



Press Release

PR17 – 003

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DISTRICT-BASED ELECTIONS MEETING SET FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 26TH

Chino Hills, CA – The City of Chino Hills is conducting a Community Information Meeting regarding district-based elections at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 26th at the Chino Hills Community Center, 14250 Peyton Drive. Residents are encouraged to attend to learn more about district-based elections versus the current at-large election system. A brief overview of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) will be presented and there will be an opportunity for community input. The CVRA was enacted by the State of California to address concerns that at-large voting dilutes the voting rights of minority communities if two racial groups vote differently from each other. This is the first in a series of community meetings and public hearings that will be scheduled on the issue. Residents will have multiple opportunities during the process to review and comment on draft maps of the City divided into voting districts. For additional information, please call (909) 364-2610.

The City hired National Demographics Corporation (NDC) in September to analyze Census and California data and to guide the City through the transition to district-based voting and public education and outreach processes. The City has set a goal to transition to district-based voting before the candidate filing period for the November 2018 General Election. The draft tentative schedule is as follows:

January 26	Community Information Meeting
February 14	Public Hearing at City Council Meeting
February tbd*	Community Information Meeting
March 14	Public Hearing at City Council Meeting
April 1	Target date for publication of draft map
April 11	Target date for Public Hearing on the draft map

(Additional dates to be published as process continues.)

*to be determined

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Background Information:

The City of Chino Hills currently uses an at-large election system, which means that all voters in the City have the opportunity to vote for candidates for all five seats on the City Council. The City Council declared their intent to transition to district-based elections on November 22, 2016 in response to correspondence received in August from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). According to MALDEF, Latinos constitute 27.3% of the voting age population in Chino Hills and that only one Latino, Mayor Ray Marquez, has served on the City Council since the City's incorporation in 1991. MALDEF alleges that the lack of success of Latino candidates is the result of "racially polarized voting," which exists when two racial groups vote differently from each other. The remedy for racially polarized voting is to switch to district-based voting. MALDEF states that continued use of an at-large election system would violate the CVRA.

According to City Attorney Mark D. Hensley, a number of cities in California have faced a CVRA lawsuit since it was adopted in 2001 and none of them have successfully defended a CVRA lawsuit brought to mandate district-based elections. Mr. Hensley reported that there is a low threshold for plaintiffs to establish a valid claim under the CVRA and cities are required to pay the plaintiff's costs if their claim is deemed valid. Because there are significant costs to defend against these lawsuits, the vast majority of cities have voted to voluntarily transition to district-based elections.

Impacts on California Cities:

- Modesto – settled lawsuit after citizens voted to switch to district-based voting, paid \$3 million in fees to the plaintiff's lawyers and \$1.7 million for its own lawyers.
- Cities sued or threatened with suit under the CVRA: Anaheim, Bellflower, Ceres, Chino, Compton, Escondido, Fullerton, Highland, Los Banos, Merced, Palmdale, Riverbank, Santa Barbara, Santa Clarita, Tulare, Turlock, and Visalia
- The vast majority of cities have opted to voluntarily transition to district-based elections
- The City of Chino conducted district-based elections in November of 2016
- Nearly all cities in the Inland Empire have plans to transition to district-based voting

Residents may review City Council meeting staff reports on the item by visiting www.chinohills.org/agendas, select City Council and the following meeting dates: November 22, 2016; September 27, 2016.

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