



Onondaga County Legislature

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PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES NOVEMBER 10, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.

PROPOSED LOCAL LAW REGARDING THE REAPPORTIONMENT OF THE ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. May, Mr. Rowley, Mr. Burtis, Mrs. Tassone, Ms. Cody, Mrs. Abbott-Kenan, Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Ryan, Dr. Chase, Mr. McBride, Mr. Bush, Dr. Kelly, Mr. Kinne, Mrs. Ervin,
Chairman Knapp

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Holmquist, Mr. Williams

Chairman Knapp called the 6:00 p.m. public hearing to order at 6:15 p.m.

The Clerk read the notice of public hearing and stated that the notice had been duly published.

Chairman Knapp stated this is the sixth public hearing on this process, and there are several speakers signed up. Administratively, Chairman Knapp pointed out the exits and stated that he will call speakers in the order of which they are signed in. He will also announce who is on deck and asked that the speaker come up to the podium to make comments. There are several speakers, and Chairman Knapp asked that they keep their comments to three minutes.

Mark Matt:

Good evening, my name is Mark Matt, and I reside in the village of Fayetteville in Onondaga County, where I've lived for 30 years. I'm here to represent my family, my spouse, my 2 children, and my 8 grandchildren. All who live in the town of Manlius. Due to lack of time to present, I will keep my comments only to the legislative 10th district, where I see the representative is not attending at this point, which is normal. I happen to live in that district, and I looked closely at the plan proposed. The most notable observation is that it separates Minoa and Manlius from its historical communities. It continues the separation of the village of Minoa from the rest of the East Syracuse Minoa School District and separates the village of Manlius from the rest of the Fayetteville Manlius School District. These school districts were the results of mergers in the school systems in New York State in the 1950's and 1960's. Those mergers were based on history, commonalities and sense of community with the villages. Those bonds were created before the school districts were merged and have grown stronger. Both the village of Minoa and the village of East Syracuse have common history as neighbors and villages built with and a continuing tradition of the railways! Manlius and Fayetteville have a long history of working together. In the early 1900's freight trains ran between Fayetteville and Manlius. Passenger service on trolleys between the two villages was available in 1910. The villages are separate but they both have Memorial Day parades and their fire departments march in both. Manlius has a 4th of July parade that both fire departments participate in. There is a Fayetteville Manlius Soccer Club that my children played in and I coached for years. The players and coaches were from Fayetteville and Manlius. There was a Fayetteville-Manlius Rotary Club that I was a member of for many years and served as president. The members were from Fayetteville and Manlius. There is a Fayetteville-Manlius Rod and Gun Club. I've attended events there and attended meetings held there. There is a Fayetteville-Manlius Lions Club. I purchase fruit from them during their holiday fruit sale. There is a Fayetteville-Manlius Food Bank which I have supported. I have never seen a Fayetteville-Minoa organization or Minoa-Fayetteville organization. Now, it also gets sort of interesting too, because I have never seen a Manlius-Pompey, or Manlius-

Fabius, or Manlius-Tully or LaFayette organization. So, I really don't understand that. The only commonalities I see in all of that is that Fayetteville and LaFayette were named after the same Revolutionary War hero. Manlius and Fayetteville are also recognized by the county as similar villages by their wastewater systems. In the last few years, they have both been placed under the control of the County with WEP and sewage treatment through the Meadowbrook system at the Limestone Facility. Minoa has its own waste treatment facility. Under the proposed redistricting, Manlius would be included with villages that have no relationship with the county on their wastewater systems. The demographic for Fayetteville and Manlius have a strong commonality based on income levels and education levels. So the question becomes, "Why are these common communities Fayetteville and Manlius being separated from their historical communities?" Now, we are really very fortunate that the current 10th legislative district exists entirely in the town of Manlius, and its proposed redistricting is entirely in the town of Manlius. This allows us to model very accurately the results of the redistricting process. Prior to 2017 the voter registrations in the town of Manlius and the 10th legislative district were decidedly in one party's favor. It was very unusual for the opposing party to place a member as an elected official on the town or County Legislature. In 2017, the opposing party placed one member on the town board. In 2019, the opposing party placed an additional four members on the town board. In 2021, our current elections, the opposition party appears to have placed three members on the town board and, after absentee ballots are counted, place a members as a Town Supervisor and place a member as a Town Justice. If this is accurate, there has been a major change in the town of Manlius in voter registration and voting. Onondaga Board of Elections data supports the changes as well as the voting. If I take the proposed 10th legislative district and apply it to the town races, what happens? I took the town of Manlius 2021 current election results and removed the four election districts of the village of Manlius as proposed and looked at the 2021 town of results with that model. The opposing party would have lost the Town Supervisor race, the Town Justice race, and one of the town board races. It appears that the redistricting proposed is for political advantage. This proposed redistricting minimizes commonalities and amplifies differences. I would ask you as the Onondaga County Legislature to reject this proposal as redistricting for political advantage, which is illegal in New York State and to reject it on the basis of dividing communities, which should never be a goal of redistricting. Thank you.

Mary Cunningham:

Thank you for opportunity to speak. I want to remind people that the NYS Constitution Article 2 Section 4c says that maps shall not only be contiguous and compact, but protect communities of interest, and as we have listened to Mr. Matt, certainly in the example of Manlius and Fayetteville, there has not been any attempt to protect communities of interest. The village of Manlius has been removed from town of Manlius. These two villages have been together, as he said, for years, so I will not dwell on it. But the other thing we see, is for example, District 16 in the city. It now includes SU and downtown and the town of Geddes. Certainly one would be hard pressed to say there is a real community town of interest. District 15 also goes from an enormous area. It goes from the south side of Syracuse to Strathmore to Meadowbrook to Jamesville to Ainsley Drive to the lake. It is gerrymandered. We have made communities of noninterest. We've done it over and over again. We've taken the village of Camillus and split it into 3 districts. There cannot be a justification for this. We've taken the town of DeWitt, which has 26,000 people and could be a district by itself. We have broken it into three or four districts. There is no reason to be breaking up villages. Nedrow is seven thousand people. It is cut in half. Over and over again we see where there are communities of interest that are being split. And this map absolutely reeks of party interest. We had 15 out of 17 members voted for nonpartisan redistricting. Nine of the Republicans reneged on that as soon as they were vote in. Mr. McMahon appointed either his personal campaign lawyer or his personal lawyer, Mr. Hulslander. So there is no bipartisan, nonpartisan, or impartial. We have a committee that is totally partisan, and it is shameful.

Justin Polly:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you everybody hear for allowing us this opportunity to speak. I wanted to start by reading a part of the reapportionment commission report towards the bottom part of the document. It is a little bit repetitive of what you just said. "Districts maintain the core of existing districts, pre-existing political subdivisions, provides strong consideration to preserve communities of interest." A bit of repetition, but I'm okay with that. I've been hearing a little bit in terms of the reports and the news, that people are not really interested

in the process. They have bigger fish to fry. They have other things they are more interested in. This really does not affect their day to day lives. But its perplexing because the folks over there, they are interested in this process. The folks sitting in front of me are interested in this process; deeply interested in this process. The folks that ran against you are deeply interested in this process. The County Executive are deeply interested in this process, and I'm deeply interested in this process. So, redistricting is something that happens every ten years. Our country's been going through the redistricting process for 230 years. And that's every 10 years. We've only done this 23 times, since census' have been done. This is important. This is not something that needs to be done in a quick manner. This is something that needs to be done in a considerate manner that takes public opinion into account. That's important. And if we feel that it's not that important. The public doesn't really care. We haven't been hearing a lot of interest in it. Well, you've spent probably tens of thousands of dollars to be elected to your positions. Your opponents spent tens of thousands of dollars to try to replace you for these positions. I would think it's worth a little bit of time, energy, effort, and money to educate public on why this is important. Why we should be doing this the way we're doing this. This is important. This is not small potatoes. Now in terms of the maps themselves, I feel really strongly what I said before, which is in the NYS Constitution. It is in the document for the Reapportionment Commission that was issued to you all. That political boundaries should be preserved when possible. That communities of interest should be preserved when possible. And I feel that the map being proposed does not do either one of those things in many instances. Citizens are familiar with their communities. They are familiar with the towns and the existing borders. Many of which have been in existence for over 200 years. My issue isn't with really the northern part of the map. I don't live in that area of the map, so I'm not going to speak to areas where don't live. Clay has to be split up, we know that. Manlius has to be split up, we know that. Cicero has to be split up, we know that. Salina has to be split up. There's too many people living up north to have districts in and of themselves. The rural districts tend to be, and I refer to districts as the towns. The rural towns tend to be preserved. That makes sense. Low population. Its those folks in the middle areas. We're affected pretty drastically by the proposed map. I live in the town of Onondaga. There's just under 23,000 people living in the town of Onondaga. We need about 26 – 29,000 people in a singular district. So we should be practicing addition not subtraction to the town. And that goes for any medium sized town. That goes for DeWitt, that goes for Camillus. We should be looking at addition not subtraction. I live in the town of Onondaga. I live in the neighborhood of Nedrow, and if you look at the map over here, the town of Onondaga was 23,000 people; just under. And we should be adding 5 – 6,000 people to their population. Well there's one particular example where they didn't do that, and that's my neighborhood. You sliced my neighborhood in half. Ya cut my neighborhood in half, and you didn't need to do it. Nedrow is divided right there. So now I'm assuming we'll be calling this north Nedrow and south Nedrow from now on. I base that on the map right there. Communities of interest. The people in Nedrow are a community of interest. I mean no offense to my friends in the village of Manlius, and I have many friends in the village of Manlius. I mean no offense to the folks in Fabius. I mean no offense to the folks in Tully. I know people in all three areas. I love these people. They're great. But south Nedrow does not have as much in common with the folks in those communities as they do with north Nedrow. Nedrow is Nedrow. Nedrow is a community of interest, and Nedrow needs to be united. I just want to say one thing based on this and based on what the commission report has said. They broke what their rules were supposed to be. Uniting community of interest. Uniting current political borders; current town, municipal borders. They didn't do it. And so I ask, because of this and numerous other reasons. I'm only speaking to where I live and my community. I ask you to vote no. I ask you to vote no. Legislator McBride, you are my legislator. I ask you please to vote no. It's breaking up my community. It's breaking up your community. Your town, your district. Simply said, please vote no on this map.

Brandy Witthoft:

Hi, good evening and thank you for having me. I'm Brandy Witthoft, I live in the village of Marcellus. I'm just a private citizen with an interest in this. I've been following it for some time now. What I would say is I don't know what I think about those maps, because this process has been so rushed through. There hasn't been time for anyone to really properly consider the census date, and to really consider what new maps should or shouldn't look like. I think it is a complete miscarriage of our democratic system that many of you signed pledges to support nonpartisan redistricting. I think that our county has spoken loudly and clearly that we want independent nonpartisan redistricting. And you all pledged to support that and reneged on your pledges. Instead you created

a partisan commission. I went to one of the public hearings. I went to the one in LaFayette, which I read the minutes from a meeting in this chamber that the hearing would be in the evening. In fact, it was at 4 o'clock in the afternoon that day. So people had to leave work early to get there. The draft maps were not produced at that time, so we couldn't see the maps. And only 3 of the 6 commissioners even bothered to show up. So I would say this commission is a complete sham, and those of you who are supporting it should really be ashamed of yourselves.

Charles Pierce:

Good evening everybody. My name is Charles Pierce. I'm a native Syracusan. I can remember growing up that we didn't have an African American in the County Legislature. And it is a catastrophe as to what's taken place in the 16th legislative district right now. And it is a form of depression, and I'm disappointed in that. And the thing about our politicians today is that they think they are the government instead of we the people. And you guys, whoever's in that, whoever got that, you got it wrong, because we the people are the government. We put you in office to represent us on the things that you're supposed to represent us on, and what you said you were gonna do when you got elected. A lot of that... not just locally either, it's all across the board. Even in congress and the senate. They think they are the government. Even our supreme court. Each branch got a part to do. You guys serve us, and that has not been happening in my time. I just turned 75 years old September 29th. So I was here. I used to come down here a lot. I'm a community activist. I formed the Southside Homeowners Association, I'm the chairperson of that. I also lead and chair the Board of Education committee. I rather educate my community then register them. Because if I educate them, they're gonna register. If I register them, they might not even vote. So those are the things that I do. For this legislature and this map going out. I'm looking at this map right now. The 16th has been broken up so much that we are very small now. We were getting numbers. I raised that district up with voter education with the Southside Homeowners and Legal Women Voters. We went from 4% to 8% in the last couple elections in voting participation, because we go door to door. I work on that every day. I'm out in my community educating people on how important it is to be involved in the system. Our constitution gives us that right, and we need to attain that, and we need to follow it. And the things that are needed. This process normally takes... one more thing... we are legally entitled to nine months for the process. Six months from when we receive the census information to reflect research that thinks about fairness. That would have brought us to February, and then we could have three months more for the redistricting process taking place up to April and May. We have taken 21 or 22 days. That is ludicrous. That is completely unacceptable. Whether you believe it or not, it is unacceptable. I'm here to address those issues. I'm disappointed, because we, and our legislators, I appreciate what you guys do. But it is the work, as you have to represent the people. And this is... I heard about these meetings probably only about two weeks ago. It wasn't advertised in the paper. It definitely didn't get information on the southside about it. Otherwise I would have been the ones in the suburbs. Those are the things that are very important and dear to me. And I love my constitution of the United States, and I love my constitution of New York State Constitution. So, thank you for your time.

Karen Docter:

Hello everybody, I'm DeWitt Town Councilor Karen Docter, and I am here to talk about things from the town of DeWitt perspective. First of all, I spoke at the East Syracuse meeting on October 29th, and at that time I spoke regarding the process. I asked Chairman Knapp to convey, what would the legal word be, the "rushiness" of the process, and I like to think, because I asked him to do that, he did indeed convey that to everyone. It's only been 21 days. Not enough time, but more than we had before. Actually, I'm looking for more time again, Chairman. I just wanted you to know that. That's the first piece. Second piece has to do with what I am calling the content of the town of DeWitt. Town of DeWitt, which is that beautiful chunk over there, includes the village of East Syracuse, hamlets of Jamesville and Collamer. Areas of DeWitt that you think about when you think of DeWitt... the Orvilton, Erie Boulevard, East Genesee Street. But when you actually look at DeWitt, we have 27,000 residents from all walks of life, all educational levels, all partisan, not partisan, affiliated, unaffiliated; you name it... the board of DeWitt represents the best interests of all of those disparate folk. We have an urban feel. We have a suburban feel. We have a village feel. So there are a lot of different types, but what we all have in common is that we are residents of the town of DeWitt. What I have done is... I was always taught back to the source. So I went back to the source. I pulled out the proposed... what had been the proposed bill and has now been executed

by Governor Hochul. Which is, and I believe I mentioned this in passing on October 29th. Now I'm going to try to hit it with all barrels blazing. It's bill 5160-B. And that is legislation that started in February, February 25th, and it had been added on long before February 25th. The basis of everything was Home Rule. I may ... the delegate to the NYS Association of Towns. When you talk about Home Rule everyone says yay. But that has been modified since approximately 1991 when there was indeed a hearing and a court case regarding districting and redistricting. I know I have 3 minutes, I'm getting there. What I did is I pulled copies of the entire bill, in case anybody ever wants to look at. I thought it was kind of neat. And then I put together a sheet as well from October 27th when Governor Hochul signed this legislation, and made it official. Okay. The areas that are encompassed by this simply state that regardless of any local law to the contrary, county reapportionment of members of local legislative bodies is first and foremost subject to state and federal constitutional requirements ensuring fairness and equity and in furtherance of the principle of one person, one vote. The areas of this bill that are, which I highlighted, are... upon signing of this bill, lines must, and that's the word, must be drawn in a manner that ensures (1) districts are as nearly equal in population as is practicable; (2) districts are not drawn with the intent or result of denying equal opportunity of racial or language minority groups to participate in the political process; (3) districts consist of contiguous territory; (4) districts are not drawn to favor incumbents or any particular party or candidate; (5) the district is to promote orderly and efficient administration of elections. That's the summary. Okay, now to take a look at map 1.5, which happens to be the Democrat proposed, second proposed actually, map. That big beautiful chunk over there is town of DeWitt. If you look at the other maps, district 7 is just DeWitt entirely and one squishy little piece that is immediately north of Syracuse, and immediately west of the town of DeWitt. But it is immediately adjacent. *Ms. Doctor inaudible*. If DeWitt is to be treated as the Governor has said that towns need to be treated, by virtue of amendment of the Home Rule law. I am here to say as representing everybody, please do not, pun intended, draw and quarter the town of DeWitt the way that it is being presented. And I will stick around if anybody has any questions afterwards, and I thank you for your interest and listening.

Max Ruckdeschel:

Hello everyone, my name is Max Ruckdeschel, and I'm a councilor-elect for the town of DeWitt. I also happen to have bachelor's degrees in Cartography and Geography, a master's degree in Geography, and I worked with the 2010 census drawing community boundaries. I would like to speak to you tonight about the proposed redistricting map and its effects on the town of DeWitt. I presented much of these comments to the Redistricting Commission at its hearing in East Syracuse on October 29th, but as the commission decided to ignore all the comments that were presented, I thought I would share it with you, our County Legislature as well. When I first saw the proposed legislative districts for the town of DeWitt, I was appalled. It is easy to see that they were not drawn with any consideration for DeWitt residents. No other town in Onondaga County is so needlessly dissected into so many legislative districts. The town of DeWitt has over 26,000 residents, according to the 2020 census. That is just 700 fewer people than the smallest proposed legislative district. And yet we were carved up into four separate districts. The city of Syracuse with almost 150,000 residents is only divided into six districts. Not only is DeWitt divided into four separate districts, but in each proposed district, the town of DeWitt is just a minority part of the total composition. No single district in this proposal represents mostly DeWitt residents. It is very conceivable that if this map is approved, that there will be no DeWitt resident to represent us in the County Legislature. And the legislators that are elected to represent us will be beholden to the majority of their districts that are outside the town of DeWitt. This proposed redistricting is unjust and undemocratic for the citizens of DeWitt. This travesty is easily remedied by redrawing the districts to keep DeWitt whole. A district comprised of the town of DeWitt with just one or two contiguous election districts from a surrounding neighborhood would be a fair and just solution to make sure the citizens of DeWitt have a voice in their county government. I call on you, the County Legislature, to redraw the map, create a district that keeps DeWitt whole, and make sure that democracy is preserved in Onondaga County for the years to come. I would also like to take a minute to read to you a resolution adopted without opposition by the current town board regarding the proposed map. This resolution was forwarded to the Redistricting Commission before their deadline, but as far as I can tell from the minutes of the November 3rd meeting, it was ignored by the Commission despite attempts by Commissioner Czarny to bring it up. At a special board meeting of the DeWitt Town Board, held November 3rd, 2021, at the

DeWitt Town Hall, 5400 Butternut Drive in the town of DeWitt, NY. Seven members of the town board being in attendance, the following resolution was introduced by Councilor Rigney, and seconded by Councilor Docter:

*THE DEWITT TOWN BOARD URGES THE ONONDAGA COUNTY LEGISLATURE AND ITS
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION TO ADOPT A REDISTRICTING MAP THAT LEAVES DEWITT INTACT,
AND ITS RESIDENTS WITH EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION IN THE ONONDAGA COUNTY
LEGISLATURE*

Whereas, the Onondaga County Redistricting Commission has created a proposed legislative map, Map 2, which divides DeWitt into four different legislative districts, dividing town residents into more separate districts than any other town in the county; and

Whereas, the current map no. 2, as presently drawn, fails to provide for affective and cohesive representation of the more than 26,000 residents of the town of DeWitt; and

Whereas, should the County Legislature adopt Map 2 in its current form, DeWitt may very well have no resident as an elected member of the resulting County Legislature; and

Whereas, proposed Map 1.5 provides for a unified legislative district for DeWitt by taking the entirety of the town and adding it to a single contiguous and cohesive Salina neighborhood; and

Whereas, proposed Map 1.5 presents a feasible, workable, and fair alternative to Map 2, and provides for effective representation for the people of the town of DeWitt in County Government; now, therefore it is hereby

Resolved, that the Town Board urges the Redistricting Commission to advance, and the County Legislature to adopt proposed Map 1.5 in so far it provides DeWitt remain undivided and intact, which will ensure our community is fairly represented in the County Legislature; and, be it further

Resolved, that the Town Board calls upon the representatives of DeWitt in the current County Legislature to advocate for and adopt proposed Map 1.5, or another map that leaves the town of DeWitt in a single legislative district; and, it is further

Resolved, that the Town Clerk is requested to immediately forward this resolution to the members of the Onondaga County Redistricting Commission, the County Executive, and the Chair, Minority Leaders of the Onondaga County Legislature.

This is the voice of the people elected to represent the town of DeWitt, and I would ask you, as the County Legislature, to please listen to that, and create a district that keeps the town of DeWitt whole. Thank you.

Charlene Tarver:

Good evening, my name is Charlene Tarver. I was born and raised here in Syracuse, New York, and recently relocated here after more than 33 years of being away. I have more than 4 generations of family, and my family has been here for the past 40 years, or so. This particular issue is very concerning. I grew up on the south side, and I'm very concerned about the redistricting and the composition of this Reapportionment Commission. So I wanted to go back and just kind of outline a few facts here for your consideration. On October 27th, Governor Hochul passed a new law enacted in late October by the New York State Legislature, legislation S5160-B/TA.229C. It requires county redistricting to follow specific guidelines requiring districts be drawn to be nearly equal in population, contiguous, and not to favor incumbents or parties. Essentially, after reading that, it is very clear that the process must be independent, nonpartisan. And the commission must be independent, nonpartisan. So what I'd like to do now is recap one of the stories that was written regarding the composition of this particular commission. So, "Legislature Chairman David Knapp, Republican, LaFayette, proposed establishing the commission on a Friday night, and brought the measure to a floor vote the following Tuesday. It passed along

party lines guaranteeing Republicans would control four out of six appointments. Three days later, the six members of the commission were named. Knapp, the county's two Election Commissioners, McMahon's campaign lawyer, a bar owner, and a SUNY ESF Geography Professor. Five days after that, the commission held its first meeting, where Kevin Hulslander, the lawyer, laid out a timeline that called for cramming four public hearings into two days and handing maps to the Legislature by November 3rd for a vote on November 12th. When we reminded McMahon of the Legislature's desire for 6 hearings, he asked Hulslander to schedule one more public hearing to be held in the evening and in the city. This is that additional hearing. So again, if the requirement is to be independent, nonpartisan redistricting, clearly this is not a representation of that. Mr. McMahon has appointed his campaign lawyer to lead the reapportionment effort, which is clearly a bias, and a conflict of interest. Additionally it has been acknowledged that communities of interest and commonality should remain combined, because it allows voters to elect leadership that understands the challenges and nuances of their particular communities. This is a Republican lead commission. It does not represent the will or the best interests of our community, our residents, nor is it the best work of our Legislature. And may ultimately subject the county to litigation. I urge you to vote no on this map, and to consider reconvening a commission that more accurately and adequately reflects the people. Thank you.

Senator Rachel May:

Thank you Mr. Chair, good evening everyone. I want to talk not about the lines on the map, but that little white box in the top right hand corner of the proposed map, which has the breakdown of population in the different districts. If you average the population of the 6 districts currently held by Democratic legislators, the average is almost 29,000 people. The average of the other 11 is 27,500. A difference of 5%. It does not sound like a lot, and it does fall within the letter of the law, but what that means, is that everyone in the city of Syracuse, and in those 6 districts, has effectively 5% less of a voice at the ballot box, because there are more residents in those districts than the other districts. Furthermore, if you take the smallest district, which is Chairman Knapp's district, and the largest district, Bill Kinne's district (where I live), the difference is 9%. I resent the implication that I and my neighbors are somehow 9% less important than you and your neighbors. I do think this is something that needs to be looked at, especially in light of the law that we passed. I was very proud to vote for it and to encourage the governor to sign it. It says, "districts shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minority groups to participate in the political process, or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice." I think it is fair to say that pretty much all of the area of the county that is predominantly racial or language minority groups is underrepresented by these maps. And that is just plain wrong. I, as many others have done, I urge you to vote no. I urge you to come back, look at the law that we passed, pay attention to the spirit of it, and not just the absolute letter of it, and afford equal representation to everyone in the county, but particularly the people who have been traditionally under represented;

Elaine Denton:

I am Elaine Denton. I live in the town of Manlius. This proposed map has the same issues that exist with our current district maps and does not follow law S51608 which states "districts shall be as nearly equal in population as is practicable;". If we look at the 3 proposed maps that the reapportionment committee considered the map in front of you was the worse one at keeping the districts as equal in population as possible. This map only has 5 districts that are within 500 voters. Whereas Map 1 had 10 districts within 500 voters and 1.5 had 12! This simple check shows how biased the proposed district map is. Another part of the law that is not followed is where it states: "To the extent practicable, no villages, cities or towns except those having more than forty percent of a full ratio for each district shall be divided;" Now I realize the town of Manlius's population is over the 28,000 threshold and therefore would consist of 2 districts. But I know the Village of Manlius population is not over that threshold; it does not make any sense for the Village of Manlius to be included in the more rural district 12. It would make more sense for the section of the Town of Manlius that would be in a different district to include some "communities of interest." For example the Town of Manlius includes 3 school districts within Onondaga County which would be a point of community interest to divide districts on. But even more egregious is the division of the Town of Dewitt which is divided into 4 districts. The law states "no town except a town having more than one hundred and ten percent of a full ratio for each representative, shall be divided in the formation of representation areas." Dewitt has a population of 26,074 residents. It is well below the 28,000 threshold and

there is no valid reason to split it up into 4 distinct districts. The city of Syracuse should have at least 5 districts within city lines. The map in front of you today dilutes the city representation on the county legislature when Syracuse represents over 30% of Onondaga County population. There should be at least 5 representatives that live within the city. And this doesn't even account for the fact that Syracuse's population is growing. These basic rules of communities of interest, no excessive splitting of municipalities and equal representation should be the foundation for district maps. This proposed map fails to follow the law and does not make sense. We need to do better. We can do better. I ask you to vote no on this map and send it back to the reapportionment committee and tell them to actually listen to the people who care enough to come out and speak about what we would like to see. Not partisan maps but fair ones. How is that too much to ask? Send this map back to the reapportionment committee and let's do better. Onondaga county had 24 districts in 1990. We have more population now than we did then so why do we only have 17 districts? Our neighboring counties have less population than us and have more representation at the county level. Their representatives serve anywhere from 3,000 - 10,000 residents where our legislators represent over twice that at approx. 28,000 residents. Why are we spreading our democracy so thin? We still have time, we can do redistricting right. If you want to strengthen our democracy here in Onondaga County this map must be voted down. Thank you

Heather Waters:

First off, I just want to give props to Councilor Denton and everything she said. I just wanted to say ditto. I'm here with other town councilors from the town of Manlius and so many residents. And I hope that our legislators understand that we are very concerned about the proposed maps of district 10 and district 12, along with the other maps.

I'm Heather Waters, a Manlius Town Councilor, here to stand up for my constituents of the Town and residents of the Village of Manlius, given the 10 years they will have to live with this political manipulation, this gerrymandering, along with so many others in our County.

I call on you to pause this process.

Mayor Mark Olson of Fayetteville agreed in a candidate forum held by the Eagle Bulletin that this process has been too rushed.

The Village of Manlius residents are being placed back into the giant district 12, which spans from Spafford to DeWitt, and drowns their voices out and cuts them off from most of the conversation and policy making in Manlius. Because our legislators do not show up for the people, they show up for ribbon cuttings and do business with the towns and villages out of the public eye and ear.

Our District 10 County Legislator, Kevin Holmquist, is not here, nor was he at the 10am meeting I attended in East Syracuse, and he has not publicly communicated with his constituents about this redistricting process ONCE. The last time district 12 rep Chairman David Knapp and district 10 rep Kevin Holmquist were at a meeting with Town of Manlius residents was when they were running in 2019. They do not hold town halls. This is not a fair process, nor is it democratic.

Amy Kruse:

Hi, my name is Amy Kruse and I live in the Town of Manlius. I'm speaking for myself and on behalf of my mother who lives in the Village of Manlius. I don't think anyone here believes that the redistricting you're proposing is for the benefit of the people of Manlius. Although there are about a hundred reasons why, in the interest of brevity and my sanity, I will give you three:

1. Although many have asked for it, you have provided ZERO rationale as to why you want to carve out the village of Manlius from district 10, and add it to district 12
2. This public hearing is purely posturing, as you have not taken into consideration any of the input from voters like myself, or my Mom

3. With this new map you've drawn, you would be splitting up a community of interest into two legislative districts, which would make the voices of that community, which includes the families in the Fayetteville-Manlius school district, and village residents, like my mother, harder to hear.

David Knapp and Kevin Holmquist, who I guess had other plans tonight, you had signed a pledge that you would do the right thing, so do the right thing. Thank you for your time.

Sarah Bollinger:

Thank you. I'm Sarah Bollinger from the town of Manlius, and I'd like to again refer to the law that there shall be nearly equal in population. This map 2 clearly does not reflect that. It could more easily be done using town borders. I would like to reiterate what my colleagues have said, that the village of Manlius really needs to remain in district 10. It is not right to disenfranchise the residents of Manlius by putting them in a district that has so little in common with their interests. The proposal to divide the town of DeWitt into 4 districts is a violation of the law as it is written, because it does require towns to be kept together. If DeWitt was held together, and you added a little bit of the town of Manlius that is in the JD school district, which is a community of interest, you would then have the little bit less that Manlius needs, and a reasonable town of DeWitt. We think that that would be a recommendation this commission should consider. We urge the legislature to vote no on this and send it back to the commission to consider maps that actually make sense to the residents. So I am calling on the Legislature to vote no, and I am also calling on Kevin Holmquist to stand up for the village of Manlius. Thank you.

John Deer:

Good evening everybody. My name is John Deer, and I am a town of Manlius councilor. Fingers crossed supervisor-elect. The only reason that is true, is because you cannot gerrymander a town. And that is what has been happening at this redistricting process. Ever since the Democrats took majority of the board in Manlius, during a pandemic, we have not seen a single one of our three legislators at a single meeting to give us an update on what is going on. Now, in order to make sure we are continued to be ignored, Manlius is completely ignored when it comes to representation here. And you are taking the Manlius out of Manlius. You are drawing the village of Manlius out of the town of Manlius. This is so clearly a political farce. There has been absolutely no attention paid to a single public comment. I don't know if there has been any person to speak up in favor of these maps. When we hold public hearings in the town of Manlius, we listen to our residents. We keep them open, we keep it easy to attend, and we make sure that everybody's voices are heard. Unlike completely this entire process. It is shameful that this is what is happening at our County Legislature. And I know I have been working very hard to make sure the people's voices are heard, and with a district like this, you are going to take the village of Manlius, again, out of Manlius. If you look at the map, Otisco down there, apparently has more in common or less in common with the currently proposed district 12, then the village of Manlius does. You look at this map, and anyone can tell you that that is not a fair map. That this is meant to disenfranchise voters based on political party, and also to completely discount the voice of the town of Manlius residents at the Onondaga County Legislature. Thank you.

Joe Driscoll:

Thank you for your time legislators. I'm glad that you held this meeting. This might be an exercise in futility, but that is nothing new for me. To quote Atticus Finch, "Simply because we were licked a 100 years before we started, it's no reason not to try." So, I'm not going to quote Hochul's new law. I'm not going to explain to you how the village of Manlius is split in three ways, or how Geddes is split up. Or quote the demographics, because you all know that. I mean you guys, this is your job. You are aware these maps are designed to maintain power. That's what they're here for. I have been trying to explain this to voters for years and receiving blank faces. They don't really get what this means or why it's important, but you guys do. You know these aren't drawn in the interest of fairness, and it's basically cheating. Democrats received 40% of the vote this cycle, yet they maintain 35% of representation. We can see if these lines were drawn in a different way, that that would be a different story. But I think you guys know that, which is why we are rushing this through as fast as possible. 4 o'clock meetings. That's why we all signed pledges saying we wouldn't do it again, and once we got elected, we're doing

it again. I believe County Executive McMahan admitted as much when he argued not that these were fair or just, but if that Democrats had won the majority, that they would do the same thing. Even though Democrats had already introduced a nonpartisan independent redistricting. So I won't try to explain to you why these maps are not fair. I feel that that is kind of understood. It's beating a dead horse at this stage, after everyone that has spoken. But I would say, what kind of lessons do we want to teach. What kind of legacy are we going to leave? Are we going to say it's fine to cheat as long as you win? As long as you maintain power? I don't think that's what we should expect of government. I reach out to as a fellow elected representative, and when I tell people I'm a politician, they immediately think scumbag. And I hate that. And I feel about bad about that. And I remember a time, I'm somewhat young, but I'm old enough to remember an era where Democrats and Republicans would go out to lunch together. And they talk about issues, and they worked things out. And that requires civility and rules of engagement that we need to have. And this in my mind violates those rules of engagement. This is rigging the game in your favor. I ran for office, never expecting to run for office, because I was so disgusted with the way our country is going with everybody at each other's throats. And even though I'm branded as a far left, I was a supporter of Bernie Sanders, I like to consider myself a pragmatist, and someone who would love to work with people of all political stripes or creeds or whatever. To improve our county, and improve our region. This is steps us in the opposite direction. This teaches people that the game is rigged and it's alright to rig the game as long as you win. And that is not what we should expect of our elected representatives, and I hope that you will vote no. Because it is fine to... if the Republicans the Democrats in the county, I'm absolutely fine with that, as long as there are rules of engagement that are fair and that we can all agree on. This violates our democracy in my mind. I've been trying to explain it for years, and people don't get it. But everybody here does, so I'd ask you all to vote no with respect. Thank you.

Tashia Campbell:

Hello everybody, my name is Tashia Campbell, and I am a resident of the 16th district. I have been a lifelong resident of the 16th district, and I call for all of you legislators to get together and do what is right for the people; the voters really in your community. The ones that we sent all these beautiful flyers to. We knock on their doors, and we need their support. And we talk to them, and we talk to their family. And we give them all this hope, and we are going to do exactly what is needed for the community. Then as soon as you leave that street, you forget all about them. Let's do what's right for those in the community that you promised to be not a gang, but you agree to work with everyone. Okay. I just want to say a few more words and then I'm done. The way this map is set up, we only have 2 African American representatives, and the way this is going, you're going to divide it. And it's only going to be one. The Syracuse area has a lot of black and brown people, but we don't have any representation of black and brown people. I looked at this new map, and it looks like we will be joined in with DeWitt. I thought, if you're going to do some type of cutting or putting together, do things that make sense. We don't have any commonality with DeWitt. I don't know why we were even... like we are joined up with DeWitt. We don't have any commonality with them. So I would say to our legislator for the 16th district, when it's time for this vote to come in or come up, I would say vote no. Vote no. This is not what is needed for those in our community. And I'm going to leave you with this. Remember the sins of the father will fall on the son.

Mark Spadafore:

I thank the chair and the Legislature for letting me address you today. My name is Mark Spadafore, and I am the president of the Greater Syracuse Labor Council (AFLCIO); representing over 50 local unions, representing over 35,000 working people in this area. And our delegate body had a robust discussion about the process of this, and we passed a resolution basically endorsing the nonpartisan process. And we're seeing that in action right now in the city of Syracuse. It looks different than the process that took place here. Right now they are still going through their process, but the people who are on that commission, are just regular rank and file people who applied on an application with the city auditor's office. It isn't people who are necessarily connected to the political process. And I think that is what we're missing here, because what we have created... we've created a process where working people really don't have a say. That working people really are excluding from this process of choosing who their representatives are. Basically, you are doing a process where representatives are choosing what voters they want. To me, at the end of the day on a personal level, it reminds of when I was a kid growing up in Liverpool. I had a bunch of friends of mine, and we had these older kids in the neighborhood. And they

would always say, hey come on over and play basketball, so they did. We would go over and play basketball, and what they would do is slam the ball on our heads and reject and things like that, because they knew they could dominate us. And they did that because they were jerky kids who were bullies. And that is a similar process I see happening in here, like Councilor Driscoll said, if it's a fair process and one party wins and the other doesn't, that's fair. But what you are doing is choosing which voters you want for a partisan advantage, and that doesn't help working families. And I would also argue, what we experience when we try to organize workers into unions. The boss always wants to come in and put in managers and put in professional people, so we lose the organizing drive. We're seeing the same process happening here. So for us, we, I join those others that we encourage you to vote no, and to institute a process that they have in the city.

Jaqueline LaSonde:

Good evening, my name is Jaqueline LaSonde. I am a Syracuse city south side resident, district 15. I represent also the Greater Syracuse South Side Neighborhood Association. We work in coordination with Homeowners Association, Legal Women Voters, Onondaga Votes, and so on. I'm very tired, but very passionate. As a group we are all passionate about getting people out to vote, encouraging them, and that their voice is their, their vote is their voice. All these wonderful things. But what we find is that over and over again, the lack of transparency. The reality that things may not go our way, and we're not going to be knowing about it until it hits the newspapers. So, while we are hard at work with the voter education information, we ask you to work with us. We are here to remind our elected officials that you are accountable to the people. We demand that you place people over party. We are interested in our district not being further sliced and diced with representation which will not reflect or protect our interests. We know the supreme court has already said that partisan gerrymandering is a political questions. So it is not a judicial issue, therefore this will be dragged through what court, and to what avail. So, we will ask you at this time to be on the right side of history. To vote no to these partisan maps. To work with the people. To support the people's interests, and not the partisan gerrymandering. And lastly, as a reminder, Governor Hochul had stated that both the intention and the result of this must not result in racism and racist effects. We need to reestablish what we're saying. We are going to hold you accountable, we are going to be at your meetings, we're going to do what we need to do as the people who voted you in office, and remember we can also make certain that this doesn't happen again to us; and you'll be voted out. Thank you for your time.

Ida Stewart:

Good evening, I'd like to say, first of all, congratulations to Charles Garland, who is newly elected here. I'd like to say that you need to listen to the people. The people are speaking, and the people say no. Do not, do not, do not, do not not listen to the people. We voted you in, and we want you to represent us honestly and clearly. And map does not. Whether you are in it for your friend or your neighbor, you are not in it for the communities. The communities do not want to be redistrict and taken apart, torn apart, separated from one person across the street from me, and this is wrong. Wrong. Wrong. W-R-O-N-G. No.

Peter King:

Good evening legislature. My number one comment is the obvious and often stated concern this evening that this is too short a comment period. Characteristically scheduled precisely during one of the busiest times of year. But I will further add to that comment that my reading of your commission process, in communications terms. I mean, I'm interested in what kind of communication produced these maps and this process. My reading was that there was a miscommunication or lack of communication between the different parties attempting to create a map in a four Republican, two Democrat commission. The seeds of some kind of reconciliation might occur, but as one commentator on the 27th said, that there really should be only one map in this kind of process. Or whatever process you've chosen, basically is failing on its own merits. The community had expressed clear interest as of last year, and the year before for a nonpartisan process or an independent process. Now some of these ideas might seem new and radical, and so on, but the fact that this somehow seems like deja vu for previous decades in the legislature, it does not give me any comfort as a voter and a citizen that something good is happening to resolve those long standing issues. And the fact that this is coming to head nationally in recent years. I can only point to the city of Syracuse having taken a different tangent, where there is producing maybe a longer process, but one with the participants are actually listening to each other. The legislature has clearly not communicated any

rationale for the rush. The original reason Mr. Knapp made for news media is that this is only a small demographic change, and it can be handled quickly and administratively does not seem to hold up in light of the disagreements and comments made this evening. And that this is fractured decision making that does not bare reality to communities of interest, and so on. I live in the city. Currently, I recently moved to the Meadowbrook area, and I do not find that that, ya know. There is an attempt to make the city a more centered object than before, but clearly there is not a relationship with the true communities of interest. Especially, the Wescott area is definitely fractured in two. The usual dragon shape coming up from underneath, and there is not a similarity that I can determine from understanding that community. The commission's communication with the public has been to deny questioning, to deny... nor have you addressed concerns adequately, I thought. Some commissioners have asked for a longer process, which I support. Including public and expert participation. And in bare terms, I find no reason why there's a deadline. The next election cycle is 2022 that this needs to be ready for. I don't see a need for a 21 day process. In actual demographics, I believe there has been a lot of change. The city of Syracuse made the mistake of denying, of not redistricting for 20 years, and found that they have a lot of catching up to do for this cycle. Certainly, I don't think you can make a case for a quick reapportionment on that basis. And so, in the end I'm left with that this is a definite partisan process. The dividing of the 16th ward does not seem correct for me, and the towns and villages are speaking up. I have not heard one positive comment in support of these maps. Thank you very much. I'd vote no please.

Dana Balter:

This is a really beautiful chamber. I've been looking around as I'm sitting back there. It is designed and built and maintained with a great deal of love and respect. And there's a reason why this is the seat of our county government. There is a reason why you as legislators come to a room like this to meet and do the business of the people. It's because in this country, in a democracy, we revere the power of the people. We understand that a democratic government has an awesome responsibility to be stewards of the public good. To make decisions on behalf of the people you represent. To serve their interests. To ensure that everyone can thrive. I hope that you still come into this room for every meeting and session you engage in with a little bit of that reverence. I hope you take a minute, take a breath, and look around you, and think about where you are. And think about the responsibility and the power that has been vested in you, by the people who voted for you. Who put their trust in you. They gave you their most precious asset; their trust. They asked you to serve them, and that is an incredible privilege and honor that you are all enjoying. And if that means anything to you, if you care about the integrity of that service at all, you have to vote no on these maps. These maps are a violation of all of those values and principles. I have already spoken about why the process was so problematic. There is a transcript, of what I'm sure Chairman Knapp thought was an excessively long speech at the Camillus town meeting. I'm not expecting that any of you have read it. I don't think any of the commissioners that were supposed to be at that meeting have even read the transcripts. I don't want to talk about process tonight. I want to talk about power. We've heard great arguments from folks coming up to this microphone all night about what's wrong with these maps. I live in the city of Syracuse. I love the city of Syracuse. The redistricting process this year is a chance to repair the mistakes, I think mistake is a generous word, the transgressions of the last redistricting process. What is supposed to be happening right now, and that is all the considerations folks are talking about with keeping communities of interest together, the law the governor just passed; all of those things. What that is about is making sure that we don't do again what the folks in power did the last time. Which is rig the map to keep power, instead of draw the map to fairly represent the people. The city of Syracuse is perhaps the place that suffers the most. And while I am a fan of Councilor Joe Driscoll, and I really appreciated his remarks, I am going to disagree with him on one point. I am going to talk about the reasons. I think they do need to be said. I think you need to hear them over and over and over again. And they need to be spoken in the record. And the reason for rigging the maps this way, the reason for violating the pledge you made, the reason for upholding a partisan process instead of engaging in a true, fair democratic process is to dilute the power of the people that you don't want to have power. And lets talk. I want to be very clear. I want to be explicit about who those people are. This isn't just about Democrats and Republicans. It is certainly about that, let's not pretend it isn't, and by the way, I'll say here what I said at that last meeting, which is Democrats shouldn't do this when they're in power either. And I am currently lobbying my state representatives and representatives from all across the state to beg them not to rig the congressional districts when they redistrict at the state level. It doesn't matter who's in power, rigging districts is wrong. And

the reason these districts are rigged this way, and the reason that the commission is trying to re-rig them, and I hope with every fiber of my being you will not let it happen, is to dilute the power of the people they do not want in power. In this county, we have about 460,000 people. About 143,000 of them, live in the city of Syracuse. Syracuse residents should have more power in county decision making than they do in this map. In the county, about 10% of the poor population is black. In the city, 30% of the population is black. It is no accident that these maps dilute the power of the city population. It is about taking power away, keeping power out of the hands of people of color in this city primarily, but not only black people. It is part of a shameful history in this county, and we have the opportunity right in front of us to fix that. This is such a simple solution. So many of the challenges that you come here to work on as legislators are so complicated. It is hard to figure out how to end poverty. It is hard to figure out how to protect our communities from the climate disasters that are happening with these extreme weather events. It is hard to figure out how to get people who disagree so vehemently with each other, to come together and make decisions that everybody can be satisfied with. This is easy. We know how to do this. We know what's fair. A 3 year old knows what's fair. You have the opportunity here to do what you were sent here to do. What the people have vested their trust in you for. To be not guardians of your self-interests, guardians of the public's interest. That is what your job is. This is about making sure that every person's voice is heard, and every person's voice carries equal weight. That is what is at stake here. There is nothing more fundamentally American or democratic than that. And you have the power to do it right. You also have the power to do it wrong. I am asking you please not for partisan reasons, not for political reasons, but because you are Americans, and I hope you are patriots. That you understand this is bigger than any one of us. I am begging you to do the right thing and vote no on these maps.

Pauline Finch:

I am Pauline Finch, and I moved here from up north. And I've been here since 1964. I have never, never in my life saw such a mix up, such a dirty nasty way of treating us south siders. First of all, you took six houses from Midland to South Avenue on the right hand side for the sewer plant. You come down to Hudson Street where I live, 400 block, you took two houses there. You took three houses up further, no six houses up further. Alright, that's our voting area, and yet you are discontinuing this. It's not fair to us. We pay our taxes just like you, and all you DeWitters, and anywhere you live. We pay our taxes. We cannot make a go of it if you are going to cut us off. And we cannot get anybody to represent us, because you didn't put us in the 16th district. You took it away from us. You've got to stop this. This is ridiculous. I know you people don't know what we're going through. They put a creekwalk there, and we've had nothing but drugs being sold there, people being shot there, and that takes away from that area. So, please vote no for this map. We do not need you DeWitters or anywhere else to get profit of what we've worked so hard to keep. And he knows how... I have worked hard. I was secretary of the Independence party, and I took care of everything I could take care of. All you people, most of you people know who I am. And most of you people know that we've worked together. We've worked with Independence, we worked with the work parties, we worked with every party. But now you are taking it away from us. For what? For what? To give it to DeWitt, so DeWitt can get more votes in there. We're losing. There's nine houses gone out of ... from Midland to South Hudson. That's nine houses that we cannot get our votes from. Now, why, why are we doing this? Because they want the others to have more profit than us. Right now, all the votes and everything are going separately. We've worked hard to get our people in there. We can't, because we can't get the votes, because you've taken it away from us. Look at the sewer plant. It stinks, so it's terrible. You can't even walk past there during the day. And now they're taking the creekwalk in there. Who's going to walk that creekwalk when they smell sewer? I mean, and it's \$10 million you spent there. Why didn't you take that \$10 million and build those bridges up instead? And I'll tell you something else. We do not need these tunnels. That's somewhere where people can get hurt again. I was in Utica not too long ago, and I was through the tunnel there. You could find people lying on the ground there. We've got to look at that. Make our area nice. Now they got this property in front of my house. They took and put these ugly trees there. I asked them please put some blossoming trees, so people around the creekwalk would enjoy walking the creekwalk. But no, there's two peoples a day that walk that creekwalk, because there's nothing to see. Look at all the money we spent. And if we spent it, because Mr. McMahan wanted to have something with his name on it. Or Mr. Walsh wanted the tunnel to put his name on it. We don't need his name on anything. We need the money to be worked, we need the money to be spent properly. And until you learn to say no to these big monks, you'll all be alright. But now

everybody thinks we're doing good. We're not. Our taxes are going to go up in January. For what? We have a creekwalk that two people down once a day. You can't walk down there, because there's someone else on the other end selling drugs. I wouldn't walk down that way. I won't let my family come from out of town, because I'm so embarrassed of how Syracuse has done. They've got to take, they've got to look at it. We're not. Mention not to long ago, that's alright, put it in the ghetto. What did they put in the ghetto? They put the sewer plant and they put the creekwalk. What good is it? But we're paying taxes for that. And ask how many of these DeWitt people walk that creekwalk. You won't find them on the south side. We've got to stop this wasting money. Instead check and find out what can do with that money. But we have no say to it. We have no say on how to spend our money. The only thing we have to say is let it go. Don't say nothing. Don't come to these meetings. I've heard a lot of people say that. They've been told not to come to these meetings, because it doesn't do any good. Please look into it. Please work at it. Bill you know we need something done with south side. We need to do something now, not tomorrow, not another day. We need to do it now.

Ken Miles declined to speak.

Casey Cleary-Hammarstedt:

My name is Casey Cleary-Hammarstedt. I wanted to thank Linda Ervin, Mary Kuhn, Bill Kinne, Chris Ryan, Peggy Chase, & Vernon Williams for persevering year after year under such difficult circumstances. We see you, and we need to do better to support you. I also want to give a shout out to Dustin Czarny, my hero, in appreciation for his professionalism & integrity in defending democracy valiantly on the Reapportionment Commission. When I look at your faces, I don't expect you to do anything but vote yes. So I prepared my letter to the governor.

Dear Governor,

All across our nation, we see a dramatic rise in shocking attempts by the Republican Party to destroy democracy and further concentrate power in the hands of the wealthiest of the wealthy and the most extreme of white nationalists. Observing the most recent actions of the Onondaga County Republican Dynasty to ensure their control of redistricting I thought at first, "Why they are just following the Republican National Committee (RNC) Playbook!"

But, after attending two of local public hearings on the redistricting maps, reading media accounts, studying the maps, watching the sham process of the Reapportionment Committee, and now, seeing the results of the 2021 elections, it is clear the Onondaga County Republican Committee here is way ahead of the curve in destroying democracy. I would not be surprised if they wrote the RNC Playbook, in fact. They have been at it much longer.

Governor, please enforce (S.5160- B/A 229.c) the legislation you signed on October 27, 2021 to promote fair, non-partisan and non-discriminatory redistricting by launching a full investigation of the Onondaga County Republican County Executive and Legislature for their blatant challenge to your authority. Their actions suggest they welcome a lawsuit to test your strength and resolve.

I will concentrate on your guideline regarding how redistricting maps should not be drawn to favor of incumbents or any particular party or candidate. The Republican map, referred to locally as "Map 2", bakes in many of the choices made over 60 years – many rounds of redistricting to ensure Republican Party control over Onondaga County government.

John F. Kennedy was President of the United States when Republicans took control of both the County Executive's seat and the County Legislature. John F. Kennedy!!! In those 60 years partisan control of the White House has switched 8 times and 12 men have served. During the same time period in Onondaga County, there have been only 4 individuals who have served as County Executive and party control has never switched. With the exception of two years, the County Legislature has been Republican-controlled; the County Executive was still a Republican during those two years.

County Executive Ryan McMahon is quoted in an editorial (Syracuse.com 10.17.21) saying the fault lies in the quality of our candidates. Governor, you have met the Democratic candidates; you know what an unnecessarily arrogant statement that was to have made. The Democratic candidates are an amazing group.

Many of us have been so impressed with their determination to educate voters about how the odds are never in our favor because of Republican drawn unfair, partisan and discriminatory district maps generation after generation after generation after generation. It harms the psychology of a county when voters recognize the system is rigged to ensure the outcome. It

dissuades talented, enthusiastic people with forward-thinking ideas from running and it dissuades donors from donating when candidates do not have a chance.

Let me focus on where I live in the Town of Manlius or District 10 of Map 2. The Republicans break up a contiguous territory with hundreds of years of shared history, development, a single school district and intergovernmental municipal services. Why? Because Democratic candidates in District 10 have mounted three successive campaigns that came close to ending their 44-year control of the county legislator seat.

The District 10 race will be decided by absentee ballots and it appears that the brilliant, Heather Waters, an elected Councilor in the Town of Manlius will not win against the Republican candidate Mark Olson in the closest race of the last three. What the Republicans have done in Map 2 is to protect Olson for the next 10 years. They have removed the Village of Manlius from the Town of Manlius and put it in a rural district firmly held by Republicans. Why? They believe it will ensure Democratic candidates will lose the chance to run successfully in District 10; they believe the growing number of Democratic voters will be blocked from electing a candidate from the Democratic Party.

Olson, who served as a Trustee of the Village of Fayetteville for 6 years before serving as the Mayor of the Village for the last 18 years, plans to be both the Mayor and the new County Legislator while he works in the private sector full-time. The Village of Fayetteville, like almost all villages in Onondaga County, has been controlled by Republicans for as long as anyone can remember - most assuredly for decades.

Does it seem fair to you that the Republicans have redrawn District 10 to ensure Olson 10 years of control in an area in which Democratic Party enrollment has been growing steadily? Please note that the success of four Democratic candidates in the 2019 Town of Manlius election, which switched that body from Republican to Democratic control, is a major motivation for the Republican determination to redraw District 10. We are a bright spot in the county – and they want to extinguish Democratic bright spots systematically.

I have lived in Onondaga County for 38 years, and the Town of Manlius for 22 years. Our first home in this District was located in the Village of Manlius for 4 years; for the past 18 years we have lived in the Village of Fayetteville. Our two daughters graduated from the Fayetteville Manlius School District. We are one community. I am sure you will hear from the many other District 10 residents who have written thoughtful comments explaining the absurdity of splitting our community through Map 2; there are many other arguments against this change.

Finally, this is the change that effects our family most, but it is not the most important flaw in Map 2. Map 2 continues a pattern of disenfranchising the people of the City of Syracuse most heinously. Map 2, both in intent and result, denies “equal opportunity of racial or language minority groups to participate in the political process.” (S.5160- B/A 229.c) You will receive letters also from Onondaga County residents explaining those aspects of the map. Please know that our suburban-based family, and many others, recognizes that the impact on the citizens of the City of Syracuse is the most important reason for you to study the reapportionment debacle in Onondaga County.

Governor, we need you to investigate ASAP. Thank you.

*Sincerely,
Casey Cleary-Hammarstedt*

Sarah Klee Hood:

Good evening, and thank you for presenting tonight for this opportunity. As a veteran, I learned a few things in the military. Some of them are to be concise, the other is know where you stand in line in terms of chow and retreat. So with that I'd like to offer my concise remarks. I come before you tonight as Councilwoman-Elect from the town of DeWitt. I spoke first about this event at the East Syracuse press event that was held by County Legislator Mary Kuhn. Tonight I offer the same sentiments and comments. It is easy to see that these maps were not drawn in consideration of the town of DeWitt residents. DeWitt has the same population as Lysander. Lysander is proposed to remain whole, while DeWitt is divided into four sections. Does this make sense? No. When you divide DeWitt, and then add sections of the city of Syracuse back, you are diluting the vote, or de-emphasizing the value of communities. Their voice, the communities, the characteristics, and the priorities,

personalities that make each community unique. It's time that you put the votes first. You put the people first. And it's time to vote no. Thank you.

Chanel Turnquest:

Hi, my name is Chanel Turnquest, and I'm here on behalf of the NAACP here in Syracuse. And I'm the Co-Chair with Van Robinson for the Political Action Committee. And I just wanted to state that the NAACP agrees with the Democratic redistricting map 1.5 plan, because the lines drawn show equitable representation of the vulnerable and underserved citizens of Onondaga County. It respects communities interests, and recognizes the black and brown communities right for true representation. A lot of the people in the community have, due to social, economic disparities, aren't as able to be involved in the political process that we have available to us. So the representation, even when we go to these meetings sometimes, were not present. So to draw the lines where there is less representation for their voices is really a disservice to the community. And it impacts the community when their voices aren't being heard, and those resources not being equitably distributed to that population as well. So, I just want to say vote no, and thank you for listening. And there are legal means to remedy this issue if necessary by also going through the courts here after. Thank you.

Jonah Minkoff-Zerh:

I'm Jonah Minkoff-Zerh, I'm speaking in four different lights. First, I'm speaking as a national organizer on democracy campaigns for public citizens. As public citizens, we're extremely excited to see Syracuse as the first city east of the Mississippi to have established an independent redistricting commission. That was an extraordinarily important step for our democracy, and am pushing this nationally, which we're also doing with the Freedom to Vote Act. Second, so then we were excited to see that a majority of members running for the Common Council also committed to establish and support independent redistricting. Then we were surprised to see that that was voted down, which seemed in blatant violation of your pledges when you ran for office. So that was concerning to us. Then we saw the maps that you put out for the county, which are clearly not aimed at independent redistricting, but aimed at increasing Republican representation on the County Council. So that's concerning to us as an organization nationally that works for democracy. Second, I'm here to speak as a resident of Syracuse. Syracuse is one of the poorest cities in the nation. 31% of residents of Syracuse live below the poverty line. Syracuse is one-third of the population of Onondaga County. So if I was on the County Council, I would spend every day and every night thinking about how do I better serve the people of Syracuse. How do I break down one of the most segregated areas in the nation and make it less segregated. How do I make sure that the one billion dollar budget that I control is best served in remedying the problem of extreme poverty in the city of Syracuse. That would be my number one concern night and day. So to do that, I would want more representation and more voices from the people of Syracuse, who are best served to understand the problems and address them. I would want to draw a map, if I was going to draw a map, to increase representation of those voices. I would want those people who need most representation to have the biggest voice in order for our county to help address this problem of deep poverty in a city that is one-third of our population. Third, I'm here as a friend. I'm friends with some of the amazing people who ran for County Council, who have brilliant ideas to remedy these problems of poverty. New, to bring new ideas to our county, to evolve our county, and make it one where we can address the problem of poverty in Syracuse. And where we can move ahead. And if I was on the County Council, I would be excited for those voices to have representation. I would draw maps to ensure new voices, like those, were being heard and were being represented. I wouldn't be trying to hold onto my power, or the power of a political party. I would be working to make sure those people had a voice. And finally, I'm here as a father. I'm a father of a five year old and an eight year old. My eight year old is beginning to intensely learn about civics in her school and in her life outside of school. And I want my eight year old and my five year old to see her representatives as one who care about justice, not clinging to their power. I want her to see her representatives as people who care about democracy, so when she learns about the right to vote in school, when she learns about voting and representation, or when they both do, that they have good role models here in the county. You're letting me down in all four regards. In a national advocate for democracy, in a resident of Syracuse, as a friend who sees the brilliance of these people's ideas who are running, and the value that they would bring to this council, and as a father. I urge you to have an awakening of consciousness tonight, and to do the right thing, and to vote down the maps that are clearly unjust. Thank you.

Chairman Knapp asked if there was anyone else wishing to be heard.

Helen Hudson:

Good evening, my name is Helen Hudson. Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank you County Leg for having us. I am President of Syracuse City Council. I'm proud to say that myself and my colleagues, we kind of did it the right way. We talked to our constituents, and we listened. I think we forget, we're all public servants, okay. And I think that constituents should have a voice, and our constituents are saying that they want to see independent nonpartisan redistricting. I think that we need to listen. This is not a topic that just happened overnight. We've been at this now for a year and half. I think it's very unfair, because when you look at everybody, well not everybody, but this portion of the room, we're called public servants. And as a public servant, it is your job to hear the public. And right now you're not listening to the public. I'm going to ask you to vote no on this, and I'm going to just say this, right. We can, you're picking and choosing who you want to vote for you, instead of letting the voters choose. And when we talk black and brown people being 10% of the population in the suburbs, that's the truth, but guess what, we're coming. I know a whole bunch of black and brown people that live in Cicero, that live in North Syracuse, that live in Manlius, and we're still coming. So, I mean, take a look around you. We have to stop the partisan gerrymandering. It's not good for our democracy. It's not good for our county. It's not good for us as humans. I mean we can continue going on the Republican and Democratic line, but guess what, when we sink, we're going to all sink together. We won't sink as Republicans, and we're not going to sink as Democrats. We're going to sink as people. So what we need to do is we need to open up our minds, open up our hearts, and start listening a little bit. Because the 400,000 people in Onondaga County, and the 140-150,000 in the city of Syracuse, they vote for us. They put us in these seats. And I think Jackie said it, as they put us there, they can take us out. So I really, really would ask you to consider vote no on these... I don't really know what to call them, but let's just vote no. Thank you.

Chairman Knapp asked if anyone else wished to be heard. Hearing none, the public hearing was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature