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FEATURED

New maps to be considered

By ALLISON GATLIN Valley Press Staff Writer

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The Palmdale City Council, tonight, will reconsider two maps of new Council districts that it previously rejected, on Feb. 2, along with a third, recommended by the Advisory Redistricting Commission.

Allison Gatlin/Valley Press

PALMDALE — The Palmdale City Council, tonight, will consider three maps resubmitted by the Advisory Redistricting Commission for new boundaries for the four Council districts.

It is the culmination of the decennial process of drawing district boundaries based on information from the 2020 Census.

The Council previously rejected, on Feb. 2, the two maps recommended by the Commission, sending the matter back to the body it formed last year.

The Commission resubmitted the same maps that were rejected, along with a third map created by demographic consultant NDC, labeled NDC Purple.

The 11-member Advisory Redistricting Commission was established by the Council to recommend new district boundaries using data from the 2020 Census and following redistricting guidelines, established in state and federal law.

After months of public workshops, hearings and meetings, the Council-appointed Commission recommended two maps with new boundaries, chosen from among a total of 15. Of those 15, not all met the state and federal requirements for drawing election districts at first glance, because they did not balance populations or had other obvious deficiencies.

All of the maps under consideration create three districts with a majority Latino population, reflecting the city's 62% overall Latino population.

The Commission's two initially-recommended maps were drawn by a member of the public and by ALVA, a coalition of Latino organizations, respectfully.

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Loa suggested the maps were created to pursue a political agenda and not to equitably represent the city's population.

"It seems to me there's been some intent that's not driven by trying to keep communities together, but instead is trying to pursue some political agenda," he said at the Council meeting.

He said it shows a partisan discrimination by placing two sitting Council members in one district.



The Council's rejection of the recommendation was seen by some as disrespectful of the Commission, the community and the process.

Xavier Flores, representing the Antelope Valley League of United Latin American Citizens, said the rejection was "an opportunistic and not-so-veiled attempt to corrupt the (redistricting) process."

"Do not let yourselves and this body to be used as a buffer," he said in requesting the Commission resubmit the original maps. "Place the onus back on them, allow them to decide what maps they want, rather than using you as a shield to guard them from the consequences of their actions."

He also said the organization feels the Council will only adopt a map that protects the Council incumbents.

The Commission, on Feb. 9, reconsidered the maps available, along with comments Council members made in rejecting the maps.

On closer analysis by demographic consultant NDC, the ALVA map was determined to have the potential to be in violation of federal rules against racial gerrymandering, avoiding some areas, to take in others, to create districts that are more favorably Latino. It could also violate state requirements to create compact districts with easily identifiable boundaries, Kristin Parks of consultants NDC said.

The very jagged boundary between Districts 1 and 3 appears to show where certain census blocks were included in one or the other district and others excluded. This could be seen as racial gerrymandering, where race is the sole or predominant factor, she said.

The second map originally recommended, labeled Map 208, had no compliance concerns.

The NDC Purple map was recommended as it had cleaner boundaries.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m., in the Council Chambers, 38300 Sierra Hwy. It is also available via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84032816351?pwd=VVFmZDBYYTFSeMpMTTg3S2UzSWliZz09>

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