

for the purpose of diluting the voting strength of any language or ethnic minority group.”

Districts these days are redrawn not by hand but with software. The question arises of not only which software will be used, but also whether that software, and the process by which it is chosen, can reflect bias.

Lane County has had issues in the past with “gerrymandering,” a process named after Gov. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts who, in 1812, reluctantly signed into law a bill Republicans forced through the state’s legislature that rearranged district lines to assure them an advantage in the upcoming senatorial election. According to Budget Committee and Redistricting Task Force committee member Scott Bartlett, the commissioners’ districts in the past have been drawn in to reflect bias. He points to a map

to population numbers.” He said it saves money, staff time and “allows for us to run hundreds of scenarios.”

Adding further tempest to the political redistricting teapot was the revelation that Administrator Richardson had authorized \$5,000 and already purchased the Moonshadow software. Richardson said, “The county has purchased the software, which would allow us to use it for redistricting if the board chooses to go in that direction.”

She said the current plan for the use of the software, among other things, is to allow the community to come in and use it to draw districts during one or more open houses; allow the redistricting committee to use it, even if LCOG is selected as the official provider; and to allow the Office of County Counsel to very quickly determine if the “final” districts inadvertently create areas that appear to be

Michael McKenzie-Bahr, who in April resigned in an agreement with the county, said, “In the case of contracts in community and economic development, scope of work changes were approved in consultation with the county administrator.”

McKenzie-Bahr added, “I am proud of the work I did assisting local businesses and communities. The county made a large investment in expanding the local green economy.” Among the projects McKenzie-Bahr was working on were efforts to bring a bioenergy park to the county and making grants to popular local sustainable businesses such as \$100,000 to Arcimoto electric cars and \$100,000 to Ninkasi brewery.

Berney said his work for the county created the opportunity to get up to \$10 million in non-county resources. This private capital and grant funds would finance the first year of a residential energy efficiency and solar program to create local jobs and reduce carbon emissions. The multi-year program could expand each year.

According to county emails, Berney sent a copy of his report to the commissioners and interim CEDD Director Glenda Poling on June 1. As of press time, he had not received a response.

A recent *Register-Guard* article looked at the issue, calling it an “investigation” into Lane County’s CEDD and into contracts such as those signed with Berney. Richardson is quoted in the story as saying that “an investigation into McKenzie-Bahr’s actions ‘began to reveal potential issues implicating Commissioners Handy and (Pete) Sorenson.’”

McKenzie-Bahr said, “I do not know why she singled out Commissioner Handy or Sorenson; I interacted with them the same way I interacted with the other commissioners.”

EW obtained a copy of the release agreement that McKenzie-Bahr signed with Lane County. “The investigation into what the county initially labeled ‘misconduct’ has been terminated in regard to the employee,” the document states.

When asked if an investigation into McKenzie-Bahr is continuing, despite the contract stating that the investigation was terminated, Richardson said via email that the *R-G* reporter “uses the word ‘investigation.’ We are doing an audit of the entire program. I have told him that the investigation and the audit are the same thing and that audit is a better characterization, but investigation keeps showing up in the articles.”

According to the *R-G* article, Richardson had said, “projects where the (county board) was not asked to give direction, but instead individual commissioners were pulled in and provided private briefings while others had no idea about the project.”

McKenzie-Bahr continued, “I made the commissioners aware, before their vote to award the contracts, that the contracts for Renewable Funding and Joe Berney did not go before the economic development standing committee. This fact can be verified by watching the online video of the board meeting.”

When asked if the board intended to continue work on bringing energy efficiency and renewable energy back to Lane County, Bozievich said, “Frankly I can’t comment a whole lot on that subject because it its under investigation.” But when it comes to focusing on green, sustainable local projects, he said, “As always the economy is about local jobs; we wouldn’t be doing if it wasn’t about the local economy. It kind of goes without saying.”

Bozievich said while he finds the word green “overused,” he thinks the board will continue “to have an eye for sustainable development.”

Handy said, “Last year, the board passed good public policy to place solar panels on every rooftop possible in Lane County to help promote renewable energy and to save people and businesses money.” But, he continued, “behind the scenes, this policy has been sabotaged.” Handy said, “Instead of making this shift up-front and at a board meeting, they have worked with the County Administrator Liane Richardson to undermine this policy and destroy the work.”

Commissioner Handy said, “I want there to be transparency about this matter so that the public has all the possible information and can see these political shenanigans for what they are.”

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— ROB HANDY

from the 1991 redistricting that shows the North Eugene commissioner district drawn in such a way it extended all the way to south 18th Avenue.

Bartlett said in 2001 the district was redrawn to 11th Avenue, which followed the North Eugene High School/South Eugene High boundary. High schools, Bartlett said, are a community of interest.

Some political-process watchers have speculated that a more right-leaning County Commission might vote to pull the west Eugene and Whiteaker precincts from the North District and add them to South Eugene, making the North a Republican electoral stronghold by yanking out progressives and racially diverse neighborhoods and census blocks.

The *R-G* reports that conservative Eugene City Councilor Mike Clark is thinking about running against Handy for his North Eugene seat. Clark’s recent effort to say the Pledge of Allegiance at City Council meetings has been called an attempt to build conservative media attention. Clark did not respond to an *EW* request for an interview.

Lane County has historically used the nonpartisan Lane Council of Governments (LCOG), and it uses Esri’s ArcGIS (geographic information system) to redistrict. Controversy began when Bozievich suggested the county use Moonshadow Mobile, a Eugene-based internet software company to redistrict.

Clark is vice president of Moonshadow.

“It bothers me that redistricting process is somehow being linked to the political work being done by candidate Mike Clark,” said Sorenson. He added that it’s important the redistricting process not be tainted by partisan and political tones.

Bozievich has high praise for Moonshadow; he calls it “the bee’s knees.” He said he has a long history of working with GIS software, and that Moonshadow would replace a process that has become cumbersome. Bozievich said, “Moonshadow allows a layman to draw new polygons for districts and get immediate feedback on what it does

disproportionate. “What took months to accomplish could have been done in a day if we had this software,” she said.

Sorenson said he’s “troubled by the involvement of a political candidate,” noting that Clark used Moonshadow in his Eugene City Council campaign, and he’s concerned about the process by which Moonshadow entered into the county’s system.

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Process and politics might be what seems to be holding up Lane County’s chance at \$10 million in grants. The county is currently “investigating” grants in its Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD). The issue appears not to be whether the programs are good and will benefit the county, but wording in board orders and, of course, process.

On May 19, 2010, the board resolved and ordered that it would give an \$80,000 contract to Renewable Funding, a group that provides administration, financing and technology services for clean energy programs to hundreds of cities and counties across the nation.

In the same order, commissioners voted to give a \$50,000 contract to social justice advocate and renewable and alternative energy consultant Joe Berney to develop job-creating grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy. The order was part of an effort by the previous board, with the aid of a U.S. Department of Energy grant, to create a strategy to implement energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy technologies on public buildings, nonprofits and residential buildings. Part of that work was associated with PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) financing.

According to county documents, while PACE was suspended on the federal level, the CEDD, in consultation with then-county administrator Jeff Spartz, decided to keep working on the energy efficiency program. The board order’s directive was focused on renewable energy and energy efficiency, which PACE called a “recommended strategy.”