

FB solutions residential construction management and design

191 Wild Hare Road

Harpers Ferry, WV 25425

304 725 6754

fred@fredblackmer.com

November 10, 2011

Public Hearing Submission

Subject: Magisterial Redistricting

Commissioners,

I am submitting a proposal for increasing the number of Magisterial Districts from your current proposal to ten (10). I believe it to be easily done and in the best interest of the residents of Jefferson County.

Narrative, maps and graphics are attached for the record. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

signed

Fred Blackmer

Truth or Dare

August 15, 2011

The Backstory

A simple game played by children of all ages. Player 1 says “truth or dare” to player 2. Player 2 can then choose to answer the question or complete a “dare”. If player 2 doesn’t want to answer the question or do the dare, they can appeal to the group who may vote to overturn it and make up a new challenge or leave the game.

Time for the Backstory.

Over the past several elections can anyone think of a political candidate that HASN’T supported open government, more transparency, more citizen involvement and better representation of residents? Do you ever remember hearing a candidate say they DIDN’T support more citizen participation in elections? I sure haven’t.

How can someone actually evaluate the performance of elected officials? That’s a hard one, but I have a proposal. It’s a little game of “truth or dare” local government style. The County Commission (CC) will be player 2. I’ll be player 1. County residents will be the rest of the players in this game.

The question: “What have you specifically done to support more citizen participation in elections”? That could include any official action to allow or encourage more people to consider running for elected office or raising citizen interest in voting.

The dare: “Increase the number of people eligible to run for election to the county commission”. That would give the citizens more opportunity to directly participate in elections and raise voter interest during the election process.

Appeal: If player 2 (County Commission) doesn’t want to answer the question or complete the dare they can leave the game. If Player 2 doesn’t want to voluntarily leave the game, they can ask the rest of the players (voters) to excuse them from both answering the question and the dare.

The “question” being asked is pretty straight forward. There needs to be a lot more information about the “dare”.

We need to have some basic information about the current restrictions on how many county residents are eligible to run for County Commission in any given election. Also the authority of our CC to change how many are eligible to file for office during the election process.

Who can vote: All registered voters in Jefferson County can vote in county commission elections every two years. They elect one or more candidates to a five member commission for a six year term. The 2012 election will be for one commissioner, 2014 for two commissioners and 2016 for another two commissioners. 2018, the process starts over to elect a candidate for the position that was filled in 2012.

I'm going to use the upcoming 2012 election cycle to describe who can run for the CC. It certainly isn't everyone. Less than 20 percent of residents eligible to vote in the election can run for the office.

Jefferson County is divided into five districts (magisterial) for the purpose of meeting residency requirements by potential candidates. The districts are required in West Virginia Code and can be any number from three to ten. It really doesn't have anything to do with the number of CC members. These districts were originally established more than a century ago. The structure, authority and process of state and local government have changed significantly over time but the requirement for the districts remains. Current WV election law recognizes that only one commissioner can be elected from any one district. There is no connection to the number of commissioners a county has and the number of districts.

Jefferson's county commission has not only the authority but responsibility for changing the shape and number of magisterial districts. West Virginia Code directs that "the county court may, from time to time, increase or diminish the number of such districts, and change the boundary lines thereof as necessity may require in order to conform the same to the provisions of the constitution of the state".

The state and county are currently working on required redistricting with the current 2010 census data. Changing the number of districts isn't that difficult a task. Dividing the current districts would create ten.

That simple political initiative would triple the number of residents eligible to run for the county commission in the 2012 election, bring candidates closer to their constituents, provide opportunity for more voter interest and not change the current CC in any way. If you want more information or have comments send them to the paper or to me.

The county commission is off next week. They will be at the Fair. If you see one of them ask if they are willing to play "truth or dare".

fred@fredblackmer.com

The Backstory

Over the past several elections can anyone think of a political candidate that HASN'T supported open government, more transparency, more citizen involvement and better representation of residents? Do you ever remember hearing a candidate say they DIDN'T support more citizen participation in elections? I sure haven't.

How can someone actually evaluate the performance of elected officials? That's a hard one, but I have a proposal.

Simply ask this question: "What have you specifically done to support more citizen participation in elections"? That could include any official action to allow or encourage more people to consider running for elected office or raising citizen interest in voting.

Now before everyone starts going through old notes and trying to remember if there was anything done about following up on campaign promises I would like to offer another proposal.

Wouldn't it be great if there was some way for the County Commissioners to join together in making a single policy statement that would say "yes we are in favor of more public interest and participation in elections and local government". That opportunity is available and the time is now!

Our County Commission (CC) is considering how to modify the current county voting precincts and magisterial districts as a result of the 2010 National census and the actions taken during the state delegate redistricting. Last Thursday, the CC was presented with a redistricting proposal by the County Clerk's office. It was said to be well thought out, a workable design and meeting legal requirements. There would be little change in the number of voting districts. Magisterial district boundaries would see significant change but the number would remain the same (5).

There was also mention of a proposal submitted to the CC several months ago. It involved changing the number of magisterial districts. Change needs to be understood but that proposal is where opportunity for the CC to make a bold and positive statement comes in.

Let me just start by saying that magisterial districts are political boundaries that simply define a citizen's eligibility to run for County Commission or to be elected to the Board of Education according to the location of his physical residence. WV Constitution states that "no two (county)

commissioners shall be elected from the same district". WV Code states "no more than two (Board of Education) members may be elected or serve from the same magisterial district".

One of the best ways to start an explanation about increasing the number of magisterial districts from 5 to 10, the maximum allowed by law, is talk about what wouldn't change. The issue here is not how many county commission members there are. That would remain at 5 just as it is now. The board of education would remain at 5 just as it is now. The length of their terms wouldn't change. They would remain just as they are now. Who could vote for county commissioners and school board members wouldn't change. It would continue to be all county registered voters just as it is now. State constitutional or law sections wouldn't have to change. They would stay exactly as they are now. The "well thought out" voter precincts and magisterial district lines proposed by the County Clerk wouldn't be changed. They would remain just as they have been presented.

So what would change by increasing the number of magisterial districts to ten?

The single most important change would be in the number of citizens that would be eligible to run for the county commission. It just makes sense that if every registered voter in the county is eligible to vote in county commission elections every two years, the number of citizens eligible to run for those offices should be the maximum allowed by law.

So how can the CC keep all of the information presented by the County Clerk as it is and still double the number of magisterial districts? The change is done by simply adding five lines to the magisterial districts on the map proposed by the County Clerk that would evenly divide them into two following voter precinct lines.

That simple political initiative would triple the number of residents eligible to run for the county commission in the 2012 election, bring candidates closer to their constituents, provide opportunity for more voter interest and not change the current CC in any way. If you want more information or have comments send them to the paper or to me.

fred@fredblackmer.com

The Backstory

I want to share some questions I have been asked over the past week. They were about the news stories and my opinion articles regarding County Magisterial Districts. Three stood out as being the issues that people wanted answered.

Number three: “Will a change mean there will be more people on the ballot”?

Answer: No, the number of people on any given ballot is more about issues at the time and who the incumbent is. The election process isn't being changed, only the number of residents that could consider running for public office. Our current system has a candidate filing period, primary election for major party candidates and a general election to allow ALL county voters to select the candidate of their choice. There is no real connection between the number of districts and residents that choose to run. There is no requirement that there be a candidate from every eligible district. This is about more open government in the election process.

Number two: “Will adding more magisterial districts mean we will have more county commissioners”?

Answer: No, the number of commissioners will remain the same. There are currently 5 county commissioners, each serving 6 year terms and each elected by ALL registered voters in the county that choose to cast a ballot. That will not change. The confusion is caused by a local situation that is more chance than design.

Jefferson County currently has five magisterial districts and five commissioners. People naturally assume that we must have one commissioner from every magisterial district. There is also the thought that somehow having more magisterial districts than commissioners will somehow make things too complicated. That simply isn't the case.

Our state constitution says that “no two of said (county) commissioners shall be elected from the same magisterial district”. “No two” is a lot different than requiring one from each. As for being complicated having more magisterial districts than commissioners? Jefferson is the ONLY county in the panhandle that has the same number. We aren't the rule, we are the exception.

It isn't difficult. Berkeley has six districts and five commissioners. They used to have three commissioners with six districts. Morgan has six districts with three commissioners. Hampshire has nine districts with three commissioners. A different number of districts than commissioners is actually the norm in WV.

We hear a lot about “open government” and more “citizen participation” during campaign election time. Let's take a look at how Jefferson stacks up in allowing residents to run for the county commission. I'll use the 2012 election for county commission and current number of

districts as the standard for calculation. It will simply be a statement of what percentage of registered voters are eligible to run for their own county commission.

Hampshire County, 77 percent

Morgan County, 66 percent

Berkeley County, 50 percent

Jefferson County, 20 percent (now)

I want to repeat a portion from last week: Magisterial districts are political boundaries that simply define a citizen's eligibility to run for County Commission or to be elected to the Board of Education according to the location of his physical residence.

Let's recap the things that won't change if the number of magisterial districts would increase from 5 to 10, the maximum allowed by law. The issue here is not how many county commission members there are. That would remain at 5 just as it is now. The board of education would remain at 5 just as it is now. The length of their terms wouldn't change. They would remain just as they are now. Who could vote for county commissioners and school board members wouldn't change. It would continue to be all county registered voters just as it is now. State constitutional or law sections wouldn't have to change. They would stay exactly as they are now. The "well thought out" voter precincts and magisterial district lines proposed by the County Clerk wouldn't be changed. They would remain just as they have been presented.

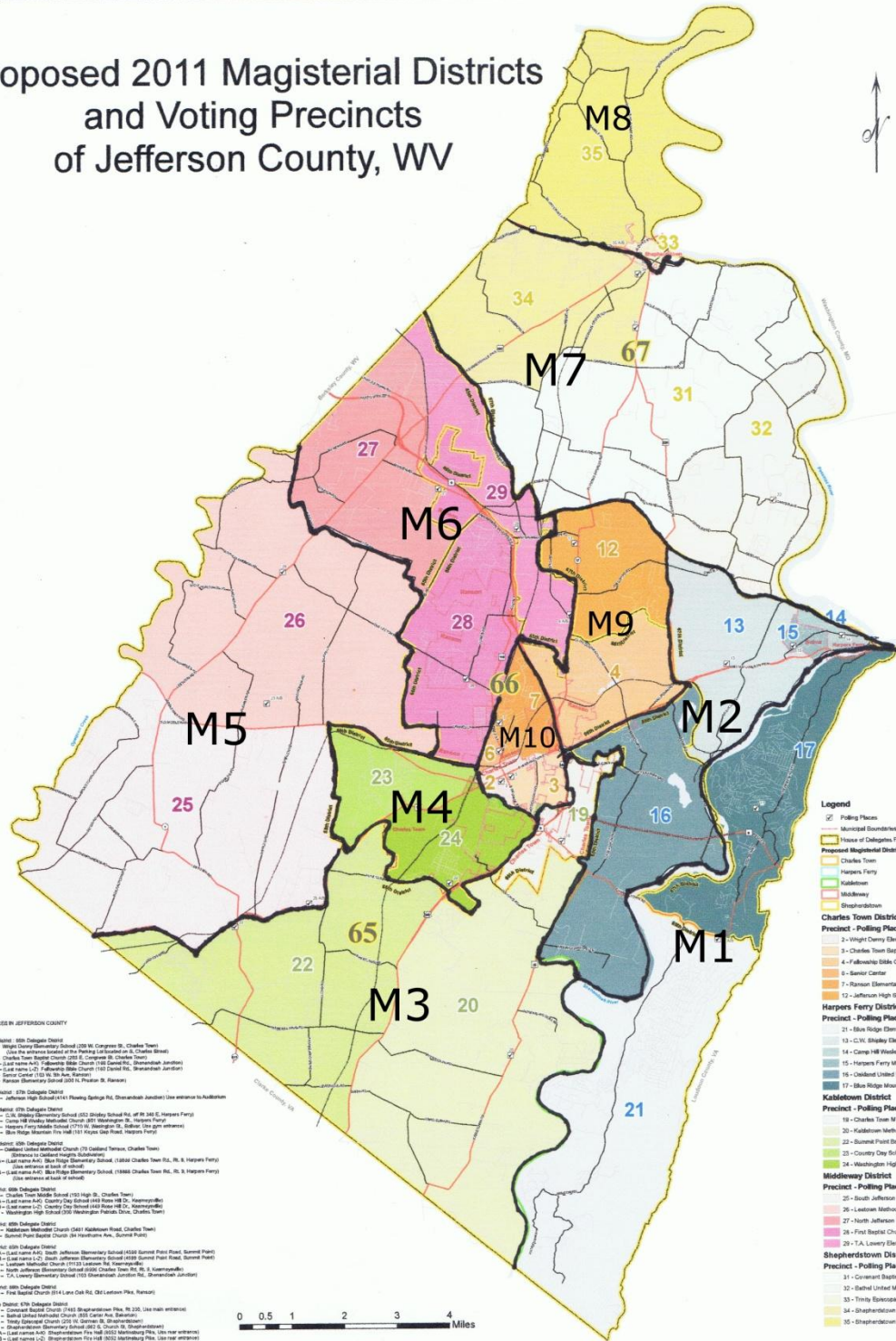
And the most often asked question about going from five to ten districts?

Number one: "Why change"?

Answer: Enabling more citizens to participate in local government is the right thing to do.

fred@fredblackmer.com

Proposed 2011 Magisterial Districts and Voting Precincts of Jefferson County, WV



POLLING PLACES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Charles Town District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 2 - High Camp Elementary School (200 W. Carnegie St., Charles Town)
 (Use the entrance located at the parking lot located on S. Charles Street)
 Precinct 3 - Charles Town Baptist Church (200 E. Carnegie St., Charles Town)
 Precinct 4 - 444 main st. - following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 5 - Canal Center (100 W. 3rd St., Ripston)
 Precinct 7 - Ripston Elementary School (202 H. Ripston St., Ripston)

Charles Town District - 7th Delegate District
 Precinct 12 - Jefferson High School (4141 Hoving Springs Rd., Shepherds Junction) (Use entrance to Audubon)

Harpers Ferry District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 14 - C.W. Shippy Elementary School (252 Shippy School Rd. off Rt. 200 E. Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 15 - Harpers Ferry Middle School (2711 W. Washington St., Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 16 - Camp Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church (201 Washington St., Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 17 - Blue Ridge Mountain Fire Hall (100 Hovey Oak Road, Harpers Ferry)

Harpers Ferry District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 18 - United Methodist Church (100 Charles Town Rd., Rt. 6, Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 21 - United Methodist Church (100 Charles Town Rd., Rt. 6, Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 21A - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 21B - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)

Kabotown District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 19 - Charles Town Middle School (100 High St., Charles Town)
 Precinct 20 - (Last name L-2) Country Day School (1400 Pine Hill Dr., Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 23 - (Last name L-2) Country Day School (1400 Pine Hill Dr., Harpers Ferry)
 Precinct 24 - Washington High School (500 Washington Park Dr., Charles Town)

Kabotown District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 22 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)

Middletown District - 6th Delegate District
 Precinct 25 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 26 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 27 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 28 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 29 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 30 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 31 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 32 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 33 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 34 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)
 Precinct 35 - (Last name L-2) following 6th Church (100 Canal Rd., Shepherds Junction)

Legend

- Polling Places
- Magisterial Districts
- House of Delegates Final Plan 2010
- Proposed Magisterial Districts 2011
- Charles Town
- Harpers Ferry
- Kabotown
- Middletown
- Shepherds Junction

Charles Town District
 Precinct - Polling Place

- 2 - Wright Cherry Elementary School
- 3 - Charles Town Baptist Church
- 4 - Following Little Church
- 5 - Senior Center
- 7 - Ripston Elementary School
- 12 - Jefferson High School

Harpers Ferry District
 Precinct - Polling Place

- 13 - C.W. Shippy Elementary School
- 14 - Camp Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church
- 15 - Harpers Ferry Middle School
- 16 - United Methodist Church
- 17 - Blue Ridge Mountain Fire Hall

Kabotown District
 Precinct - Polling Place

- 19 - Charles Town Middle School
- 20 - Kabotown Methodist Church
- 22 - Summit Point Baptist Church
- 23 - Country Day School
- 24 - Washington High School
- 27 - Blue Ridge Mountain Fire Hall

Middletown District
 Precinct - Polling Place

- 25 - South Jefferson Elementary School
- 26 - Leetown Methodist Church
- 27 - North Jefferson Elementary School
- 28 - First Baptist Church
- 29 - T.A. Lowery Elementary School

Shepherds Junction District
 Precinct - Polling Place

- 31 - Concord Baptist Church
- 32 - Bethel United Methodist Church
- 33 - Trinity Episcopal Church
- 34 - Shepherds Junction Elementary School
- 35 - Shepherds Junction Fire Hall

Prepared for Jefferson County Clerk
 Magisterial Districts - County 08, October 27th, 2011
 Approved as Final by Jefferson County Commission, December 1st, 2011

District and name proposal
(draft Nov 1, 2011)

M1: Mountain District

Voter precincts: 17, 21a, 21b

M2: Harpers Ferry District

Voter precincts: 13, 14, 15, 16

M3: Kabletown District

Voter precincts: 19, 20, 22

M4: Washington District

Voter precincts: 23a, 23b, 24

M5: Middleway District

Voter precincts: 25a, 25b, 26

M6: Leetown District

Voter precincts: 27, 28, 29

M7: Flowing Springs District

Voter precincts: 31, 32, 34

M8: Shepherdstown District

Voter precincts: 33, 35a, 35b

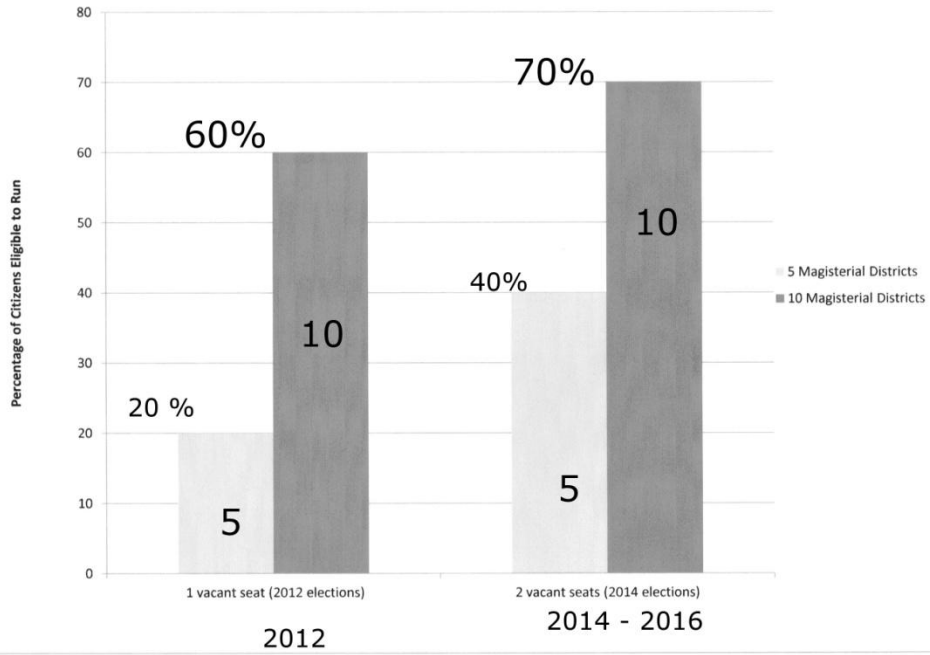
M9: Walnut Grove District

Voter precincts: 4, 12

M10: Charles Town-Ranson District

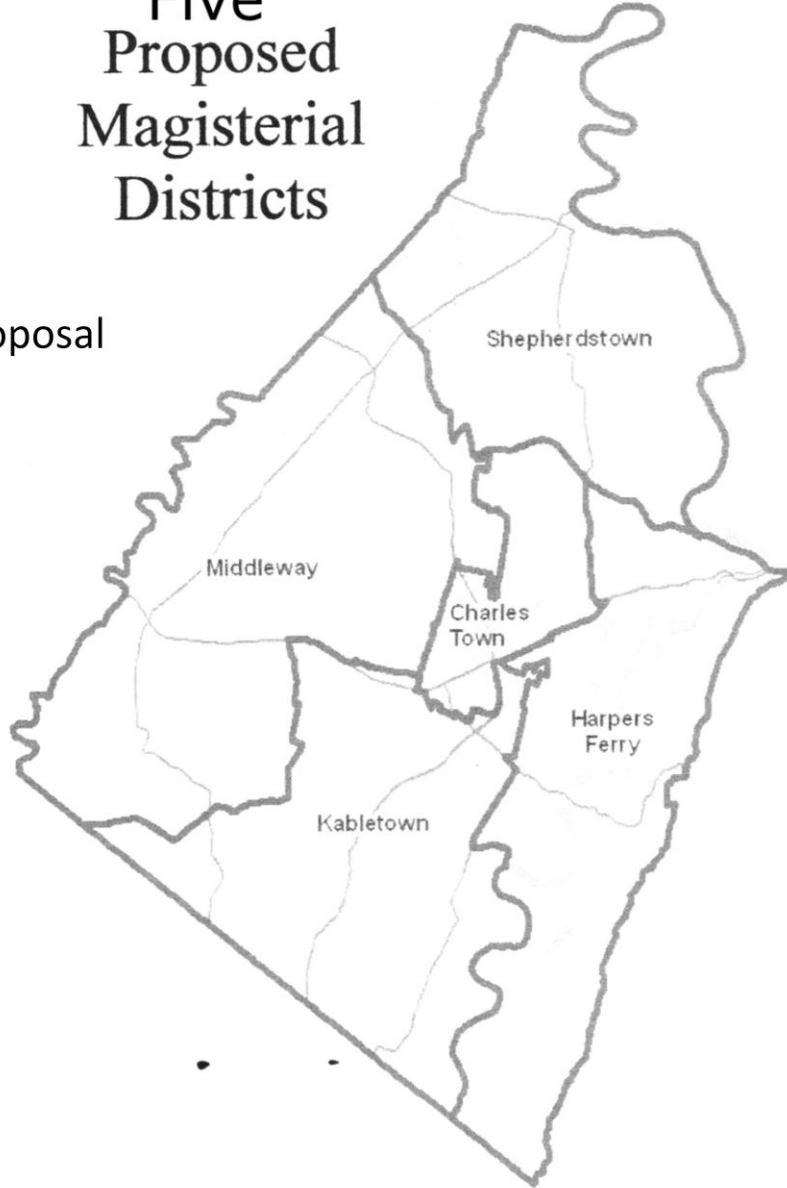
Voter precincts: 2, 3, 6, 7

Percentage of County Eligible to Run for CC vs. the Number of Magisterial Districts



Five Proposed Magisterial Districts

Current County Proposal

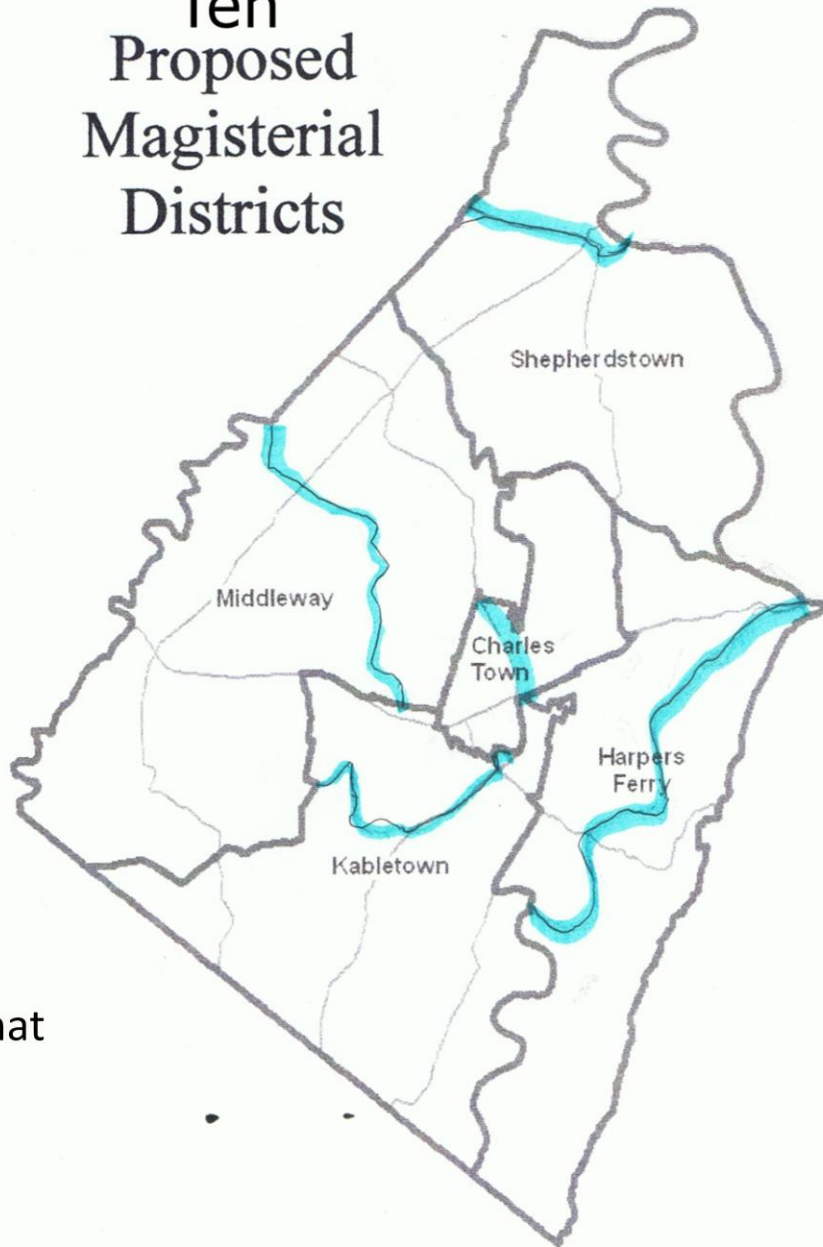


Changes required
for ten districts



All the map changes need

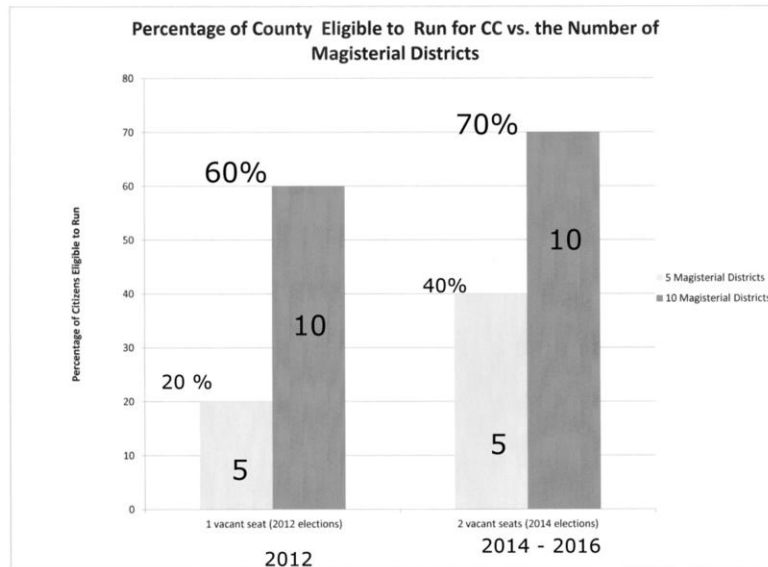
Ten Proposed Magisterial Districts



As simple as that

Why change to ten Magisterial districts?

Why allow more people the opportunity to participate?



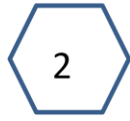
It's the right thing to do

50,000 people

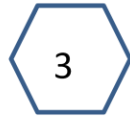
5 County Commission seats



2012



2014



2014



2016



2016

5 Magisterial Districts



10,000 each

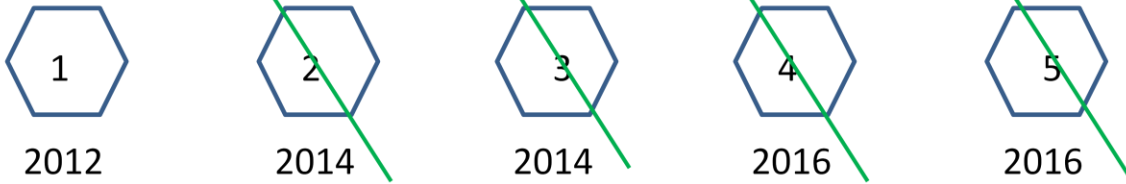
10 Magisterial Districts



5,000 each

50,000 people

5 County Commission seats



5 Magisterial Districts

2012 Election

10 Magisterial Districts

