

## 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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