



**Ravenna Ad Hoc Committee
Ward Redistricting Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2026**

The public meeting was held in person in City Council Chambers.

Committee present: Chair, Council member, Carmen Laudato, Council member, Amy Michael, Council member, Paul Moskun; Jen Mapes, Sherry Rose

Also attending the meeting: Council President, Rob Kairis; Council member, Tim Calfee; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Larry Selinius

Ad Hoc Committee Ward Redistricting Meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chair, Carmen Laudato

The only item was to discuss Ward Redistricting within the City of Ravenna.

Carmen Laudato convened the inaugural Ward Redistricting Committee meeting, introducing committee members and explaining that Council unanimously established the committee after recognizing Ravenna's ward populations had become significantly unbalanced. She noted that previous Planning Committee discussions and a presentation by Trevor Martin highlighted that the city's ward deviation exceeded 60%, demonstrating the need for redistricting.

Sherry Rose, President of the League of Women Voters of Kent and Development Director for the League of Women Voters of Ohio, explained that Ohio law requires ward populations to remain within a 10% deviation to ensure equal representation and equitable workloads for Council members. She emphasized the importance of transparency and public engagement throughout the process, encouraging residents to provide input on neighborhood boundaries before a final map is adopted.

Jen Mapes, a geography professor at Kent State University, introduced mapping software that allows census blocks to be moved to create balanced wards while preserving communities of interest. She encouraged committee members to develop map proposals themselves rather than relying on pre-made plans and noted that Ravenna's downtown is currently divided among all four wards, raising questions about whether downtown residents are adequately represented.

Ms. Michael stated that the technical process of redistricting appeared straightforward but stressed the importance of educating residents and allowing public feedback before adopting new ward boundaries. She recommended presenting proposed maps through the Planning Committee, Committee of the Whole, and public meetings while ensuring clear communication through the City's website, water bills, local media, and the Board of Elections.

Mr. Calfee suggested making minimal adjustments by shifting existing ward boundaries north or south to balance populations while preserving Ravenna's traditional ward structure. He noted that Wards 2 and 3 have experienced population growth while Wards 1 and 4 have declined, requiring the movement of approximately 500 residents. Mr. Calfee also discussed preserving

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neighborhoods with similar housing characteristics and maintaining portions of downtown within each ward where possible.

Mr. Kairis agreed that maintaining clean, logical boundaries should be a priority but cautioned that achieving equal populations would likely require more detailed adjustments than simply shifting lines. He supported beginning with the existing ward structure and making only the changes necessary to achieve compliance.

Committee members discussed the effects of population shifts over the past 50 years, changing school districts, apartment developments, declining household sizes, polling locations, zoning considerations, and maintaining communities of interest.

Ms. Rose reiterated that redistricting should focus solely on equal population and community representation rather than political considerations.

The committee agreed that Council should first develop one or more proposed maps, then present them publicly for education and comment before adopting final ward boundaries. Members expressed confidence that the process could be completed before the statutory deadline preceding the next election cycle.

Ms. Laudato led a discussion on how potential ward boundary adjustments could affect polling locations. She noted that moving the proposed boundary north would primarily impact voters near the library and the New Testament Church polling locations, while most other precincts would remain unaffected.

Ms. Rose added that polling locations could still change if ward boundaries were adjusted.

Ms. Mapes demonstrated the district mapping software, explaining how members could create and save their own draft maps, recalculate population totals in real time, and use census blocks as the smallest unit for making changes. She also provided printed maps and step-by-step instructions for members who preferred to draw maps manually.

Committee members discussed the goal of reducing population deviations among the wards.

Ms. Laudato emphasized that the objective was not to make every ward identical but to achieve a fairer balance, targeting a population deviation of 10% or less.

Mr. Calfee and other members noted that while no specific percentage is required under the Ohio Revised Code, the law requires wards to be "substantially equal" in population. He also observed that Ravenna's population has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, making significant future changes unlikely unless major development or annexation occurs.

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Ms. Michael cautioned against relying on current polling locations when drawing new ward boundaries because polling sites frequently change. She and Ms. Laudato agreed that residents are generally accustomed to receiving updated polling information from the Portage County Board of Elections.

Ms. Laudato stressed the importance of conducting the redistricting process transparently and involving the public so residents would view the effort as fair rather than political. She noted that the city's declining population and recent elementary school closures made the timing appropriate for reviewing ward boundaries.

Members agreed that committee members should spend time creating and comparing their own draft maps before bringing recommendations forward.

Ms. Rose suggested reconvening once several proposals had been developed so the committee could compare approaches and identify the best option.

Ms. Laudato proposed placing the redistricting discussion on a future Planning Committee agenda to allow time for members to work with the mapping software and encourage public participation.

Ms. Michael supported holding a follow-up meeting to review progress and share any draft maps that had been prepared.

The meeting concluded with members expressing confidence that, with the mapping tools and collaboration, the redistricting process could be completed efficiently while ensuring equitable representation for Ravenna residents.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:06 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Carmen Laudato, Chairperson
Ad Hoc Committee