

**THE CRAVEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MET IN SPECIAL SESSION ON FEBRUARY 27, 2002 AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE COMMISSIONERS' ROOM OF THE CRAVEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 406 CRAVEN STREET, NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING MATTERS RELATED TO THE PENDING APPLICATION FOR REDISTRICTING OF COMMISSIONERS' VOTING DISTRICTS.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Chairman C.W. "Pete" Bland  
Vice Chairman Johnnie Sampson, Jr.  
Commissioner Lee Kyle Allen  
Commissioner Donald Phillips  
Commissioner J. Harold Talton  
Commissioner Albert H. Toon

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Charles F. Tyson, Jr.

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Harold Blizzard, County Manager  
George B. Sawyer, Assistant County Manager  
Gwendolyn M. Bryan, Clerk to the Board  
James R. Sugg, County Attorney

Following an invocation by Commissioner Sampson, Mr. Mike Crowell of Tharrington-Smith Law Firm, reviewed the current status of the Commissioner voting districts in Craven County. He stated that the submission had been made to the Justice Department for a request in a change in voting districts, as well as voting method. The Justice Department has indicated that the proposed change in voting method is acceptable; however, clarification is being sought concerning how the districts were drawn. Mr. Crowell advised the Board that the questions from the Justice Department constitute a non-specific, standard inquiry, which is quite extensive. He stated the opinion that the specific concerns may be about District 5, which when reviewing the non-military population, is not a majority African/American, but only 45%. With the proposed redrawn lines the percentage shifts downward by several percentage points. He outlined the Board's options, as follows: 1) Redraw the proposed lines, leaving District 5 as it currently is, and redraw the other six districts to bring the population into compliance, as District 5 is currently in compliance with the one person/one vote requirement. 2) Gather all of the information requested by the Justice Department, and respond. 3) Challenge the request for information, for clarification and specification, and defend current submission.

Commissioner Allen, representing District 6, indicated no preference as to how the Board moves forward, but advocated the simplest alternative. Commissioner Phillips stated his discomfort with the district lines being based upon residential population as opposed to voting population. Mr. Crowell mentioned that the numbers in District 5 are especially skewed due to the presence of the military. Commissioner Toon inquired why the lines for Districts 5 and 6 were not returned to the pre 1997 locations in the proposed plan, and speculated that this may be the basis for the Justice Department's hesitation. Mr. Crowell stated that the total population numbers still may not have been acceptable. Commissioner Talton moved to leave the District 5 boundaries as they are and to adjust the other districts, with the exception of District 3, and to ask Tharrington Smith and Mr. Crowell to redraw the maps accordingly. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion, which carried in a roll call vote, there being five (5) "Ayes and one (1) "Nay" from Commissioner Toon. County Manager, Harold Blizzard, inquired if a proposed adjustment in the line between Townships 5 and 6, which was considered prior to the submission, could still be considered. Mr. Crowell advised that it may not satisfy the Justice Department, but without knowing the specific source of the Department's concerns, it would be difficult to speculate.

At 6:15 p.m. Commissioner Talton moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously carried.

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Chairman C.W. "Pete" Bland  
Craven County Board of Commissioners

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Gwendolyn M. Bryan, Clerk