

**FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR COMMON COUNCIL
JOINT FINDINGS & VOTING DISTRICT OPTIONS
REGISTRARS OF VOTERS PETER GOSTIN (R) AND JUAN VERDU (D)
3/16/2016**

As per Common Council Resolution # 33377 dated 1/27/16, enclosed please find the requested Feasibility Study on the status of the city's voting districts and polling locations as compiled for the common council by the Registrars of Voters office.

First, in order to realize the fiscal cost of running an election for each of the city's seventeen polling location, we researched and gathered all of the various expenses associated with every voting district (Exhibit A).

We then considered the possible places that might afford reasonable opportunities for improving the utilization of each polling place and what any associated cost-savings might be (see Exhibit B).

Next we put together a spreadsheet showing voter turnout and polling place rankings in descending order of voter turnout in each of the past four elections (Exhibit C).

Our final look was into how New Britain rates in comparison with over a dozen other state municipalities regarding their number of voters, square miles of territory, the number of polls, voters per square mile, polling location per square mile and voters per polling location (see Exhibit D). As you will see, New Britain has by far the highest average number of polling locations per square mile to go along with the lowest average number of voters per polling location.

It is noteworthy to mention that no changes can be made to the existing ward boundaries. This is because our city charter requires five wards, and the determination of these boundaries was based on an equal population distribution from the 2010 census. This cannot be altered until after the next state legislative re-districting occurs in 2022, after the 2020 census. The voting district boundaries, however, could be malleable within each ward to the extent the common council determines how many districts best serve the electorate in each ward, and whether they would adversely intersect and affect the electors in even vs. odd-numbered years. Once the voting district boundaries are defined, the Registrars of Voters are responsible for selecting the polling locations in each voting district.

Here are some of the notable pieces of information derived from our study:

Exhibit A – The five highest-cost voting districts are, in descending order: #6 State Armory, #7 Generale Ameglio Society Hall, #12 Pulaski School, #1 Vance School and #10 St. Francis Church Hall.

Exhibit B – Of the seventeen polling locations, workable options for consolidation may be:

#1 Vance School, #6 State Armory, #5-1 School Apartments, #5-2 Graham Apartments and #11 Holmes School. The merging of these districts with others within their wards could show a net savings to the city of \$17,741 per election.

Exhibit C: Since the re-districting in 2012, the polling locations consistently ranked in the lowest third of voter turnout (numbers of voters) have been the following:

District 4 – Gaffney School

District 5 – Senior Center

District 5-1 – School Apartments

District 5-2 – Graham Apartments

District 6 – State Armory

District #10 – St. Francis Church Hall

Of these six polling places, three have fewer than 500 registered voters:

Gaffney @ 477 voters School Apts. @ 180 voters Graham Apts. @ 240 voters

Of these six polling places, two are in the top five of the highest costs in running elections:

State Armory @ \$5,765 (1st) and St. Francis Church Hall @ \$4,146 (5th)

Exhibit D – Of the 13 other municipalities used for comparison in this study, New Britain ranks the highest for the number of polling locations per square mile and the lowest for voters per polling location. Consequently, our overall costs for running elections are higher than they might otherwise be under a thoughtful, measured consolidation effort.

Findings and Options By Ward

Ward 1

District 1 – Vance School is ranked between 3rd and 5th in voter turnout each election, but the ease of parking is only fair. Option: could move two-thirds of the voters to New Britain High School where parking is very ample, and move the other one-third of voters to Slade School where parking is a little more abundant. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 2 – New Britain High School has a very large parking area which can easily accommodate more vehicles. Option: could absorb approximately two-thirds of the voters from Vance School. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 15 – Slade School had a good amount of parking area and could absorb a modest increase of traffic. Option: could absorb approximately one-third of the voters from Vance School. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

Ward 2

District 3 – Roosevelt School could not be merge with or be moved to either District 6 or District 9. This would result in Roosevelt's electors needing to vote in Ward 2 in the odd-numbered years and then crossing into a different state assembly district in the even-numbered years. Suggestion: leave this district as is.

District 6 – State Armory is the costliest polling location in the city due to the state of Connecticut's rental fees (non-waivable). The parking area is only fair and voter turnout is historically in the lower third of all the city's polling locations. Option: find a less expensive site (Angelico's Restaurant or St. John's Church?) or move voters to Chamberlain School where parking is a little more abundant. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 9 – Chamberlain School has a fairly good parking area that could accommodate some increased volume. Option: if an alternate polling location couldn't be found for the State Armory, then looking to absorb those electors might be viable. No voter relocation issues with even or odd year elections would factor in this course of action.

Ward 3

District 5 – Senior Center consistently ranks in the bottom third of voter turnout, is underutilized but has a good amount of available parking and could easily handle an increase in volume. Option: could absorb all 420 electors from both the School and Graham Apartments, or only those from the School Apartments (180). No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 5-1 – The School Apartments house 180 electors, all of whom are seniors, with a majority being mostly mobile and a good number of these who participate in daily activities / lunch at the Senior Center. It has a very limited amount of on-street parking. Option: could move all electors to the Senior Center. They could be offered hourly rotational transportation (e.g. bus rides to and from the Senior Center, possibly adding a loop with the Graham Apartment electors). Those electors who are more physically challenged could make use of the absentee ballot process. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 5-2 – The Graham Apartment complex houses 240 electors, many of whom are seniors with a large majority being mobile and some of these also participating in daily activities / lunch at the Senior Center. Parking is quite limited. Option 1: could move all electors to the Senior Center. They could be offered hourly rotational transportation (e.g. bus rides to and from the Senior Center, possibly adding a loop with the School Apartment electors). Option 2: Move all 240 electors to Smalley School, as parking there is more abundant and could absorb these electors. In either case, those who are more physically challenged could make use of the absentee ballot process. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 7 – Generale Ameglio Society Hall has a fairly good amount of available parking and is adequately utilized, but any increase in the number of electors could be problematic. Suggestion: leave this district as is.

District 8 – Smalley School has a fairly good parking area yet is somewhat underutilized in most elections. Option: could absorb all 240 electors from the Graham Apartments. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

Ward 4

District 10 – St. Francis Church Hall has a spacious interior area for voting and a large parking area. Both are underutilized based on election turnouts. Option: could absorb up to two-thirds of #11 Holmes School electors if it is determined practical to move the electors from that polling location. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 11 – Holmes School ranks between 3rd and 5th place in voter turnout over the past four elections but has a tight interior area for voting and an odd-shaped triangular area for parking but is generally ample enough for most elections. The vehicle entry and exit points are one-way and sometimes cause confusion for the voter. Depending on any polling location adjustment to #13 HRA (needed), it could be possible to move one-third or so of its electors to a new #13 location (see below) and the other two-thirds or so of its electors to the underutilized #10 St. Francis Church Hall. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action.

District 13 – Human Resource Agency of New Britain (HRA) has a spacious interior for voting but the parking area is severely limited due to this location serving as a year-round pre-school and the lot being 95% filled with personnel vehicles between 7:30 am – 5:00 pm. Options: could move all electors to another location? [i.e. un-rented Housing Authority building located 1,000 ft. down the street, or look into Holy Cross School, the new Crystal Ballroom (may be completed this summer), or other]. If a site such as Holy Cross is used, then between a third to half of the electors from Holmes School could be moved there. No voter relocation issues with even or odd-year elections would factor in this course of action. [Note: it is too close to the presidential primary to make any change now, but both Registrars are investigating other possible locations before an expected August primary and this November's election.]

Ward 5

District 4 – Gaffney School, although having the third fewest number of electors and a good parking area, could not merge or be moved to either District 12 or District 14. This would result in Gaffney's electors needing to vote in Ward 5 in the odd-numbered years and then crossing into a different state assembly district in the even-numbered years. Suggestion: leave this district as is.

District 12 – Pulaski School has a sufficient interior for voting during elections but during primaries when school is open moves to inside and outside the hall / auditorium, which is not ideal. The parking area is very ample to support the largest number of district voters in the city. However, it could not merge or be moved to either District 4 or District 14. This would result in Pulaski's electors needing to vote in Ward 5 in the odd-numbered years and then crossing into a different state assembly district in the even-numbered years. Suggestion: leave this district as is.

District 14 – Diloreto School has the third-highest number of electors and an ample amount of parking area. However, it could not merge or be moved to either District 4 or District 12. This would result in Diloreto's electors needing to vote in Ward 5 in the odd-numbered years and then crossing into a different state assembly district in the even-numbered years. Suggestion: leave this district as is.

In summary, whatever the determinations of the common council end up being we recommend that any actions to merge, consolidate and/or move district lines and polling locations should be delayed until the 2017 election cycle, after this year's presidential election. The possible confusion that might be borne of such changes would best be implemented in a municipal election year when the lowest voter turnout occurs.