It took three special meetings, but the Gallup City Council was finally able to agree on a new redistricting plan during its Nov. 16 meeting.

During the first work session on Nov. 2, President of New Mexico Demographic Research LLC Rod Adair presented three redistricting plans to the council.

Adair explained that the city's four districts have to be divided into equal parts. He told the council that the 2020 Census reported that Gallup has a population of almost 21,900 people. He explained that Plan A would create the smallest change from the city's current redistricting plan, and the council decided to endorse Plan A.

Plan A was not enthusiastically embraced by everyone.

"I don't like any of [the plans], but I guess I would go for Plan A, if we have to choose one," Fran Palochak, Dist. 4, said, during the second special meeting on Nov. 10.

Adair was late to the Nov. 10 meeting, so the council finished most of the discussion about Plan A before he arrived. One of the main issues that came up was that Plan A diminished the population provided to District 1, compared to the other districts.

During the discussion, Palochak expressed her concern about how Plan A affects her district, arguing that almost all the changes come from District 4.

“It appears that our consultant has targeted my district to provide almost all the additional census for District 2,” she said. “I guess I have the most population is what I’m gathering, because they’re pulling from all of my district for all of the plans.”

The rest of the council did acknowledge that Palochak’s district has seen the most growth in the last several years. Palochak’s district includes the west side of Gallup.

The council also noted that Councilor Linda Garcia’s district, located on the north side of Gallup, has more of an elderly population and older homes.

To fix the problem, Adair said he would need to move 71 people from District 4 to District 1, which only affected four census blocks. This new plan was named “Gallup Plan Developed During Nov. 10 Council Workshop” and included those minor changes.

The council approved the plan during the Nov. 16 special meeting.

In a previous meeting, Adair explained that municipalities could be within five percent of what he called “a perfect number,” which would happen if everyone had an equal number of people in each of their districts. For Gallup, that perfect number would be 5,475 people in each district. A district is permitted to be either five percent above or below that figure.

Based on the plan the council accepted, District 1 was 4.58 percent below, District 2 was 1.72 percent above, District 3 was .05 percent below, and District 4 was 2.9 percent above that figure.

The new plan will go into effect on March 1 when the Municipal Officer Election is held. It will remain in effect until a new redistricting plan is adopted after the next U. S. Census.

By Molly Ann Howell
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