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RELEASE

The Monroe County Legislature Is Not Cinderella and the Clock Doesn't Strike for Redistricting at Year's End

The County Legislature has been barreling forward on the process of redistricting, cutting corners and neglecting important steps along the way. When legislators protest, they are told by the President of the Legislature and by the attorney advising him that they must move fast because redistricting must be completed soon, perhaps as soon Dec. 14. Though Dr. Carbone has been asked repeatedly to explain the source of urgency, he has not made it clear. In fact, there is no urgency. There is ample time to elicit public input and consider carefully what tradeoffs to make in drawing the new district lines. All Monroe County residents will benefit if the Legislature acts with thoroughness rather than haste.

There is No Hurry

The Monroe County Charter specifies that once a Legislative District Revision Commission is appointed, it has three months to recommend revisions to the districts (see section C-3 of the Charter). That has been achieved. The Commission was appointed on Sept. 14 and voted to approve recommendations on Nov. 29. The recommendations were presented to the Legislature on the 30th. The work of the Commission is done.

The next step is for the Legislature to review the recommendations. They must call at least one public hearing before they act on the proposed legislation. They have three months to accomplish those tasks (see section C-5 of the Charter). Three months would take us to late February, 2022. There is no deadline looming.

Why does the President keep telling the Legislature they must act in haste? We can see only one thing weighing on President Carbone's mind. His term ends with the installation of the new legislature in January. There is nothing in the charter that gives any significance to the seating of

a newly elected legislature. The Charter rules are simple and clear. The Legislature has three months, starting on now, to do this next phase of work.

The Stakes are Too High to Rush

The drawing of district lines has a great impact on how well the County Legislature can represent Monroe County residents. Dozens of residents came out for the public hearings in October to complain about problems with the lines we've been living with for the last ten years. The prior lines divided communities of interest in many parts of the county, cutting through villages and dicing up both neighborhoods and towns. These concerns were expressed in the October hearings, but do not appear to have been considered. It appears that the proposed districts retain most of the problems with the old districts and introduce new ones.

It is possible to do so much better. If the County Legislature were to hold multiple well-publicized hearings on these district lines, and **to listen** to concerns raised by residents, we could have districts that reflect communities of interest in a natural and organic way. It would be easier for citizens to know who represents us and how to communicate with our representatives. Democracy works better in those conditions.

The Legislature has three months to consider the amendments, and we urge them to take that time and listen to the public. They could spend the first month making sure that the maps are available in a form that lets residents see where they live and where the lines may cut their neighborhood, and publicizing effectively the timeline for a series of hearings at locations convenient to each part of the city and county. The second month could be spent holding hearings in every corner of the county. The final month could be used to integrate the information collected from everyone to make revisions so that we would have maps that reflect the interests of all Monroe County residents.

We urge the Legislature to do a diligent job of seeking input from the public and responding to it thoughtfully. This is one of the most consequential things the Legislature does; it deserves serious thought and care.