

June 3, 2021

The Honorable Paul Grenier
Mayor of Berlin
168 Main Street
Berlin, NH 03570

Dear Mayor Grenier,

The Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives has appointed a committee to develop new voting districts for state representatives and certain other state offices. The process for revising state representative districts requires coordination between the House Special Committee on Redistricting and the cities.

The Census Bureau has announced that the state population data for the purpose of redistricting will be released by September 30, 2021. This new data will provide us with city, town and ward population breakdowns so we may begin the redistricting process. As you know, every ten years we must redraw lines for the districts for State Representatives, State Senators, our two Congressmen, as well as County Commissioners and Executive Councilors. We must maintain the principle of "one man/one vote" in all of our work.

Our work will proceed under the assumption that all cities will realign their wards so as to be as equal in population as possible. After all, if you elect local officials on a ward basis, you fall under the "one man/one vote" mandate as well.

Many state representative districts within cities are established using ward boundaries. Therefore, we need information from you relative to your redistricting plans as we prepare for redistricting at the state level. We are aware that not every city uses the same process to revise ward lines – some must be revised pursuant to the charter amendment process outlined in RSA 49-B and others are revised by a vote of the City Council or the Board of Aldermen. The charter revision process, including notice and public hearing requirements, must be completed 60 days prior to the date of the municipal election in which the amendments are on the ballot.

In order to complete the state redistricting process in an orderly manner, it will be important for us to have the following information as soon as possible:

- Do you plan to revise your city ward lines to create an equal alignment?
- What process will your city be using to amend ward lines, if necessary?
- What is the anticipated timeline for the adoption of an initial proposal, conducting a public hearing, and adopting a final proposal for ward line revisions?

- What is the earliest possible date by which you expect to be able to submit updated ward line data to the Legislature?

In order to integrate your data into our software, we would like a listing of all the census blocks that are in each ward in the new plan by tract and block number. It would also be helpful for you to provide the population of each ward in the new plan. While we do not need to know the exact street lines you use as demarcations, we will also need to know which wards are contiguous since wards included in any floterial must be contiguous. We will make every effort to keep districts within cities, but as in the past, it is likely that in a limited number of instances, some city wards will have to be combined with surrounding towns, especially in floterial districts.

It is also important to note that there is a state law that addresses the establishment of ward lines. This law, RSA 44:4-a, requires all ward boundaries to follow easily identifiable physical features.

44:4-a Boundaries of Wards. – All boundaries of wards, other than those boundaries which are coterminous with the boundaries of municipalities, shall follow easily identifiable physical features. For the purposes of this section, physical features include public and private ways, public utility lines, railroad tracks, and surface waters. Ward lines shall be clearly shown on a map of suitable scale. Those portions of physical features with names and used as ward boundaries shall be clearly labeled on the ward map.

The delayed release of the Census data for redistricting will make it extremely challenging to complete our work in time for the 2022 elections. It is our intention to adopt a plan for the new House districts as early as possible in the 2022 legislative session. Your cooperation is certainly appreciated.

Responses can be e-mailed to our Committee Assistant, Lindsay Oestreich, at lindsay.oestreich@leg.state.nh.us or mailed to Room 409, House Committee Services, Legislative Office Building, 33 North State Street, Concord, NH 03301.

Sincerely,

Rep. Barbara Griffin, Chairman
House Special Committee on Redistricting

cc. Shelli Fortin, City Clerk