

To whom it may concern:

As you are aware, the redistricting process for the New York City Council is underway. It is a difficult job; a small districting commission has to account for proper district lines that accommodate over seven million people while meeting certain regulations, such as keeping communities together, racial obligations, religious obligations, and so on. It is easy for something to be overlooked or ignored due to a lack of information or because of other priorities; Hurricane Sandy definitely had an impact on everyone, including the districting commission, who pushed a deadline back because of it. However, I believe that there is a problem on Staten Island that the districting committee has failed to address. It involves two of the three districts on Staten Island (the 49th and the 50th) and proposes to split a Roman Catholic parish.

St. Teresa's Church (and the accompanying school) is located on the corner of Slosson Avenue and Victory Boulevard. The property is located on a narrow strip of land, a "peninsula" of the 49th district; it is so narrow that the deli across the street from it, as well as the area just beyond the overpass one can see from the church property, is in the 50th district. Based on the way the 49th and 50th districts were previously drawn, this parish always had the potential to be split. However, I believe that the redistricting commission has drawn the district in such a way that it does not attempt to reduce the number of parishioners disenfranchised.

St. Teresa's claims on their website an area that encompasses part of the 49th district and part of the 50th district. Running the numbers based on what they claim, out of 12,193 residents, 6,221 people reside in the parish and in the proposed 50th district, about 51% of the population. It appears, however, after looking at a map of surrounding parishes, that St. Teresa's draws their parish boundaries conservatively. They ignore an area that appears to be, at worst, disputed territory with Holy Family, and more likely than not, an area that would identify with St. Teresa's instead of Holy Family because they are closer in distance to St. Teresa's. This entire area is in the 50th district, which, if added to the current parish boundaries, gives them 15,364 people to draw from, with 9,382 people in the 50th, about 61% of the population. This does not even include some possible disputed areas south of Ocean Avenue with St. Ann's, and possibly St. Christopher's and Our Lady Queen of Peace. **Simply put, I believe a noticeable majority of St. Teresa's parishioners are located in the proposed 50th district, but the church itself was drawn into a narrow part of the 49th district.**

I believe that this split causes a community problem and may actually be illegal under the rules in which districts have to be drawn. According to the City Charter, Ch. 2 A, section 52(1)(c), district lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economical, ethnic, religious, or other. The 49th "peninsula" I believe was drawn in order to reach an area that has more in common with the rest of the 49th. I do not have a problem with the concept of these lines. But by drawing the lines as they are, they at the very least split the St. Teresa's parish, separating a majority of its parishioners from the church itself. I believe that the line as it is currently drawn violates the City Charter under religious grounds. The community also is split based on racial, ethnic, and economical grounds; based on the numbers the districting commission used to create the district lines, the parish has more in common with the 50th district than the 49th, yet the church is allocated to the 49th district.

The district commission also overlooked the presence of P.S. 29. P.S. 29 is located across the street from St. Teresa's Church and School. P.S. 29 is also located in the 50th district, while the church it overlooks is located in the 49th district. As a person who attended Catholic school and played intramural and inter-parochial sports, such as CYO, kids from the local P.S. were common in each league. Dividing these two institutions will only serve to facilitate a fragmented community where constituents will be dealing with two different councilmen, thus making it harder for the community to consolidate their efforts on a city issue. A community should not have to deal with this kind of fragmentation. Fortunately, this problem can easily be resolved by a very minor shift in the proposed district lines.

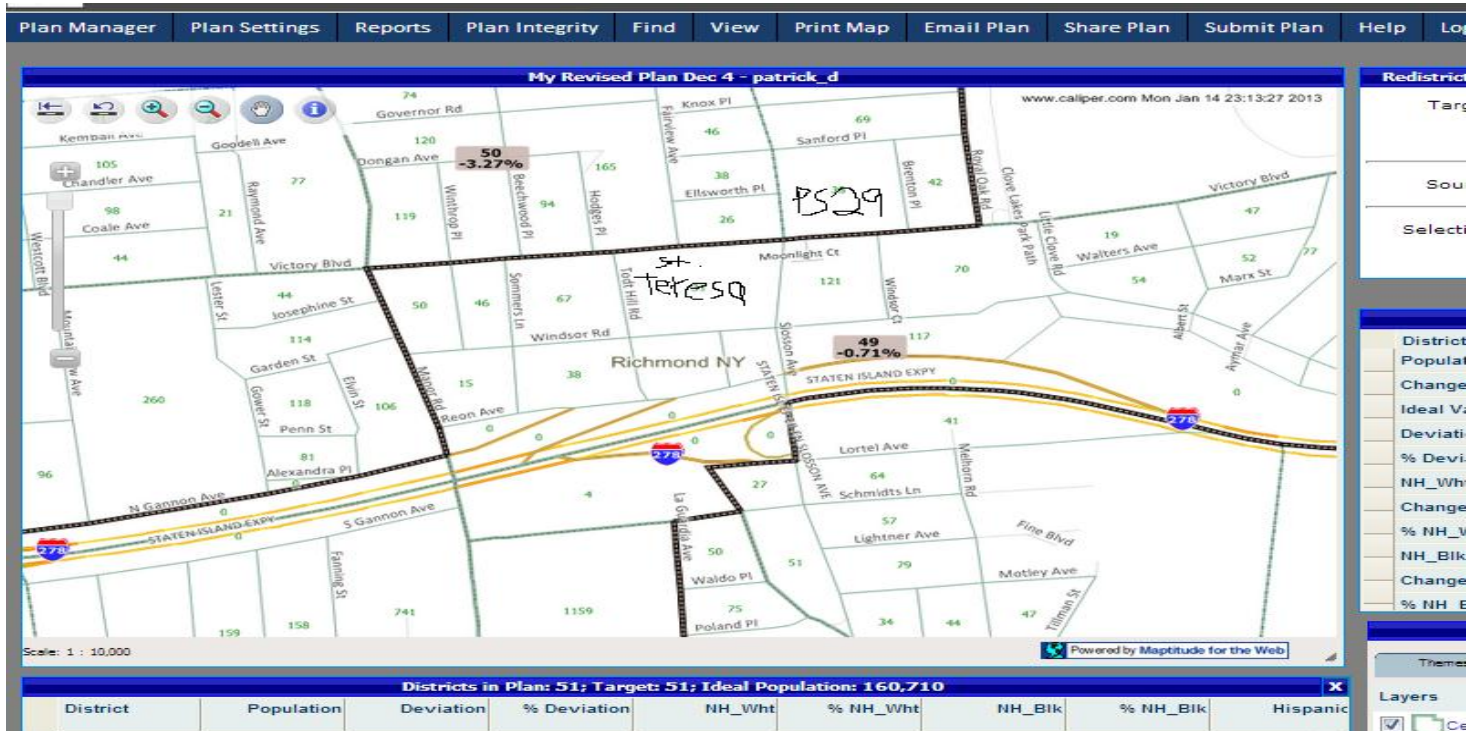
To deal with the issue at hand, **I propose moving the border of the 49th council district from Victory Boulevard down past Windsor Road to the Staten Island Expressway.** Doing this would shift about 600 people from the 49th district to the 50th district, a statistically insignificant amount in regards to the numbers that each district must meet. More importantly, it would shift St. Teresa's from the 49th district to the 50th district, a district that more reflects the character of the parish and contains, even with the most conservative estimates, a majority of its parishioners. Shifting this line down to the expressway would also keep the districts contiguous, as the 49th district would use a narrow strip on the expressway to reach the rest of the district.

Finally, although I am not a member now, I was once a member of the St. Teresa parish. One of the first significant moments of my life occurred there: my baptism. I live close enough to the parish that I still occasionally attend mass there. I am friends with some members of the parish. My observations and what I know of the parish show a community that relates more to the Mid Island (the 50th district) rather than the North Shore (the 49th district). Perhaps the districting commission noticed something regarding that, as the majority of parishioners are in the 50th district. However, the church itself is in the 49th district. Knowing what I know about this parish, this does not feel right. I believe that the statistics express this as well. In light of these facts and observations, **please redraw the line dividing the 49th district and 50th district to better accommodate the St. Teresa's parish.** Thank you.

Sincerely,
Patrick Donegan

P.S.: Maps outlining the current proposed lines and my modifications are viewable below.

Current Lines



Lines Under Proposed Changes

