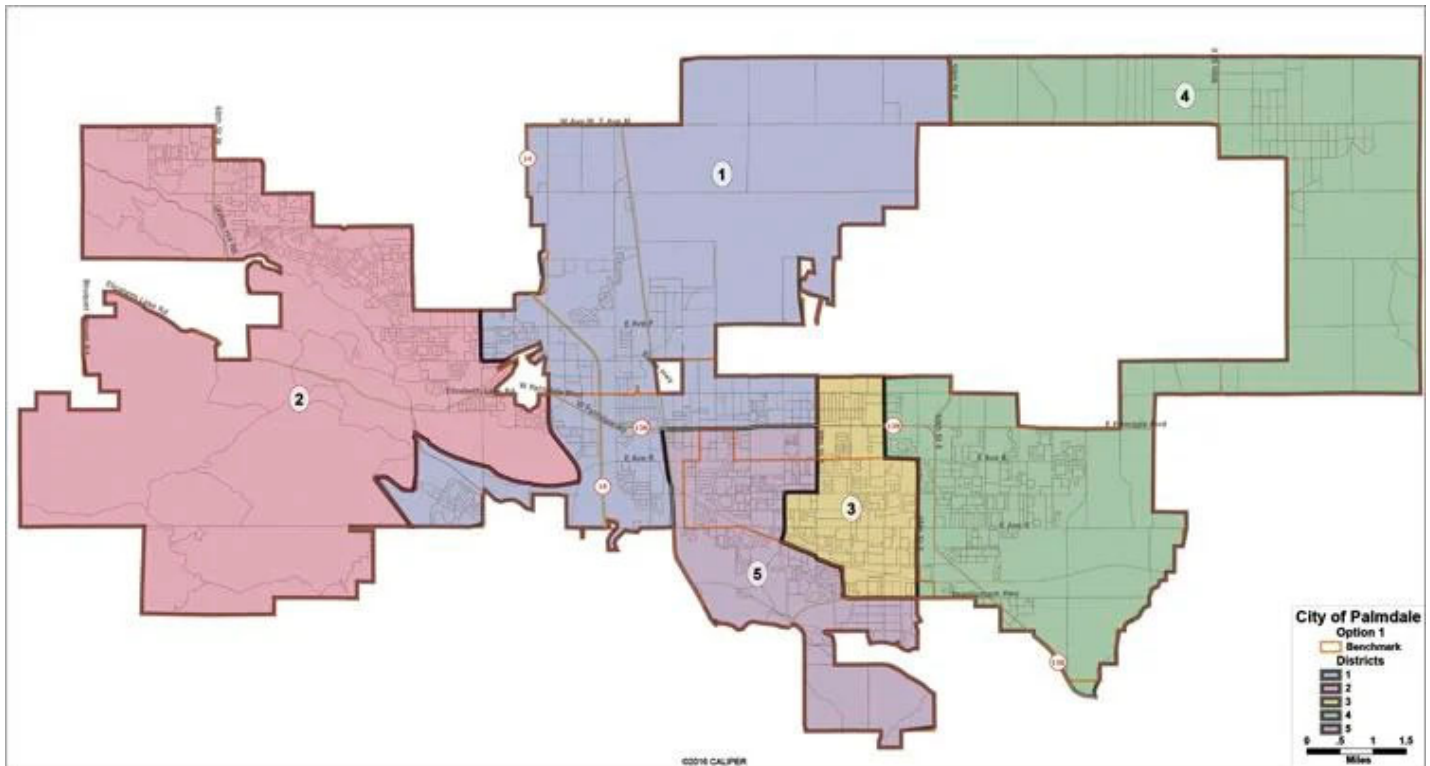


https://www.avpress.com/news/local_news/council-to-consider-changing-format/article_77022106-a40e-11ec-a02e-3b4f4cbe4a0b.html

Council to consider changing format

By ALLISON GATLIN Valley Press Staff Writer

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MAP courtesy of the city of palmdale

PALMDALE — The City Council, on Wednesday, will discuss and potentially change the Council format to five members elected from districts and rotating the mayor position among them, instead of four with the mayor elected from the city at large.

The change would come in adopting new electoral boundaries, in the form of a map recently created by an outside demographer.

The proposed change comes at the 11th hour in the decennial redistricting process and effectively negates the efforts of the public, staff and hired consultants over the past seven months. The city faces an April 17 deadline to finalize the districts for the November elections.

Earlier this month, the Council declined to ratify the four-district map they selected two weeks earlier and instead instructed staff to contract with a different demographer to draw new maps for consideration with five districts instead of four.

Compass Demographics was hired to create the five maps that will be considered, under a provision in the Municipal Code that allows for no-bid contracts for goods and services valued at less than \$30,000.

Wednesday's meeting is the first of two public hearings to be held before a final map is adopted.

The earlier redistricting process involved months of public workshops and hearings and a Council-appointed Advisory Redistricting Commission to sift through the proposals and make a recommendation to the Council as to which map to adopt, based on 2020 Census data and federal and state requirements.

Mayor Steve Hofbauer, reached by phone in Washington, where he is attending a conference, was asked why the change was not considered earlier during the redistricting process.

"That is an outstanding question," he said. "I think it was planned. I don't think there's any coincidence that it came up at the last minute and I think that there is an agenda to create as much chaos as possible."

Hofbauer cast the lone dissenting vote when the Council voted, on March 2, to hire a new demographer to create new maps with five districts for the Council's consideration.



“There’s nothing to be gained for our community by going to this,” he said, adding the sentiment is not about his tenure, in that he doesn’t expect to continue in the position indefinitely.

He said having a rotating mayor just means problems are blamed on the previous tenure and pushed off on the next to assume the seat.

“I work damn hard to represent all the areas of the city and to try to help balance programs and services,” Hofbauer said. “You’re accountable to the entire city, not a neighborhood.”

The change to five districts has been brought up, but not considered, in the past, most recently during the discussion to approve a map, on Feb. 16.

Attorney Kevin Shenkman, who successfully sued the city, in 2013, to force it to move to district representation to comply with the state Voting Rights Act, sent a letter to the city, dated Jan. 16, stating “the failure to adopt a five-district map leaves the City of Palmdale vulnerable to further litigation for violating the California Voting Rights Act, particularly in light of the results of the at-large elections of 2018 and 2020.”

The letter cites the losses of mayoral candidates V. Jesse Smith, in 2018 and Xavier Flores, in 2020, as examples of how the Black and Latino vote is diluted in the at-large mayoral election.

Shenkman is also representing former city manager J.J. Murphy in his claim against the city.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m., in the Council Chambers, 38300 Sierra Hwy. Residents may also participate via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89156234087?pwd=NmhmVEZyazVTUTFZazFZcGt4ZERndz09>

The proposed maps, with the associated demographics, are available online at www.DrawPalmdale.org

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The advertisement features a blue background. On the right side, there is a close-up photograph of a young boy with short dark hair, smiling broadly, wearing a denim shirt. On the left side, there is a white circular logo containing a stylized tooth with a blue ribbon-like shape around it. Below the logo, the text 'Lancaster Children's Dental' is written in a sans-serif font, with 'Lancaster' in a smaller size above 'Children's Dental'. Underneath that, the tagline 'We Love Us. Parents Trust Us.™' is written in a smaller font. Below the logo and tagline, the text 'Free Exam and Consultation' and '5-Star Rated Facility' is displayed in a large, bold, white sans-serif font.