



CITY OF GERMANTOWN TENNESSEE

1930 South Germantown Road • Germantown, Tennessee 38138-2815
Phone (901) 757-7200 Fax (901) 757-7292 www.germantown-tn.gov

MEMORANDUM

To: G. Andrew Pouncey, Economic and Community Development Director

From: Marie Burgess, Planner

Date: June 26, 2012

Re: After Action Report of the 2012 Special Census

The Special Census was planned with the goal of successfully challenging the 2010 Federal Census count. Upon completion of the Special Census, the City anticipated that the population count resulting from the Special Census would exceed the 38,844 count from the 2010 census. The City has conducted past Special Censuses and understands the process involved in meeting the State's requirements for a Special Census.

Staff reviewed past processes for the Special Census, developed a timeline based on this information, implemented the plan, and ultimately achieved a population count of 40,123 which the State has verbally certified (the official letter should arrive in July). As a whole, the process involved in conducting a Special Census works and is necessary to attain accurate results.

One significant improvement was the decision to involve a consultant to setup a file in Microsoft Access for the purpose of comparing the Special Census addresses (carried forward from past Special Censuses) to the mailing list provided by the vendor. This effort identified many new addresses that were missing from the Special Census database. The decision to hire the consultant was not planned at the time of the budget, so staff limited the consultant's involvement. However, this file should be examined again and fine-tuned to make it a more useful tool aiding in efficiency and accuracy. Another significant part of the process is the assistance of volunteers and hired help. Whether code enforcement, park rangers, reserve police officers, neighborhood associations, residents, Delores Mitchell, etc, these people were critical to the successful "canvassing" of the City.

There were also several minor points for improvement to consider for a future Special Census that may help to save time and money. These include the following:

- Have some penalties built into the printing bid in case the vendor makes errors (such as sending mailouts that do not contain all pieces of paper – some did not contain the forms, mailing to non-Germantown residents, etc)

- Have a line item in the bid for pricing additional mailouts (per 100 or 500). This was *requested* in our bid, but there was not a dedicated line for it, so no one provided the information.
- Request how much lead time the vendor will need prior to printing. (When will they need all files for printing? When will they need to know which people responded to initial mailing so they will not receive a second one?)
- It would be preferred if there was a way for the website to only allow people to submit their online form if their water bill account number is entered correctly. Currently, as long as the box is not left empty, the form will go through (regardless of what information is put into the box). If there is not the capability to do this in-house, then an outside consultant may have to get the system setup to function that way.
- If the vendor plans to purchase their mailing list from the Post Office for zip codes 38138 & 38139, require them to cull out the addresses that are in Memphis or Collierville as there are residents from those municipalities in these zips. Otherwise, the City needs to maintain a list of these addresses and provide to the vendor in order to avoid mailing to these addresses (and paying for non-residents who mail back their forms).
- If the City maintains a list of vacant houses, it would be helpful to provide that list to the vendor in order to avoid mailing to these addresses.
- Add gender to Special Census form since the database contains that field and it can be difficult to make the determination from the name alone. If the City does not desire this information, it should be deleted from the database.
- Stress the importance of obtaining names at each household and not just a count. The State will not accept as part of the count households that do not have names listed with the address.
- Conducting a Special Census is a full-time responsibility for more than one staff person. With information gathering, coordinating, and data entry, it is not possible for one person to conduct a Special Census and complete other City tasks. If there is not enough staff available to dedicate to this process, help must be secured.

Throughout this Special Census, it has become apparent to staff that the City's ability to conduct a *successful* Special Census in the future will face a growing, major challenge. Residents have become more reluctant to share basic personal information (address, name and age) primarily due to the prevalent problem of identity theft. Without names and addresses, the State will not count a household. People do not trust that their personal information will be kept safe. Historically, staff has seen a lower response from multi-family households, but this problem compounds the lack of response issue and occurs city-wide. In a time-consuming, last-ditch effort, staff spent days pouring through hundreds of water service applications in order to obtain information for non-responding households. There needs to be a way to identify residents at each household in an electronic format that remains current so that the burden is not as substantial when a Special Census occurs. This concern will be presented to the Six Sigma group for their consideration.