

CITY OF CRANSTON  
Cranston Census Complete Count Committee  
Regular Meeting of July 20, 2020 – FINAL MINUTES

The Cranston Census Complete Count Committee met on July 20, 2020, in a meeting advertised in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act on July 15, 2020. The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Edward Garcia, at 2:05 p.m. It was held virtually via electronic means on the Zoom platform, conducted in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 20-46 in response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Edward Garcia (Chair, Cranston Public Library), Nicholas Lima (Recording Secretary, Canvassing Dept.), Joanne McGunagle (CCAP), David Quiroa (Senior Enrichment Center), Caitlyn Blankenship (CCAP OneCranston)

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Psilopoulos (Administration), Robert Coupe (Cranston Housing Authority), Norma Cole (School Dept.), Cpt. Carl Ricci (Cranston Police Dept.), Andrea Champagne (Cranston YMCA)

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT: Debborah Smith (U.S. Census Bureau)

The chair declared a quorum present.

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – 2-24-2020
- III. CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – EDWARD GARCIA
- IV. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. THE COMMITTEE MAY RECEIVE A REPORT FROM DEBB SMITH OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU REGARDING THE CHANGES IN TIMELINE AND OPERATIONS OF THE 2020 CENSUS DUE TO COVID-19
  - B. THE COMMITTEE MAY DISCUSS AND REVIEW ITS OUTREACH EFFORTS TO DATE
  - C. THE COMMITTEE MAY DISCUSS AND VOTE ON NEW OR EXTENDED OUTREACH PLANS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020 CENSUS FIELD OPERATIONS
- V. ADJOURNMENT

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Mr. Garcia asked for unanimous consent to approve the minutes of Feb. 24, 2020.  
WITHOUT OBJECTION, PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

## CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – EDWARD GARCIA

The fourth meeting of the Cranston Census Complete Count Committee was called to order by the chairperson. Mr. Garcia welcomed the attendees to the Zoom call and introduced Caitlyn Blankenship, who has been brought on as a new committee member and Cranston census outreach coordinator following the award of the census outreach grant to Cranston from the Rhode Island Foundation.

Mr. Garcia said he also received an additional \$2,000 census grant from the American Library Association that will be implemented into the outreach plan. He said all of the Cranston Complete Count Committee's community partners and city departments have been getting social media posts out weekly. The City Council also passed multiple resolutions in support of the 2020 Census and the Committee's efforts, and he asked individual Council members to help by reposting and retweeting the Committee's social media posts.

## NEW BUSINESS

### A. THE COMMITTEE MAY RECEIVE A REPORT FROM DEBB SMITH OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU REGARDING THE CHANGES IN TIMELINE AND OPERATIONS OF THE 2020 CENSUS DUE TO COVID-19

Ms. Smith thanked the Committee for its efforts, and said she could see why, given everything the Committee is doing, that Cranston's numbers are exceeding the national average. She wanted to let the members know about the MQA program, which has a census official appear in person at events and gathering spots, iPad in hand, to help attendees complete the census on the spot. She also offered additional opportunities for the Census Bureau to send staff and a table to community events.

Mr. Garcia offered the Committee's help to the Census Bureau for additional outreach. He suggested coordinating with Ms. Cole at the School Department to distribute information during the lunch program. For the libraries, because of capacity restrictions, unfortunately a table or event set-up isn't feasible presently, but could work later in the summer or early fall if restrictions or eased.

Ms. Smith said she is happy to assist the city's efforts in any way and to just reach out to her with dates, times, and locations.

### B. THE COMMITTEE MAY DISCUSS AND REVIEW ITS OUTREACH EFFORTS TO DATE

Ms. Blankenship provided the Committee an update on outreach efforts to date, including fliers and the ongoing census raffle promotion. She said CCAP has helped distribute over 100 bags with bilingual materials and census items, including at the food bank. She has also done three Facebook Live events to promote the census with other members of the Committee and community at large. Ms. Blankenship is completing additional outreach work with the southeast Asian community in Cranston. The second

round of the census raffle is ongoing, and is working well to draw attention to the importance of completing the 2020 Census.

The pandemic has provided some challenges, but the shift to more virtual outreach on platforms such as Facebook has allowed Ms. Blankenship to reach the entire city with promotions and marketing. She said Ms. Champagne at the YMCA has also been very helpful in distributing physical materials in a safe and socially distanced way.

Mr. Garcia thanked Ms. Blankenship for her report and work to date. He added that the libraries have also been distributing census fliers and have posted information prominently on the system's website. Plans were discussed to post more information on YouTube.

Mr. Quiroa asked if some census items could be distributed with the hundreds of bagged lunches the Senior Enrichment Center distributes daily, and when vouchers are distributed in-person. He offered his assistance in putting the bags together. Mr. Garcia said that was an awesome idea to reach out to more people.

Ms. McGunagle suggested doing additional outreach at the local farmers' markets.

#### C. THE COMMITTEE MAY DISCUSS AND VOTE ON NEW OR EXTENDED OUTREACH PLANS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020 CENSUS FIELD OPERATIONS

Ms. Smith provided additional updates on the changed reporting dates for the 2020 Census, citing Oct. 31 as the new deadline to complete the census due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic. However, she said that it's important for people to complete the census ahead of Aug. 11, after which door-knocking will resume. Census takers may knock on a door up to 12 times to attempt to complete a response for that housing unit if they have failed to respond online or to previous mailings.

Next week, Ms. Smith said the Census Bureau is deploying a "push week" for added exposure on social media and traditional media in order to boost response rates, the goal being to reduce the number of door knocks that will be needed later on.

Mr. Garcia said the previous idea to use the city's robocall system to promote the census was denied. While other communities have used their systems for that purpose, in Cranston the policy is to keep the system exclusive to emergency communications.

Ms. Smith said the bulk of hard-to-count areas remain in Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket. She said Cranston is at a 64.8% response rate, which is 2.4% above the national average. She again thanked the Committee members for their effort and said it's working. She shared maps of census tracks in Cranston that are hard-to-count that demand more attention in outreach efforts. Mr. Lima said there are a lot of apartments and three-tenement houses in the area Ms. Smith was displaying, which makes direct canvassing outreach more difficult when going door-to-door. Mr. Garcia said a lot of the Committee's effort is focused there, particularly the northern half of Ward 3.

Mr. Lima said there's a GIS-integrated map on the state's Complete Count Committee website, where it is easy to see Cranston's efforts pretty well, including some areas that

are above a 70% and 75% response rate. He said in comparing Cranston to Warwick on the data hub, they are at 69%, or four percentage points above where Cranston is. He said that's due to the harder to count areas of Cranston bordering Providence that should be given additional targeted attention. Mr. Lima said the northern part of Ward 3 and some sections of Ward 2 is where we are seeing amongst the lowest response rates in the city, and if that there's anywhere where we should pour resources, time, and energy in the few weeks we have left, it's in those specific areas.

Ms. McGunagle said those are well-known poverty pockets in the city, and have a higher percentage of undocumented residents who are much more hesitant to respond to the census. Ms. Smith said the Census Bureau has been working with organizations that traditionally work with undocumented residents to try to get a higher response. Ms. McGunagle said CCAP is one of the agencies working directly on that effort. Mr. Quiroa said he could reach out to friends of his who host radio shows listened to frequently by the undocumented community and do a direct appeal to complete the census.

### ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Garcia asked for unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting.  
WITHOUT OBJECTION, PASSED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicholas J. Lima  
Recorder

*The preceding Official Minutes constitute the record of the final scheduled meeting of the Cranston Census Complete Count Committee. As the body completed its function and did not convene again, the minutes are submitted as approved by the Chairperson, Edward Garcia.*

APPROVED by the Chairperson: April 29, 2021

A permanent record of the work of the Cranston Census Complete Count Committee is maintained by the City of Cranston Canvassing Department, at the following address:

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Cranston, RI 02910-2786