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Conducting a Special Census

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CONDUCTING A SPECIAL CENSUS

November 2007

Margaret Norris, Municipal Management Consultant

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 
MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

In cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League



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The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) was created in 1949 by the state legislature to enhance the quality of government in Tennessee municipalities. An agency of the University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service, MTAS works in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League and affiliated organizations to assist municipal officials.

By sharing information, responding to client requests, and anticipating the ever-changing municipal government environment, MTAS promotes better local government and helps cities develop and sustain effective management and leadership.

MTAS offers assistance in areas such as accounting and finance, administration and personnel, fire, public works,

law, ordinance codification, and water and wastewater management. MTAS houses a comprehensive library and publishes scores of documents annually.

MTAS provides one copy of our publications free of charge to each Tennessee municipality, county and department of state and federal government. There is a \$10 charge for additional copies of "Conducting a Special Census."

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CONDUCTING A SPECIAL CENSUS

Why is it important to know how many people live in your community? In the 2008 fiscal year, it is estimated that a municipality will receive \$111 per person in state shared revenues. The more people in your city or town, the more money the city receives from the state. Except for the state street aid and petroleum taxes a city gets from shared revenues, the money is unrestricted and can be spent on just about anything from address labels to zoysia grass seed.

By state statutes (T.C.A. §§ 54-4-203 and 67-6-103), cities and towns are allowed to conduct three citywide special censuses between the federal decennial censuses. For state shared beer taxes authorized by T.C.A. § 57-5-205, local governments can hold two citywide special censuses. This means that if a city conducts a third citywide special census the state shared beer tax revenues will be held to the latest count. Municipalities have the option of conducting the census themselves, hiring a firm to do the count, or requesting the federal Census Bureau to handle it. Cities and towns also have the option of doing a citywide count upon incorporation (rather than relying on the latest federal census data) and counting newly annexed areas. The annexation count is not restricted to the three census limit.

However, there are many things to consider before diving head first into the census pool including the cost, time, and human resources involved in conducting the census; correctly scheduling the census; and determining who will conduct the census, just to name a few. The costs a city might expect to pay when doing its own count include printing letters, envelopes and flyers; postage to mail the surveys out and postage to return them; any incentives the city might offer;

labor; advertising; and payment to the state Local Planning Assistance Office (LPAO) for verifying the results.

The first step in the process is to contact the city's regional LPAO. A list of these offices is located at the end of this publication. The LPAO is the state agency responsible for verifying a city's census count and conveying that information to the Department of Revenue. It has guidelines that a city must follow in order to have the census certified. The date for submitting the census data is May 15. This deadline is necessary for them to have time to check the information before the start of the next fiscal year. If the LPAO finds more than a five percent discrepancy in the city's data, it will reject the census count.

The LPAO charges municipalities a small fee to verify the town's numbers if someone other than the federal Census Bureau conducts the count. For cities with populations more than 1,000, the fee is \$175 plus 10 cents per person. For cities with populations below 1,000, the 10-cent per person charge is waived, and there is a minimal charge based on population, ranging from \$50 to \$175. The LPAO's guidelines are included later in this document for each type of census count.

The next step is to determine if the city is going to manage the process, hire a firm or agency to do the work, or have the federal Census Bureau conduct the count. A detailed description of the U.S. Census Bureau requirements is at its special census Web site at www.census.gov/field/www/specialcensus.

If the decision is to use the Census Bureau, the city still has to meet certain LPAO requirements. Before July 1 the bureau has to give the LPAO an official



notice of the census, a map of the area covered, and the census count. The bureau's count is not checked by the LPAO.

The U.S. Census Bureau's campaign generally takes longer and costs more than a canvass done by the city, but the information reported is often much more detailed than that from other sources.

The cost of a special census carried out by the bureau's Office of Special Censuses begins with a request for a cost estimate and a signed memorandum of understanding. The charge for the estimate is \$200. The bureau will then prepare an estimate within 30 days that is valid for 180 days. The estimate is figured on a case-by-case basis and hinges on such variables as population, number of houses, location, area wage rates, and the number of group quarters (i.e., dormitories, apartment complexes, nursing homes) in the municipality.

The bureau typically stops doing special censuses about two years before the decennial census due to decreased demand and a shifting of resources in preparation for the national count. The current deadline for accepting requests for cost estimates is November 30, 2007, and the signed memorandum of understanding, with payment, must be received by February 28, 2008.

For more information, you can contact Mike Stump or Adriana Gonzalez at the Office of Special Censuses at (301) 763-1429, or send an e-mail to SpecialCensusProgram@census.gov.

If the city decides to contract with a firm or agency to perform the census, the following information is still required by the Local Planning Assistance Office. Each of the three scenarios under which a city may conduct a special census (citywide, for incorporation, for annexation) has separate requirements.

NEW INCORPORATION

For certification of a count in a newly incorporated area, cities have two options. They can use the latest federal census data or conduct their own count if they believe the area has grown in population during the decade.

Using Latest Federal Census

If a new town uses existing census data, there is no charge for the LPAO to verify it. The caveat is that the new city's boundaries cannot cross federal census tract lines or block numbering areas and must contain the entire area of one or more census tracts or block numbering areas.

The census tract data can be found in the Census Bureau's publication *Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas*, which is available at the bureau's Web site www.census.gov/. This data can also be obtained from the following locations:

Center for Business and Economic Research
College of Business Administration
The University of Tennessee
Temple Court, Suite 100
804 Volunteer Boulevard
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-4334
Phone: (865) 974-5441
Fax: (865) 974-3100
E-mail: vickiec@utk.edu

Sparks Bureau of Business
and Economic Research (BBER)
The University of Memphis
221 Fogelman Executive Center
Memphis, Tennessee 38152-3130
Phone: (901) 678-2281
E-mail: bberlib@memphis.edu
URI: <http://sbber.memphis.edu/>



The LPAO requires:

1. A notarized statement of the total, with the identification numbers of the tracts or blocks surveyed, the census publication used, the table, and page numbers;
2. A notarized statement by the mayor with the date of incorporation and type of city charter; and
3. A map of the incorporated area clearly showing the blocks and tracts that were counted in the census.

Using Municipality's Data

The city may compile its own census data if it thinks that the population in the newly incorporated area has grown significantly since the last federal census. The LPAO needs a list of every resident with a street address. Members of a household may be grouped under a single address, but the name of each member of the household must be given. The LPAO also needs a notarized statement by the mayor of election for incorporation, giving the date and type of charter that was adopted along with a map showing the boundaries of the new town. The list, the notarized statement, and the map, along with the appropriate fees for verification, must be mailed to the LPAO. When considering which method to use to arrive at population numbers, the city should bear in mind that it may not yet have at its disposal all the tools and resources to make conducting its own survey easier.

ANNEXATIONS

As with conducting a survey for newly incorporated municipalities, cities and towns have a choice as to how they count the people who live in recently annexed territories. If the city decides to use the latest federal census data, the same rules apply as for incorporations. If the city decides to do its own count, it must send the following by May 15 (along with the appropriate payment for the number of people counted in the annexed area only) to LPAO:

- A list naming each and every resident by street address;

- A copy of the signed ordinance of annexation with the date of final passage included;
- A notarized statement of the mayor containing the following information;
 - A brief description of the manner in which the census was taken;
 - The total number of inhabitants enumerated within the area;
 - Passage of the 30-day waiting period and absence of litigation;
- In case of litigation, an affidavit from the court of record of resolution of the litigation; and
- A detailed map of the annexed area and indication on that map or on another map of the relation of the area to both the previous boundary lines of incorporation and the latest federal census boundary lines.

CITYWIDE CENSUS

For a citywide count of residents, the LPAO requires the same listing of residents as for counting incorporated and annexed areas. Each person must be named along with a street address. In addition, the LPAO needs a notarized statement from the mayor that describes how the census was conducted and gives a total number of inhabitants enumerated within the city or town. A map showing the municipal boundaries must also be included. As before, if the LPAO verifies a city's numbers, a check must accompany the required information.

If the city cannot prove that its numbers are greater than the last federal census, it is not required to submit the information to the LPAO. City officials should be very confident before they begin the counting process that there is quantifiable evidence of growth because this could be a costly mistake.

Once the decision has been made regarding who will conduct the census, the next question should be when to do it. As previously stated, there are deadlines to consider. Should you conduct the survey this year or next year or wait until the year after that? It is important to know what



is occurring in the city that might impact the numbers. The governing body should consider many questions such as when the new plant that is under construction will employ the 100 new workers; is there a new subdivision in the works and when will various phases be complete; has a local industry announced layoffs; how many building permits were issued last year compared to previous years; and has the elementary school expanded or added mobile units to handle an increased student population.

Since a city has only up to three opportunities to conduct citywide special censuses, timing is critical, and it is important not to count too soon or too late.

PREPARING TO COUNT

Before the town begins counting, it must devise a strategy, including a timetable and assignments of people responsible for each step. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. Census Bureau begins preparations at least two years in advance. Creating a database to track responses is crucial as is developing a marketing plan to announce the count. What databases will the city use to create its master address list? Options include property tax rolls; water, sewer, gas, and electric utility customer lists; recent building permits; and past census survey records. If the city decides to use its Web site to allow people to register, the software must be developed or purchased. If the city is using volunteers, its own staff, or hiring temporary help, all personnel must be trained before going door-to-door and they should be equipped with city-issued photo identification badges. When going door-to-door to track down people who have failed to respond to previous requests, it is a good idea to assign someone who is familiar with the area and the residents.

A few methods that cities have employed to increase participation include allowing residents to respond electronically through the city's Web site, providing a self-addressed stamped envelope or

postcard for residents to return, including reminders with utility bills, and, if the city owns the utility, offering a dollar or two off the bill for returning the survey by the deadline. Samples of forms and letters to residents are available for checkout from the MTAS library.

The more work the city can do on the front end of the count to verify addresses and prepare for public relations, the better results the city will have. There are three key resources the town can use to get the word out: city employees, the media, and civic and business organizations.

GETTING THE WORD OUT CITY EMPLOYEES

To communicate with people about the city, communicate with people who work for the city. Do not alienate municipal employees from this piece of city business; they should be among the first to be informed about the special census. If they feel that they're part of the team, their enthusiasm might just flow outside city hall walls and spill into their own neighborhoods. Through education, city employees and elected officials can relay accurate information to their friends and encourage them to return the completed census forms.

One suggestion is to call a special meeting for city employees to talk about the census and distribute a bulletin they can keep for reference. Be sure to include all employees in this session, regardless of their position or work location.

Another recommendation is to spend extra time educating those who answer the phones. If a citizen is motivated enough to call with a question, staff need to answer it quickly and correctly without bouncing the call all over city hall.

THE MEDIA

The media are powerful players in communicating the importance of cooperating with the special



census. A story in the local newspaper or on television or radio can boost the credibility of the census and incite a desired behavior, in this case, convincing people to complete the census forms and return them.

Newspapers

Newspaper reporters are very busy, especially at small weeklies where some editors even deliver the newspaper as part of their duties. The city's chances of an article appearing are greatly increased if the work is mostly done for the newspaper. Include with your press release a fact sheet on the numbers the town anticipates, how much extra money the census will bring in, and what the governing body plans to do with the additional revenue.

Radio and Television

Send the press release to your local stations and call the news directors to remind them about it. Ask whether the mayor or another high-ranking official can appear on taped news segments or any interview shows the station broadcasts.

If the local television station has a graphics channel that continuously runs ads across the bottom of the screen, talk to the station manager about buying a spot. Also investigate how you can use the community access channel.

Public Service Announcements

Most media publicize public service announcements as space or time permits. These short blurbs are differentiated from ads by one very important factor: they are free. Even though they generally serve the greater good of the community, they are subject to space constraints, so it is not a good idea to depend solely on them to communicate the city's message.

Advertisements

Unlike public service announcements, if the town pays for ads, they will run. City staff may be able

to work out a package deal with local advertising representatives that includes a few paid spots with a couple of public service announcements thrown in for good measure.

CIVIC AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

Many neighborhood associations and churches have newsletters that might run an article on the special census. Some also accept advertising. Plugging into these groups is a good way to instill a sense of cooperation and community pride.

Civic groups, such as the Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary, often feature speakers at their monthly meetings. Arrange an engagement for the mayor or city manager to talk to the group about the special census and what the city hopes to accomplish.

The chamber of commerce can also promote the cause. Make sure a government head attends the monthly mixers to tell the local business community about the census. The chamber or other similar groups may also be interested in "piggyback" advertising: splitting the cost of an ad and including their name as sponsor.

CENSUS CONSIDERATIONS

While the task of conducting a census may seem like it is more trouble than it's worth, consider that even some of Tennessee's smallest communities have been successful in the endeavor. At the end of this publication are tables compiled from data provided by the Local Planning Assistance Office that lists cities that have conducted citywide censuses since the 2000 census decade and cities that have conducted annexation censuses.

In seven years, 79 cities have conducted citywide special censuses and 58 have held special censuses for annexations. The smallest percentage that a city gained by doing a special census was 0.67 percent and the largest was 147.77 percent, while, on average, cities saw an increase of



22.08 percent. The smallest city to conduct a citywide special census over the last seven years was Silerton, which began with 60 and increased to 118 people. That was a 96.67 percent increase that practically doubled its state shared tax revenues.

Even if the city annexed just two homes at the end of a street, there may be five people living there (in 2005 the Census Bureau reported that the average household size was 2.6 with the average family size being 3.18). In fiscal year 2008 that will equate to \$555, and the city will receive that money every year thereafter. The only cost to the city would be a few phone calls to get the names of family members, the cost of a stamp to mail the information to LPAO, and a check to the LPAO for \$50 because it has to verify fewer than 250 names and addresses.

In summary, the first step in conducting a special census is to contact the Local Planning Assistance Office. The next step is to determine who will do the count and to devise a strategy to do the work. Timing of the census is important since a municipality can do only up to three counts in a decade. Keep in mind the May 15 deadline if the city is doing work that needs to be verified (if it is not using the latest decennial census data from the federal government for an incorporation or annexation count). Be sure to get the word out to the community for the best results because the more responses the city can get before having to make personal contacts the better.

LPAO OFFICES

For additional information, contact one of the following Local Planning Assistance offices, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, or your MTAS management consultant.

Director's Office
William R. Snodgrass/Tenn. Tower Building
10th Floor
312 Eighth Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0405
Phone: (615) 741-2211
Fax: (615) 741-0607

West Tennessee Region
Lowell Thomas State Office Building
225 Martin Luther King Drive, Suite 302-A
Jackson, Tennessee 38301-6995
Phone: (731) 423-5650
Fax: (731) 426-0640

Middle Tennessee Region
446 Metroplex Drive, Suite 128
Nashville, Tennessee 37211-3139
Phone: (615) 741-1534
Fax: (615) 532-1896

Upper Cumberland Region
621 East 15th Street
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501-1820
Phone: (931) 528-1577
Fax: (931) 528-1577

Southeast Tennessee Region
Chattanooga State Office Building
540 East McCallie Avenue, Suite 690
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402-2057
Phone: (423) 634-6446
Fax: (423) 634-6351

East Tennessee Region
Twelve Oaks Executive Park
5401 Kingston Pike, Suite 210
Knoxville, Tennessee 37919-5039
Phone: (865) 594-6666
Fax: (865) 594-6653

Upper East Tennessee Region
207 North Boone Street
Johnson City, Tennessee 37604-5675
Phone: (423) 434-6476
Fax: (423) 434-6482



City	Fiscal Year(s) Census Done	2000 Population	After 1st Special Census	# Increase	% Increase	After 2nd Special Census	# Increase	% Increase	After 3rd Special Census	# Increase	% Increase
Algood	2005	2,942	3,150	208	7.07						
Ardmore	2005	1,082	1,190	108	9.98						
Arlington	2004 & 2006	2,569	5,041	2,472	96.22		7,590	2,549	50.57		
Ashland City	2006	3,641	4,050	409	11.23						
Athens	2002	13,220	13,334	114	0.86						
Atoka	2002 & 2005	3,235	4,266	1,031	31.87		6,067	1,801	42.22		
Baneberry	2007	366	469	103	28.14						
Bartlett	2005	40,543	43,354	2,811	6.93						
Bell Buckle	2002	391	405	14	3.58						
Benton	2005	1,138	1,275	137	12.04						
Brentwood	2004 & 2007	23,445	30,617	7,172	30.59		35,262	4,645	15.17		
Brighton	2005	1,719	2,636	917	53.34						
Burns	2007	1,366	1,439	73	5.34						
Chapel Hill	2003	943	1,182	239	25.34						
Charlotte	2007	1,153	1,651	498	43.19						
Clifton	2003	2,699	3,046	347	12.86						
Collierville	2002 & 2005	31,872	37,044	5,172	16.23		41,923	4,879	13.17		
Coopertown	2002	3,027	3,510	483	15.96						
Cross Plains	2005	1,381	1,557	176	12.74						
Crossville	2004 & 2006	8,981	9,603	622	6.93		10,433	830	8.64		
Dickson	2007	12,244	19,274	7,030	57.42						
Doyle	2003	525	564	39	7.43						
Eagleville	2006	464	562	98	21.12						
Fairview	2006	5,800	7,014	1,214	20.93						
Farragut	2006	17,720	19,717	1,997	11.27						
Franklin	2004 & 2006	41,842	46,416	4,574	10.93		49,412	2,996	6.45		
Gallatin	2005	23,230	23,917	687	2.96						
Germantown	2002 & 2006	37,348	40,203	2,855	7.64		40,977	774	1.93		
Goodlettsville	2006	13,780	14,761	981	7.12						
Gordonsville	2007	1,066	1,248	182	17.07						
Greenbrier	2005	4,940	5,373	433	8.77						
Harrogate	2001	4,073	4,425	352	8.64						
Henderson	2006	5,670	6,195	525	9.26						
Hendersonville	2006	40,620	42,509	1,889	4.65						
Henning	2002	1,033	1,218	185	17.91						
Jefferson City	2007	7,760	8,624	864	11.13						
Lakeland	2002 & 2007	6,862	7,464	602	8.77		10,848	3,384	45.34		
Lakesite	2005	1,845	1,920	75	4.07						
La Vergne	2003 & 2006	18,687	21,561	2,874	15.38		25,278	3,717	17.24		
Lebanon	2004	20,195	21,887	1,692	8.38						
Lobelville	2005	915	1,025	110	12.02						



City	Fiscal Year(s) Census Done	2000 Population	After 1st Special Census	# Increase	% Increase	After 2nd Special Census	# Increase	% Increase	After 3rd Special Census	# Increase	% Increase
Luttrell	2003	915	1,174	259	28.31						
Lynnville	2002	345	405	60	17.39						
Manchester	2005	8,294	9,442	1,148	13.84						
Maury City	2002	704	803	99	14.06						
Medina	2002 & 2006	969	1,066	97	10.01		1,902	836	78.42		
Medon	2002	191	269	78	40.84						
Middleton	2001	602	670	68	11.30						
Millersville	2006	5,308	6,129	821	15.47						
Moscow	2007	460	571	111	24.13						
Mount Juliet	2003 & 2006	12,390	15,610	3,220	25.99		20,392	4,782	30.63		
Munford	2003	4,708	4,938	230	4.89						
Murfreesboro	2003 & 2005	68,816	75,083	6,267	9.11		81,393	6,310	8.40		
Nolensville	2006	3,099	3,343	244	7.87						
Oak Hill	2006	4,493	4,726	233	5.19						
Oakland	2005	1,279	3,169	1,890	147.77						
Orlinda	2007	594	850	256	43.10						
Piperton	2006	589	841	252	42.78						
Pleasant View	2006	2,934	3,645	711	24.23						
Portland	2004 & 2007	8,458	10,046	1,588	18.78		10,941	895	8.91		
Ridgetop	2005	1,083	1,861	778	71.84						
Saltillo	2001	342	408	66	19.30						
Shelbyville	2006	16,105	16,213	108	0.67						
Signal Mountain	2002	7,429	7,725	296	3.98						
Silerton	2007	60	118	58	96.67						
Smyrna	2003 & 2005	25,569	29,983	4,414	17.26		33,123	3,140	10.47		
Somerville	2002	2,534	2,671	137	5.41						
Sparta	2002	4,599	5,030	431	9.37						
Spring Hill	2004 & 2005 & 2007	7,715	13,697	5,982	77.54	17,325	3,628	26.49	23,462	9,765	56.36
Springfield	2005	14,329	15,530	1,201	8.38						
Surgoinsville	2005	1,484	1,861	377	25.40						
Sweetwater	2007	5,586	6,567	981	17.56						
Three Way	2006	1,375	1,675	300	21.82						
Tusculum	2004	2,004	2,498	494	24.65						
Vanleer	2007	310	454	144	46.45						
Wartrace	2007	548	630	82	14.96						
White Bluff	2007	2,142	2,929	787	36.74						
White House	2005	7,297	8,530	1,233	16.90						
Whiteville	2005	4,539	4,640	101	2.23						
Woodland Mills	2002	296	385	89	30.07						
AVERAGE				1,101	21.94		3,011	24.27		9,765	56.36
Total Cities	65										



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