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## Preparing for a complete count

By ALEKSEI PAVLOFF Perry County Tribune Reporter Sep 25, 2019

NEW LEXINGTON — Representative for the Perry County Think Tank on Poverty met with the Perry County Commissioners on Wednesday last week to discuss preparing for the 2020 United States Census. The Think Tank proposed the creation of a Complete Count Committee, something that a census bureau representative recommended a few weeks ago.

“We are here to talk about the census 2020,” Leshia Farias stated to the commissioners.

Farias met with commissioners to help address some preconceived notions regarding the United States Census Bureau. Farias, a member of the Think Tank, stated that some areas of the county have been silent when the Census Bureau visits homes. Farias was joined by Think Tank members Anne Barnette and Linda Klingler.

“The census is done every 10 years,” Farias told *The Perry County Tribune*. “The census numbers determine how federal funding comes back to local communities.”

Farias, as well as the commissioners, emphasized how important it is for everyone to participate in the census due to grant, state and federal funding efforts. Census data that gets recorded affects the amount of government funding a county can receive. Funding such as grants and free and reduced lunch is affected by census data.

Prior to Farias, approximately a month prior, met with a United States Census Partnership Specialist, Aaron Dages, and talked about all possible strategies to make sure every resident gets counted.

The Perry County Think Tank on Poverty stems from another Think Tank located in Newark. The Licking County Think Tank have already made efforts to create a complete count committee. The commissioners in Licking County, according to Farias, are “interested” in a complete count committee because it may help in reaching out to individuals and families that may not participate in the census.

“Licking County Commissioners realize without that kind of outreach, we are not going to get the kind of response rate that we need in order to get the resources that we need to serve the people completely in the county,” Farias stated during the meeting.

The Licking County Complete Count Task Force has been formed recently in order to address the fast approaching census. Bringing in media, administrative leads and public officials, preparing for the census takes equal and all participation if members of the community want to receive increases in state or federal funding. Farias commented that the task force tries to help local residents understand what the census bureau does and what kinds of questions will be asked.

One issue that Farias stated, with some commissioners agreeing, was the stigma that some locals may have when the census comes knocking at their door or calls their phone. Farias sought to dispel those stigmas when she visited with the commissioners and part of solving those stigmas is working together.

“We wanted to come to you and say that we would like to do a complete count committee,” Farias offered to the commissioners. “And we wondered if we could get your support and your involvement.”

Farias also added that if a complete count is not recorded in Perry County, local agencies and entities that apply or receive government funding may lose out on additional dollars that could go towards county and village projects.

“I think we can obviously support that and convey that to Aaron (Dagres),” Perry County Commissioner Ben Carpenter told Farias and her colleagues.

All commissioners were in agreement that an informational presentation with the public could be effective in getting a complete count of the Perry County population. Farias invited the idea of holding one presentation where Specialist Aaron Dagres visits with local businesses and community leaders.

“Could you help us coordinate that,” Farias asked the commissioners.

Carpenter stated that the commissioners will advertise for the informative presentation with a tentative date being in mid-October.

“If they make it a countywide effort, then I think we’re more likely to have a successful count in the county,” Farias concluded.