

Minutes from the Dutchess County Complete Count Committee Meeting October 17, 2019

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

Committee members attending were: Jennifer Drake, Eva Woods Peiró, Jonathan Bix, Seema Rizvi, Danny Hairston, Gabriela Owen, and John Penney.

Penney updated the committee on outreach efforts since the last meeting, which have included the committee having a presence at the Hyde Park and Dover Community Days, and Penney making presentations to the Town of Wappinger and Village of Wappingers Falls boards. Penney said he also addressed the Dutchess County Mayors and Supervisors Association, and a U.S. Census official joined him for that presentation. Penney said he disseminated information about the census -- including the PowerPoint he has been using and additional information -- to the mayors and supervisors through an email list they use to stay in touch. Penney said he and two census officials also took part in a video discussion with City of Beacon Mayor Randy Casale. That approximate 20-minute video is on the city's website and has been spread through social media. The link is <https://vimeo.com/365965572>.

Penney said he was presenting to the Town of Pine Plains later that night and to the Dutchess County school superintendents at their monthly meeting at BOCES the next week. He said other members of the committee who were not present at the Complete Count Committee's meeting have been doing outreach efforts, including Mario Johnson and Karen Dipnarine-Saroop.

He said committee member Tom Lawrence told him Dutchess County public libraries are on board with providing computer access to anyone needing it. He says that most, if not all, of the libraries will dedicate a PC for the primary purpose of letting people fill out their census online.

Eva Woods Peiró wanted to know more about the role the county would be playing in the census. She said there is a need for "safe sites" where people could come to fill out the census and get help. Penney said the county's role is to help raise awareness about the census but the count

itself is done by the census. Committee members agreed there should be safe sites and that the libraries in each community could have a significant role in that. But they also said other places, including churches and health centers, should be viewed as locations for safe sites.

Seema Rizvi suggested places like Barnes and Noble also could be helpful in raising awareness about the census and perhaps provide guidance about how to fill it out if necessary.

Gabriela Owen had two guests with her at the meeting -- Patricia Ferrer, assistant professor of Spanish at Marist College, and Chelsea Sheldon, a Vassar College sophomore. Owen said Ferrer and Sheldon and others in the community will be assisting her outreach efforts that will largely concentrate on the Latino community.

Jonathan Bix said his organization, Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson, continues to do outreach on the census and often ties it with events they are attending, such as the upcoming "Day of the Dead" event in Newburgh.

Jennifer Drake addressed funding issues and sources related to the census. She noted that New York has approved spending \$20 million for census-related work but has not revealed how that money will be spent – or if it will be spent. She said a New York Census Equity Fund was created, largely through foundations, and is making available \$3 million to community groups that are raising awareness and doing outreach about the importance of filing out the 2020 census. She said the Community Foundation of Dutchess County also has set aside \$100,000 and will award monies to groups doing outreach.

Committee members also addressed the upcoming meeting between Penney and the school superintendents. The committee member agreed there were a number of ways for schools to help and that meetings also should be held with teachers and school boards to have them participate in raising awareness about the census and encouraging people to fill out the form.