

Boundaries and bathrooms

Council chooses district map, moves to add four restrooms

When it came to finalizing Chico's election districts at Tuesday's (Jan. 21) City Council meeting, the pleas of the public from across the political spectrum seemed to fall on deaf ears.

That night, citizens clamored for one of three maps drawn by local planner Bryce Goldstein (also a Chico planning commissioner). Two dozen people spoke, with the majority advocating for her proposals to be considered. Among their reasons: The maps preserved important Chico neighborhoods and their boundaries were based on natural environs and not to preserve incumbency.

Several speakers advocated for her maps because of the representation they would offer historically disenfranchised neighborhoods. "We need to prioritize that they have a voice," Chaz Kelley said.

Others said they felt the maps were bipartisan, as evidenced by the broad public support: "For me to agree with a socialist is kind of crazy, but I am tonight," said Jynaia Badie.

Instead, the panel opted for a map (plan Lavender) by demographer Michael Wagaman. This was mentioned by a few speakers as their preferred option. It's a slightly

modified version of an original map (plan Purple; see map details at tinyurl.com/ChicoDistricts).

For the modifications, which were specifically requested by the council, Wagaman slightly shifted the boundary lines of one district, which resulted in Councilmembers Ann Schwab and Karl Ory ending up in the same one (both of their terms end in 2020, but Ory has decided not to run).

The map wasn't the controversial decision for the council, however—Councilman Scott Huber was the only nay. When it came to choosing which districts would be up for grabs in the 2020 general election, that's when things got sticky.

Ory suggested that districts in south and west Chico be in the running. These include ones that represent the south campus neighborhood, downtown Chico, and the Barber and Chapman/Mulberry neighborhoods. They're the proposed districts where Mayor Randall Stone, Vice Mayor Alex Brown, and Ory and Schwab reside. (The south Chico district encompassing the Barber and Chapman/Mulberry neighborhoods has no incumbent).

Councilman Sean Morgan immediately made a substitute motion, advocating for odd-numbered districts to go on the ballot. This would implement one change: swapping his district for Brown's.

After the progressives shot that down, Morgan pressed for the reasoning. Ory said his intent was to include districts that have the highest non-white populations in order to increase representation.

Morgan argued that it was clearly to shut him out of the running for 2020 (at this time, he has not submitted his intent to run).

The vote on Ory's motion passed narrowly, with Morgan and Councilwomen Kasey Reynolds and Schwab against.

The audience's response: a resounding "boo."

Since Brown's term runs through 2022, she will serve until then, regardless. But she can choose to run this year, in order to secure an additional two years, since her district is on a 2020-24 cycle (if she loses, however, her successor would serve the two years from 2022-24).

Also at Tuesday's meeting, an often-argued topic re-emerged: Is it enabling to provide services to

the homeless?

This item related to providing public restrooms in city parks. The Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC), spurred by a proposal submitted last August by Commissioner Scott Grist, began examining adding restrooms to solve sanitation and environmental health concerns caused by human waste left in riparian areas.

The council approved of most of the BPPC's recommendations, adding 24-hour portable restrooms to the Humboldt (or Windchime) Park, Comanche Creek Greenway, Parking Lot 1 (where the Saturday morning farmers' market is held) and the bridge over Lindo Channel at The Esplanade. For the latter, staff will look into placing the portable north of the channel, given the proximity to Chico Nut Co.

The panel approved \$83,500 for the project—staff will recommend where those funds will come from at a future meeting.

While the majority of public speakers supported adding restrooms, some voiced concerns over proximity to their homes, arguing that they could encourage people to camp or congregate and pose a safety risk.

Reynolds said she worried the city was taking a piecemeal approach—perhaps the council could consider a trial period, or put the \$80,000 toward sheltering.

Several council members and public speakers noted the importance of access for moral reasons as well as health and sanitation. Patrick Newman, of Chico Friends on the Street, called 24-hour access to restrooms a "fundamental human right."

Brown, who chairs the Greater Chico Homeless Task Force, said expanding 24-hour restroom access throughout the city is one of the group's policy recommendations to the council. Indeed, 51 percent of those surveyed in the 2019 homeless census said they did not have access to a restroom on a daily basis (44 percent day and night, 7 percent only at night).

Schwab added: "As our population grows, there is a need for more restrooms, and if people don't have those facilities or can't get back to their own home, then that is necessary for us to go forward."

—ASHIAH SCHARAGA
ashiahs@newsreview.com



Resistance 2020

Nearly 1,000 people attended the fourth annual Women's March on Chico on Saturday (Jan. 18), once again held on the same day as hundreds of sister rallies around the nation that began upon President Trump taking office in 2017.

PHOTO BY
CHARLES FINLAY

Open Enrollment UNTIL JANUARY 31



SCIENCE



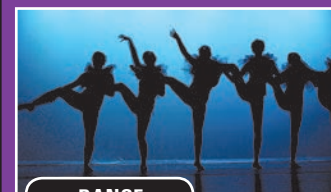
THEATER



ENGINEERING



ARTS



DANCE

- Tuition-Free Charter High School
- Small Learning Environment
- Over 70 Specialized Elective Choices
- College-Prep Curriculum
- 21 Clubs
- ISPE (Independent Study PE)

Inspire
School of Arts & Sciences

(530) 891-3090
www.inspirechico.org