



Subject: *2022 Polling District Review Report # 6, Phase 2 - Completion*
To: CAO for Corporate & Residential Services Committee, February 14, 2023
Date Prepared: February 6, 2023
Related Motions: C22(11), C22(49), C22(227), C22(383)
Prepared by: John Woodford, Director of Planning and Development
Approved by: Kim Ramsay, Chief Administrative Officer

Summary

This sixth report on the polling district review discusses Phase 2 public consultation, provides a jurisdictional scan of other municipalities regarding voter parity and makes a recommendation to complete the project.

Financial Impact Statement

There is no financial impact as a result of adopting this report. Advertising and hall rental costs associated with this project have been provided for in the 2022-23 Operating Budget.

Recommendation

That Staff be directed to prepare a submission to the NSUARB using the preferred 11 district option

Recommended Motion

The Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends to Council that Council authorize staff to prepare a submission to the NSUARB requesting that the size of Council be set at 11 and that district boundaries follow the preferred option (Fb)

Background

This is the sixth report regarding the 2022 Polling District Review. Decisions made by Council to date include:

- Endorsed the project moving ahead.
- Sought approval from the NS Utility & Review Board for up to a year's extension due to Covid 19. The Board granted up to a 4 month extension.
- Decided to keep the Warden system and not seek public opinion on switching to a Mayoral system of leadership.
- Approved the public consultation program conducted in Phase 1.
- Approved a Council size of 11.
- Decided to hold 2 workshops with all councillors to review 11 district scenarios.
- Directed Staff to prepare a 12 district scenario.
- Directed Staff to conduct Phase 2 consultation using the preferred option (Fb).

This report discusses Phase 2 public consultation, provides a jurisdictional scan of other municipalities regarding voter parity and makes a recommendation to complete the project.

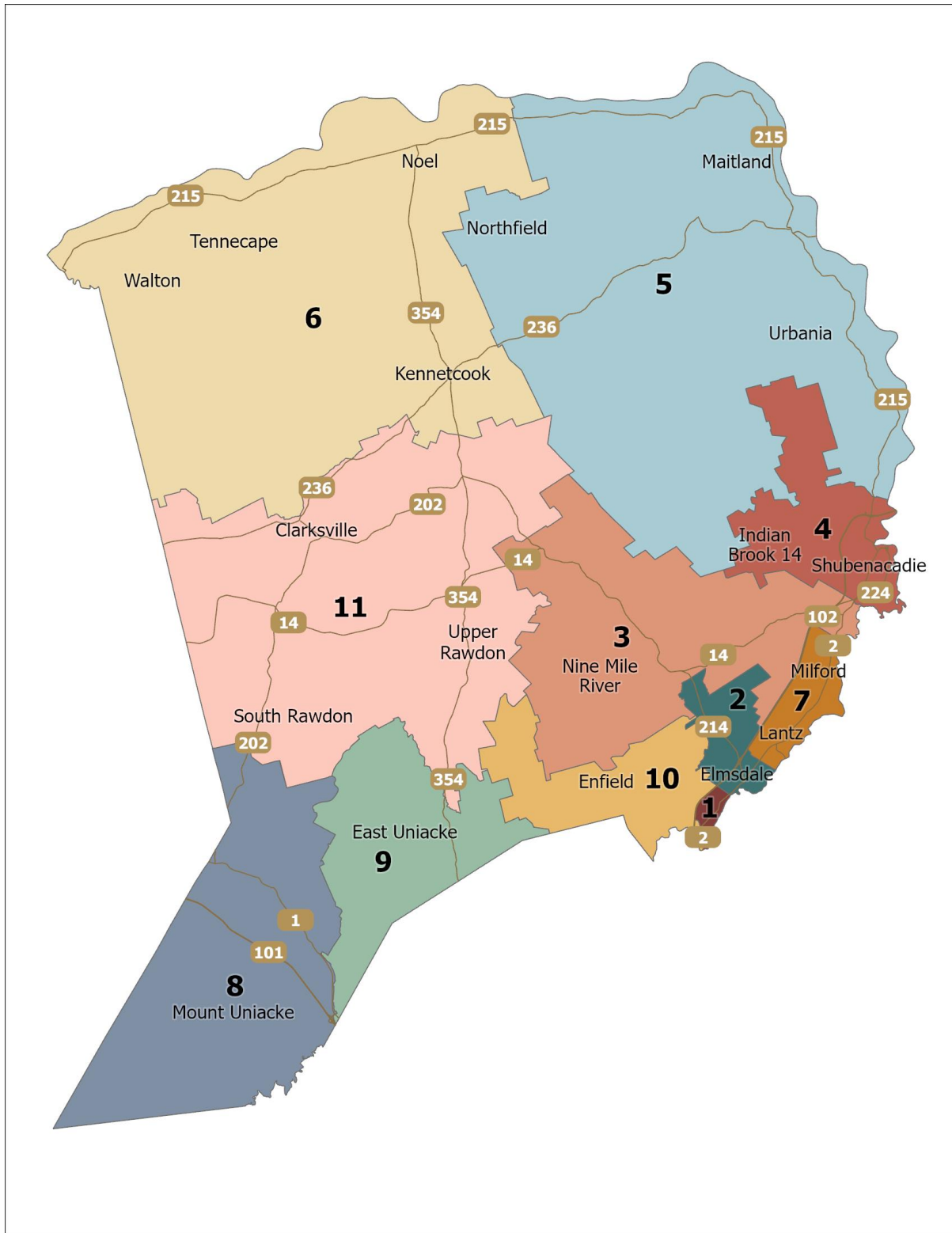
Current Voter Parity

As discussed in Report #5, there are significant deviations in voter parity, requiring significant boundary changes

Projected Voter Parity (October 2024)			
Polling District	Electors	Variance	Variance %
1 Enfield	2595	+633	+32.3%
2 Elmsdale-Belnan	1968	+6	+0.3%
3 Milford-Nine Mile River	1900	-62	-3.2%
4 Shubenacadie	2002	+40	+2.0%
5 Maitland-MacPhee's Corner	1579	-383	-19.5%
6 Walton-Noel-Kennetcook	1417	-545	-27.8%
7 Lantz-Milford	3047	+1085	+55.3%
8 Mount Uniacke	1723	-239	-12.2%
9 South-East Uniacke	1760	-202	-10.3%
10 Enfield-Grand Lake	1800	-162	-8.3%
11 Rawdon-Gore	1793	-169	-8.6%
TOTAL	21584		
AVERAGE	1962		

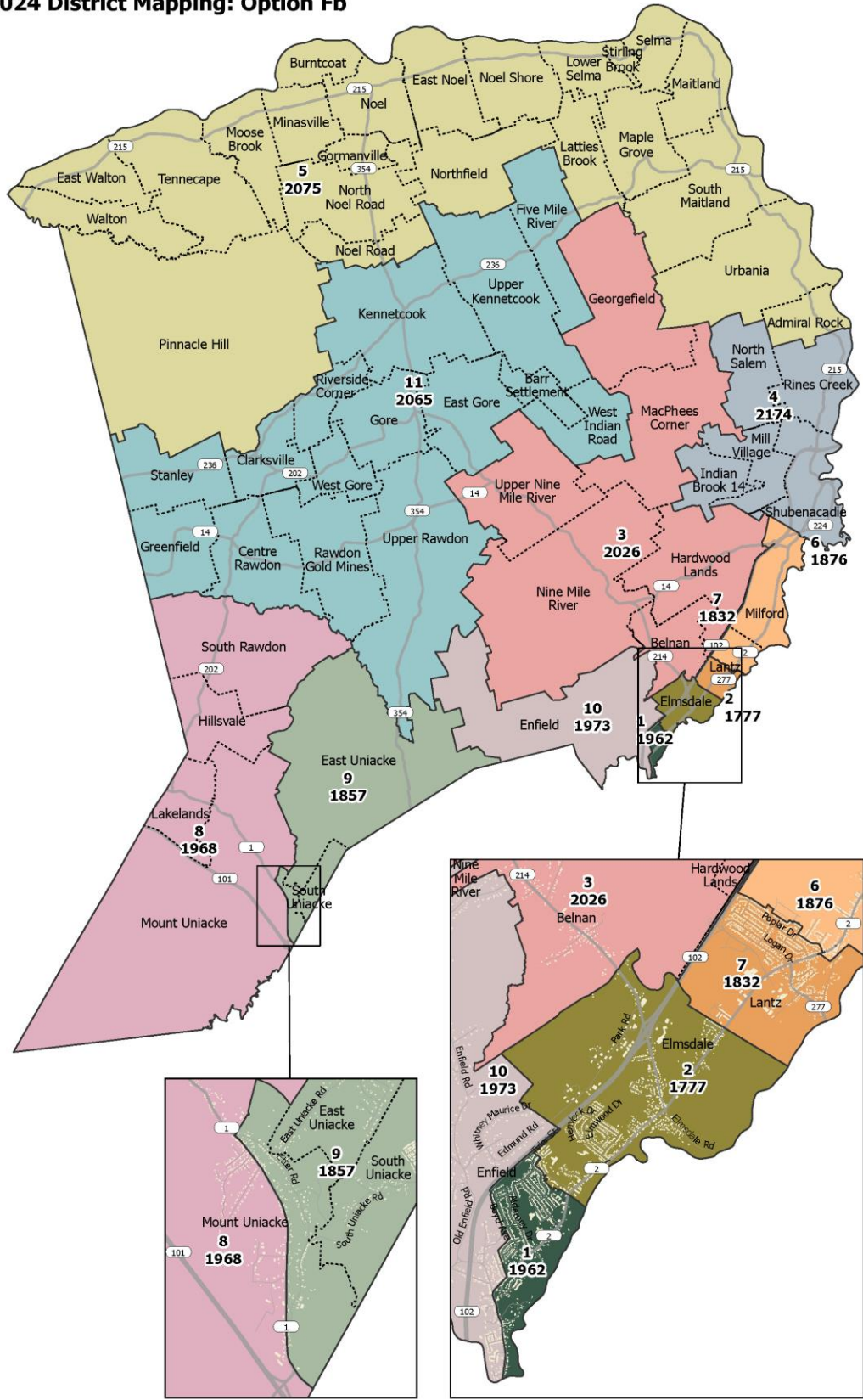
District Boundaries

CURRENT DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



PROPOSED DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

2024 District Mapping: Option Fb



PROPOSED DISTRICTS

Polling District	Electors	Variance	Variance %
1 Enfield Centre	1962	0	0
2 Elmsdale	1777	-185	-9.4%
3 Nine Mile River-Belnan	2026	+64	+3.3%
4 Shubenacadie-Indian Brook	2174	+212	+10.8%
5 Maitland-Noel Shore	2134	+172	+8.8%
6 North Lantz-Milford	1876	-86	-4.4%
7 South Lantz	1832	-130	-6.6%
8 Mount Uniacke-South Rawdon	1968	+6	+0.3%
9 South Uniacke	2094	+53	+2.7%
10 Enfield-Grand Lake	1973	+11	+0.6%
11 Rawdon-Kennetcook	2006	+44	+2.2%
TOTAL	21584		
AVERAGE	1962		

Option Fb, the preferred option, results in 10 districts falling within the +/- 10% guidance.

District 4 would fall just above the +/- 10% guidance at 10.8%.

Staff believe that this variance is justifiable as:

- In previous decisions, the NSUARB has mandated that the community of Indian Brook not be divided between polling districts.
- The Board has also previously mandated that the communities of Shubenacadie, Indian Brook and North Salem be kept together in one district.

This option minimizes also the number of communities divided between districts.

Council workshop participants were generally in agreement that in Option Fb communities are grouped logically and respect community of interest.

Maps of each proposed district are shown in Appendix 1 of this report.

Phase 2 Public Consultation

To garner public opinion on the proposed district boundaries, three community meetings were held in Kennetcook, Mt. Uniacke and Elmsdale in January 2023. The meetings were advertised in the Chronicle Herald, the municipal website and social media.

The meetings were sparsely attended with only two residents attending the Elmsdale meeting and five attending the Mount Uniacke meeting. The meeting in Kennetcook attracted the largest number of residents (17). Attendees at this meeting expressed a general concern regarding the loss of Hants North representation on Council and the increasing size of rural districts.

No specific boundary adjustment suggestions were made at the meetings.

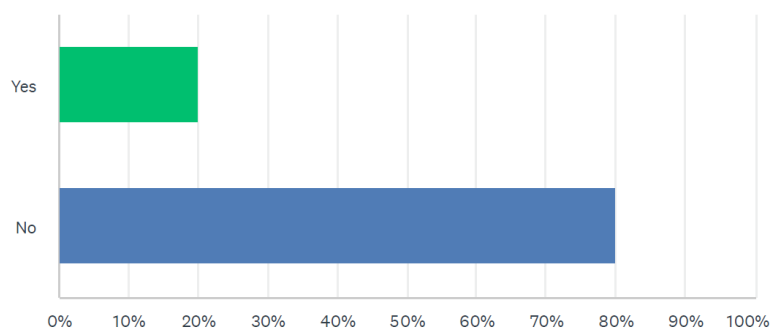
Meeting notes from the three meetings are found in Appendix 2 of this report.

A second on-line survey was also conducted from December 2022 to the end of January 2023. A total of 20 responses were submitted with the following results:

Responses from	
Corridor	4
Mt. Uniacke	1
Rural/North	15

Q3 Looking at the existing polling districts and the proposed changes shown on the maps below, are you in favour of the changes?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



A majority of the respondents were from the rural/Hants North area of the municipality and expressed concern with large rural districts and the loss of representation on Council. Complete survey results are found in Appendix 3 of this report.

Jurisdictional Scan

At one of the January public meetings, a question was raised regarding how rigorously other municipalities are adhering to the +/- 10% guidance. As a result, staff found the following:

Municipality	Largest variation	Rationale
Guysborough District	+12.8% (one district with a historic African Nova Scotian Community was left out of the avg as the board allowed it to have a -57.1% variation)	To better represent former Town of Canso
Queens RM	+20.89% (not yet approved)	Realigning districts to provide more cohesive representation for former Town of Liverpool
Colchester County	Within +/- 10% (review not yet completed)	
Halifax RM	-23.9% (not yet approved)	Community of interest, very large rural district (1829 km ² vs 647 km ² in EH) and Fall River expected to grow to add voters
Pictou County	-13.25% (not yet approved)	None provided
Chester District	+13.2% (not yet approved)	Did not want to divide community of Simms Settlement
Kings County	+5.8% (not yet approved)	
West Hants District	-12.5%	Approved as part of 2019 amalgamation decision

Conclusion

Phase I consultation was completed in May regarding the size of Council. Following that phase, it was decided to keep the size of Council at 11. Council then held two workshops in October to work through various 11 district scenarios and emerged with a preferred option.

Phase II public consultation, regarding the district boundaries, was completed in January. The feedback largely reflects dissatisfaction in the rural/north part of the municipality with losing representation. This dissatisfaction appears to be amplified by concerns about the current plan update project underway. However, the actual number of citizens who participated in the 3 meetings and on-line poll was very low.

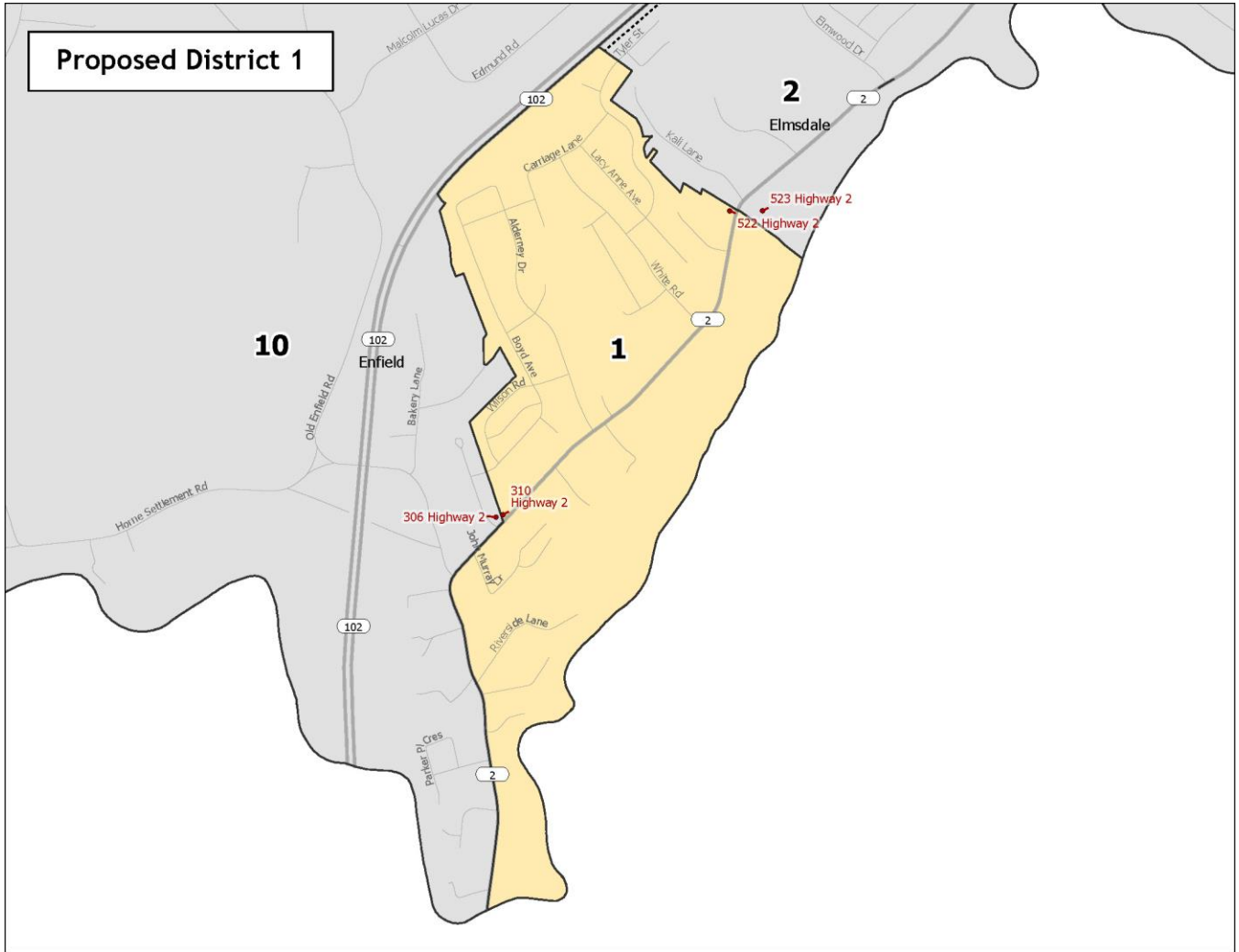
CRS should now be in a position to make a recommendation to Council.

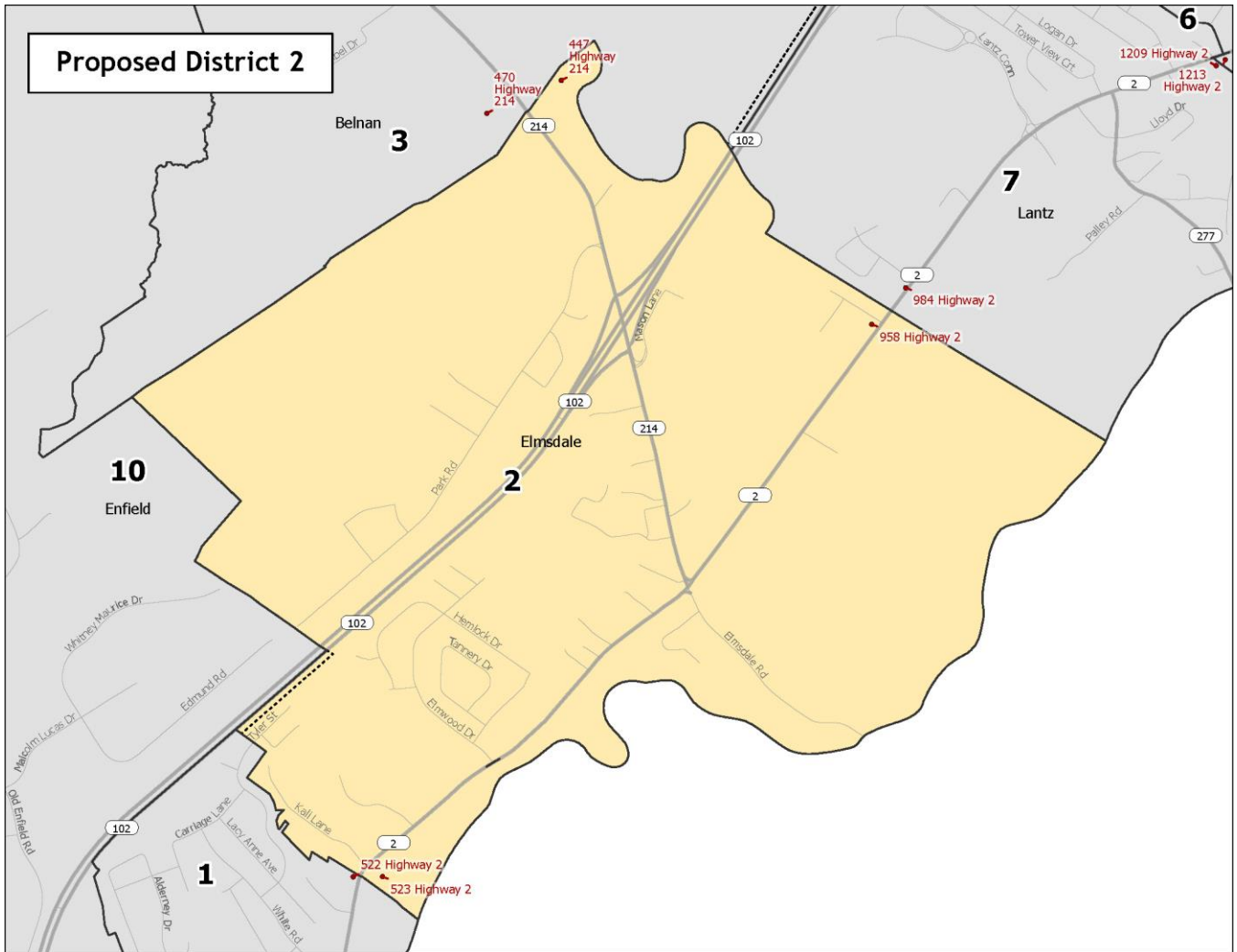
Following a Council decision, Staff will prepare a submission to the NSUARB, which is due by the end of April 2023.

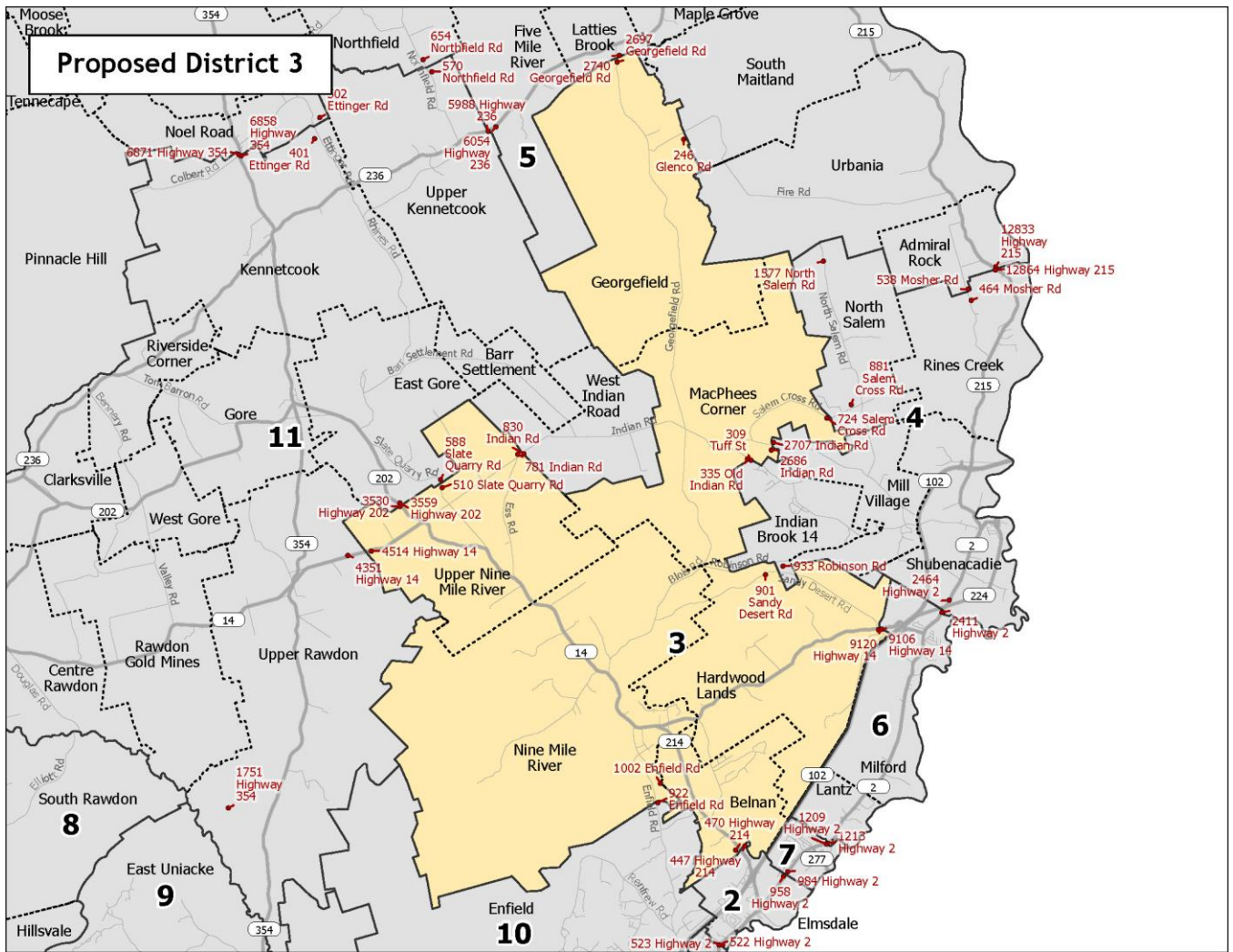
Recommendation

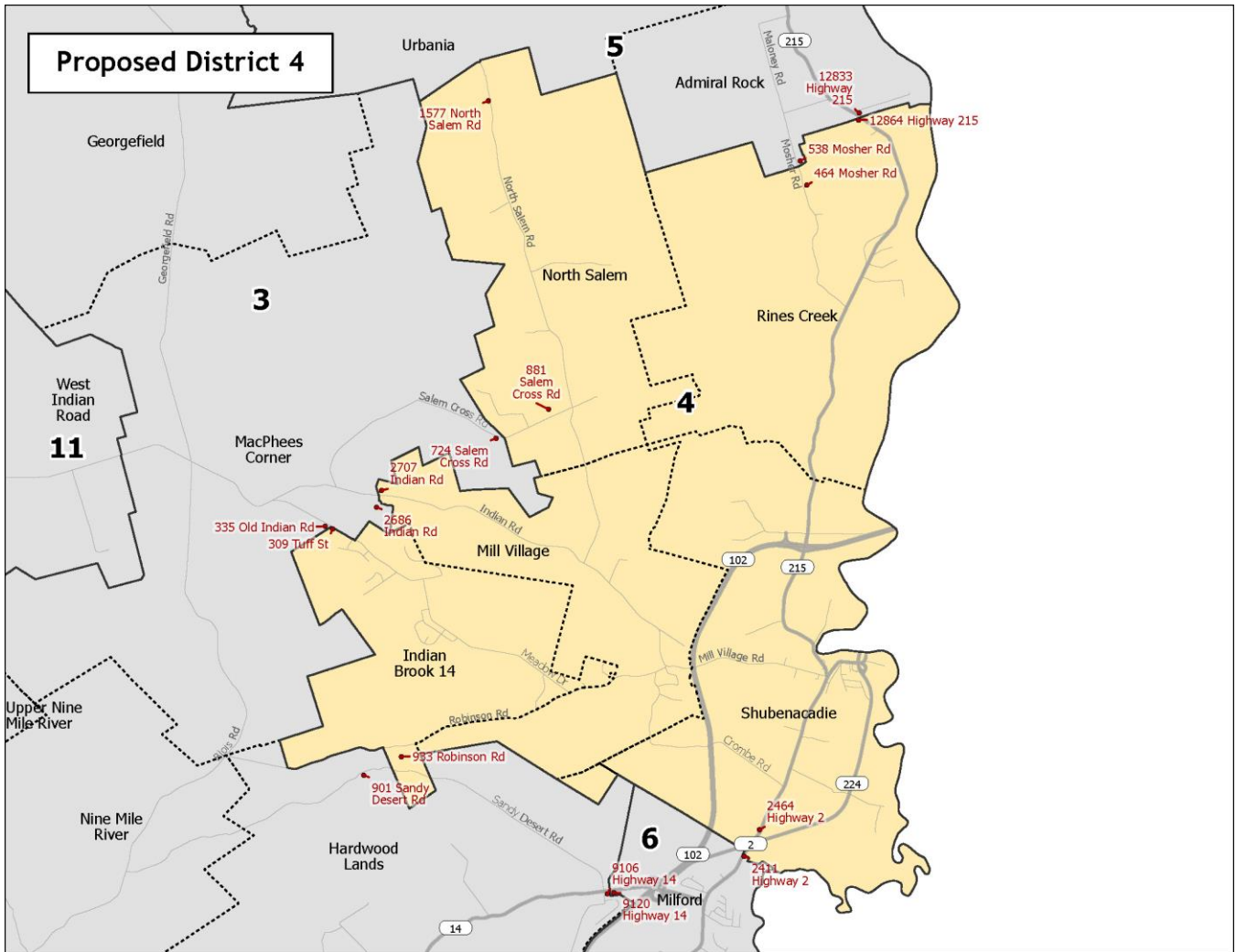
That Staff be directed to prepare a submission to the NSUARB using the preferred 11 district option.

Appendix 1 District Maps

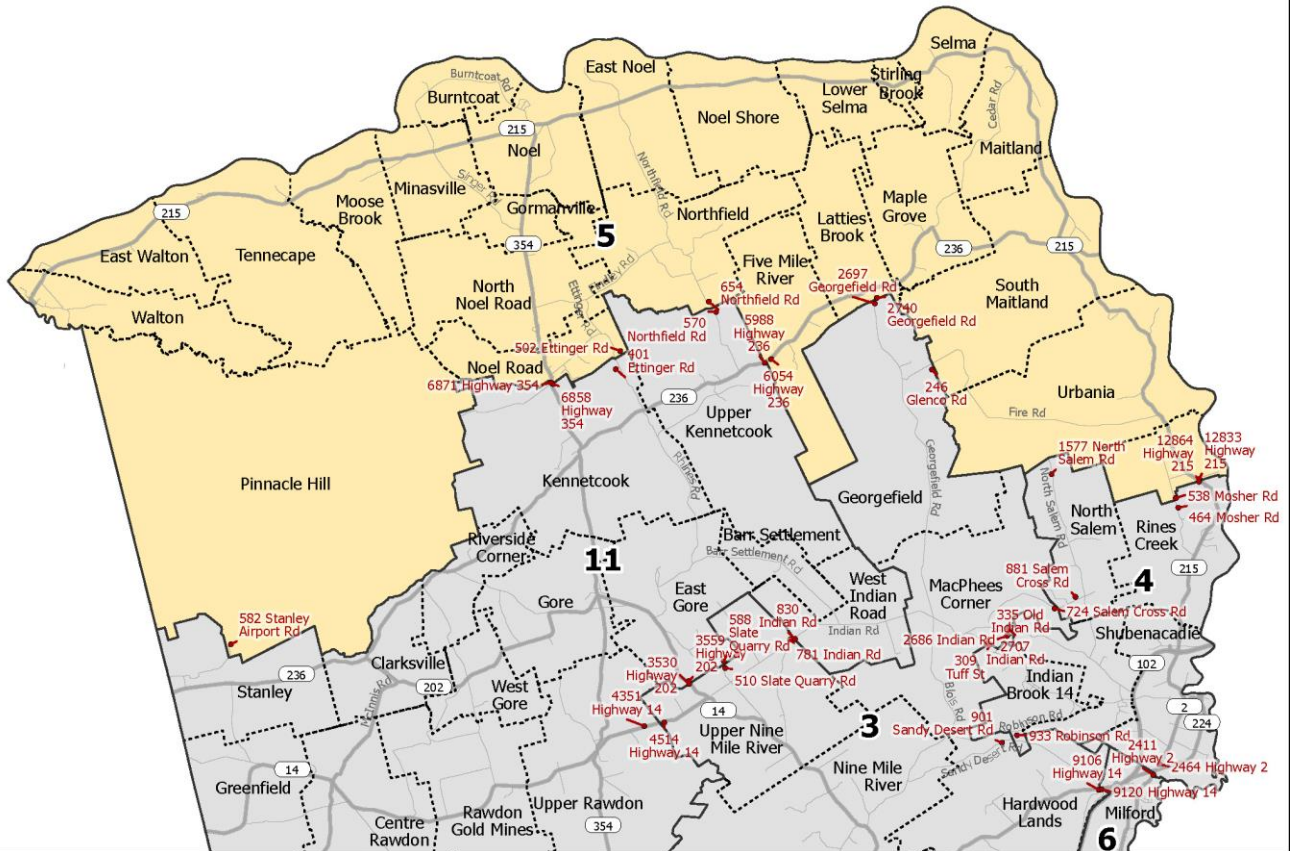


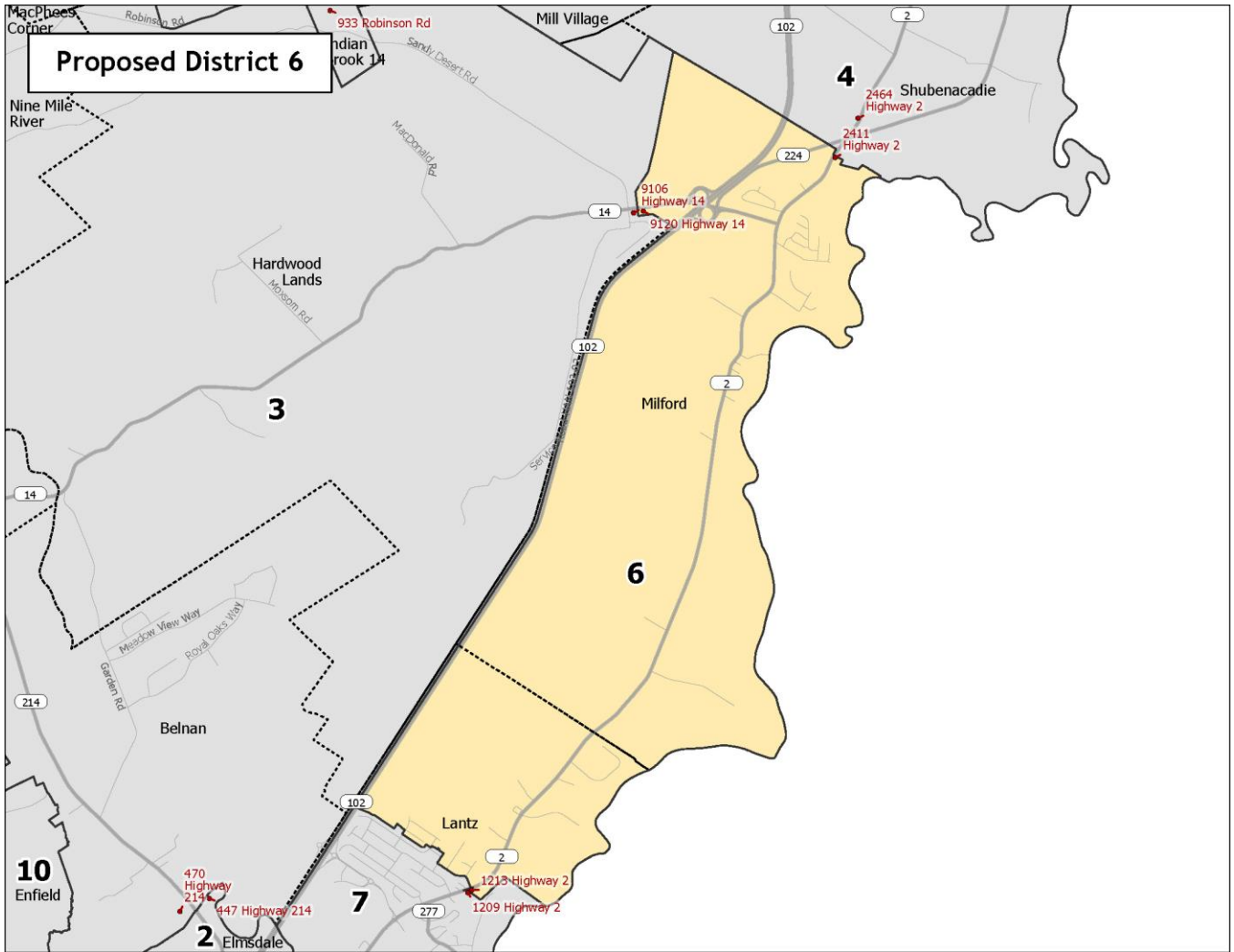


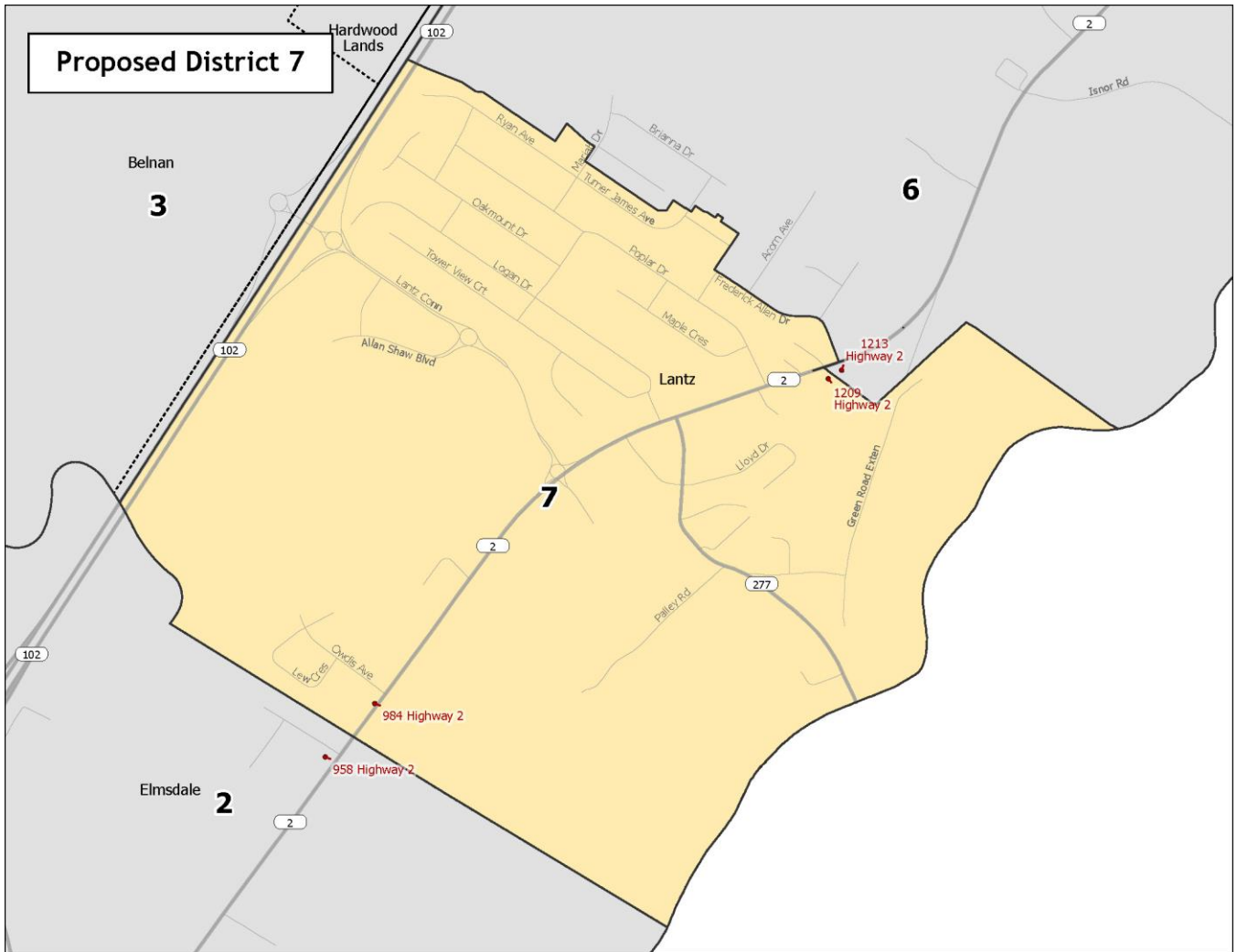




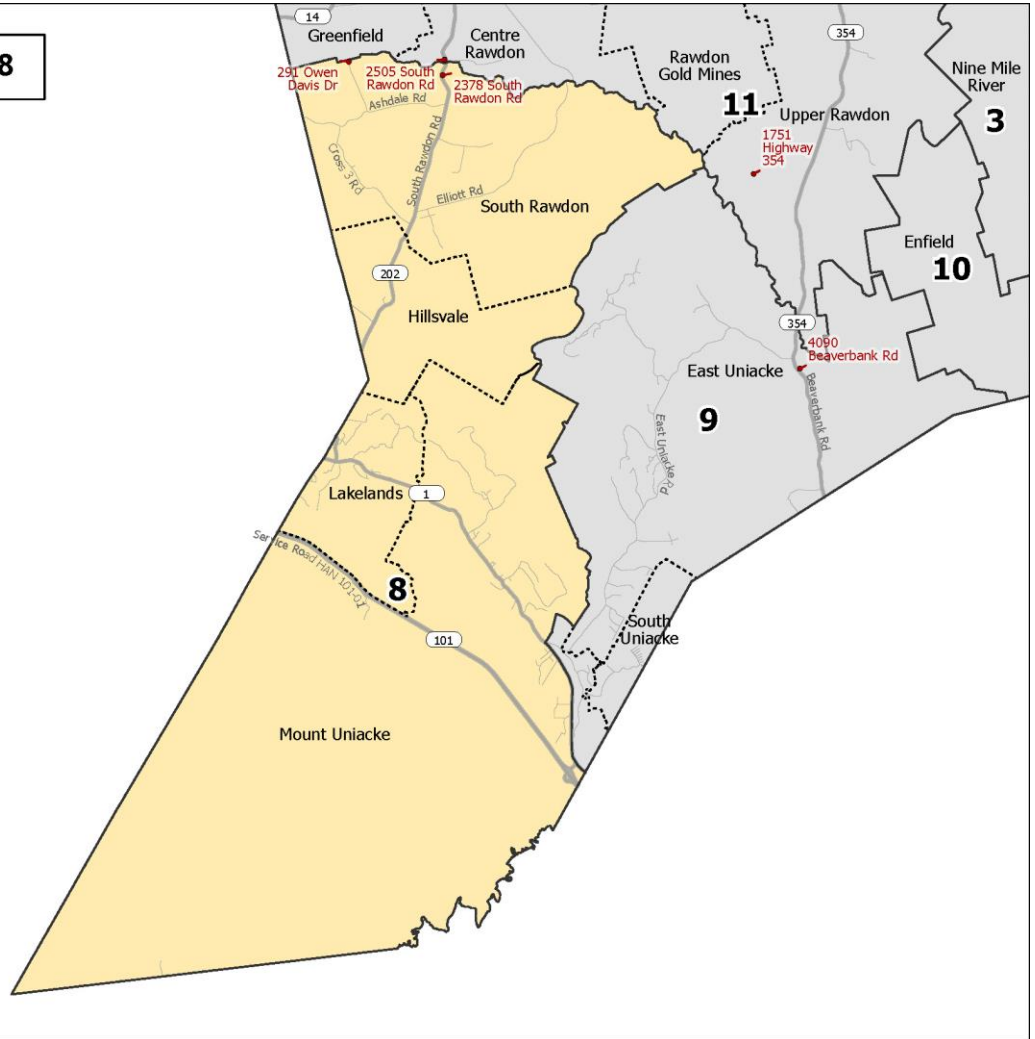
Proposed District 5

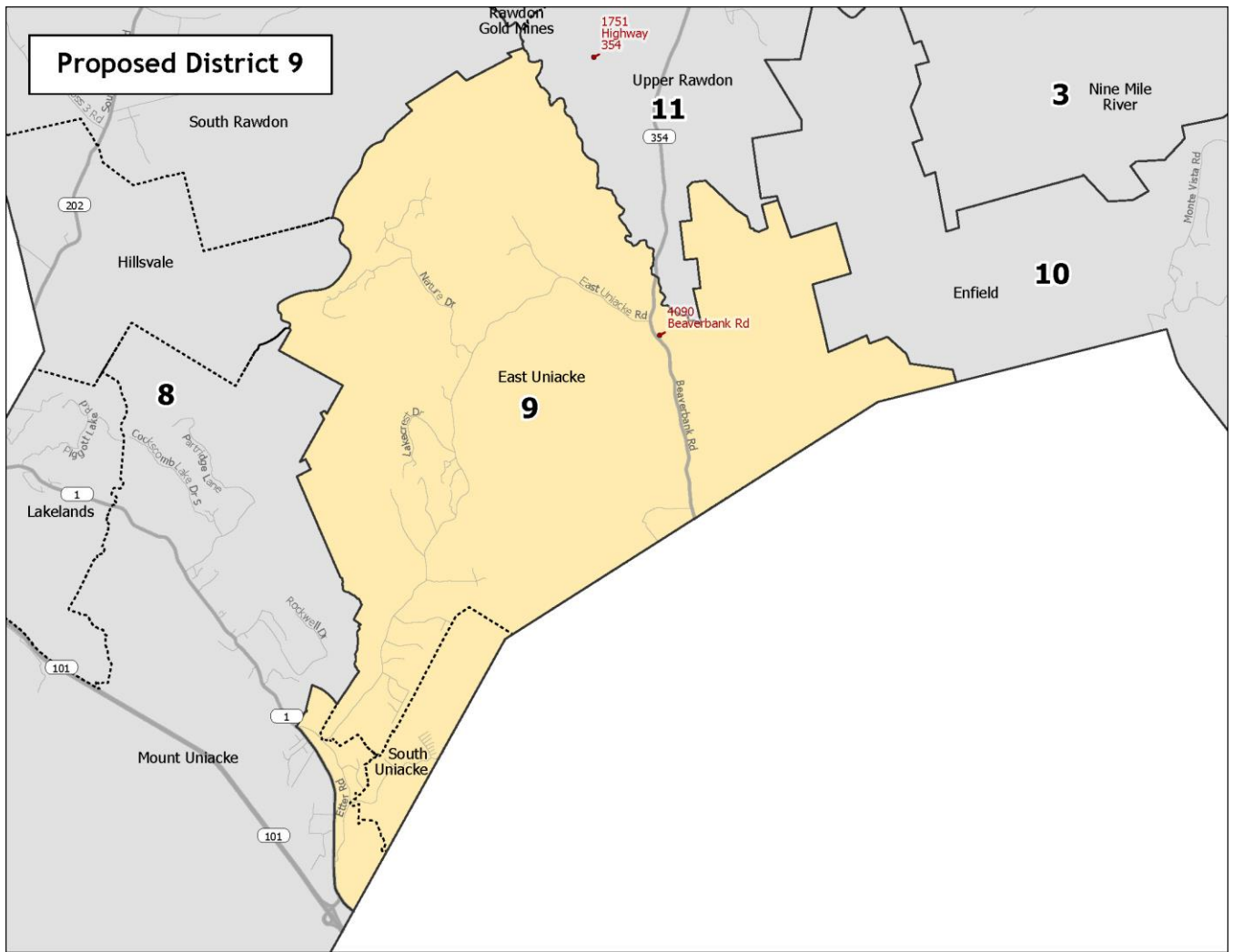


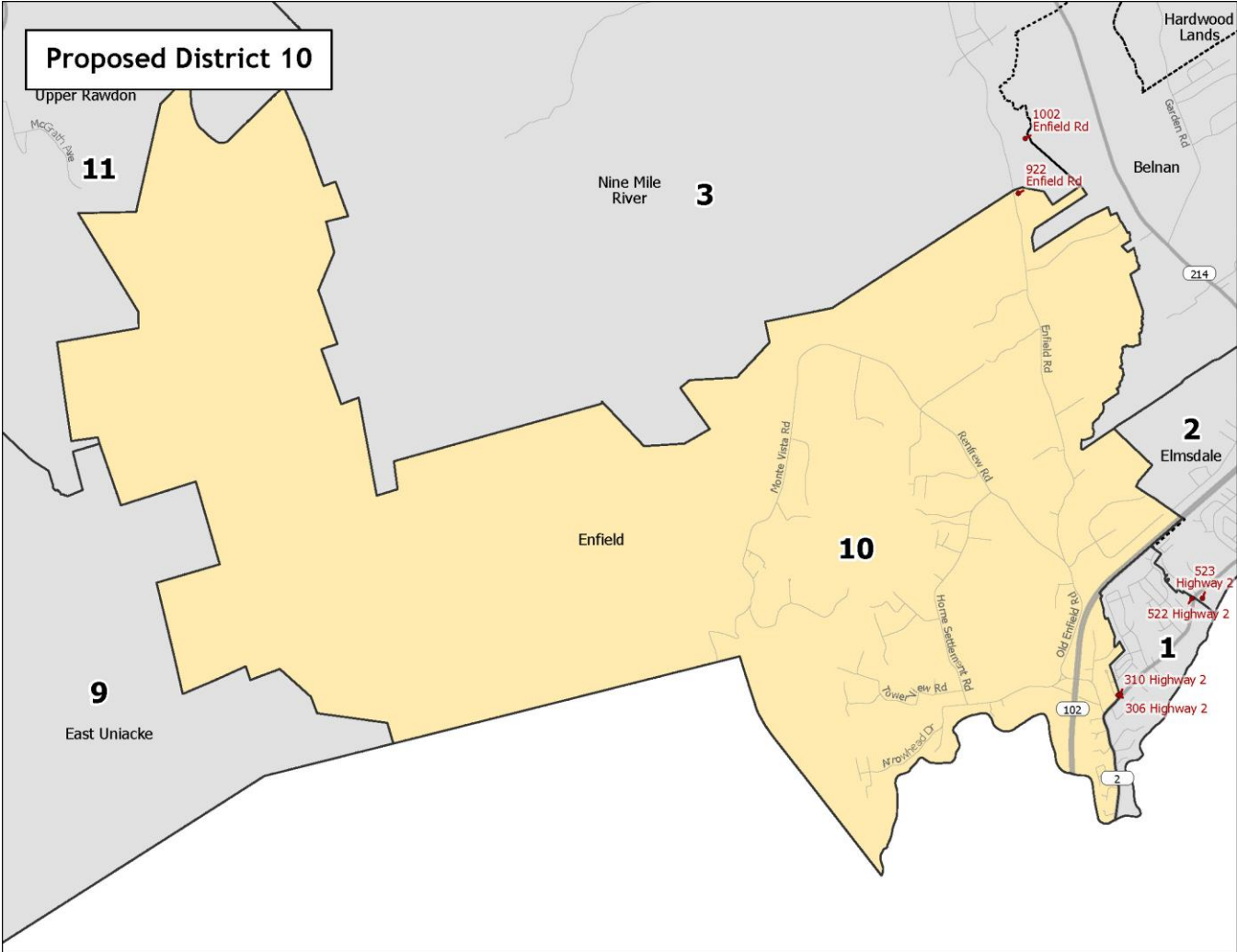




Proposed District 8







Appendix 2
Phase 2 Public Meeting Notes



EAST HANTS

Meeting Notes

Phase 2 Public Consultation Meeting

Polling District Review

Kennetcook Fire Hall, 32 Martin Walsh Rd, Kennetcook

January 9, 2023

Staff in attendance:	John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development Tippy Scott, Geomatics Coordinator
Public in attendance:	17 members of the public attended 5 Councilors (Warden Roulston, C. Rhyno, C. Garden-Cole, C. Maphe , C. Hebb)
Questions & Comments:	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our taxes out here (rural area) aren't going to drop - why should we lose a Councilor? • When you get rid of rural Councilors, we lose our voice. • Every community has different needs - there is no benefit to what you're doing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We're making the best of a difficult situation. • What was the problem with the 12 District option? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It split more communities and areas of interest both in the rural areas and the corridor. • Sometimes the borders of communities on a map aren't necessarily how they are on the ground. • What is the benefit of fewer Councilors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some people actually want fewer Councilors/smaller government. Compared with other municipalities with respect to number of Councilors and district size, there is no argument to increase the number of Councilors in East Hants. • There may be no geographic argument when comparing with other municipalities, but have there been any studies done to see how that has impacted those larger districts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There have not; we only looked at similar municipalities to compare the size of their districts. • How will the proposed polling districts benefit the shore area? It looks like it's only benefitting the urban communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This isn't benefiting Enfield; it is being split (C. Garden-Cole). • If we lose a Councillor, we basically have no vote because the Warden can't vote. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I vote on everything (W. Roulston)

Population Growth

- Districts 5 / 6 have been relatively unchanged in population over the last number of years. It makes no sense to lose a Councilor in this area.
 - Population is actually declining in some rural areas, and increasing significantly in the corridor.
- There has been a lot of people moving into NS recently, was that taken into consideration?
 - Not many of those people moving here have ended up in the rural areas of East Hants.
- District 5 will be losing more population due to zoning regulations that are coming. If you can't build houses, you're not going to have people here.
- How will we entice more population with the zoning regulations coming into place?
- The incentive isn't there for the rural area (for population growth?). Tourism stops at Burntcoat. If East Hants doesn't want to put more stuff into the area, how do you expect things to go? The advertising isn't there for Walton tourism. Maybe the growth could be better.
- I don't think we want to put all of our money into Tourism. Burntcoat has not done one thing for the community of Burntcoat.
- The growth in the Corridor is frightening for what it means for the rural area. This is going to negatively affect the rural area's representation.
- The Planning regulations you're bringing are only going to hinder population growth further.
 - The area of the municipality where population is booming is the area that has had planning regulations implemented for years.

Process and the UARB

- When was the last application to the Board?
 - 8 years ago
- When did you collect the elector numbers data?
 - April 2022
- Has there been a request to the UARB for adding more Councilors?
 - No, but based on the previous application 8 years ago when we were told to drop to 11, we know they would not likely approve a 12 District option.
- Why do you wait 8 years? Why not do an assessment every year?
 - We could do it every 4 years, and are mandated to do it every 8. Staff/Council/Public time.
- Was the 12 District Option brought to the UARB?
 - No, it was reviewed by Council and ultimately, they decided not to move ahead because the districts unreasonably split communities in both the rural and corridor areas.
- Who is the UARB and how many people are involved?
 - Explanation of the UARB; a few people; lawyers.
- Have the UARB had a tour of the rural areas?
 - The UARB will do site visits for Planning Applications under appeal, and certain other cases, but we are not aware of them touring East Hants for the Polling District review. They are sent a very comprehensive package including detailed maps of the areas.

Title of Minutes - Date

- When is the last time that the Polling Districts were changed? Were communities of interest taken into consideration then?
 - 8 years ago; yes.
- If we did try to go to 12 Districts, and the UARB didn't want that, we would just go back to the 11 district options?
 - Yes.

Communication

- Shouldn't this meeting have had a registered mail out?
 - The meeting was advertised online, on social, and in the Chronicle Herald.
- Many people don't have internet/social media, or subscribe to the paper.
- There should be advertising for these meetings much more in advance.
 - Sometimes when meetings are advertised too early, people forget about them.
- Put signs up in small town stores.
- I thought the presentation was well prepared - good speaker.



Phase 2 Public Consultation Meeting

Polling District Review

Mount Uniacke Fire Hall, 654 Highway 1, Mount Uniacke

January 11, 2023

Staff in attendance:	John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development Tippy Scott, Geomatics Coordinator
Public in attendance:	5 members of the public attended 5 Councilors (Warden Roulston, C. Rhyno, C. Moussa, C. MacPhee, C. Perry)
Questions & Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There was one question unrelated to the polling district review regarding blasting in the area.• How do I access the online survey?



Phase 2 Public Consultation Meeting

Polling District Review

Lloyd E. Matheson Centre, 15 Commerce Court, Elmsdale

January 12, 2023

Staff in attendance:	John Woodford, Director of Planning & Development Tippy Scott, Geomatics Coordinator Kim Ramsay, CAO
Public in attendance:	2 members of the public attended 8 Councilors (Warden Roulston, C. Rhyno, C. Garden-Cole, C. MacPhee, C. Perry, C. Mitchell, C. Tingley)
Questions & Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it 11 or 12 Districts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 11 • Satisfied the 10% rule for voter parity • Don't want to large of a Council • Noticed in the last few years, when there are issues in the Corridor, the size of Council made for better discussions and decision. I usually fight for a smaller Council size, but you get more input with this size of Council. • Last time there was a recommendation that the Council of the day really look at reducing the size of Council even more (from the UARB). On the flip side, we've seen incredible growth in certain areas. • Should the UARB come back and say 9 or 10 Councilors only, are there options prepared? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ No. This seemed to fit when comparing similar municipalities. • Just came to see what was happening • How is the decision made to have a mayor or Warden? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Council decides through a process outside of this review. • Many similar municipalities have mayors. • When comparing to similar municipalities, does the UARB tend to make allowances for rural areas to have fewer people, given the size of the area. • Would like to see the variances in similar rural boundaries (from other municipalities), what are their percentages? • We've taken a Councilor from Noel, and put it in Milford. There will now be less rural representation. We're different communities out in the rural areas. • When Warden/C. Rhyno first started they remember there was more weight for community of interest; now it is dependent on what the member of the UARB decides. • I (Warden) think the UARB has too much power • How many other places are pushing the envelope (re: 10% variance)

Title of Minutes - Date

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The bigger area you have, the more difficult it is to be a Councilor.• A greater variance, might also help higher populated communities - you wouldn't necessarily have to split these communities.• Do other municipalities feel the exact same way? Maybe a greater variance would be appreciated.• Will the district changes have much of an impact on things like tax rates?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Recreation funds would, but area rates are different than polling districts.	
--	---	--

Appendix 3 On-line Poll Results

Polling District Review Survey December 2022

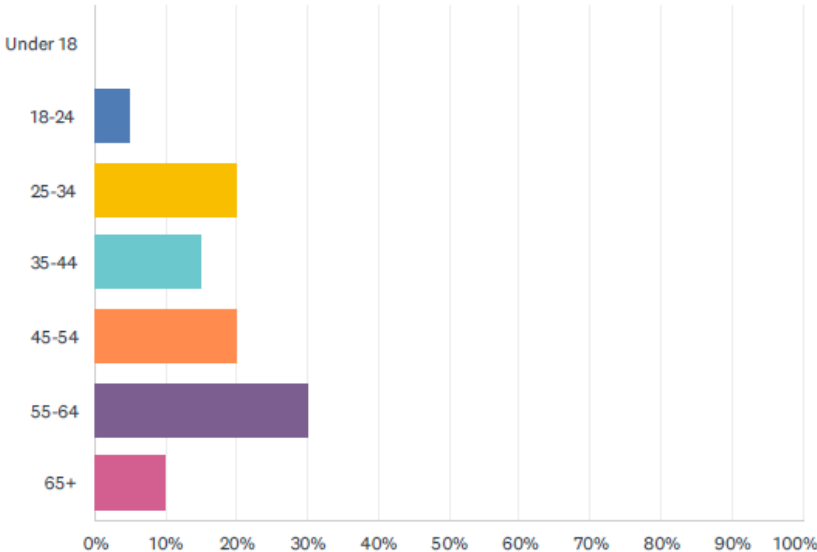
Q1 Which community do you live in?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Walton	1/17/2023 11:57 AM
2	Walton	1/17/2023 11:39 AM
3	Enfield	1/12/2023 6:32 PM
4	Mt Uniacke	1/12/2023 1:23 PM
5	North Noel Road	1/12/2023 12:06 PM
6	Lantz	1/12/2023 10:47 AM
7	Lantz	1/11/2023 9:06 AM
8	Stanley	1/5/2023 5:51 AM
9	Maitland	1/4/2023 9:37 AM
10	Moose Brook	1/2/2023 6:25 PM
11	Maitland	1/2/2023 2:27 PM
12	Noel Shore	1/2/2023 11:28 AM
13	Maitland	1/2/2023 9:46 AM
14	Moose Brook	1/2/2023 9:24 AM
15	Maitland	1/2/2023 3:34 AM
16	Noel	12/29/2022 11:56 AM
17	Latties Brook	12/21/2022 8:06 PM
18	3-Nine Mile River	12/20/2022 9:09 PM
19	Lantz	12/20/2022 10:30 AM
20	Noel	12/20/2022 10:15 AM

Q2 What age are you?

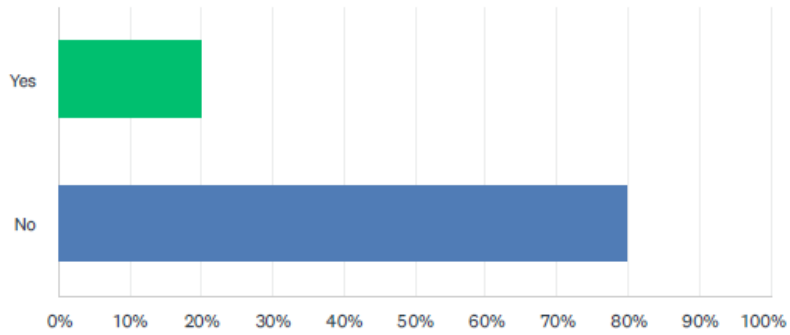
Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	5.00%	1
25-34	20.00%	4
35-44	15.00%	3
45-54	20.00%	4
55-64	30.00%	6
65+	10.00%	2
TOTAL		20

Q3 Looking at the existing polling districts and the proposed changes shown on the maps below, are you in favour of the changes?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	20.00%	4
No	80.00%	16
Total Respondents: 20		

Q4 Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding the proposed changes?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 6

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I feel our district is too large and spread out. It also coincides with the area that is currently under review for zoning designation which I find suspect.	1/17/2023 11:57 AM
2	have individuals who have nothing to gain or lose to come up with borders	1/17/2023 11:39 AM
3	I think when you have districts that are minuscule in physical size in comparison with others - that you are comparing apples and oranges - the people representing those huge districts are at such a disadvantage - what is the leveraging suggestion for them? The power resides in the corridor area and we are well aware of how disadvantaged we are!	1/12/2023 1:23 PM
4	Making larger polling districts does no one a favour...in fact gives some areas less of a voice.	1/4/2023 9:37 AM
5	This is wrong. We are loosing say out here your taking away another counselor from us. Already we have three and one is the warden so basically we have two votes,,, how is that fair in any event like the land situation. If someone wants to explain this to me my name is Joshua White and my email is wjosh315@gmail.com personally I don't think the municipality wants us to have much say out this way.	1/2/2023 6:25 PM
6	The rural voice will be disadvantaged	1/2/2023 2:27 PM
7	It took the province "60" years to re work the roads out here about 12 years back. We aren't used to changes out here. In fact, we love living and being out here partly because of that & the fact that, unlike everywhere else, mushroom houses are not popping up over night spoiling the view, or the land. If these changes are made, it won't take long for them to want to start implementing other changes, based on them believing that we all are open to the next stages, when we are not. We are an historical community, "The first designated heritage area of the Province, oldest General Store still operating...what we do need, is more help to save these houses by the means of personal grants, not changed boundaries, or changed land proposals.	1/2/2023 9:46 AM
8	How's a potential councillor living in Urbania going to know what the people of Walton, for example, want or need. The area is just too large.	1/2/2023 9:24 AM
9	The new district 5 is far too large. Is this why Agriculture Reserve is being brought in? To have one councillor for a soon to be unpopulated area? One councillor to over see the a soon to be handful of farmers? Has the 215/shore area already declined that much that only one councillor is required? Who brought this decision forward? Do not take a rural seat away from the table. East Hants needs a new Warden who is able to make better decisions for this community. Bring on 2024	1/2/2023 3:34 AM
10	It will mean 1 less rural vote at the council. The rural population especially in the north of east hants is feeling very alienated as it is, this proposal only insures we have less input into the decision making process.	12/29/2022 11:56 AM
11	The proposed changed will make rural east hants even more marginalized than they already are. It will result in less say for the Hants North area. I feel that there should have been a district added instead of the boundaries being changed. I understand that the corridor area is growing exponentially faster than the hants north area however there are considerably different needs in the two areas of the Municipality and those concerns need to be addressed.	12/21/2022 8:06 PM
12	I think the changes look good. Bigger districts in our area but still managable and fair.	12/20/2022 9:09 PM
13	Would like an explanation of why the boundaries are being redrawn	12/20/2022 10:30 AM
14	Areas 5 & 6 are better kept as-is.	12/20/2022 10:15 AM