



COMPLETE COUNT COMMITTEE

Meeting Summary

June 2, 2020, 11:00 a.m.
Virtual Teleconference
(804) 316-9457, ID 605 617 135#

Members present:

Will Palmquist, Chair	Tavares Floyd (for Ellen Robertson)
Dr. Catherine Howard	Matthew Stanley (for Jason Kamras)
Michel Zajur	

Members absent:

Andreas Addison	Dr. Danny Avula	Scott Blackwell
Dr. Allia Carter	Dr. Michael Jones	Bill Harrison
Dr. Michael Jones	Dr. Cynthia Newbille	Mark Olinger
Karla Ramos	Dr. Leo Whitaker	Steve Wilborn

Other Attendees:

Justin Beck, U.S. Census Bureau	Donna Lewis-Clayton, U.S. Census Bureau
Marianne Pitts, City of Richmond	

Mr. Will Palmquist called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and welcomed Committee members to the second virtual meeting of the RVA Counts 2020 Complete Count Committee due to limits on in-person meetings because of COVID-19. Mr. Palmquist then asked committee members and other attendees to introduce themselves.

1. Committee and Subcommittee Updates

Mr. Palmquist briefly summarized the last Committee meeting on May 5th which took place via teleconference and noted that the meeting summary could be found at the RVA Counts 2020 website.

Mr. Palmquist provided an update on current response rates to the 2020 Census, noting that as of May 31st, 2020, the national response rate was 60.5%, the statewide response rate for Virginia was 65.6%, and the citywide response rate for Richmond was 56.0%. He summarized the change in response rates since last month, stating that the response rates at the national, state, and local level have all increased about five percentage points since May 3rd 2020. He noted that some areas of Richmond have much lower response rates than other parts. Areas with the lowest response rates include Central Richmond near VCU, and parts of Southside, specifically along Hull Street Road and Rt. 1.

Mr. Palmquist provided a brief summary of the Census operational changes due to COVID-19, stating that the online self-response portion of the Census is extended to October 31st, and that the Non-Response

Follow Up phase will happen between August 11th and October 31st. Final population counts are planned to be delivered to the President's desk on April 30th 2021.

2. Census Bureau Update & 3. Digital Outreach and Social Media

Mr. Justin Beck provided an update on the Census outreach and hiring process. He stated that in regard to hiring Census field workers, Richmond is at a 90% recruitment level which is very good. He noted that there is still an opportunity for folks to apply and that the Committee should still be promoting the job opportunities.

In regard to Census operations, he stated that many Census Area Offices are re-opening around the commonwealth. The Virginia Beach office opened today (June 2nd), but the Richmond office is still operating at a reduced capacity in accordance with local and statewide best practices in response to COVID-19.

Mr. Beck stated that Congress needs to approve the extension of the population count delivery date, and that there is bi-partisan support for the measure. The issue is currently trying to attach the amendment to a bill that can pass the House and Senate and be signed by the President. The latest COVID-19 relief bill included this amendment and it passed in the House but was not taken up by the Senate.

Mr. Beck also stated that the city's overall response rates have slowed over the last several days. He described the response rate as increasing steadily over time, perhaps by about three or four percentage points a day, but it has now slowed to be about 1/10th of a percentage point each day.

Regarding advertising, Mr. Beck described an increased media push across the city of Richmond to increase response rates, which is being headed up by Tasha Chambers who is a Media Specialist out of the Census Area Office in Richmond. Previous efforts were focused on the Tidewater and Northern Virginia areas of the commonwealth, but are now being shifted toward Richmond. This includes advertisements through traditional media outlets as well as through social media and networks such as "Nextdoor."

Mr. Beck mentioned that there are a few areas of specific concern in Richmond regarding the current response rates. One of which is the area around VCU, which mostly consists of students who are living off-campus. These individuals may not be living in Richmond at the moment and therefore do not know they need to respond to the Census as if they were still at their Richmond residence. He is working with Ruben Rodriguez at VCU to identify ways of reaching this population and let them know how to respond to the Census.

Mr. Beck also noted that areas of Southside Richmond with large Hispanic populations have very low response rates, specifically areas along Hull Street Road, Broad Rock Boulevard, and Route 1. He is reaching out to Spanish radio programs and hopes that he and Fernando Armstrong, the Regional Director for the Census, can get on the air to speak directly to Spanish-speaking residents. Mr. Beck stated that he is also doing "contactless drop-off" of materials to apartment complexes and assistance distribution operations. Mr. Beck stated that he needs the Committee's help to identify partners and opportunities for engagement with residents in these areas of the city.

Ms. Donna Lewis-Clayton, who is a new Partnership Specialist with the Census, stated that she is working on doing outreach at large churches, which are still doing drive-in services. She has been encouraging people to complete their Census in real-time with their phone. She stated that she is also working on putting up posters at GRTC bus shelters but is still awaiting final approval from the City of

Richmond. Mr. Palmquist stated that he would be glad to assist with trying to get her the needed approval. She also noted that she is working with drive-thru food banks to encourage attendees to complete their Census.

Mr. Beck stated that he visited the Sacred Heart food bank, and working with Tanya Gonzalez, handed out information there. This location is a donation center that gives out cleaning supplies and other household essentials to those in need, and mostly serves residents along Route 1. Dr. Catherine Howard stated that she was at Sacred Heart a few weeks ago and spoke to Father Shay about the Census, whom told her that in 2010 many pastors encouraged people not to fill out the Census for fear that the information would be used against them. She asked if there were talking points that could be provided to the Hispanic clergy to share with their congregation, and Mr. Beck responded that he had information he could share.

Mr. Beck noted that he is looking into the reaching out to the Carver neighborhood, which is directly north of VCU where many students live. Dr. Howard provided him with the name of the civic association and its president: Carver Area Civic Improvement League, led by Jerome Legions.

Mr. Palmquist asked if the low response in the VCU area had anything to do with the high number of students living on-campus that may have not been counted yet through the Group Quarters program. Mr. Beck responded that the number does not include Group Quarters addresses, but did note that the Group Quarters count with VCU was just completed.

Mr. Palmquist noted that he would assist with finding contact information for the owners and managers of larger apartment complexes in specific areas of Richmond that have low-response rates. Mr. Beck noted that he had received similar information from Henrico County and it was very helpful in providing targeted outreach and material delivery to low-count areas.

Mr. Matthew Stanley provided a brief update on the work that RPS has been doing in partnership with the Census, including having the RPS Family Engagement Team work with Mr. Beck to distribute materials to undercounted areas. He stated that there are 45 bus route points where meals are being distributed and this will continue throughout the summer. He would be glad to continue to assist with getting information out at these locations that are within low-response rate areas. Mr. Stanley said that he is also working with School Board members to assist them with reaching out to their respective communities.

Dr. Howard stated that she would reach out to Ruben Rodriguez at VCU, as well as Tito Luna who serves as a community liaison. She stated that VCU is doing a weekly COVID-19 outreach email to the entire VCU community and this could be a good opportunity to include information about the Census.

Mr. Michel Zajur asked if Justin could provide the most up-to-date information on the Census in Spanish. The Virginia Hispanic Chamber is doing regular email updates to its members and having fresh information is always helpful.

Mr. Palmquist noted stated that he would try to set up a phone call with Karla Ramos, as well as Mr. Zajur and Mr. Beck to discuss more targeted outreach to the Spanish-speaking community in Southside Richmond.

4. Next Steps

Mr. Palmquist thanked attendees for calling into the virtual teleconference. He noted that the next meeting is scheduled for July 7th at 11:00 a.m. and will likely take place virtually as well.

Mr. Palmquist noted he would be following up with specific Committee members and other individuals regarding some identified outreach strategies, and encouraged Committee members to continue to look for opportunities to share information about the 2020 Census, including on social media, on both personally- or professionally-based accounts. He suggested that an easy way to do so is to share posts made by the Census Bureau, which makes several posts a day.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:55 a.m.