

County Supervisors Toss Out Resident-Drawn Redistricting Map in Favor of Plan By Carbajal

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The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday threw out the redistricting map it adopted July 12 and moved forward with one drawn by First District Supervisor Salud Carbajal.

Carbajal said his map builds on existing boundaries to move as few citizens as possible, and it was supported by the two other South County district supervisors at Tuesday's meeting.

After a months-long process of public outreach, the board examined 16 maps at July's meeting and chose one drawn by Goleta resident George Relles. Opposition to the map came mostly from Lompoc, whose citizens don't want the city to be represented by two districts.

Carbajal said he attempted to resolve some concerns raised during the last meeting, including Lompoc's split. In the process, he created some new ones.

Changes from the current district boundaries in Carbajal's map include moving the Santa Barbara San Roque neighborhood to the First District; moving Cuyama to the First District; moving the Santa Barbara Airport and Goleta areas north of Highway 101 to the Second District; moving Tanglewood and Guadalupe to the Third District; and moving the southern portion of Santa Maria to the Fourth District. Only Santa Barbara, Goleta and Santa Maria are divided between multiple districts.

Guadalupe Mayor Lupe Alvarez said his city has been constantly moved back and forth between districts and is the "whipping city" of

the county, adding that he learned about the new proposed map last week and is still furious.

He said the boundaries proposed by Carbajal make the Fourth District gerrymandered and another “ribbon of shame.”

Nearly 30 public speakers came to Tuesday’s meeting, including a strong showing of Lompoc City Council members who voiced their support for a united city under one district.

Many speakers objected to the board’s decision to disregard maps drawn by the public, especially after the \$60,000 or so spent on the public outreach portion of the process.

Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business Executive Director Andy Caldwell said county supervisors should have made their priorities clear in the beginning since they have the final votes, then the public could have some input that is more likely to be considered.

Former supervisor Brooks Firestone reminded the board that “there is great suspicion in the north of the county that the south is running the show and they don’t respect the north.” He served when there was a possibility of the county splitting in two and urged sitting supervisors not to add fuel on that fire.

Fourth District Supervisor Joni Gray said she was glad to see Lompoc remain intact but didn’t support the motion since it moved Guadalupe out of her district. Fifth District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino also dissented.

“I’m really confused,” he said. “I mean, I’m really, really confused. We left the last meeting and had a map agreed upon. ... I want to know if that map is dead or not.”

He asked whether it was coincidence that the only two maps given motions of support in July were submitted by people — Relles and BL Borovay — who he later found out have been heavy campaign donors within the county. Though he believes the board did nothing wrong, it “looks bad and smells bad.”

“To me, this process is tainted,” he said, recommending the decision be turned over to a three-person commission made up of District Attorney Joyce Dudley, County Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone and County Clerk-Recorder/Assessor Joseph Holland.

Carbajal defended his efforts, and Supervisor Janet Wolf said Lavagnino’s comments were a “new low” and called the accusations “unfair,” “ridiculous,” “chilling” and “kind of dangerous.”

She supported the new map and said Carbajal “worked hard and came up with I think a fair solution.” Third District Supervisor Doreen Farr also supported it, calling it better than the one adopted in July.

The second reading of the ordinance, including the new map, will be done at the Aug. 9 meeting in the Joseph Centeno Betteravia Government Administration Building, 511 E. Lakeside Pkwy. in Santa Maria.

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