

## NYC Redistricting Commission Public Meeting August 20, 2012

Good evening everyone and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important topic concerning New York City Council Redistricting.

My name is Joe Granello and I am a home and business owner in the Sunnyside section of Staten Island. Sunnyside is part of Community Board 1 on which I am proud to have served for 8 years as a member, transportation chair and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair under 2 former Borough Presidents, Anthony Gaeta and Ralph Lamberti.

I have been informed that Staten Island, for the first time in 30 years, will have three self-contained council districts which do not cross county lines.

I hope that this Commission will consider the geographic boundaries of the 3 Council districts to be coterminous with our existing 3 Staten Island Community Boards.

The concept of Community Boards (CBs) has been evolving since the year 1951. Citywide voters have reaffirmed the importance of the 59 Boards. CBs provide the citizens of New York City with neighborhood governance.

The Council must work **closely** with their CBs:

- ▲ Council Members are "ex-officio" non-voting members of the CBs.
- ▲ Council Members submit nominations for CB membership to the Borough President (BP), **half** of the BP's appointments must be made from the Council Members' nominations.
- ▲ CBs advise the Council Members on the Expense and Capital Budgets and the Council Members help determine the funding for the Boards.

All three Council Members sit on The Borough Board with the three CB Chairpersons. The three CB District Managers participate in the Borough Service Cabinet chaired by the BP and includes borough officials appointed by the head of each City agency.

To quote Mr. Jim Caras, Deputy General Counsel for the New York City Council, in his opening remarks to this commission on July 17th, "One of the main reasons for increasing the number of districts in 1989 was to make the Council a body that more closely represented the rich **diversity** of our City."

As a follow-up to Mr. Caras' remarks, I quote the words of Dr. Joseph J. Salvo of the Department of City Planning regarding the population change by Race/Hispanic Origin on Staten Island, 2000-2010 spoken at the same July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of this Commission. "Let's go to Staten Island. White population down. Staten Island is the only borough where the Hispanic, black populations both increased, most heavily in Community District 1.

Community District 1 is now no different from any of the

different areas in the rest of the city. It's an **amazingly** diverse place." Let's seize on this opportunity to maintain this "amazingly diverse place" by making it Council District 49. Do not carve out white communities or minority communities to protect incumbents, diversity is too important.

Following Mr. Salvo's presentation, Mr. Thaddeus Hackworth, Senior Counsel, New York City Law Department, stated, "There can be almost -- really no deviation in population among the Federal congressional districts. **But that stringent rule does not apply to State or local redistricting.** So, there's a rule that is applied for State and local redistricting. It's also reflected in the New York City charter and it specifies that the difference in the population between the least populous district and the most populous districts shall not exceed 10 percent of the average population." Mr. Hackworth continues, "Now, that is not an absolute rule. There can be deviation that (are) greater than that. But, the courts will require some very compelling reason for a population deviation much more than 10 percent."

Using Mr. Hackworth's math, we have 160,000 per Council district plus or minus 10%. Compare this number to the current population for Community Boards 1, 2 and 3 which is 175,756, 132,003 and 160,209, respectively. The numbers are close and deserve to be preserved for reasons stated earlier and for efficient communication and operation of **good local government.**

Mr. Hackworth continues, "The next rule is compactness. So, the charter says each district shall be compact and shall be no more than twice as long as it is wide. Ultimately, you just want to keep a circumference as small as possible. So, you want to stay away from **odd-looking districts** or districts that extend to large swaths narrowly...And the last one is that the district should be in standard shape. So, that's very similar to the compactness. You don't want to draw districts based on favorite animals or anything like that. The districts, to the extent possible, should be standard district shapes." Staten Island Community Boards are compact, standard shape, continuous and not divided.

In conclusion, Staten Islanders expect a fair, effective and nonpartisan redistricting. Making the Community Boards boundaries coterminous with the Council boundaries will give the residents of Staten Island the good government they deserve and expect.

Respectively submitted,  
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**THE COUNCIL OF  
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**DEBI ROSE**

COUNCIL MEMBER  
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**COMMITTEES**  
AGING  
EDUCATION  
HEALTH  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
TRANSPORTATION  
OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS

## **NYC Districting Commission Public Hearing at Staten Island Borough Hall August 20, 2012**

**Presented by New York City Councilwoman Debi Rose**

Good Evening,

I want to welcome the Districting Commission to Staten Island as they undertake the arduous task of reconfiguring the borders of the councilmanic districts on Staten Island.

This complicated process, often misunderstood, occurs every ten years in order to comply with population changes according to the census and to ensure that the mandate of one person one vote is realized.

This process has to happen.

The director of the commission has assured me that every effort will be made to preserve communities of interest within the districts so that Staten Islanders will be fairly represented in the new districts.

I have represented the 49th Council District for 2 years and 8 months and have come to know many constituents and community groups.

The possibility of no longer representing some neighborhoods is upsetting to me as my staff and I have worked hard to put the needs of our constituents first.

I am asking the commission to recognize that re-districting Staten Island is unique.

The relatively small size of the population in comparison to the other boroughs combined with geographic factors has created unique problems in transportation, environment, economic development and delivery of municipal services.

In one sense there is a broad community of interest across Staten Island about these issues.

However, Staten Island also has nearly innumerable small neighborhoods- many of only a few blocks- each with a very individualized community of interest.

I am asking you to keep these neighborhoods in the forefront of your considerations as you try to balance population changes with identifiable communities of interest.

Thank you for your hard work. As the work of the commission continues I am looking forward to input from Staten Islanders and your reaction to it.

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**STATEN ISLAND BRANCH NAACP**  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

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August 20, 2012

Redistricting Commission Hearing  
Borough Hall, Richmond County  
Staten Island, New York 10301

**TOPIC: Redrawing City Council Lines for the Borough of Staten Island.**

Staten Island currently has three Council Districts: The 49<sup>th</sup> District (North Shore) the 50<sup>th</sup> District (Mid -Island and a portion of Brooklyn) and the 51<sup>st</sup> District (South Shore). The possibility of the Mid-Island Standing on its own free of Brooklyn seems like a good idea.

Every ten years we have the CENUS COUNT that tells of the increase or decrease in population in our communities. According to law, the voting lines/district lines; Federal, State or local should be drawn to give all communities equal population/voting strength as possible.

As a long time resident of Staten Island, and a man-who has voted in every election since becoming of age, I have often wondered if this concept has worked for the African-American Community. It is my understanding that the 49<sup>th</sup> District, the district with the largest African-American population is slated to lose about 10,000 people due to an excess in the population.

According to the Voting Rights Act/Constitution preserving the racial strength is important within a district and should not be diluted. I am speaking in terms of maintaining the strongest possible African -American Vote. I am asking you not to remove any of the African-American streets, Blocks or community from the 49<sup>th</sup> District. You will have a difficult task to remove 10,000 people from District 49, but the figures suggest it must be done.

Presented by,

  
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President SI Branch NAACP

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