

AGENDA ITEM REPORT



Date: December 21, 2022
To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Sarah Plinsky, County Administrator
Department: Administration
Subject: County Commission Redistricting

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On December 1, 2022, Douglas County hosted a town hall meeting to gather feedback on how new and expanded county commission districts should be formed. Information on potential ways to redistrict the commission districts was presented on November 30, December 7 and December 14. Commissioners will continue to discuss priorities in the map formations and review the attached proposed district map based on public feedback and discussion from the last County Commission meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider approval of a new redistricting map to encompass a five-member County Commission Board.



**JAMIE SHEW
DOUGLAS COUNTY CLERK**

1100 Massachusetts, Lawrence, KS 66044

**Marni Penrod - Chief Deputy Clerk
R.J. Wilson - Deputy Clerk Elections**

TO: Douglas County Commissioners
FROM: Jamie Shew, Douglas County Clerk
DATE: December 16, 2022
RE: Proposed County Commission Map

Using values and criteria expressed at the December 14th, 2022 County Commission meeting along with those shared over the past few weeks, we have created a proposed five-member Douglas County Commission map. This map is a variation of both the “Spokes” (A) and “Cities” (B) maps which had received the most public support along with some ideas from Map E. The following are the criteria used to guide development of this map.

Provide representation of the unincorporated areas of Douglas County in most of the districts.

This proposed map has two districts below 80% incorporated population in comparison to the previous five maps which had one district below 80%. The remaining three districts, 100% (1st District), 97% (2nd District), 94% (4th District).

Baldwin City, Eudora and Lecompton in separate districts.

This map has Lecompton (3rd District), Baldwin City (5th District), and Eudora (4th District) in separate districts.

Baldwin City and Eudora in the two new districts

Eudora is in the 4th Commission District and Baldwin City is in the 5th Commission District. This value had some challenges because of geography and restrictions from other values, i.e. Baldwin City and Eudora in separate districts.

Divide the southern part of Douglas County along the East/West line of 59 Highway, maintaining communities of interest.

59 Highway is used to divide the 3rd and 5th Districts in Willow Springs Township. Because of population numbers and keeping Eudora and Baldwin City separate, 59 Highway is not the dividing line in Wakarusa Township. District 5 goes to the Wakarusa/Clinton Township border, which does keep Wakarusa Township largely whole.

Combine Grant Township with North Wakarusa to avoid isolation as the only unincorporated area in a district.

District 2 has both townships within its boundaries.



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Be aware of how neighborhoods in Lawrence are separated.

By utilizing major streets in Lawrence and attempting to avoid smaller streets which run through neighborhoods, this map is able to use already existing separations as boundaries. Examples: Massachusetts Street (2nd & 4th Districts), Iowa Street (1st & 2nd Districts, 1st and 4th Districts), 23rd Street (4th & 5th Districts, 1st and 5th Districts). Some areas did require moving across major streets either because of census block shapes or population calculations. Attempts were made to keep neighborhoods largely whole, if possible. Areas where a neighborhood is divided by a smaller street is a result of precinct boundaries and population requirements.

This map has the University of Kansas within the 2nd District, Haskell Indian Nations University in the 4th District and Baker University in the 5th District.

Population must be equal as possible within a 5% deviation.

All of the districts meet this criteria, except for the 3rd District which is a little outside of the deviation, but, these numbers represent the 2020 Census. The precincts in the 3rd District both in the incorporated and unincorporated areas are the fastest growing in Douglas County. We are confident this district is already within the deviation with this growth. As mentioned, in three years the lines can be revisited with the projected census numbers.

Districts must be compact and contiguous.

All of the districts are contiguous with no outlying areas. All of the districts have compactness as allowed while maintaining population numbers and observing precinct boundaries.

Keep townships whole.

All townships, with the exception of Willow Springs and Wakarusa, are whole. Willow Springs is divided by 59 Highway which has historically been a dividing point for other types of districts. This map actually accomplishes keeping the majority of Wakarusa Township whole, especially the areas south of Lawrence.

Avoid dividing a precinct.

All precincts are kept whole within their current boundaries. In fact, this map also has the majority of polling places with precincts represented by the same commission district. Out of 46 polling places, only 4 will have precincts with different commission districts. This not only minimized ballot distribution errors, all the voters in 42 polling places will be voting on county commission in the same cycle. Of the remaining four polling places, 3 will have voters voting in opposite cycles. Additionally, this map follows some of the existing political subdivision boundaries. For example, Kansas House District 42 now includes parts of East Lawrence along with Eudora; all of those precincts are now in the 4th Commission District. Kansas House District 47 now includes parts of West Lawrence, especially areas of potential growth across K-10 Highway. Commission District 3 includes all of the precincts in House District 47.



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Maintain some existing precincts for Districts 1, 2, & 3.

A number of the values expressed earlier have challenged our ability to keep all three existing commission districts largely intact. Because of the separation of Baldwin City and Eudora, while also honoring the placement of those two cities in the 4th and 5th districts, District 2 has to move significantly west. While this changes a majority of the existing precincts, it does place Grant Township and North Wakarusa in the same district, creates a district representing all of the KU campus and combines neighborhoods in north central Lawrence which have similar communities of interest.

Conclusion

Creating a map which perfectly addresses completely all criteria and concerns is almost impossible, this proposed map attempts to find the balance between all of the values and criteria expressed. Some of the values compete against each other which limits options, but this proposed map successfully meets at least part of every value discussed by the Commission and Douglas County residents, while abiding by the law, minimizing disruption for voters and avoiding further complicating election administration at the polling place. We are grateful for the assistance of the Douglas County IT and GIS departments for the many variations of maps created.

ID	Start time	Completion time	Provide Comments
1	11/30/22 12:27:18	11/30/22 12:27:48	
2	11/30/22 12:29:26	11/30/22 12:29:56	
3	11/30/22 12:52:01	11/30/22 12:52:30	
4	11/30/22 12:56:32	11/30/22 13:04:51	I strongly support the Cities option. This option would provide the opportunity for Lecompton, Eudora, and Baldwin City to have representation on the Commission. Lawrence would have 2 representatives as well as some
5	11/30/22 13:21:08	11/30/22 13:22:37	I believe that the "Spokes" map will provide the best representation. allowing more districts to have a rural population and therefore having better
6	11/30/22 13:30:02	11/30/22 13:32:02	I support the proposal to move to 5 commissioners in Douglas County. I also support the "spokes" distribution map that has been proposed. I like the geographical representation. Thank you!
7	12/1/22 7:08:29	12/1/22 7:11:10	As a county resident I feel the "spokes" version provides the most equal coverage and allows the commissioner to serve a geographical area that is easier to visit and know the residents
8	12/1/22 13:55:07	12/1/22 13:59:12	I prefer the spoke option. As someone who lives outside of Lawrence I prefer an option which potentially gives more possibility of county residents outside of Lawrence being elected. The whole county needs and deserves knowledgeable representation. The Shannon's needed extra time to learn about the whole
9	12/1/22 14:18:41	12/1/22 14:26:53	I have a preference for the map titled "Spokes" as it would likely give residents of Baldwin City and Eudora a higher probability of getting representation from their communities, as well as better representation of those in the unincorporated areas of Douglas County. District 5 would largely be decided upon by the affluent members of west Lawrence while districts 2 and 3 would also be largely selected by city of Lawrence residents. This could result in 3 members being city of Lawrence chosen, and the other 2 members being representatives of the small cities/unincorporated resident voices. All other map options would likely heavily favor the voices of city of Lawrence
10	12/1/22 21:09:17	12/1/22 21:09:47	My preference would be the Wakarusa map.
11	12/2/22 8:51:29	12/2/22 8:52:16	Spokes plan actually represents the rural County residents. Most other plans have 2-3 from the city of Lawrence.
12	12/2/22 8:49:24	12/2/22 8:53:59	I believe the "county" option map would be the best as it does not lump significant parts of Lawrence in with the smaller cities. and rural residents who are likely to have different views and could be silenced by large blocks of
13	12/3/22 9:05:45	12/3/22 9:19:57	We attended the December 1 public meeting -- its general tenor has been reasonably captured by reports in the Journal World and Lawrence Times. We'd encapsulate the process as one that wrestles with the problem of adequate geographic representation for both "urban" and "rural" interests in county governance. In order to depict this issue in data-driven fashion, we formally request that the county GIS team provide the following information for the 12/7 meeting: For each of the 4 maps show the number of Lawrence city residents, "other incorporated city" residents, and unincorporated residents that would be contained in each of the districts. In this way, interested Douglas County residents would likely be better able to understand the basics of representative government.
14	12/3/22 9:11:08	12/3/22 9:22:25	Since about 80% of the county's population is within the city limits, it makes sense for four of the districts to mostly encompass the city and the 5th district to cover rural Douglas County. This is the "County" option in your examples. Some of the other options looked gerrymandered and confusing such as "Spokes". I had a hard time figuring out what district I might be in.

15	12/5/22 10:26:57	12/5/22 10:49:00	<p>The "Wakarusa" map makes a lot of sense. It also seems to be the easiest to adjust as areas are annexed.</p> <p>The "County" map will perpetuate 'us versus them' conversations for one Commissioner.</p> <p>The "Cities" map doesn't really create representation for the small cities. The "Wakarusa" map actually appears to create the best opportunity for a Eudora or</p>
16	12/5/22 15:28:50	12/5/22 15:30:07	<p>Each district needs to have it's representative actually living in it as a requirement, no at large districts please.</p> <p>One district should be entirely rural, no Lawrence. The other 4 should have a piece of Lawrence to provide a balance.</p>
17	12/6/22 6:03:07	12/6/22 6:04:14	All areas must be represented equally.
18	12/6/22 6:41:38	12/6/22 6:47:01	Your map does not represent the rural parts of the county. Urban values are different then rural. So rural parts of the county should have some one fighting
19	12/6/22 7:32:19	12/6/22 7:34:17	Please include 3 of the 5 in rural areas including Baldwin and Eudora. We should
20	12/6/22 8:11:12	12/6/22 8:16:00	Keep existing townships intact as much as possible. Do NOT spend funds on a special election. The ongoing cost to the county for two additional commissioners is more than enough. There is no urgent need for the additional commissioners to take office.
21	12/6/22 9:15:17	12/6/22 9:16:32	I want to make sure the rural area is represented. Right now I feel like the outlying areas don't get heard and everything is based on decisions that the
22	12/6/22 20:23:04	12/6/22 20:33:48	I would like to see the new five districts drawn to give better representation to the rural areas and small towns of Douglas County, including Baldwin, Eudora, Lecompton, and the surrounding countryside. I would actually like to see Lawrence secede from Douglas County, become it's own county, and run itself into the ground with its horrible politics. But since that's not going to happen, I'd at least like to see 2-3 Douglas county commissioners come from the rural areas of the county, given that our political views differ vastly from Lawrence.
23	12/6/22 22:10:26	12/6/22 22:12:58	In reviewing all maps to this point, including those created by Commissioner Willey, the Spokes map appears to do the best job in giving rural Douglas County a broader voice while still respecting the reality of population distribution. This seems to be the consensus among discussion that I am having and hearing from
24	12/7/22 8:43:18	12/7/22 8:48:34	We attended the most recent meeting on the change in number of commission districts. Although it probably is not the popular sentiment, we believe that there are strong grounds to argue for delaying the election until the next general. We would like to see a coherent public discussion of the special vs general election decision at the next commission meeting.
25	12/7/22 19:51:06	12/7/22 20:07:14	I truly believe this will make our county better, as long as at least two of these new commissioners be from the unincorporated areas of the county. The previous commission was made up of three members and they all lived in Lawrence, leaving no representation for the unincorporated areas. Those of you who live in Lawrence, or Baldwin or Eudora, for that matter, look at life through
26	12/8/22 8:24:15	12/8/22 8:43:56	I would like to comment on the maps for redistricting the county for the five areas. Spokes is my favorite then the original cities. Regarding the lines, several of you commented you wanted to keep as much of the area as you had before. Remember you all work for the county commission, you may want the lines in the areas you are used to but there are now 5 districts not 3. Lines need to be
27	12/8/22 11:58:14	12/8/22 12:04:01	I would like for the five districts to allow for the opportunity to have RURAL representation, based on the population of the RURAL areas, and also looking at the republican versus democrat population per district. Without having the additional data referenced, it looks like cities and spokes are the two options that provide more opportunity for this representation that is elected. Currently, the only rural representation we have is Karen Wiley, however, she is not elected, and therefore not a proper representation voted on by the district. When will we be able to have this additional data provided for reference in the

28	12/8/22 16:39:10	12/8/22 16:56:15	After participating in the town hall meeting and listening to all the feed back since, it appears the spokes map has a lot support throughout the community. I would like to recommend a few changes for consideration on spokes, could the dividing line be kept to E1000 Rd straight south? Also can the bump out at 59 highway be added to one side or the other? I know this causes some concerns with precincts and townships. but it would give district 3 some area back and create a more appealing map in respect to districts and representation for the unincorporated communities. I would also show a little support for Karen
29	12/8/22 17:52:18	12/8/22 17:54:23	I live in Southwest Lawrence (Prairie Meadows), and I'm pretty tired of being gerrymandered into mostly rural, conservative districts. In fact, I'm voting
30	12/9/22 20:35:37	12/9/22 20:36:38	Map B is the best option but please move the dividing line to E 1000 road.
31	12/10/22 15:26:35	12/10/22 15:29:52	I like either the cities option or spoke. Even with the change I feel there needs to be more action by commissioners to get out to their entire community of constituents. The two other options can lead to a us vs them mentality.
32	12/12/22 17:39:35	12/12/22 17:39:51	B and then C
33	12/12/22 17:36:29	12/12/22 17:39:52	Could you add major street names to the maps for the Lawrence residents? I live in West Lawrence and can not distinguish where my home falls within the
34	12/12/22 18:46:29	12/12/22 18:48:22	Proposals B and C appear to divide the rural areas more evenly. This would enable a commissioner to cover their respective areas easier without being
35	12/12/22 21:15:26	12/12/22 21:18:01	Map A is my vote. It keeps the areas with common concerns/interests together while incorporating enough of Lawrence in each district to balance population
36	12/13/22 3:41:27	12/13/22 3:44:32	I view Douglas County's interests as primarily a north/south division. Therefore, plans A, D, and E make most sense.
37	12/13/22 7:39:56	12/13/22 7:45:22	All input on increasing the commission to 5 members should be taken from residents of Douglas county and mainly rural residents because rural residents
38	12/13/22 8:15:23	12/13/22 8:16:33	City of Lawrence should not be allowed to have majority's in each district. It completely negates the point in having 5 districts and diverse representation. Rural folks will not be accurately represented if their seat is allowed to be held
39	12/13/22 8:33:19	12/13/22 8:34:27	We live south of Eudora and like Douglas County "D" for the Eudora area because it most aligns folks and the issues we will face into the future.
40	12/13/22 10:25:25	12/13/22 10:52:56	I don't think it should be possible for every member of the commission to live in Lawrence anymore. It is difficult to understand what it is like to live outside of Lawrence, if you've never lived outside of Lawrence, or if you went from living to one populated area to another. I currently live in Eudora, and life here is very different than it would be in Lawrence. I already spend time in Lawrence out of necessity, but if a Lawrence resident is elected to represent a district that is largely geographically different than what they are used to, I think they should be required to attend a number of community events that represent their constituency, if they don't already do so.
41	12/13/22 10:55:02	12/13/22 10:55:32	Preference is map A.
42	12/13/22 15:18:10	12/13/22 15:20:23	Spokes is a terrible idea. That map will be an excellent way to wind up with five commissioners that live in the city of Lawrence with negates the entire point of adding 2 more commissioners for more rural representation. I don't remember the maps name but it was proposed by commissioner Willey last meeting and it separated Baldwin and Eudora as their communities have different needs. And does not allow all the power to be held by future commissioners who only live in the city of Lawrence.
43	12/13/22 15:53:33	12/13/22 15:53:45	I like #5 please
44	12/14/22 7:41:15	12/14/22 7:43:38	I believe that option B looks the best. Each commissioner would have input when it comes to the cities decisions, not just 1 or 2 people as the other maps

Proposed Five County Commission Districts

"Douglas County Template"

- District 1 - 24,664 population 100% Incorporated**
- District 2 - 23,139 population 97% Incorporated**
- District 3 - 22,036 population 77% Incorporated**
- District 4 - 24,556 population 94% Incorporated**
- District 5 - 24,390 population 76% Incorporated**

