

# **Minutes from the Dutchess County Complete Count Committee**

## **Organizational meeting, July 17, 2019**

The Dutchess County Complete Count Committee held its organizational meeting on July 17, 2019 at the Dutchess County Mental Health Center, 230 North Road, Poughkeepsie.

Committee members attending were: Brian Doyle, Chief Executive Officer of Family Services, Inc.; Jennifer Drake, Senior Program Officer of The Dyson Foundation; Karen Dipnarine-Saroop, Executive Director of Dutchess County Interfaith Council; Eva Woods Peiró, Professor of Hispanic studies at Vassar College; Brian Riddell, Executive Director of Dutchess Outreach; Jonathan Bix, Executive Director of Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson; Seema Rizvi, Representative of the Dutchess County Human Rights Commission; Tom Lawrence, Director of Poughkeepsie Public Library District; L'Quette Taylor, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Community Matters 2; Mario Johnson, Project Coordinator of Empire State After-School Extended Learning Time Program, Poughkeepsie City School District; Christine Sergent, Executive Director of North East Community Center; Danny Hairston, Coordinator of The Family Services SNUG program; Gabriela Owen, Latino organizer.

Maffy Malaver, Director of ABC Latino, also is on this committee.

### **Opening remarks**

Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro greeted the committee with opening remarks, pointing out the importance of having people fill out the census. He noted the final numbers will be used in redrawing congressional districts and will determine how billions of dollars in federal aid gets distributed. The county executive emphasized the information collected by the Census Bureau is confidential and protected under law. He also said the census count is non-political, and it's imperative everyone living in Dutchess County be counted.

Dutchess County Planning and Development Commissioner Eoin Wrafter took the members through the more technical aspects of the census, including the county's work on the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) for the Census Bureau. Wrafter also explained Dutchess County has some "hard to count" areas as defined by the census and showed a map of the 2010 census count. Those areas include parts of the towns of Dover and Wappinger and the cities of Poughkeepsie and Beacon.

### **Census 101**

Using handouts, John Penney made a "Census 101" presentation, pointing out that more than more than \$675 billion in federal funds get distributed annually, in part, based on census information. Census numbers drive how federal, state and local governments plan and implement programs and services, including emergency response. Penney explained that by

April 2020, households will receive an invitation to participate. People will have three options to respond: online, by phone, or by mail. The goal is to count people once, only once and in the right place according to where they live on Census Day, April 1. Starting in late April, census workers will start going door-to-door to those who have not responded to the census.

The committee brainstormed strategies and had questions about the census, some of which will be addressed by a census representative at the next meeting.

Among the strategies the committee offered were:

- Looking at best practices from other Complete Count Committees across the nation.
- Making sure religious leaders from different faiths are aware of the importance of having people fill out the census.
- Getting started now on outreach and not waiting until 2020.
- Having information available in Spanish and other languages.
- Working with the school districts to ensure young people understand the census and why it's important.
- Designing materials in ways that are visually appealing and will make it easy to understand, including for young people.
- Developing a strategy to go to the county's "hard to count" areas but also raising awareness in other areas so everyone understands the importance.
- Building a network of ambassadors to help with this effort.

### **Quick, immediate steps**

The committee discussed immediate and tangible next steps, including having a presence at the Dutchess County Latin American Festival on July 27 and the La Guelaguetza Festival on Aug. 4, both at Waryas Park in Poughkeepsie. The committee also will contact key government and community leaders to start presentations in hard-to-count areas.

Karen M. Barnes, Partnership Specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau Field Division, is expected to attend the committee's next meeting, which will be held at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 13, at the Dutchess County Mental Health Center, 230 North Road, Poughkeepsie. The meeting is open to the public.