

**CHRISTOPHER G. PAPLAUSKAS**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

**Councilman Ward 5**  
**14 Highland Street**  
**Cranston, RI 02920**  
**401-996-9196**  
**chrispaplauskas@gmail.com**



**EX-OFFICIO OF ALL COMMITTEES**

**CITY COUNCIL**

869 Park Avenue  
Cranston, Rhode Island 02910-2786

VIA EMAIL

Dec. 19, 2021

Rep. Robert Phillips, Co-Chair  
Sen. Stephen Archambault, Co-Chair  
Special Commission on Reapportionment  
1 Capitol Hill, Room 35  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairmen Phillips and Archambault, and Honorable Members of the Commission:

I am writing to express significant concerns regarding representative district boundaries used in the “House C” plan unveiled last week. As the Ward 5 councilmember who has represented this area since 2015, and as a resident of the Meshanticut neighborhood myself, I cannot fathom a reason or need to split this community in two, and certainly not in the arbitrary fashion that approval of “House C” would enact. Already, I have received numerous calls from constituents and neighbors who share these concerns about the neighborhood being broken up by proposed state district boundary lines.

It is noteworthy that one of the proposed lines splits Meshanticut in two horizontally (east to west), using a small side street, Curtis Street, that is not a major road or natural feature, and that is wholly inappropriate for use as a representative district line. The other unfortunate line used in “House C” is Cranston Street, which in this area of the city, is not a major road, but instead the central road that defines Meshanticut itself – using Cranston Street as a boundary here breaks the neighborhood in two vertically, on the north-south axis. This boundary line is a mere few dozen feet away from my own house, and cuts off my neighbors, whom are just across Cranston street.

The Cranston Redistricting Commission conducted a study of neighborhood lines last summer, and after receiving public feedback, shared its findings earlier this year with Election Data Services for use by the Special Commission on Reapportionment, with the stated goal of keeping city neighborhoods intact during the state redistricting process, which will aid in the City’s own efforts to draw wards. The City of Cranston’s neighborhood map that was produced from this effort defines Meshanticut as a major neighborhood, and it has for decades been defined this way, and effectively had the same representation in both state and local government.

It is noteworthy that the previous plans, “House A” and “House B,” each achieved a population balance without finding the need to break up Meshanticut – the core of the neighborhood remains whole in both of these map scenarios. So, it is clearly not a question of whether or not it can be done; given that there are numerous other alternatives, it would neither seem prudent nor justifiable to break up this important Cranston neighborhood, especially when other options that do not do so, and do not create a “ripple effect,” are readily apparent and available.

Furthermore, as defined in “House C,” the breaking up of Meshanticut creates a small pocket precinct, and there is no viable facility located within this pocket precinct for use as a polling location. If the pocket remains as-is, the City of Cranston will have no choice but to expend thousands of dollars in renting, supplying, and staffing an out-of-district polling location over the course of the next 10 years. Such an occurrence would be confusing and inconvenient for the voters who live in this well-established community of interest, and make for an extremely inefficient use of taxpayer dollars and finite city election administration resources.

The Charter of the City of Cranston was recently amended to state that the City’s wards “respect the geographic integrity of local neighborhoods or local communities of interest in a manner which minimizes their division to the extent possible.” This new measure was overwhelmingly approved by Cranston voters in November 2020. While the state Special Commission on Reapportionment is certainly not bound by the City Charter, I would respectfully request that the spirit of the Charter be honored by the state in its work, to the extent possible, by ensuring major neighborhoods like Meshanticut are not broken up unnecessarily, particularly when more preferable map alternatives may be developed.

Thank you for your diligent and important work in conducting the state’s redistricting process, and for your consideration in adopting a plan that does not break up a key neighborhood and community of interest like Meshanticut. I understand that you have many competing considerations to balance in the drawing of state maps, however, in this case I hope you can see the damage that “House C” would do to the contiguity of the Meshanticut neighborhood, and that any plan that would do so is entirely avoidable.

On behalf of my neighbors who live alongside me in this truly wonderful part of Cranston, I respectfully request that the Commission considers a new plan that does not split the Meshanticut neighborhood, and keeps our community intact with the same representation in state government.

Respectfully,



Christopher G. Paplauskas  
Cranston City Council President