

July 14, 2014

Polling Location Consideration

Now that the redistricting is in place and I have the figures of how it impacted the five districts, it appears that there needs to be some consideration to polling locations, as shifting has created some issues that will cause stress, in particular, at District Two, the American Legion Hall, Steward P. Morrill Post, on Broadway.

As you may or may not recall, ten years ago I redistricted the five city districts based on voter population so that we would evenly distribute the turnout at each polling location. Because all voters elect Councilors city wide rather than by District, former Corporation Counsel, Mary Kahl, had no issues with that distribution and it worked great for ten years. A year or two ago a gentleman stopped by my office voicing concerns about our population count variations in each City District. After discussing that issue with our current Corporation Counsel, Sally Daggett, she said we need to follow Title 30-A; §2503 which says;

- A. Each district must be formed of compact, contiguous territory. Its boundary lines may follow the center lines of streets.
- B. Each district must contain as nearly as possible the same number of inhabitants as determined according to the latest Federal Decennial Census, but districts may not differ in number of inhabitants by more than 10% of the inhabitants in the smallest district created.

This is how the totals changed from before to after;

	State Rep	Total Voters After Redistricting			Prior to Redistricting		Voter Shift
District 1	31	4271	4271	22.31%	3951	20.48%	320
District 2	31	3176					
District 2	32	1241	4417	23.07%	3131	16.23%	1286
District 3	32	2323					
District 3	33	1519	3842				
District 4	32	2596					
District 4	33	1059	3655	39.15%	8391	43.50%	-894
District 5	33	2962	2962	15.47%	3815	19.78%	-853
		19147		100.00%	19288	100.00%	

I have a big concern with a 41% increase at the American Legion Hall. That location was pretty stressed before the redistricting. I've spent some time looking around District Two for an alternative location. Mahoney Middle School gym is not handicapped accessible and neither is Holy Cross School. The Congregational Church on Meeting House Hill does not have a large open space. The Wright Pavilion looks rather large from the picture on the website, however you can see from the information that I've attached that it isn't much different in size than the Pulpit of the Church. I spoke with Captain Gilda at the Coast Guard Base. He would have sincerely liked to help the city out, but said they do not have a spot on the base any larger than the room at the American Legion Hall. Additionally, they would have to check ID's for anyone entering the complex. Councilor Cohen suggested that I contact Yankee Ford because she knew of a polling location in Lewiston where a car dealership showroom was used several years ago. I spoke with Mary Arnold, the owner of Yankee Ford on Waterman Drive. They have the Yankee Luxury Showroom that she would be happy to let us utilize but she would only commit to one election to see how things went. After researching the space I found that it was actually slightly smaller than the American Legion Hall (see attached information).

There is no easy solution that comes to mind. I have three recommendations; split District Two and have Legislative District 31 (3176 voters) vote at the American Legion Hall and Legislative District 32 (1241 voters)

vote in the Library Meeting Room. I spoke with Kevin Davis about this suggestion and he would be amenable to considering this option. There would be additional costs for staffing and equipment if we go this route. It does not relieve the stress at the American Legion Hall that exists for a high turnout election. It also compounds on library parking issues, especially if there happened to be a funeral at the church across the street. Additionally I'm always very apprehensive about bringing more traffic around an elementary school. Brown School has a large number of children that walk to that school.

Another thought would be to combine District Two and Three at the Community Center and Four and Five at Redbank Community Center. This would actually be my preference for several reasons; reduced costs, we would go from four polling locations to three. The Charter amendments that we are seeking approval of this fall will enable us to have one Warden and one Ward Clerk per polling location. Currently the Charter requires us to have one Warden and one Ward Clerk for each city district. Parks Department would have one less setup to complete. We would need less equipment.

If we went with that scenario this is what the change would be;

District 5 was	3,815	after redistricting combining District 5 and District 4	6,650
District 3 and District 4 was	8,391	after redistricting combining District 2 and District 3	8,282

The Community Center has 138 parking spaces available. Redbank Community Center has 51 spaces with two curb cuts. The Community Center continues to hold programs throughout the day on election day, but Redbank Community would have no other events on Election Day.

The downside to this proposal would be that all the voters in the outer Highland Avenue area would have to travel to the Redbank Community Center, driving past the Community Center where they have voted for the last several years. It is about three miles from the Community Center to Redbank Community Center. They do have the option of absentee voting however, I'm sure most of these people will not be happy with this shift. Whatever decision is made I would recommend that for at least the next two elections post card reminders get mailed to every voter impacted by whatever changes take place.

A public hearing must be held at least 90 days before an election if there is a decision to change or consolidate any voting places. A public hearing would have to be held either at the July 21st Council meeting or the August 4th Council meeting.

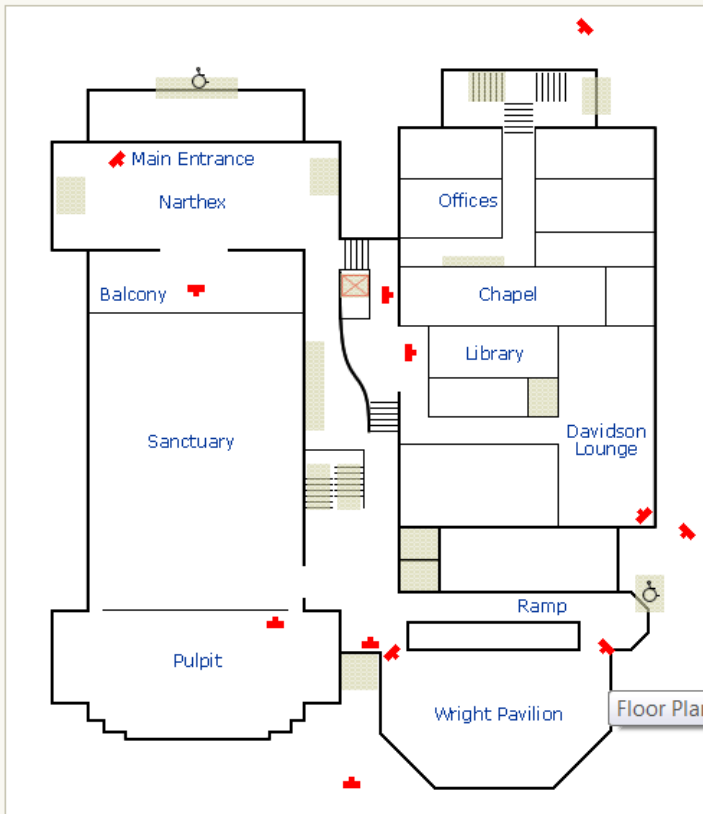
A final consideration would be to leave things as they are for this election and send a notice to all District Two voters explaining the impact from redistricting and advising them that they have the option of considering absentee voting or to plan accordingly; dress warm in case they find themselves waiting outside in line and anticipate that they will probably have up to a half hour wait time. If this is the decision that is made, I will spend some time looking to see if we can redesign the layout to see if voting stations rather than voting booths would be more efficient and putting one or two more voting machines at that location to keep things moving faster. I would then recommend that we discuss moving the district lines after this election as described on the last attachment, and then combining Four and Five for future elections at Redbank and Two and Three at the Community Center.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH – MEETING HOUSE HILL



Tour



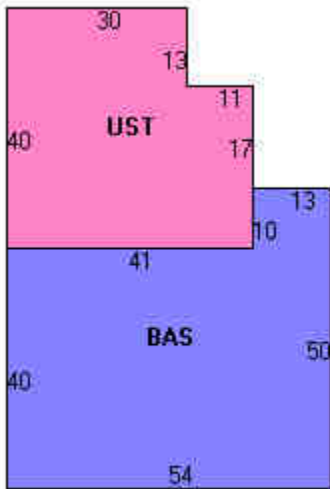
View of Pulpit from the Balcony



Wright Pavilion

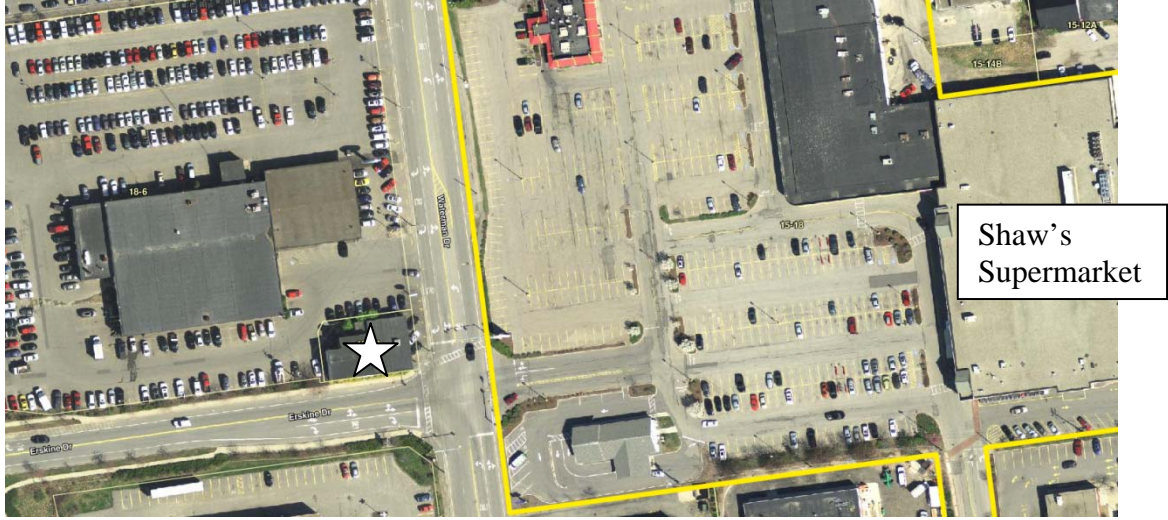
YANKEE LUXURY AUTO – WATERMAN DRIVE

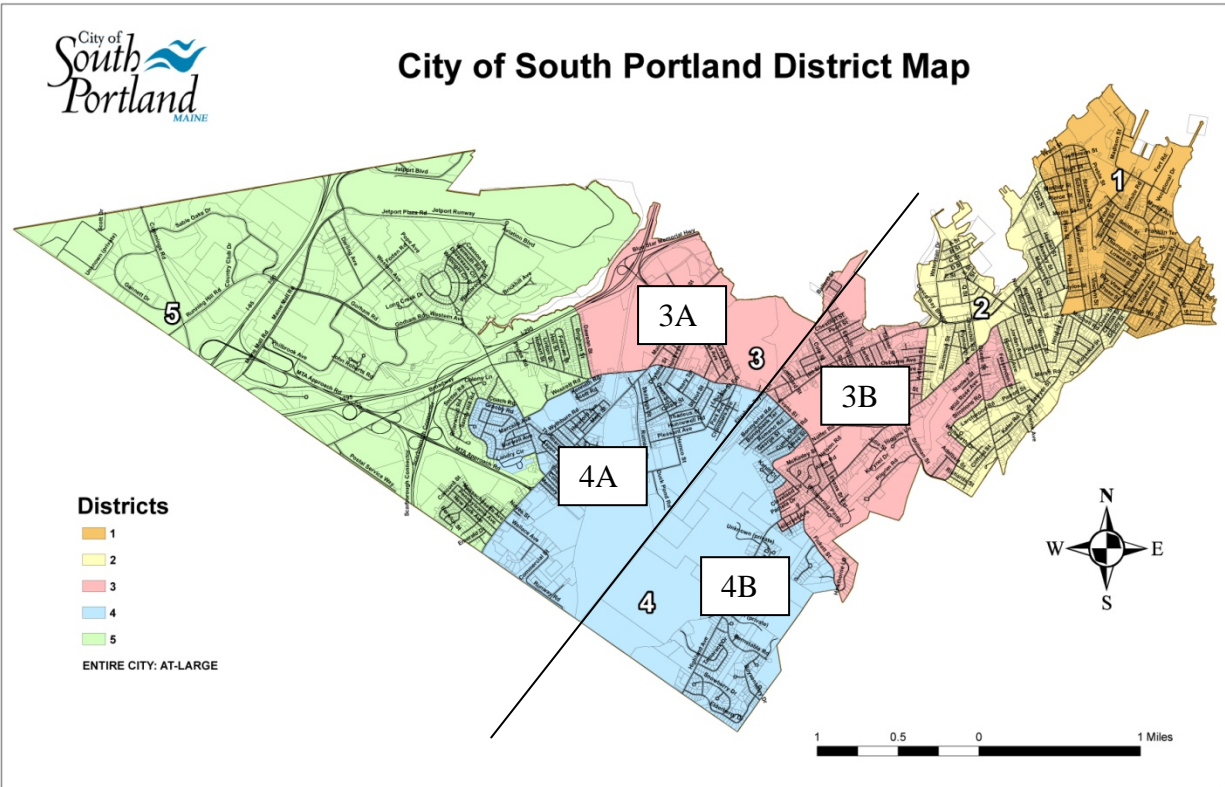
Motivated by a suggestion from Councilor Cohen, I contacted Mary Arnold, owner of Yankee Ford on Waterman Drive about the possibility of perhaps utilizing their showroom as a polling location. Mrs. Arnold was very receptive and offered the idea of using their Luxury Auto showroom (which is now the location for selling used vehicles). While some parking on site could be freed up, their service department would have to be accommodated during the business day and would not be enough to supply voter parking adequately. We could request the use of the Waterman Drive end of Shaw’s parking lot, which is mostly open at all times. Voters would have to cross Waterman Drive to get to the show room. While the empty show room was bright and looked spacious I was disappointed to learn that the area is actually smaller than the American Legion Hall.



The Yankee Luxury Auto show room is approximately 2,290 square feet. The American Legion Hall about 2,680

YANKEE LUXURY AUTO – WATERMAN DRIVE





This is a map of the new district lines. While it would have been beneficial to split three and four in a more northeast to southwest direction, it was not possible to do that as it would have displaced Councilor Cohen and School Board Member, James Gilboy from District Four.

It would be beneficial to have some dialog about swapping 4B and 3A so that District Three would actually be the area noted as 3B and 4B and District Four would be the area noted as 3A and 4A.

Councilor Cohen has moved out of District Four so the decision no longer impacts her. It would only affect School Board Member, James Gilboy. His term expires in 2015 and this change could be