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U.S.
census figures.

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

Cleveland City Council will lose two more seats this year. The 19-member City Council will now have 17 members. The process has been taking place and members have been secretly working on the map.

One can only guess who will be under attack this time. Last time, Zack Reed had to run in Ward 2 after most of his Mt. Pleasant area was taken away. The process of determining the new ward boundaries, which are expected to reflect a city whose population is both declining and moving steadily westward, will be released early in March.

With a shrinking population,Clevelandis shrinking the size of its council for the first time in 30 years. Voters approved a charter amendment last fall that now ties the number of council seats

to the number of residents with roughly one councilman for every 25,000 people.

In a 16 to 4 vote, council agreed to a redrawn map that divides the city into 19 wards, down from the current 21. While more than three quarters of the city's population will not see any change, wards now represented by Councilmen Zack Reed and Brian Cummins will be split up and attached to neighboring wards, eliminating their seats. The most affected areas are Old Brooklyn,Brooklyn Center, andMount Pleasant.

A new ward map has only begun to take shape. And council members, who hired consultants to manage the data and draft a recommendation, are reluctant to speak openly about the details of a process that depends heavily on political allegiances and issues of race.

Wondering how much this new map will carve out if any of the Black community, leaves many questioning who will have to run against whom to get a seat. Could Phyllis Cleveland run against Mamie Mitchell or Ken Johnson?

"TheEast Sidewill not lose two wards. Period. End of sentence. No qualifiers," said consultant Bob Dykes, who, along with his partner, Larry Brisker, has been meeting with council members individually and in groups to discuss how adjacent ward boundaries could be altered.

Maintaining the balance between the east and west side, however, most likely will require many of the eastern wards to gain more of the population by reaching further westward, Dykes said.

Since council maps were last drawn in 2009,Cleveland's population has shrunk by more than 30,000 people to about 396,000, according toU.S.census figures. Most of that population loss occurred in the city's northeast quadrant.

But council members say that the east side, home to several of the city's predominantly Black

neighborhoods, will lose only one ward in the redistricting. That will preserve council representation for the Black community.

The council, which redraws the lines every decade following the census, must do so by April 1 or cede the authority to Mayor Frank Jackson, who served on the council before his election as mayor.

So follow us for the latest breaking news on the redistricting in Cleveland City Council.