

October 20, 2011

Redistricting plan puts Adams on move

Pitted against Lyons, Rep. Adams will move so he can run for re-election in 17th Essex

By Townsman Staff

Andover state Rep. Paul Adams is already packing his bags, following the release of a proposed state redistricting plan that would put Adams and fellow Republican state Rep. Jim Lyons in the same legislative district.

"I'm already in the process of moving," said Adams on Tuesday night. "I have every intention to run for re-election in the 17th Essex district."

A Joint Committee on Redistricting plan to redraw Massachusetts legislative district lines was released Tuesday afternoon and the effects on Andover would be significant. Andover precincts 2, 3 and 4 — the area near Shawsheen and West Elementary schools — would be in a new 17th Essex District with eight Lawrence voting areas and one Methuen precinct. The rest of Andover will be in the new 18th Essex with parts of Tewksbury, North Andover and Boxford.

State Sen. Barry Finegold's senate district will not be affected.

Finegold said legislators redrew the lines out of concern that the courts could force them to do so anyway, because of clusters of minority voters in the area.

There will now be two weeks of hearings on the proposed redistricting map before legislators are expected to vote on it. Finegold expects to approve the plan.

"Most people will support it," said Finegold. "I think the big thing to note is this was decided based on the threat of a court action — the federal Voting Rights Act forces you to do something like this."

If Adams does not move, the plan would pit the two freshman Republican legislators against each other for one seat. And Adams and Lyons seem to have a personal connection. As they celebrated their victories last November in Lyons' High Vale Lane barn, Adams wrapped his arm around Lyons, laughed, and emphasized their camaraderie.

"No one has a better grandfather... I mean, a mentor!" Adams joked.

Lyons, who currently serves in the 18th Essex seat, said it's too early to talk about new precincts for Andover.

"We knew this was coming," he said. "Next are public hearings and then both sides (Democrats and Republicans) can vote on it."

Under the proposed 18th precinct, Lyons would lose 3,000 voters, he said. "It's not as big," he said of his district.

Adams would represent only three Andover precinct instead of six, and will gain constituents in Lawrence.

"I already represent six of the 12 precincts in the district, so they gave me a few new districts," said Adams. "Many Lawrencians already know me as a friend on Beacon Hill, and I look forward to representing them."

States redistrict every 10 years. Adams noted that districts have shifted out in the western part of the state as well, where two Democratic representatives will be forced to compete for the same seat. One of them plans to move, according to Adams.

Finegold said that in 1998, when he was a state representative living with his parents at the age of 27, he saw a change on the horizon and moved in order to stay in the same district.

"I actually moved before it got changed, but if I would've stayed in my parent's house, I would have been out of my district," said Finegold. "I was ahead of the curve."

Editor Neil Fater and reporters Judy Wakefield and Dustin Luca compiled this report.

<http://www.andovertownsman.com/local/x250779633/Redistricting-plan-puts-Adams-on-move>