CITY REDISTRICTING EVENS OUT CONCENTRATIONS OF STUDENTS

“I think this process has been absolutely disgraceful,” said Mayor Shirley Dean. “I am embarrassed for this city one more time.”

Dean, along with council members Polly Armstrong, Miriam Hawley and Betty Olds, compose the moderate minority on the council.

Councilmember Margaret Brelan, among those who met with the plan’s drafters Monday, said the revisions are minor and added that politics did not motivate the changes.

Blake said he made “small modifications” to prevent some progressives on the council from losing significant portions of their constituencies.

Mike O’Malley, who also drafted the plan, said the new district lines will balance out a disproportionate student population in southwest and southeast Berkeley.

Though exact changes in the districts’ compositions won’t be available until a report from the city manager is released Friday, preliminary data show the percentage of voters under the age of 24 in District 8 will increase from 38 to 46 percent in the new district.

In District 7, the percentage of voters between ages 18 and 24 would be reduced from 55 to 47 percent.

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, who represents District 7, said the revised plan tremendously benefits students, who would otherwise be in the minority in District 8.

“It saves the students who would have been exiled and brings them back into student districts,” Worthington said. “It makes it possible for students to be taken seriously.”

Blake said shifting students from District 7 to District 8 decreases the likelihood of a viable student campaign.

SOUTHSIDE AFFECTED

Last-Minute Changes Anger Moderates

by NATE TABAK CONTRIBUTING WRITER

After a contentious meeting, the Berkeley City Council approved a redistricting plan Tuesday night that leaves Southside districts intact and evens out their college student concentration.

In a familiar 5-4 vote, the council’s progressives pushed through the Blake-O’Malley proposal, which was originally touted as the least-political plan and leaves the districts most unchanged.

But Tuesday night after the partisan vote, one of the plan’s drafters, Dave Blake, said the plan “absolutely favors progressives.”

Blake, aide to progressive Councilmember Linda Maio, met with three progressive council members Monday and made last-minute changes to the proposal to ensure that the progressives would not lose too much of their constituencies under the plan.

The changes were not brought to the attention of the council’s four public process.