



**To:** Members of Dublin City Council  
**From:** Dana L. McDaniel, City Manager  
**Date:** April 11, 2022  
**Initiated By:** Homer C. Rogers Jr., Assistant City Manager/Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer  
**Re:** Ward Divisions and Boundaries vs Franklin County Board of Elections Precinct Boundaries

## Background

On December 6, 2021, in accordance with Section 9.04 of the Revised Charter for the City of Dublin, Ohio, City Council passed Ordinance 84-21 adjusting the boundaries of the four wards that exist in the City of Dublin. These adjusted boundaries were then submitted to the Boards of Elections of Franklin, Delaware and Union Counties so that voting precincts could be adjusted accordingly. The Franklin County Board of Elections subsequently informed Dublin's Law Director, Jennifer Readler, that the adjusted boundaries did not conform to the U.S. Census Bureau's current census block boundaries as required by ORC 3501.18 (B)(1) which states,

*"Except as otherwise provided in division (B)(2) of this section, a board of elections shall determine all precinct boundaries using geographical units used by the United States department of commerce, bureau of the census, in reporting the decennial census of Ohio."*

The next paragraph (B)(2) of this section provides for a waiver potential by stating,

*"The board of elections may apply to the Secretary of State for a waiver from the requirement of division (B)(1) of this section when it is not feasible to comply with that requirement because of unusual physical boundaries or residential development practices that would cause unusual hardship for voters. The board shall identify the affected precincts and census units, explain the reason for the waiver request, and include a map illustrating where the census units will be split because of the requested waiver. If the Secretary of State approves the waiver and so notifies the board of elections in writing, the board may change a precinct boundary as necessary under this section, notwithstanding the requirement in division (B)(1) of this section."*

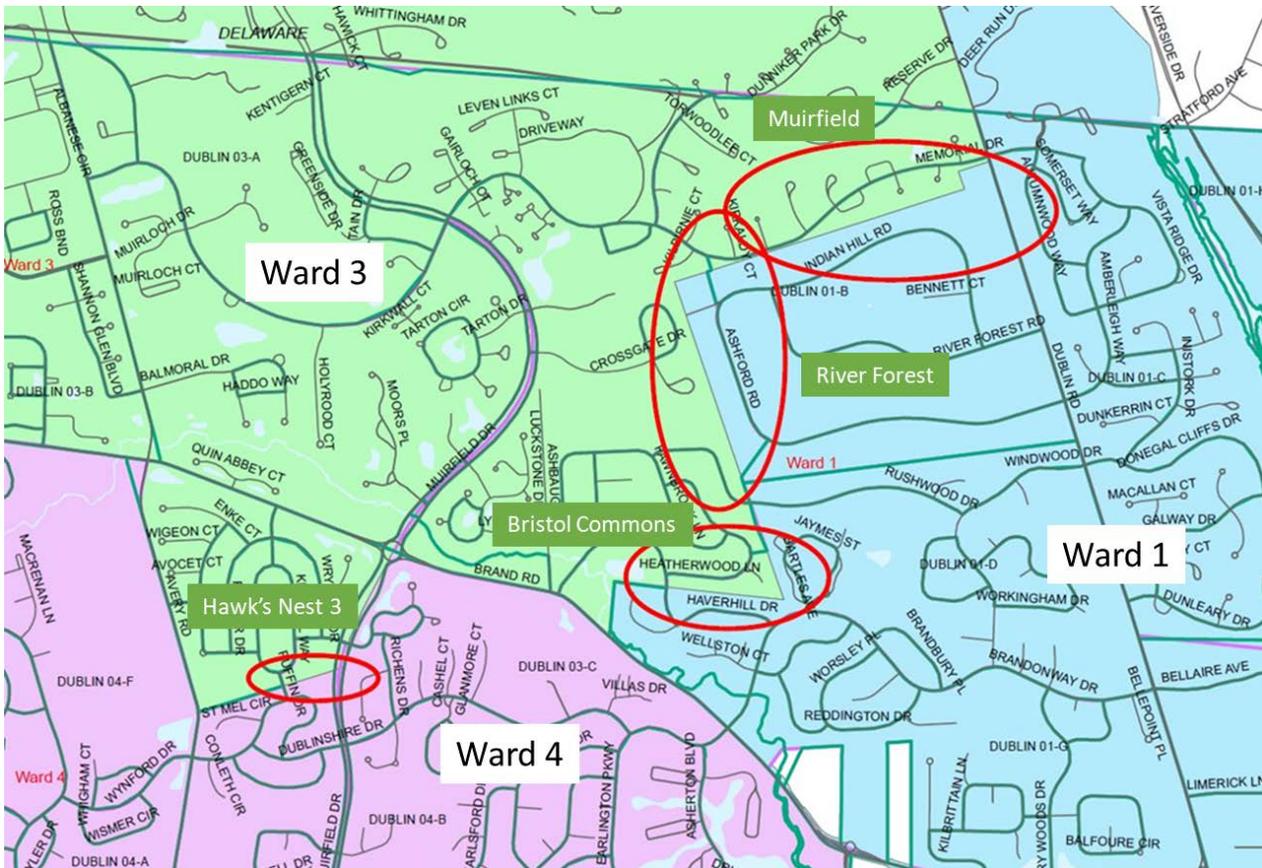
On February 25, 2022, Homer Rogers, the Assistant City Manager, Brandon Brown, the Director of Performance Analytics, and Thaddeus Boggs, of Frost Brown Todd, met with Matthew Rushay, of the Franklin County Board of Elections to discuss the potential of pursuing a waiver from the Office of the Ohio Secretary of State. While Mr. Rushay was very understanding of Dublin's intent for adjusting ward boundaries, he did share with us that the Secretary of State's Office has a significant track record of strictly enforcing the requirement of utilizing census block boundaries. Any request for waiver would have to come with significant justification and an explanation of the unusual hardship being created. Mr. Rushay specifically cited Gahanna's attempt to utilize boundaries that did not conform that was categorically denied. Dublin can apply for a waiver through the Franklin County Board of Elections, but it is very unlikely that it would be approved by

the Ohio Secretary of State and without significant justification might not be advanced by the Franklin County Board of Elections based on past experience.

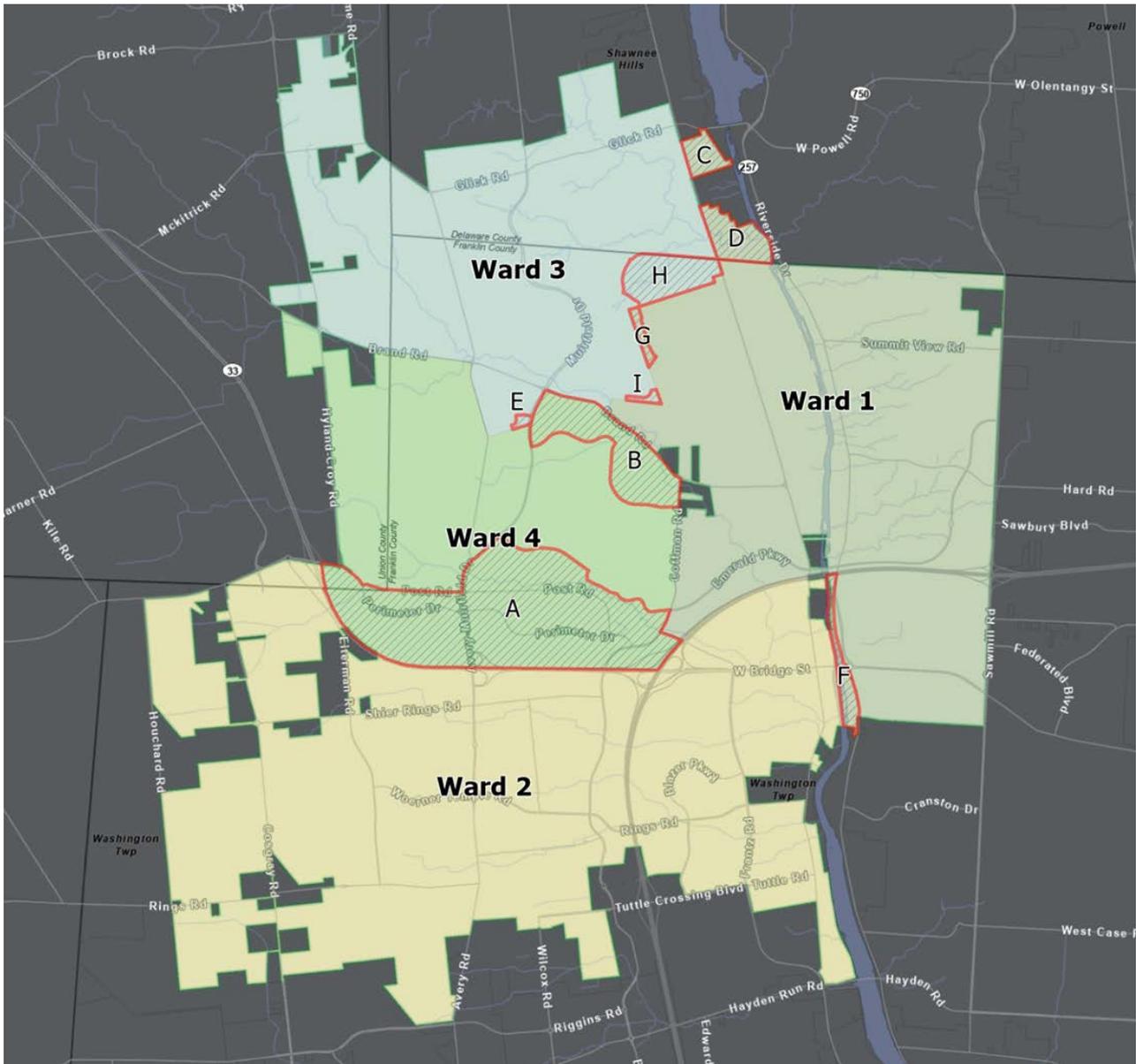
This being said, the U.S. Census Bureau does have a process to apply to have their census block boundaries updated, which would clear the way for Dublin to achieve the boundaries it approved on December 6, 2021. They usually solicit this input once a year and there is no guarantee on the timeliness of the adjustment or that it would be approved.

### Analysis

The four areas circled in red on the map below from Dublin's adjusted ward boundaries do not conform to U.S. Census block boundaries. Those U.S. Census boundaries are depicted in green and generally follow the road network, but not in all cases. In each of these identified area, we attempted to use neighborhood property lines instead of roadways in order to consolidate neighborhoods.



The circled areas above correspond with areas E, G, H, and I on the following map which depicts Council's approved adjustments of ward boundaries on December 6, 2021. All other areas conform to U.S. Census tract/block boundaries and are not in question.



Populations of Areas in Question – These are the percentages of the Dublin population represented by each area in question. The area of most significance in terms of population potentially affected is Area H (Muirfield)

Area	Previous Ward	Current Ward	% Pop	# Households
E (part of Hawk’s Nest)	Ward 4	Ward 3	0.04%	9
G (Part of River Forest)	Ward 2	Ward 1	0.05%	11
H (Part of Muirfield)	Ward 1	Ward 3	<b>0.75%</b>	<b>153</b>
I (Part of Bristol Commons)	Ward 1	Ward 3	0.10%	18

Current Population Balance - The table below represents the current population balance of the wards in Dublin as approved by Ordinance 84-21.

Ward #	% of Population 2020	% of Population 2026
Ward 1	24.7%	24.5%
Ward 2	24.6%	25.1%
Ward 3	22.7%	22.8%
Ward 4	28.0%	27.6%

**Options for resolving the issue**

While staff does not recommend pursuing the waiver process, two options are offered that will resolve the issue of conforming with U.S. Census block boundaries. Both options would involve restoring Areas E (Hawk’s Nest – 9 households) and I (Bristol Commons – 18 households) to their former boundaries prior to Ordinance 84-21 being enacted. Area E would return to Ward 4 and Area I would return to Ward 1. Otherwise, the proposed options are as follows.

**Option 1** – Use Memorial Drive as the southern boundary of Area H (Muirfield) and return Area G (River Forest) to its former boundary.

This option would have insignificant impact on ward populations as approved under Ordinance 84-21, but would leave portions of both the Muirfield and River Forest neighborhoods split across ward boundaries.

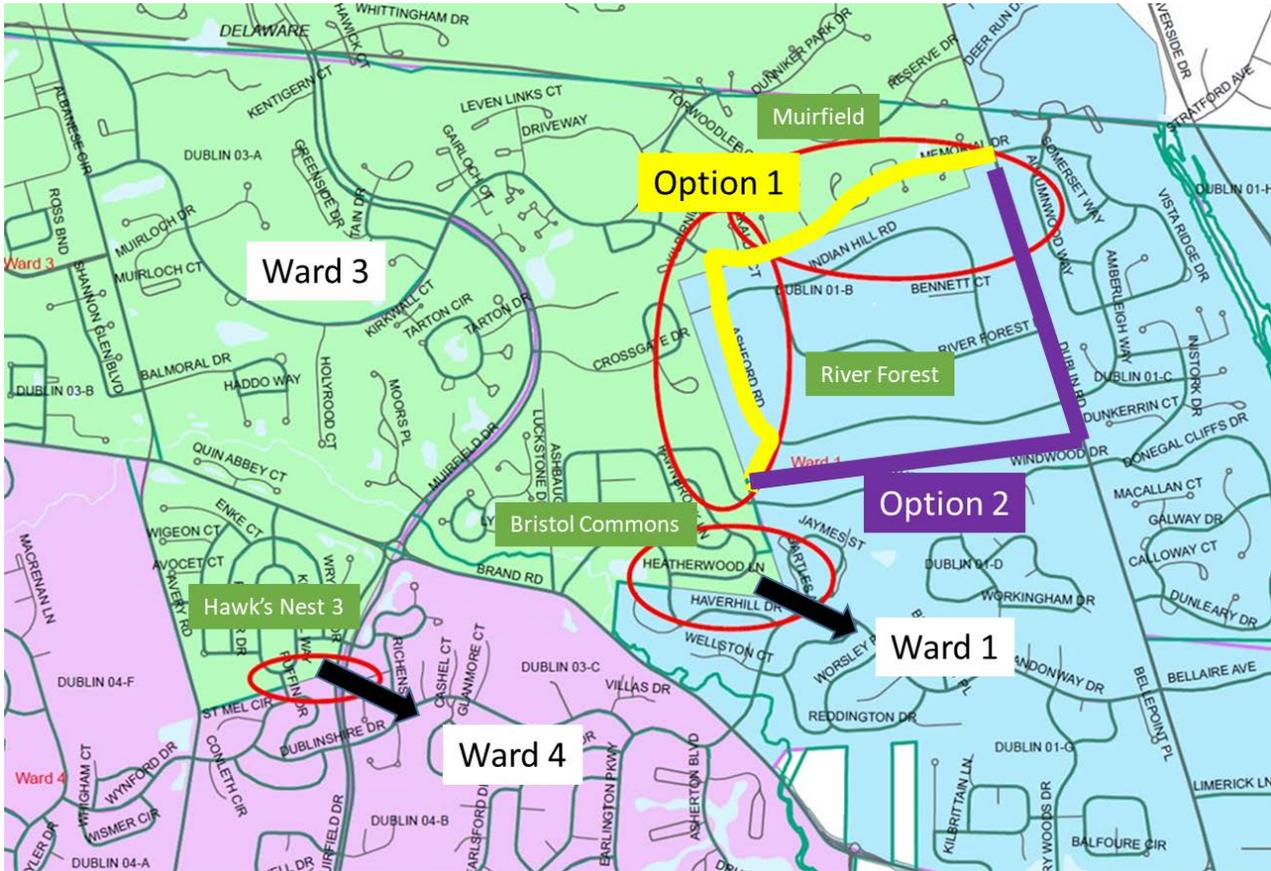
**Option 2** – Move the southern boundary of Area H (Muirfield) farther south to encompass all of the River Forest neighborhood.

This option would preserve the consolidation of both neighborhoods, Muirfield and River Forest, into one ward. In this case, however, River Forest would move in its entirety to Ward 3 from Ward 1.

The resulting population balance between wards would result in the following, which does bring Ward 3 more in balance with the other wards.

Ward #	% of Population 2020	% of Population 2026
Ward 1	24.1%	23.9%
Ward 2	24.6%	25.1%
Ward 3	23.4%	23.4%
Ward 4	28.0%	27.6%

Both Options are depicted on the map below



### Recommendation

It is recommended that City Council direct staff to draft an ordinance for consideration that proposes Option 2. Again, Option 2 would restore Areas E and I to their former boundaries and wards prior to the passage of Ordinance 84-21 and would adjust the Area H boundary to the southern boundary of the River Forest neighborhood which would move it into Ward 3. This option would preserve the consolidation of at least two of the four neighborhoods impacted while also bringing Ward 3 more in balance with the other wards.

With this recommendation, staff could still apply to the U.S. Census Bureau to have its block boundaries adjusted if Council so desires. When and if those adjustments are made, Council could then reconsider adjusting ward boundaries back to those approved by Ordinance 84-21, or some other adjustment, at that time.