

**CITY OF NEW BERN  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN WORK SESSION  
JUNE 29, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.  
WEST NEW BERN RECREATION CENTER  
1225 PINETREE DRIVE**

Mayor Outlaw opened the meeting with prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by a roll call.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mayor Dana Outlaw, Alderman Sabrina Bengel, Alderwoman Jameesha Harris (arrived at 6:01 p.m.), Alderman Robert Aster, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey, Alderman Barbara Best, and Alderman Jeffrey Odham. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

**Also in Attendance:** Foster Hughes, Interim City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

**1. Discussion and Initial Review of Redistricting.**

Alice Wilson, GIS Coordinator, shared a PowerPoint presentation to review the redistricting process to rectify imbalances in the wards. The last redistricting took place in March 2012 following the 2010 census. Since 2012, Wards 3 and 4 have had significant growth in residential housing units. Mrs. Wilson estimated the 2020 census would reveal a citywide population of approximately 33,000. She explained the methodology used to calculate her predictions. Demolitions, abandoned units, and housing units with minimum code violations were factored into the estimates provided by Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Davis cautioned that the numbers provided at this point are only estimates; the real numbers will be evident once the census data is available.

Potential changes for each ward were reviewed in some detail, as depicted in the PowerPoint slides. Mr. Davis stated the goal is to accomplish three primary objectives, one of which was to equalize the wards based on the number of residents, not political affiliation, age, etc. When doing this, growth over the next 10 years must be considered. Thus, the wards with growth will be made a little smaller based on population to allow them room to grow over the next decade. Roughly a third of New Bern's population is in the minority community. Since there are six wards, at least two wards must be a majority comprised of a minority population. This ensures minority representation on the Board. Alderwoman Harris questioned whether redistricting creates data that could be used for census tracts and opportunity zones. Mr. Davis stated he would have to research that, and Mrs. Wilson said the redistricting would not have any effect.

Alderman Bengel asked at what point the City would be required to add an additional ward and questioned at what point they decide there are too many people in a ward. Mr. Davis stated the answer to that was simply political, not legal. There are a lot of major cities, such as Raleigh and Greenville, that have six or eight wards with 50,000 people or more in each ward.

Questions were posed about counting people who would reside in developments currently under construction. Mr. Davis explained the census data counts living human beings. Projected new growth will not be considered in the redistricting, although an eye should be placed on this when considering the wards that should allot for future growth. Alderman Odham requested the number of bedrooms in apartment complexes, which would affect the number of persons per unit.

With respect to redrawing ward lines, Mr. Davis said one would want to use highways and major streets when drawing the lines and attempt to avoid neighborhoods whenever possible. However, this may not always be avoided. The aim is to circumvent creating “islands” and streets that bisect a ward. Although it may be confusing to residents, there is no way to avoid having one side of a street in one ward and the other side in a different ward.

After reviewing the potential changes for each ward, Mrs. Wilson reviewed the next steps in the redistricting process. Census data will be received by August 16, 2021. The period in which the data can be challenged will be limited. Because New Bern’s population is under 50,000, it will not receive block-level data.

Mr. Davis reiterated that the wards must be balanced based on the 2020 census numbers. Step two is to look forward with an eye on maintaining some sort of parity. The most that can be done with respect to a ward with substantial projected growth is to give it 300 less people now. Alderwoman Harris said she understood the concept, but expressed frustration that Wards 2 and 5 have a lot of drainage issues that means those areas will never be developed. Alderman Bengel explained that while those wards may lose some numbers, the population would be made up by adding people from a different area.

Alderman Odham asked if redistricting could be done more frequently than every 10 years, and Mr. Davis did not know. Knowing there will be two minority wards and the 10% rule that the City must stay within, Alderman Odham asked if the process is simply just a matter of moving the boundaries. Mr. Davis said the redrawing of the wards will make sure that growth in the near future would not dilute out a minority majority. Mrs. Wilson reminded everyone that citizens have the option to contact the Department of Justice if they are concerned that redistricting lines are being drawn to eliminate minority wards.

Mr. Davis said the goal of the meeting was to get the good questions out of the way so there was an understanding of the basic rules. With those rules in mind, he suggested another meeting around the first or middle of August. Alderman Bengel recommended Wards 1, 2 and 5 meet to look at their borders. Alderman Aster questioned the need to meet considering the census numbers would not be available. Mr. Davis said he and Mrs. Wilson would put together information on growth areas, hot spots, number of bedrooms in apartment complexes, etc. The Board could then have breakout groups to meet with Mrs. Wilson, as desired.

In considering redrawing the lines between Wards 4 and 6 with respect to West New Bern, Alderman Odham suggested Highway 70 was a good dividing line in light of sewer capacity and future development. If the City were to decide it did not want wards but wanted to vote at large, Alderman Odham asked if there would still be two minorities depending on population. Mr. Davis responded it would depend on how the elections were organized. Alderman Odham said he was trying to make the point there was nothing the Board could do to dilute the minority representation, and Mr. Davis said that was correct.

Alderman Bengel asked whether action was needed based on Senate Bill 722. Mr. Davis said in coming meetings the Board would need to talk that through. Alderman Bengel asked if the Board could be provided a ward atlas map, and Mrs. Wilson said she would put that task on her list.

Alderman Aster inquired as to how long someone had to live in a ward to run for that seat. Mr. Davis said a citizen must be eligible to vote for the seat they are running for, which means they could have moved in the day before. Alderwoman Harris thought the rules indicated you must live at your address for 30-60 days to put your name on a ballot. Mr. Davis stated that may be the voting rule, but the state statute defines the qualification for holding an office as being qualified to vote for the seat that you are running for, which may mean you have to live there 30-60 days to vote in that ward. Alderman Aster asked what establishes a permanent address for a candidate. Mr. Davis explained a domicile is where you live and tend to remain, but you could be temporarily dislocated. For example, one could be at a lake house and still live at their primary residence elsewhere. A candidate must be able to vote for the seat in which they are running, which means they must be a resident of that ward. After the election, if an alderman were to move outside of their ward, they would no longer be eligible to represent that ward.

#### Closed Session

Alderman Bengel made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Alderman Aster. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 7:02 p.m.

## **2. Adjourn.**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to recess the meeting until June 30, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. in the City Hall Executive Conference Room, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 8:02 p.m.

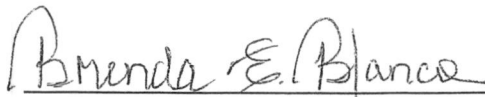
The attached documents are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

NOTE: For additional details and information on the Board of Aldermen meetings, please visit the City of New Bern's website at [www.newbernnc.gov](http://www.newbernnc.gov). Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: July 27, 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana E. Outlaw", written over a horizontal line.

Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda E. Blanco", written over a horizontal line.

Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk

**CITY OF NEW BERN  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN WORK SESSION  
JUNE 30, 2021 – 1:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM  
300 POLLOCK STREET**

**RECESSED MEETING FROM JUNE 29, 2021**

Mayor Outlaw called the recessed meeting to order.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mayor Dana Outlaw, Alderman Sabrina Bengel, Alderwoman Jameesha Harris, Alderman Robert Aster, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey (arrived at 1:05 p.m.), Alderman Barbara Best, and Alderman Jeffrey Odham. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

**Also in Attendance:** Foster Hughes, Interim City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

**Closed Session**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 6-0, time being 1:01 p.m. (Alderman Kinsey had not arrived at this time.)

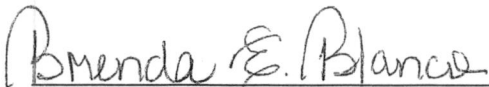
**Recess**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to recess the meeting until July 1, 2021, at 3:00 p.m. in the City Hall Executive Conference Room, seconded by Alderwoman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 2:13 p.m.

Minutes approved: July 27, 2021



Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor



Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk

**CITY OF NEW BERN  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN WORK SESSION  
JULY 01, 2021 – 3:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM  
300 POLLOCK STREET**

**RECESSED MEETING FROM JUNE 29-30, 2021**

Mayor Outlaw called the recessed meeting to order.

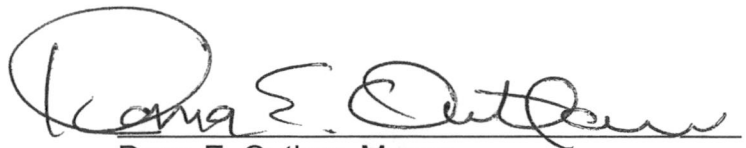
**Board Members in Attendance:** Mayor Dana Outlaw, Alderman Sabrina Bengel, Alderwoman Jameesha Harris, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey, and Alderman Jeffrey Odham. Absent: Alderman Robert Aster and Alderman Barbara Best. A quorum was present.

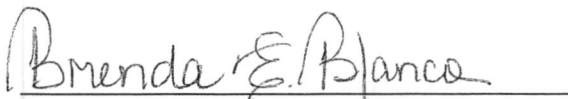
**Also in Attendance:** Foster Hughes, Interim City Manager; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

**Adjourn**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 5-0, time being 3:01 p.m.

Minutes approved: July 27, 2021

  
Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor

  
Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk