

CITY OF BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA

**MINUTES of the SPECIAL CALLED MEETING of BARNWELL CITY COUNCIL
JANUARY 30, 2023 – 4:30 pm**

MEETING LOCATION:
130 Main Street, Barnwell, SC 29812

Barnwell City Council met in a Special Called Meeting with Mayor Rivera presiding.

Council Members Present: Mayor Marcus Rivera, Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw and Councilmembers Ryan Bragg, Alicia Davis, James Moody and Ron Still

Council Members Absent: None

Others Present: City Administrator Lynn McEwen, Clerk & Treasurer Kim Vargo, and City Attorney Thomas Boulware

The press was notified but no members were present.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rivera called the meeting to order. Councilmember Bragg led in prayer.

DISCUSSION ON THE CENSUS INFORMATION AND OPTIONS TO UPDATE THE DISTRICT LINES

Councilmember Still said he wanted to make a statement addressing a January 27, 2023 email from Mayor Rivera. His statement is attached per his request. Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw said she respectfully requested that Council try their best to have their emails contain accurate information. Mayor Rivera defended his email. Discussion followed. Administrator Lynn McEwen asked if anyone had any other suggestions. It was decided that several changes to the map be given to the SFA for them to see if these options would fit the requirements. The options would be presented at the next Council meeting.

APPROVAL OF OPTION TO TAKE TO THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

No action was taken.

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ADJOURN

Mayor Pro Tem Kinlaw made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis and unanimously approved.

Submitted by:



Kim Marie Vargo, Clerk & Treasurer

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Jan. 27, 2023 EMAIL CONCERNS FROM THE MAYOR

I would like to address the email sent by Mayor Rivera on Jan. 27, 2023

Mayor, first let me state for the record that there is no motive to anything concerning the redistricting proposal that was initially sent to the RFA. It was simply a starting point to get something on the table to start to work with.

I want to be clear that no one on this council except myself had anything to do with a proposal. I and I alone rode through districts and counted houses. I went to Councilman Moody and Bragg to inform them that with this proposal their district lines would possibly change. That is the only involvement they had. As for as Councilwoman Kinlaw, she was never spoken with or at that time Councilman All because their districts were not involved at all. Finally, Councilwoman Davis was not spoken to because she had to receive approx. 220 voters. The only concern would be to make sure that her district stayed a minority district. This would not be confirmed until the RFA had inputted the proposed lines with the information in the RFA computers. Nothing was done to disrespect Councilwoman Davis. Simply didn't feel that she was losing any of her district and therefore was not a huge deal at this starting point. I do apologize to her if she felt left out but this was not done to disrespect.

Now if you feel the need to say anything to me then please feel free to do so but the rest of this council doesn't need any further email or verbal harassment from you

Your concern on a rush to complete is simple. The city is on a time table in order to be able to have voters in the proper districts for the 2023 election. You have stated several times you don't care because it doesn't affect you. This is not about you, it is about the citizens of Barnwell.

Gerrymandering means to manipulate boundaries for electoral purpose.

Surely you understand that is the purpose of redistricting is to ensure that all voters are equally represented and that there are federal laws that must be adhered to. This is a set of check and balances to stop or prevent any gerrymandering. It would be next to impossible to try and accomplish even if this was an objective by anyone. This is why the RFA tells us if what the council proposes will meet the Federal Law so we don't try and vote on a redistricting plan that would be illegal.

I am not going to address an emails that you have asked for from the Administrator but I will say that if any city's or counties were not in federal compliance that must redistrict are those entities will be in violation of federal law.

As for as those who may end up in another district running for office. You state this is not your concern nor should it be ours in reference to council. I completely disagree. The citizens have a right to know what district he/she will be in so they can decide if they want to possibly file for a council seat and each

citizen should have time to research the candidates filing for a particular office. As Mayor of all citizens you should be most concerned about this since you are the leadership face of this city. I for one expect more from you and the position that you hold. If you are not concerned then you are not performing the duties of your office.

If you feel the need to try and send this to the courts when nothing has been done or voted on illegally seems very unprofessional and has not logic behind it. There was a proposal sent in simply as a starting point. This was looked at and remodified by the RFA then the RFA sent a suggested plan back that met all federal requirements. This council would have to vote and by a majority pass this option. Again nothing has been done at any point illegally but as for one member of this council if this is the route you wish to try and take and waste more of the taxpayer money and the time of council then proceed but you know there is no malice or intent to do anything wrong here. If there was anything illegal the RFA would see this and inform us that the plan proposed would not meet federal requirements. This a check and balance system to prevent gerrymandering.

Thank each of you for allowing me to express my concerns with the email reply from our Mayor on Jan 27, 2023. I apologize to any of my fellow council person for any issues this may have caused any of you.