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City of Rancho Santa Margarita Begins Transition to District-Based Elections

Rancho Santa Margarita, CA – At the July 24, 2023, City Council Meeting, the Rancho Santa Margarita City Council adopted a Resolution declaring its intention to transition from at-large to by-district municipal elections.

Currently, all Rancho Santa Margarita registered voters vote for all five City Council Members. Upon completion of the districting process, the City will have separate voting districts. Beginning in 2024, voters will vote for one City Council Member to represent their district.

While transitioning to a district-based election system was not an existing goal for the City, on June 23, 2023, the City received a letter challenging its current election system and asserting that the City's at-large election system violates the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). Rancho Santa Margarita is not unique in this situation, as dozens of agencies throughout the State have received similar demand letters prompting a transition from at-large to district-based elections.

Residents are encouraged to get involved in the district formation process by attending public hearings, sharing their thoughts on neighborhoods that should be kept together in a single district, submitting a map of proposed district lines, and eventually providing feedback on other draft maps drawn by the community and the City's professional demographer.

As required by law, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita will hold four public hearings:

- August 16, 2023, at 7 p.m. – First Public Hearing, Rancho Santa Margarita Council Chambers
- August 28, 2023, at 7 p.m. – Second Public Hearing, Rancho Santa Margarita Council Chambers
- September 13, 2023, at 7 p.m. – Third Public Hearing, Rancho Santa Margarita City Council Chambers

- September 27, 2023, at 7 p.m. – Fourth Public Hearing, Rancho Santa Margarita City Council Chambers

To help share information about the district formation process, public mapping tools, and maps drawn by the public and to collect public feedback, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita has launched a dedicated district formation webpage: www.drawrsm.org. The webpage includes background information about district formation, a schedule outlining public hearings and deadlines, frequently asked questions and other details. The page will be updated throughout the process to include additional information on upcoming meetings, hearings, and draft maps.

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