



# A Million Stories

## Scenes From Redistricting

By Isaiah Thompson

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We at City Paper hereby announce a contest, with awards potentially so great we dare not state them here, to describe the city's 7th Councilmanic District. "Snake-like" is a top candidate, as is "corkscrew-shaped," offered at City Council's Tuesday hearing on redistricting, the first of several. The preposterously gerrymandered district incorporates a lumpish blob of Hispanic North Philly and then waggles, tail-like, into Frankford.

How the districts will be reshaped to meet the city charter's requirement of proportionate representation was the focus on Tuesday. Several witnesses, including state Rep. Angel Cruz and Wynne Alexander, called for the 7th to become a cohesive Latino district. The latter, testifying on behalf of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights' Joe Garcia, noted the district's "extremely peculiar shape ... the fact that it combines communities with different interest, distant physical locations, is barely contiguous — all of this marks it as classic gerrymandering."

Other moments of interest included the testimony of Herbert Kaplan, president of the Center City Residents' Association. His request: that Center City's powerful 8th Ward, currently represented by multiple councilpersons, be redistricted under the leadership of just one. Queer-rights activist Jordan Gwendolyn Davis proposed that the "Gayborhood be moved out of the 1st Councilmanic District." Noting that he belongs to the Liberty City Democrats but was speaking only for himself, Davis explained, "We found that [2nd Council District candidate] Kenyatta Johnson has a real grasp of LGBT issues."

"I'm really nervous about [1st Council District candidate] Mark Squilla," he added, "who is connected with [current Councilman Frank] DiCicco, who has been a little hostile to the LGBT community lately."