



COMPLETE COUNT COMMITTEE

Meeting Summary

May 5, 2020, 11:00 a.m.
Virtual Teleconference
(804) 316-9457, ID 471 010 432#

Members present:

Will Palmquist, Chair	Reggie Gordon
Bill Harrison	Dr. Catherine Howard
Dr. Michael Jones	Sam Patterson (for Dr. Cynthia Newbille)
Patrice Shelton (for Dr. Danny Avula)	Matthew Stanley (for Jason Kamras)
Steve Wilborn	Michel Zajur

Members absent:

Andreas Addison	Scott Blackwell	Dr. Allia Carter
Mark Olinger	Karla Ramos	Ellen Robertson
Dr. Leo Whitaker		

Other Attendees:

Justin Beck, U.S. Census Bureau	Fred Bravo, U.S. Census Bureau
Ron Brown, U.S. Census Bureau	Tasha Chambers, U.S. Census Bureau
Robin Pulkkinen, U.S. Census Bureau	Marianne Pitts, City of Richmond
Maya Bey, Education Subcommittee	

Mr. Will Palmquist called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. and welcomed Committee members to the first 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 March 3rd and noted that the meeting summary could be found at the RVA Counts 2020 website. Mr. Palmquist stated that at the time the Committee was planning a number of outreach activities, including in-person meetings at local libraries on Census Day, April 1st 2020, which did not take place due to COVID-19. He stated that he had instead reached out to Committee and subcommittee members, as well as other interested and relevant parties to help amplify the Census messaging by posting on social media to help with a “Virtual Census Day.”

Mr. Palmquist also noted that he did a similar request for social media posting about the 2020 Census this past weekend, May 1st to 3rd, which was part of a “Digital Action Weekend”. He noted that he also reached out to City of Richmond information officers that are responsible for handling social media and

media relations within their respective departments, and that some of them were able to participate in this virtual call to action.

Mr. Palmquist provided an update on current response rates to the 2020 Census, noting that as of May 3rd 2020, the national response rate was 56.6%, the statewide response rate for Virginia was 61.2%, and the citywide response rate for Richmond was 51.7%. He noted that some areas of Richmond have much lower response rates than other parts, including areas of Central Richmond, Northside, East End, and Southside.

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

Mr. Justin Beck provided an update on the operational adjustments that the Census has made nationwide in response to COVID-19. Mr. Beck explained that in order to ensure the health and safety of Census employees and U.S. residents, the Census Bureau has pushed back the schedule on many of their key initiatives, including the self-reporting phase which will now run until October 31st, previously scheduled to end July 31st.

He noted that as it pertains to Richmond, the city is in overall good shape for digital outreach efforts and online self-reporting as the city has good overall internet access and cellular coverage. He noted that households that have not responded online to the Census should have by now received paper questionnaires in the mail. He stated that Census Bureau staff are focusing on keeping the 2020 Census in the public's eye, and that now more than ever it's critical due to implications for federal funding and the funding of local health districts.

Mr. Beck stated that the Digital Outreach Weekend from May 1st to 3rd was a success and thanked those that participated for helping to amplify the Census messaging. He stated that the media strategy for Richmond is changing, as it was identified as a locality where a second wave of promotion will take place, including utilizing the NextDoor app in specific Census tracts, and targeted outreach via phone and email.

Mr. Beck provided a brief update on the Census recruiting efforts, saying that the overall effort was going well and that the Philadelphia Region, of which Richmond is a part, has the largest application pool. He stated that the Census is still seeking applicants.

He noted that areas of specific concern regarding low response rates include Census Tract 706.01, which includes the Woodhaven and Warwick neighborhoods, Census Tract 609 which includes Bells and Warwick roads, and Census Tract 403 which includes the area of VCU's main academic campus. He stated that additional outreach is being done to VCU and private apartment complexes to let residents know they still need to respond to the Census based on where they live most of the time, not necessarily where they're living right now if they're at their parents' homes since on-campus dormitories are closed.

Mr. Beck noted that it is Teacher Appreciation Week and that they have been doing outreach to Richmond Public Schools to promote the Census Statistics in Schools lessons that are great for distance learning. There is also some fun materials for Mother's Day, including statistics about mothers in the U.S.

Mr. Steve Wilborn asked if VCU students are to complete the Census based on where they lived on April 1st and Mr. Beck replied that they should report based on where they live most of the time, which would likely be at an on-campus dormitory or off-campus apartment or house. Mr. Ron Brown also stated that the Census Bureau is in direct communication with universities to gather information through the Group Quarters program about students living on campus, asking them to provide the information via E-response.

Mr. Palmquist asked if there was a chance that some students might be double-counted if they are counted at their parents' home where they may currently be living, and are also counted as living on-campus through the Group Quarters program. Mr. Brown responded that there's no chance for a double-count since the Census asks for names and dates of birth, and therefore people whom may be double-counted can be identified and only counted once.

Dr. Catherine Howard asked if it was possible to hand out flyers and other Census materials at food distribution sites which are currently seeing an increase in traffic, such as the Sacred Heart Food Bank. Mr. Beck responded that he has been working to get materials to such sites, including working directly with Tanya Gonzalez at the Sacred Heart Center. He also stated that he has been working with Matthew Stanley of Richmond Public Schools to deliver water bottles and brochures to schools in areas that have the lowest response rates.

Mr. Brown asked if there was an opportunity to provide Census info to students as RPS continues to distribute laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots for students to learn at home. Mr. Matthew Stanley stated that RPS is still in the process of technology distribution, but that the RPS at-home learning platform include Statistics in Schools lessons pre-loaded for students to complete. He stated that he is continuing to work with Mr. Beck to roll out materials to households concurrent with the distribution of technology and meals.

Dr. Michael Jones noted that there is a faith leaders conference call that takes place every Friday and that "virtual churches" could be a good way to get the word out about the Census, noting that outreach events by churches are still taking place in communities and that it could be a good way to provide information and resources. He also noted that as councilman for the 9th Council District of Richmond, he will be handing out 10,000 masks to the most vulnerable residents at specific distribution points, which is another opportunity to distribute information about the Census.

Ms. Patrice Shelton noted that the RRHA feeding program for students, Buses in Lunch, could be another opportunity for public outreach. Mr. Stanley stated that he would put Mr. Palmquist in touch with the program's director, Aaron Stanley.

Mr. Palmquist asked if the Census recruiting efforts were looking for all types of applicants, or just those with specific non-English language skills. Mr. Fred Bravo replied that recruitment levels for the city of Richmond were around 90%. They are predominantly looking for Spanish speakers, but they are unsure if the delay in the Non-Response Follow-up program would mean that fewer applicants would actually be available to do the work, if it shifts from being a job that's available in the summer. Therefore they are looking at receiving applications from everyone to ensure that they have sufficient coverage when the program gets underway.

Mr. Michel Zajur requested that Census job information in both English and Spanish be sent to him so that he could provide it at virtual job fairs that he has been assisting with.

Ms. Maya Bey asked if the Census was sending a form to each person in a household or just one form for every person in a household. Mr. Beck replied that the form would be sent to the household and would cover all persons living therein.

Mr. Steve Wilborn noted that he requested some information that he shared with NAACP members and that Mr. Justin Beck and Ms. Linda Pulkkinen were very helpful and quick to respond with information and materials. He stated that the information he shared was picked up by the Richmond Free Press which ran a story about the Census and therefore helped with outreach.

Mr. Reggie Gordon noted that since last time the Committee had met, there has been an increase in the housing crisis and that more people are living in shelters and in hotels or motels. He asked how to advise these people to respond to the Census. Mr. Beck noted that the Census will be conducting “transitory location” follow-up, which counts people living temporarily elsewhere, and that the schedule is shifting in response to COVID-19.

Mr. Palmquist inquired about whether the one-day count of persons experiencing homeless took place yet, and Mr. Beck responded that it is under review and will be scheduled in the future.

Mr. Palmquist asked if there was anything specific the Committee should be working on over the next several weeks until their next meeting, in addition to assisting with outreach and digital promotion on social media. Mr. Beck responded that continuing to spread the messaging and documents would be vital, and advised that individuals double-check the information they are sharing to be sure it is up-to-date with the latest developments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Palmquist asked if the Census Bureau has received congressional approval for the new schedule of delivery to the President, which was scheduled for December 31st 2020, and is now being propose for April 30th 2021. Mr. Beck responded that while the Census Bureau has discretion regarding most internal deadlines, it does need congressional approval to change the date of final delivery of counts to the President. It has not received this approval yet, but it expects to as there is strong bipartisan support for such a measure.

Mr. Wilborn basked that since Governor Northam is looking to possibly loosen the current stay-at-home order in a couple weeks, what will be the impact to any enumeration training or fieldwork. Mr. Bravo responded that training will be dependent on the number of people they can have at the Census Area Field Office, which is currently limited to ten people. He also noted that the training may take place virtually.

Mr. Beck suggested that Mayor Stoney’s regular COVID-19 briefings could be a good opportunity to briefly mention the importance of the Census as the briefings are attended by the press and viewed by a high number of people.

4. Next Steps

Mr. Palmquist thanked attendees for calling into the virtual teleconference which worked well given the current limits on in-person meetings. He noted that the next meeting is scheduled for June 2nd at 11:00 a.m. and will likely take place virtually as well. He stated that if there are visuals, such as a PowerPoint presentation, that wish to be shared, the meeting can be hosted with a visual component, but if the meeting would be audio-only then a teleconference format would be used.

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 11:45 a.m.