



Everything Michigan

Another View: Bay County redistricting was completed quickly, efficiently and cooperatively

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By

By Cynthia A. Luczak

I just want to take this opportunity to commend and thank Bay County Apportionment Board members Kurt Asbury (Prosecutor), Rick Brzezinski (Treasurer), Tony Pawlewski (Democratic Party Chair) and Aaron Baylis (Republican Party Chair) on the completion of the apportionment process, which by law, occurs every 10 years.

Special thanks to Dirk Westbury Bay County GIS department for his expertise/mapping. Following the release of the U.S. Census figures on April 1, board members met on only four occasions to complete the process and approve a plan on May 23, two weeks before the state deadline.

Throughout the process the board displayed a high level of cooperation and professionalism while acting in the best interests of the community. A total of five redistricting plans were submitted. Plan No. 1 for a seven member district (Baylis), Plan No. 2 for a seven member district (Pawlewski), Plan No. 3 for a nine-member district (Luczak) and plans numbered four and five (Brzezinski) representing both seven- and nine-member plans, respectively.

In accordance with Act 261 of 1966, Section 46.404, all attempts were made to comply with the guidelines or "rules" associated with the redistricting process. For those who are not familiar with the rules, they specifically state all districts must be single-member districts of nearly equal population, must be contiguous (connecting), compact/square in shape, no township or part thereof shall be combined with any city or part thereof for a single district unless such is needed for purposes of the population, townships and cities shall be divided only if necessary, factor in residents of prison populations (not applicable in Bay County) and shall not be drawn to affect partisan political advantage.

During the process, it was also necessary to factor in the precinct consolidation changes by the city of Bay City, which proposed a reduction from 27 precincts down to nine, as recommended by the City Election Commission on April 6. By past ruling of the courts, the total overall deviation for a county cannot exceed 11.9 percent, so one county commission area could potentially be a percent larger or smaller than another, but the entire deviation between all districts can not exceed the 11.9 percent. Copies of the plans were made available for the committee members and members of the public to review from the filing deadline of

May 13 until the date of approval, May 23. Ultimately, a seven-commission district plan was approved with a total overall deviation of 9.33 percent.

I personally voted in favor of the seven-member plan as approved, given this was a decision being made on behalf of this community for a 10-year period. This community has continued to experience difficult economic times and we certainly do not know what to expect in the future. The reduction of the expense of two commission seats will ease the financial burden to the county government. Each of the plans had their merits, but my vote was cast for the plan that was closest to meeting the requirements of the state law, as described above.

The plan was submitted to the Secretary of State, Bureau of Elections and will go in effect on Jan. 1, 2013. There is a 30-day period once the plan is filed, for an objection to be filed with the Michigan Court of Appeals. Further information and copies of the plan are available in the County Clerk office. You may view the 2011 agenda, minutes and maps as well as the documentation from the 2011 apportionment on computer at **www.baycount-mi.gov/clerk**.

– Cynthia A. Luczak is Bay County Clerk. She was the chairwoman of the Bay County Apportionment Board.

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