## NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

AUGUST 18, 2021

Transcribed by:

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1 (Transcription from YouTube started at 21:36.)

Will begin by introducing our sergeant-at-arms. Beginning from the House, Nina Lage. Oh, handing out there in the middle. Terry McGraw, and handing out as well. And William Moore in the back. Senate sergeant-at-arms, Michael Carvanus. Thank you. Jim Hamilton, behind me over here. Charles Marsalis, over here. And Linda Matthews. So thank you all for your service today in helping with the committee.

Members, I wanted to point out, I guess, first, you should have two things that are in front of you. They are the county populations according to the 2020 census, as well as the ideal district ranges for those spreadsheet detailing those as well as relisting the county populations.

We had intended this morning -- we may hear some from Erika Churchill in a minute, but we wanted to open up this morning for discussions on the public hearings and the public hearing schedules. We had a few comments about that coming in, and we wanted to give

1 opportunity to bring those up in front of the 2 committee. 3 So beginning on that point, are there 4 any comments or questions regarding --5 Pricey -- Representative Harrison. 6 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, 7 Mr. Chair. 8 I distributed to the chairs yesterday 9 afternoon a proposed draft of the public process 10 and the transparency, and it's based on the 11 August 2nd letter that we all received, all the 12 committee members received, proposing a more 13 transparent and public-friendly process and --14 which was required by the 2019 court on the 15 remedial maps. And I just put together a 16 proposal that incorporated those, and they 17 reflect a lot of the public comment. We were --18 I was going through the comments last night. 19 There were something like 290 requests for a 20 more transparent process on the online public 21 comments that had been received the last three 22 days. 23 So I just offered it to you all.

like to offer it to the committee for discussion. I think it also includes a timeline

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that reflects the schedule that is proposed in the document. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HISE: Members,
sergeant-at-arms will be handing out the
presentations we have -- or the copies we have
of the comments from Representative Harrison.

Representative Harrison, while the sergeant-at-arms is giving those out, would you like to summarize for us.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Sure.

Basically -- so it's -- I don't want to go -- I guess I'll just start.

The setup in a way that could apply to future redistricting processes, so the first item just starts with starting the redistricting process immediately upon legacy data release.

Obviously, that has started, but this is meant to be more universally applied, and providing redistricting information on NCGA website.

That has been a complaint that we've heard from the public, and this more easily found and tracked information on one site on the General Assembly that would include all the information, comments filed, meeting notices, draft maps, and any related data and

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information, and added a comment about the fact that we heard a lot from folks who wanted to see the public comments that had been submitted online that have not been available to the public. Now, I've talked to staff about the feasibility of that, but a lot of folks feel that would be important.

The third item is to permit written and oral public comment, ensuring that all North Carolinians have a chance to submit comments either through a portal, email, postal service, or in person. And this would apply before maps are drawn and after final maps are drawn but before they're voted on by the committees.

The next item, Number 4, would ensure quality video and audio broadcast in public meetings. This was an issue we heard about in the last process. As technology improves, this seems to be easy to comply with.

Also, I think in this one, there would be -- the commission -- the committee would stop drawing maps until any technical issues are resolved if there is a problem with video or audio feed.

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And then Number 5 is holding public hearings throughout the state. The proposal in the letter from the advocates indicated they thought 13 hearings reflecting the current 13 congressional districts. I realize there will be a 14th, but we don't know where that will be vet. That would address regions around the state where individuals could give input and also making sure that there is a remote option for those who cannot get to the site or who have COVID concerns, as we are still dealing with that, and making sure that the schedule of public hearings is two weeks' notice. I think that folks have been concerned about finding out about a public hearing the night before, and that would set up a process where folks had good notice.

Number 6 is disclosing all third parties involved in redistricting, that the committee would disclose all consultants and counsel to members of the legislature and committees of either house and who are paid by state funds and will be participating in the redistricting process. And that requirement would occur within 24 hours of adoption of the

criteria or engagement.

And the committee consideration of maps, which is Item Number 7. Now, the committee should only consider maps that comply with all the following:

Item Number 1 is that any criteria, systems or data used in developing of the maps have been disclosed to the public in advance of its use.

Number 2 is that the map was released online for public comment and the public had adequate time to review the map and submit comments.

Number 3 is that the map was drawn in public view, including livestreaming of the drawing.

And then Number 4 would be a written documentation justifying the district's chosen.

8 would require the disclosure of initial draft maps. After receiving an incorporating public comment, these should be released online for additional public comment within 30 days of the committee starting the map-drawing process.

And then Number 9 also relates to the

timeline that submitting the final proposed maps to the General Assembly should be publicly released no later than 21 days -- released online no later than 21 days after the draft maps are released.

And the maps should be -- the final proposed bill should be sent to the appropriate chamber within 10 days of the release of the final maps.

And that contemplates adequate time for public notice and input, but also recognizing the short timeframe that we have to get through this process but leave enough time at the back end where folks -- candidates that are considering running know what the districts are going to look like or any issues that need adjudicating could get resolved before -- well in time since filing, I believe, starts on December 6th.

So that's the proposal that I'd like the committee, and I'd like to offer it for the committee's consideration. That's the substance. And then separately, there is an actual timeline proposed. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HISE: Thank you,

Representative.

Any questions or comments from members of the committee?

Questions or comments about the process in general for public hearings?

Senator Marcus.

SENATOR MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was not here when we did statewide redistricting back in 2011, and I have heard various people mention how it was done then, specifically, how many public hearings were held across the state. And I wondered if staff, or maybe anyone who was here at that time, could clarify how many public hearings were held last time around. I'm trying to assess whether 13, as proposed here, is similar to what we did before or significantly less. I've heard that there were as many as 60 hearings across the state. I don't know if that's true or not. I wondered if anyone could address that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HISE: So I can confirm I was not involved in 60 hearings, that's coming in, but we did multiple sites at times that would occur at the same hearing, that's at coming in,

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but staff may be able to give you some specific numbers, but I would categorize it as similar in scope.

might, we're happy to count up, but I don't know that it's going to be an apples-to-apples comparison because, as Senator Hise mentioned, in the 2011 round of redistricting, as we were technologically capable of doing something that today seems like old hat, at the time it was almost novel, and it was to have interconnected public hearings via technology.

So there may have been five sites around the state, but it was technically one public hearing because everyone in every site was hearing and seeing all of the other people, or at least that was the attempt. I do realize that a couple of times the technology failed a little bit, but remember, that was 10 years ago.

But we're happy to count up all of the locations that the General Assembly went to.

Just know that the number of hearings, from a technical perspective, may be a little less than the number of sites where the General Assembly went.

1 SENATOR MARCUS: Follow-up. 2 CHAIRMAN HISE: Follow-up. 3 SENATOR MARCUS: Thank you for that. 4 Yeah, I would be interested to know all 5 of those details just so we -- I think the 6 public expects something similar or maybe even 7 better than what we had in 2011. 8 Your answer raises, for me, some 9 questions I hope this committee will address 10 about what these public hearings that we're 11 proposing will look like, how they'll be run, 12 Will they be livestreamed for anyone who wants 13 to watch to watch? Are they going to be, as 14 Ms. Churchill said -- what was that word you 15 used -- simultaneous across the state? 16 ERIKA CHURCHILL: Simultaneously 17 interconnected. 18 SENATOR MARCUS: Right. I think it's 19 important that we have some guidelines and 20 expectations in place. How many members of this 21 committee will be at any of those -- any 22 individual public meeting so the public doesn't 23 feel like they're just speaking to a screen but 24 to actual legislators and those sorts of things.

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Being new to this process, I'm just

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    throwing those questions out there, hoping that
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    we'll address some of them today.
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             CHAIRMAN HISE: Thank you.
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             Any other questions?
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             Senator Perry.
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             SENATOR PERRY: Thank you,
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    Mr. Chairman. If we could, if we're going to
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    have staff look into that, I don't know the
    value of a single reference, a single data
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    point. If we could go back to 2001, also, so
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    that we've got kind of a run rate approach and
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    understand how it's been done over time, I think
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    that'd be helpful. Thank you.
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             CHAIRMAN HISE: And I'll also say both
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    2001, 2011, we were under the requirements of
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    preclearance, and a lot of those hearings were
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    based on very specific things required for
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    preclearance. So that's coming in.
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             Any other questions that are coming?
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    If not, I think Erika Churchill has to hand
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    out --
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             Representative Carney.
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             REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY:
                                      Thank you,
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    Mr. Chairman.
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             I just wanted to acknowledge what is in
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1 this proposal that we just had handed out. 2 lot of that has come from the public hearings. 3 If you all have gone back and listened to any of 4 those, I think a lot of these requests are 5 coming from the public and some members' input. 6 So I do support the direction that we're going 7 in and being very inclusive on having the public 8 weigh in at every step of the way for all of us as we chart our way through this. 10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 11 CHAIRMAN HISE: Thank you. 12 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Mr. Chair. 13 CHAIRMAN HISE: Representative 14 Harrison. 15 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you. 16 I wondered about the process here. 17 will just add that I looked up the very specific 18 comment that was made about the amount of 19 taxpayer money that went into defending and 20 litigation on redistricting. It was a little 21 over \$11 million in the past decade. And I 22 appreciate the committee's commitment to making 23 this a more transparent process, including the 24 public participation piece, so I'm mindful of

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that. I'm hoping we can do this right.

1 But I offer this up as a -- I don't 2 know how to describe this. I offer this up as a 3 proposed redistricting process for a formal 4 I knew that -- I believe last week 5 Chair Hall indicated that we would be talking 6 about the public process today. I just see a 7 handout related to that. So I'd like to offer 8 this up as a proposal for a vote, please. 9 CHAIRMAN HISE: For this meeting as a 10 whole, we are not anticipating taking any votes 11 and have moved in that direction for what we may 12 propose or others. So we're holding this for 13 discussion only, and we will continue to read 14 that, but we have all received what you have 15 presented. 16 Thank you. REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: 17 CHAIRMAN HISE: Thank you. 18 So seeing none again, this room gets a 19 little confusing. 20 Does everyone have the proposed weekly 21 schedule of public hearings that's coming in? 22 If they do, I'm about to recognize staffer Erika 23 Churchill to explain what's here in this 24 proposal.

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ERIKA CHURCHILL: Okay. Thank you,

Mr. Chair.

As Senator Hise mentioned, this is the proposed list of counties in which public hearings would be conducted prior to the development of maps. In alphabetical order, they would be Caldwell, Durham, Forsyth, Jackson, Mecklenburg, Nash, New Hanover, Pasquotank, Pitt, Robeson, trying to group like areas of the state with like areas of the state.

The proposal of the weekly schedule would be the week after Labor Day, which technically starts on Labor Day, would be Caldwell county. The next week would be one group of folks going to the western part of the state, Jackson and Mecklenburg counties, and one group of folks going to the eastern part of the state, Nash, Pasquotank, and Pitt. The week of September 20th, Durham and Forsyth. The week of September 27th, New Hanover and Robeson.

And we would strive to use university system facilities or community college facilities depending on their availability.

CHAIRMAN HISE: Members, I think I would also state that we're going to put this out for comment. We're open to any suggestions

1 as we finalize this kind of plan and others. 2 We'll have the chairs put that out. I think 3 it's important to recognize that we're an 4 environment that may require potentially a lot 5 of flexibility in being able to do these. 6 will put out the schedule, and we will hold to 7 it as we can, but we're looking at various 8 requirements and other things that could impact any one of these. We're not aware of any at 10 this point for holding a public hearing, but we 11 will -- I think it's important to realize that, 12 as the chairs know, we will need the ability to 13 adjust maybe quickly and on the fly as those 14 occur. 15 So Representative Harrison and Senator 16 Blue. 17 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, 18 Mr. Chair. 19 I just noticed that Guilford county is 20 not on here, the third largest county in the 21 state. I see Forsyth is, but Forsyth is not 22 Guilford. I just wondered if there would be any 23 appetite for adding a Guilford hearing. Thanks.

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Representative, a lot of counties are not on

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HISE:

here.

Senator Blue.

observation, Mr. Chairman, and I think it's totally spot on, it seems to me that collectively and what I see missing are schedules in the exceptionally rural parts of the state. I'd suggest one up in the northwestern part of the state, on the edge of -- you know, from Watauga county down because if people are traveling, especially if they got long distances to travel to a public hearing -- now, if all of these are virtual or something, that's different, but if they got to travel, you probably want to make it as less stressful as possible.

And the same thing with respect to the northeastern part of the state. And if you want some real drama and great participation, you'd probably add Wake county anyhow, since it's sort of a central place, and it's also a place that probably has got more redistricting within it than any other, but just some ideas.

And I'm especially sensitive to this in the extreme areas of the state because of

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1 transportation and because of the other issues 2 related to the times in which we live. And when 3 I say northeast, I'm talking about maybe 4 Northampton, Hertford, some of those places. 5 noticed that Pasquotank is on, and that is a 6 central part, but that is a long ways generally 7 speaking. And the same thing as I was talking 8 about, whether it's Avery or Ashe or in that area.

CHAIRMAN HISE: I appreciate your comments. I'd be more than happy to discuss those coming in.

Representative Hawkins.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And to overlay with Senator Blue's statements, I absolutely agree. And one of the places -- well, let me first start, thank you for proposing this so that we have something to react to, but one of the places that is missing, of course, is the Sandhills area, between sort of Fayetteville and Charlotte. You know, those areas are, of course, not really close to much in our state, and so we want to make sure that everybody understands and feels like they're

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counted. One of the other pieces to also mention is making sure that we at least have one in some of our most populous counties.

And I did, before going to my next question, wanted to go back to something that Erika Churchill mentioned was that they had one site but multiple, I guess, sort of a satellite arrangement in previous redistricting hearing sessions. Can someone explain that a little bit further to me so that I can sort of understand how that operates because, you know, otherwise, if you're looking at a Wake or a Mecklenburg, you know, it can take you a good long ways to get from one side to the other, and we want to make these as convenient as possible for people who want to attend in person and not have to travel, you know, an hour-ish to go from somewhere like Guilford county to have to come to Durham county, which I invite everyone to come to Durham county, but I want to make sure that this process at least is convenient for them.

CHAIRMAN HISE: The chair will respond to that briefly to give you the best explanation of how 10 years ago and somewhere in the middle

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it also occurred again, when we were doing the public hearings.

They were holding a central meeting generally here at the General Assembly. They would then connect to an area in the west and/or an area in the east and put them on various screens that were here, and then they would go through some rotation. They would say, okay, first, we're going to hear from this site, then this site, maybe this site here, then this site, this site.

I will say, at least from my memory, there were a lot of technical challenges for responding between the multiple sites, and the transition between sites did not create an efficiency of process. I guess I'll leave that as kind of the neutrals, I would say.

I don't know how much those kind of things have changed, but I will say that -- and the amount of technology and others you had at different areas in the sites varied greatly for what was available and how it could do, and so the participation at different areas varied for individuals. Some would have a lot of people show up and some would have a handful of people

show up, and as we tried to balance all that, there were some headaches.

I will also say that one of the other considerations for as we do it now or as we did it then, is the staffing required to be at every single site at a simultaneous time, that was what's coming in that had to do that, and that includes sergeant—at—arms staffs, that may include capitol police staff, that includes central staff, that includes ISD staff, and how you make sure that people's viewing of that, if they were just on the viewing areas was a monumental task.

So that's my, from 10 years ago, close summary. I think some people that have been around for that time period are nodding their heads, that's with coming in.

So this is a more broken-up process on this schedule that focuses on a particular area when we have the public comments there, but again, this is up for proposal.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: Okay. Thank you.

One last follow-up, Mr. Chairman.
CHAIRMAN HISE: Sure.

CHAIRMAN HIS

1 REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: I appreciate 2 that thorough answer. 3 And this is probably, of course, 4 already set in stone, but are we married or 5 willing to extend the schedule at all from the 6 week of September 6th to the week of 7 September 27th? Are we married to it, or is 8 that up for debate or potential --9 CHAIRMAN HISE: We have not said I do, 10 so this is the proposal for the prenup. 11 REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: Thank you for 12 I'm glad that option is on the table. 13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 14 CHAIRMAN HISE: Thank you. 15 SENATOR CLARK: Mr. Chair. 16 CHAIRMAN HISE: Senator Clark. 17 SENATOR CLARK: When do we plan on 18 making a decision regarding the sites? 19 CHAIRMAN HISE: I would hope the chairs 20 will be able to have something out -- we're 21 still having comment on it. I would hope the 22 chairs will be able to have something out next 23 week for kind of the sites that would be in 24 these areas. I know there's specific sites 25 they're looking at at this area, but there are

1 some technical things that would need to be 2 nailed down with those facilities. Again, 3 mostly they're attempting to use community 4 colleges and universities for this process. So 5 they're opening for classes right now and trying 6 to figure out how they're planning for students 7 and responding to the virus as it's coming out. So a lot of that's in flex right now as to whether you can have an event on their --10 SENATOR CLARK: Okay. Thank you, 11 Mr. Chair. 12 One more comment. 13 CHAIRMAN HISE: Yeah. 14 SENATOR CLARK: Okay. For the area 15 that I perceive the Robeson site will be 16 handling, I think that Cumberland county might 17 be a more appropriate location, so I would 18 appreciate if that consideration could be 19 considered. 20 CHAIRMAN HISE: Okay. 21 Any other questions or comments? 22 Senator Marcus. 23 SENATOR MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. 24 It's hard for me to assess the proposed 25 weekly scheduled public hearings without knowing

when this committee expects to have draft maps available. To me, that has to go hand in hand.

I'm sort of guessing based on
Representative Harrison's proposal, if we're
going to accept that, that initial maps would be
released by September 30th, that all these
hearings would happen before then, which I think
we do need to have a full round of hearings
before the initial maps are released.

But then I hope that this committee is also going to have hearings similar to this schedule after those proposed maps are released. Because just like in this committee, once we see something that we can, as Representative Hawkins said, react to, I think the public will feel the same way and want to be able to comment on the maps.

So are we going to talk about that today, the schedule for hearings after maps are released, as well?

CHAIRMAN HISE: So we do not have proposals of this for consideration today on beginning of the map-drawing process and others. I will say that historically, we have completed this statewide open hearing in that process

before we begin that.

But I will say that as maps are proposed, as maps are put out, and I don't know if it would be the joint committee or the separate Senate or House committees, almost every committee I've ever dealt with has public hearing in regard to the legislation proposed in front of the committee, and I believe even some of the rules of the chambers may require that.

As we move through this process, I think there would be plenty of opportunity in addition to this to comment on anything that would continue to move out. This is not to cutoff the public. I think we would intend to keep the public comment portal open for the entire period.

SENATOR MARCUS: Follow-up.

CHAIRMAN HISE: Follow-up.

SENATOR MARCUS: Are you saying that once the initial maps are drafted, there will only be public hearings in this building, more like a typical committee, and then online, not another round of statewide meetings?

CHAIRMAN HISE: Unless somebody corrects me otherwise, that has been the

1 historical utilization of the public hearing 2 We have not or aren't considering any process. 3 different proposal, so --4 SENATOR MARCUS: Follow-up comment if I 5 could. 6 If we're only going to do one round of 7 statewide hearings, it would be my thought that 8 they would be more useful after draft maps are available, then. People are going to have 10 reactions to the actual maps and want to speak 11 to us, and I don't think just a typical public 12 hearing in this meeting at that point in this 13 building would be sufficient. 14 CHAIRMAN HISE: Okay. Any other 15 questions or comments? 16 All right. Members, we will attempt to 17 continue to work on this process and see what we 18 can adapt from comments today and see how 19 quickly we can get you something out from the 20 chairs regarding the public comment schedule. 21 So seeing no other questions or 22 comments and having exhausted the agenda, this 23 committee will stand adjourned. 24 (Transcription from YouTube ended at

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