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# Council OKs new district map on 5-2 vote

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On a 5 to 2 vote, the Watsonville City Council last night approved new district boundaries for city elections.

Council members Betty Murphy and Paul Milladin voted against a map recommended by the city's consultant, Joaquin Avila, and a 14-member advisory committee.

The ordinance will have to be voted on one more time and may

be adjusted again when the Census Bureau releases more information, but the districts approved last night will probably be used when city residents go to the polls in November.

The city changed from at-large elections to district elections in 1989 as the result of a voting-rights lawsuit, which claimed the old system diluted Latino voting strength. Under the terms of the lawsuit, there must be at least two

districts with a Latino majority and a city charter amendment says the city must be redistricted every 10 years when new information from the census becomes available.

The new map puts both Murphy, who represents District 6, and Councilwoman Betty Bobeda, who represents District 7, in District 7. No council member lives in the new District 6.

The new map drastically

changes District 1, which has had the most population growth since the 1980 census. The new districts 3 and 4 take up portions of the old District 1, and District 1 moves into the old District 7. All the other districts have been shifted counterclockwise to make up for the adjustments.

Districts 1 and 2 each have a Latino population of more than 80 percent, an amount needed, because of the large number of illegal immigrants, to get a majority

of Latinos eligible to vote, Avila says. Two other districts also have a Latino majority.

The adoption of the new map won't change which seats are up for re-election. Elections were scheduled for districts 6, 1 and 2, where Murphy, Milladin and Oscar Rios, respectively, are serving two-year terms. Bobeda was appointed to the District 7 seat after the death of Councilman Johnny Kacsmatyk and is serving only until the next election.

Murphy had several objections to the new map. She said District 7 had the highest number of registered voters of any district, and that by expanding 7, which the new map does, the city could end up with "30 percent of the registered voters in one district."

She also said the new map doesn't preserve the integrity of neighborhoods the way the current map does, with boundaries

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## MAP

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cutting across major streets and running down the middle of cohesive communities. She said she thought that would make it harder for people to understand what precinct they are in.

Councilman Parr Eves disagreed with Murphy, saying districts 6 and 7 might seem more broken up in the new map, but lines in his district, District 5, and Mayor Todd McFarren's district, District 4, seemed to make more sense.

Milladin, who rarely speaks at

council meetings, didn't say anything during the discussion on the new map. When asked during a break why he voted against the map, he said he didn't like the way districts 6 and 7 were broken up. He said he had wanted the boundaries adjusted just a little bit so Murphy and Bobeda would remain in separate districts. He also said he wanted information on how many registered voters there would be in each of the new districts before approving the map.

Avila said that information could only be obtained from the county, which couldn't provide the information until it has the new map in its computer system.

The council voted after Avila made a presentation and members of the advisory committee talked about their decision.

Pedro Castillo, the committee chairman, said the map was chosen because it best met three criteria: the attempt to maintain a one-person, one-vote ideal by making sure all the districts were about equal in population; the Voting Rights Act, and the conditions of the lawsuit; and a minimal splitting of current voter precincts, as determined by the county.

Other members also said they thought the map preserved neighborhoods.

Former Mayor Ann Soldo was the only member of the advisory committee who voted against recommending the map.

She told the council she wasn't necessarily opposed to the map, but she was against the speed with which it had been approved. The advisory committee meeting began at 7:05 and ended at 8:35 p.m., too little time, she said, to make such an important decision.

Soldo said when she was appointed to the committee she was told by City Clerk Lorraine Washington that it would probably meet about three times.

"If I had known that it was going to take one hour I would not have agreed to it," she said.

She complained that committee members weren't given maps of the alternatives Avila presented and Avila's report wasn't fully discussed.

Other committee members disagreed.

Member Dick Bernard said it wasn't too difficult to make a quick decision. With all of the parameters set by law and tradition, there "was very little maneuvering room ... We could have talked all night, we could have talked for two or three meetings, but we would have reached the same conclusion."