

Minutes from the Dutchess County Complete Count Committee Meeting on July 30, 2020

The Dutchess County Complete Count Committee held a virtual meeting on July 30, 2020. Attending were committee members John Penney, Jennifer Drake, Mario Johnson, Tom Lawrence, and L'Quette Taylor. Also in attendance were Eoin Wrafter, Commissioner of Dutchess County Planning and Development; Isis Benitez, Community Health Promoter at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York; and Linda Eddy of the Community Action Partnership for Dutchess County.

Penney updated the committee on various outreach efforts, including a recent presentation to the Town of Dover in person. Since COVID-19 began spreading in our area, Penney has conducted virtual meetings with the towns of Hyde Park, Pawling, Washington, Pine Plains, North East and the cities of Beacon and Poughkeepsie, focusing largely on hard-to-count areas. He has been distributing bundles of flyers to committee members and said Committee member Gabriela Vega-Matthews and Poughkeepsie Complete Count Committee member Ozie Williams recently came by his office to get more census materials to distribute.

Penney has enabled census officials to use Poughkeepsie City Hall to conduct training sessions for field workers. He also said the Dutchess County Office for the Aging is distributing census flyers through "drive-in picnic" events and is focusing on hard-to-count areas. Penney has provided information to the Dutchess County School Superintendents to disseminate to the respective districts through newsletters, robo calls or any other means they have to reach people.

Wrafter said more census trifolds have been printed in English and soon another round of trifolds in Spanish will be printed. Wrafter said billboards have been placed on the sides of county buses to call attention to the importance of people filling out the census. They include various messages such as, "No Count = No Money For Your Community!"

Eddy said she has made contact with the Todd Hill Market, Taste of New York and will be dropping off our census flyers there. She also thought it would be a good place to have a census table. She said the Rip Van

Winkle apartment complex in the City of Poughkeepsie is planning a ribbon-cutting for its new community garden. She said the census should have a presence there once a date is set for that event. Eddy also is working to have census workers at the Poughkeepsie Waterfront Market. One event was canceled due to a heat warning, but she is looking to reschedule it. Eddy is checking to see if an Art Effect census video can be shown before the movies at Overlook and Hyde Park Drive-Ins. She also will reach out to the North East Community Center to see if it needs help disseminating information about the census.

Barnes said the census has been using Mobile Questionnaire Assistance at key locations experiencing low self-response rates. At MQAs, respondents can receive assistance from trained staff, and they can answer the census utilizing the staff's iPads to access the Internet Self-Response instrument. Barnes said the census has found offering simple incentives such as providing people with bottles of water and masks can make the difference to get people to fill out the census. She said the census has decided to send out emails encouraging people to complete the form. She emphasized that getting people to self-respond is imperative particularly in a time of COVID-19. She said field workers will start going door to door in this area on Aug. 11.

Drake has been working through Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley to obtain funding for key activities.

Taylor said flyers were distributed at various events, and he is starting to work on a video involving community members urging people to fill out the census. Community Foundations is financially supporting that project.

Johnson said Nubian Directions II intends to utilize iPads to conduct street-level census outreach in the hard-to-count areas. Community Foundations is financially supporting that project as well. Johnson said Nubian is involved with a "free Wi-Fi" project focused on the northside of Poughkeepsie. Johnson said the census will benefit once this project is completed and people have easier access to the internet.

Lawrence said only a few libraries are operating at this point in Dutchess County, including the Poughkeepsie Library District. He asked if there were a data overlay, so libraries would know which residents have filled out the

census in order to target other areas. He said the library could use the bookmobile to go to some locations, and he will explore this option.

Benitez said the Poughkeepsie Complete Count Committee has been distributing materials at some events. Williams is also doing street outreach for the census.

During the pandemic, the Complete Count Committee has focused on a number of ways to get the message out that people can fill out the census online, by phone and through mail.

News stories have called attention to milestones:

"Census 2020 in Dutchess: Municipal officials push residents to be counted" [story](#), April 1, 2020, Poughkeepsie Journal

"Census response rates vary in Hudson Valley" [story](#), Mid-Hudson News, April 29, 2020

"Census too important for coronavirus, political hurdles" [column](#) April 30, 2020, Poughkeepsie Journal

Both Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro and City of Poughkeepsie Mayor Rob Rolison sent out letters to the community encouraging people to fill out the census:

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro [letter](#).

City of Poughkeepsie Rob Rolison [letter](#).