Council OKs Ayres remap plan

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The Metro Council met late into the night Wednesday before voting to send to the U.S. Justice Department a reapportionment plan that would create one more predominantly black council district.

Voting over the objections of the NAACP and the local black political caucus, the council chose the so-called Ayres Plan, which is similar to a plan rejected by the Justice Department earlier this year on grounds it tended to dilute black voting strength in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The plan adopted Wednesday, proposed by Councilmen Don Ayres; would leave each of the 12 council members in separate districts and would leave Councilman V.M. "Lank" Corsentino in a district with a predominantly black population but a nearly evenly voting mix.

In accepting the Ayres plan, the council rejected three other plans — one each from Corsentino, the black caucus and the League of Women Voters.

Neither Corsentino nor a representative of the League of Women Voters was at Wednesday's special council meeting, so those plans received only cursory attention.

Most of the attention was focused on the Ayres plan and the plan offered by local black leaders.

Because they objected vehemently to the consolidated council, black leaders proposed a plan that would carve out just seven city districts and would put two incumbents in two districts.

Ayres and Councilman Ben Peabody would have been in the same district and Corsentino and Councilman Gary Bergeron would have been in the same district under the plan submitted by the black caucus.

However, the black caucus' plan was based on 1980 census data and needed to be adjusted to take recent annexations into account.

Members of the black caucus protested that the Ayres plan tended to dilute black voting strength because it was based on the consolidated council approved by voters last year.

Under that concept, blacks inside the city saw their voting strength diluted by the influence of the predominantly white areas outside the city limits, the leaders said.

Because most of the subdivisions developed outside the city were for more affluent families, they developed as predominantly white communities, according to George Eames, president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Meanwhile, blacks tended to remain in the city, so their relative voting strength increased throughout the years, he said.

Voters approved consolidating the old city and parish councils into a single

(See COUNCIL, Page 12-A)