



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Boundary Review- Modified mapping options for Council approval

Date: September 9, 2022

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

Council approved the staff recommendation to present two options to residents for the appropriate number of councilors for the upcoming 2024 election. Prior to staff presenting these options, we are presenting these to Council for approval.

Enclosed, Council will find three maps, specifically, The current boundaries, modified boundaries with 9 councilors, and modified boundaries with 7 councilors.

As mentioned at the previous meeting of Council, the eligible voter population has changed and in the case of District 5, changed dramatically. The UARB rules state that variances from the average eligible voter amount cannot exceed + or – 10%, unless there are other considerations, such as geography, unique language or other factors. District 5, in our view, does not have sufficient alternative considerations, and is at 23% over the average eligible voter. This means, we would recommend an altered boundary, one that makes District 5 smaller, and other Districts larger to even out the population. It should also be noted that District 4 is 13% smaller than the average eligible voter number, making it logical for staff to increase the boundary for it.

Nine Councilor amendments for consideration.

District One – Communities of East Kempt and Hubbard's Point would no longer be in this District, replaced with SAR, Rocco Point and Eel Brook.

District Four – Community of Hubbard's Point would be added to the existing communities of Amirault's Hill, Sluice Point, and the Islands.

District Five – Communities of SAR, Eel Brook and Rocco point eliminated, and replaced with East Kempt.

The other districts would see little to no change.

Revised figures for each District are District One 8.7% (was 7.9%), District Four 8.2% (was - 13.4 %), and District 5 1.9% (was 23.6%). The revisions do succeed in amending the districts mathematically.

Nonmathematical justification:

Based on surveys and discussions with some residents from East Kempt, they have challenges identifying with District 1. Many would identify closer to North Kemp, or MODY generally. Seeing as this community shall remain in Argyle, we considered geographic proximity and the nature of those who choose to live in the area to attempt to address this situation. Both pointed (to staff) to the community of Quinan, which is attached geographically, and both communities enjoy an abundance of lakes and seasonal living.

Moving East Kempt to District 5 made the population increase in 5 even worse. Seeing as District One just lost a community and 5 had too many (by a large number), it left the communities of SAR, Rocco Point and Eel Brook as one of the only options to move. We learned from the last review that separating these communities was not an acceptable option for the residents.

Justification for adding those communities to Tusket is that, again, they are attached geographically. Language in the communities is Acadian and Anglophone mixed. Many residents from Tusket, and Abrams River would be associated with SAR to attend church, and many communities in this area shop and do business in Tusket.

District 4 is currently too small, and it cannot grow in many ways. It could only grow if Abrams River or Hubbard's Point were added. Logically, there are far more connections to Hubbard's Point than Abrams River, which resulted in the change.

Council's first decision would be to accept or ask staff to rework the 9-councilor modified option. Keep in mind that Council, if it is approved, are asking staff to present this option to the community for comment, not to choose that option at this time.

Seven councilor amendments for consideration

Clearly this is a more complex option. Staff has prepared a draft map outlining the changes required. As you may be aware, each district must be larger to make up for eliminating 2 councilors. The following is a description of the changes.

New D-1 – Wedgeport, boundary moved north to the Black Pond Road.

New D-2 – Plymouth, Little River, Comeau's Hill, Little Egypt Road, Tusket, Gavelton.

New D-3 – Hubbard's Point, Amirault's Hill, Sluice Point, the Islands, Abrams River.

New D-4 – All Belleville's, Spring Haven, Quinan, SAR, Rocco Point, Eel Brook.

New D-5 – All Argyles, East Kempt, increased to include all of Argyle Sound

New D-6 – All East Pubnicos, Pubnico Head, West Pubnico (East of Argyle Sound)

New D-7 – All of Middle and Lower West Pubnico.

All of these changes result in a mathematically acceptable segregation of districts, with none exceeding 10% of average eligible voter numbers.

Nonmathematical Justification

Staff has efforted to not divide any communities in this exercise. With Wedgeport and West Pubnico, the only way to grow is north, so that was the first two adjustments required, impacting other districts. When doing so, it was clear that adjacent districts had to be increased. New D-2 can only expand north and would now include Tusket and Gavelton in the mix. These communities are understandably different than former District 2 communities, but it was the only way to expand.

D-4 would be ok mathematically if it remained the same as the prior election, so there was no change to it. D-3 would expand to take Hubbard's Point and Abrams River. It would need both communities to stay within the 10% range.

D-6 was and D-5 both expanded by taking on new communities. The only other community of interest with East Kempt, in our view, was Argyle. Both are predominantly anglophone communities, and do share a common border, though not a common roadway. Our experience with bilingual signs informed us that there may be similarities in interest. Furthermore, the District including the Argyles had to be expanded beyond simply moving the boundary south on Argyle Sound Road.

This leaves D-6, which essentially added population by moving its boundary south into West Pubnico.

From another perspective, it could be argued that former District One and Eight were removed to accommodate new boundaries. Old District 4, 2, and 5 would absorb those communities formerly in old District 1. In Pubnico, Districts 9, 5 and 6 would absorb the elimination of former District 8. Since old District 4 was so large already, it could remain unchanged.

Council will be asked to approve or modify this option as a second decision. Again, please note that the decision to accept would allow staff to present these options to the residents for consideration, and not be to accept this option as of yet.

Public Engagement

Our plan on public engagement is still under development. What we know is the open house is limited in effectiveness. Our plan is to initiate key groups during their meetings, rather than create one on our own. Both options will be presented and explained, and a brief survey will be provided to the residents. All residents will have the same option through Facebook. All options shall be advertised in accordance with the MGA and UARB guidelines.

MGA considerations:

Boundary review is within the responsibility of Municipal Government, with the approval from the Utility and Review Board; Part XVI,

CAO's Recommendation:

Recommend the adoption of modified option 9 and option 7 to present to the public for official engagement.

Suggested motion:

Move that staff present both the modified 9-councilor option and the 7-councilor option, as presented, to the public through promoted and organized public engagement led by staff.