

PUBLIC HEARING
MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF RICHMOND
DISTRICT BOUNDARY REVIEW
NOVEMBER 7, 2006

Location: St. Peter's United Church Hall

Warden Boudreau called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m.

Warden Boudreau indicated that the purpose of this public hearing is to address the district boundaries of Richmond County, noting that a hand out has been provided outlining the statistics and issues for discussion.

Warden Boudreau indicated that this hearing will be accepting arguments regarding the number of Councillor's, the size of the districts and the current system of electing a Warden from the Council and by the Council or a Mayor elected by the voters.

Warden Boudreau indicated that a table outlining the variances within the districts has been provided, noting that boundary guidelines stipulate that the variance can be no more than 10-15% and that these variances must be brought in line and the only way is to reconstruct the districts.

Warden Boudreau requested that each person that wished to speak please identify themselves and provide their opinion.

Mr. Tommy Bona from District #9, L'Ardoise, addressed the meeting.

Mr. Bona indicated that there should be no decrease in the number of Councillor's, noting that if anything the numbers should increase expressing concern that District #10, which was once two separate districts, is very large in geographic size and that the current Councillor is doing the best that she can considering the fact that residents are so spread out.

Mr. Bona indicated that with the Heavy Garbage Collection most of the people in the secluded areas of District #10 are not aware because they do not receive the same media as the rest of Richmond County.

Councillor Johnson noted that her district makes up 49% of the land mass of Richmond County.

Mr. Bona indicated that at one time there was a District #11 in the far end of District # 10, noting that most of the residents in the far end of the District probably didn't even know about this meeting.

Mr. Bona questioned how Richmond would benefit from having a Mayor and would there be additional costs with this change?

Warden Boudreau indicated that in Nova Scotia there are both Mayors and Wardens, noting that a Mayor would definitely cost the tax payer more money.

Mr. Bona expressed concern that District #10 is too large geographically and something should be done, especially when it comes to media and communication.

Mr. Renee Sampson from District #9, L'Ardoise, addressed the meeting.

Mr. Sampson indicated that he is assuming from the information provided indicating that there are five rural municipalities of 21 that have less voters per Councillor that there are 16 that have the same number of voters or larger.

Mr. Sampson indicated that the current 10 Councillor's should remain in Richmond County.

Mr. Sampson indicated that he feels that the public is well represented in his district (District #9) and he does not see the point in changing the boundaries.

Mr. Sampson indicated that in other districts it would be great to make the variances smaller but he noted that it would be walking on dangerous ground to tamper with the boundaries, noting that communities are established and well represented further noting that communities of interest are not necessarily geographic.

Mr. Sampson indicated that he felt that to elect a Mayor at large would be an example of democracy, giving an opportunity for everyone to have a voice and a sense of ownership in the decision.

Mr. Sampson indicated that with a Mayor there would be no need for an election of a Warden every two years.

Warden Boudreau indicated that the term of Warden is chosen by Council and they can increase this is they so wish.

Mr. Sampson indicated that a Mayor would not be a Councillor and could concentrate more on their work and not on working for their district as well.

Mr. Sampson indicated that he has not heard areas in the Municipality being dissatisfied with the number of Councillor's and representation and indicated that "If it's not broke, don't fix it".

Mr. Billy Harnish of St. Peter's addressed the meeting.

Mr. Harnish noted that he did not think that most people knew what was being discussed tonight, noting that it was advertised but not explained.

Mr. Harnish indicated that perhaps a flyer should have been sent to every resident of Richmond explaining the questions being posed tonight.

Mr. Harnish indicated that with the discrepancies in the districts the smaller districts would never be well represented in a system of electing a Mayor, which is not fair.

Mrs. Eva Landry of St. Peter's addressed the meeting.

Mrs. Landry indicated that when a district gets too large it is difficult for the public to get in touch with the Councillor and vice versa, noting that the same issues are occurring with the federal and provincial boundaries and that it takes a lot of time for a Councillor to address the concerns of all the residents in their districts.

Mrs. Landry indicated that the residents of the senior citizens complex should not be counted in the population of St. Peter's.

Mrs. Landry indicated that she doesn't believe that the voters in Richmond County have a clear understanding of the Warden's responsibilities, noting that the Councillors who work with the Warden are in the best position to decide who should be their leader and who would be the most capable and who they would like to work with.

Mrs. Landry indicated that the County would be at the mercy of the personality of the person who becomes Mayor, noting that a Warden is more of a collaborative effort with the Council, noting that in general the public does not attend Council meetings, nor do they have the understanding or interest to make this decision.

Mrs. Landry indicated that the only time that you see people at a Council meeting is where there is an issue.

Mr. Doug Landry of St. Peter's addressed the meeting.

Mr. Landry indicated that advertising for tonight's meeting was on the local cable station but did not say what it was about.

Mr. Landry indicated that the residents of the Villa are made up of residents from all over Richmond and should not be counted in the population for St. Peter's

Mr. Landry indicated that the process of having a Warden works well for Richmond.

Mr. Landry indicated that in regards to District #8 the only things that can really be done is to move the boundary of District #7 along the highway towards Scotch River.

Councillor's Comments:

Warden Boudreau indicated that Districts #3, #4 and #8 must be addressed.

Councillor Cotton noted that there is a large problem with St. Peter's being +29.92% above average and this will have to be addressed, noting that in L'Ardoise for example the +15.03% can be rationalized indicating that the population is decreasing and will soon be within the acceptable limits.

Councillor Cotton indicated that the boundary with River Tillard or Roberta would be the only ways to address the excess in St. Peter's.

Councillor Johnson noted that if the decision is made to elect a Warden it is binding and the Municipality could not go back to a system of Warden.

Deputy Warden McNamara indicated that if the decision is made to go with a Mayor she predicts from her experience that the size of the Council will be downsized.

Deputy Warden McNamara expressed concern that communities tend to vote for their own and the larger communities would overshadow the smaller and the smaller communities would never represent a leadership role in Richmond.

Councillor Martell indicated that he believes that size of districts will have no effect and that residents will vote for the person and not where they are from.

Councillor Boudreau indicated that perhaps it would be best to educate the public about the authority and powers of a mayor.

Warden Boudreau indicated that a Mayor does not have to concur with representatives of Council and can make binding decisions for the County without consultation.

Warden Boudreau indicated that he would like to note that the public present at tonight's meeting are very involved in their communities and have not heard anything negative about the district boundaries and representation.

Warden Boudreau indicated that there are two more public hearings to take place on this topic and they will be on November 15 in Grand Anse and November 22 in Arichat, urging those attending tonight to bring forth any additional concerns that they may have at these meetings.

Councillor Johnson indicated that more and better advertising should be done for the remaining two public hearings.

There being no further business, the public hearing was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.