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Plea to cut Saginaw County Board of Commissioners by two thirds, to five districts, fails to win thumbs up

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By **Barrie Barber | The Saginaw News**



Tim Kelly

SAGINAW — Saginaw County Commissioner Tim Kelly thought less was best, but his colleagues didn't agree to a call to cut their ranks by two thirds.

Kelly, R-Saginaw Township, unveiled a resolution Tuesday that would have urged the Saginaw County Apportionment Commission to reduce the number of County Board of Commissioners districts to five from 15.

"It's a number to start discussions with and I think the lower the number, the better," he said.

Without any debate, commissioners voted in a mostly party line vote 9-5 against his call. The five-member Apportionment Commission meets once a decade to set the political boundaries of the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Chairwoman and County Clerk Susan S. Kaltenbach, D-Saginaw Township, said no one has submitted any plans yet and the five-member panel awaits U.S. Census Bureau counts. The panel next meets at 10 a.m. April 25 in the lower level of the County Governmental Center, 111 S. Michigan in Saginaw.

Commissioner Dennis H. Krafft, R-Frankenmuth, broke GOP ranks and voted against Kelly's idea.

"The number (of commissioners) is way too small," he said. "Seven would be bare minimum."

The next five closest counties to Saginaw in size have 11 commissioners, said County Controller and Chief Administrative Officer Marc A. McGill.

Five commissioners would mean each elected representative would have 40,000 constituents, compared to about 14,000 today. More constituents could mean commissioners would have to become full-time to handle the extra demands and negate any cost savings, Krafft added.

"We'd blow away the budget because you've got to pay a full-time commissioner what he's worth," he said.

"I voted with logic instead of politics."

Board Chairman Michael P. O'Hare, D-Chesaning, agreed five commissioners are too few.

"I don't think you'd get much support from your community at 40,000," he said.

Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas, D-Tittabwassee Township; Treasurer Marvin D. Hare, D-Saginaw Township; County Democratic Chairwoman Garnet Lewis; and County Republican Party Chairwoman Helene Wiltse also serve on the Apportionment Commission.

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