

Populaton, household figures don't add up

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

Local officials aren't pleased with recently released preliminary census figures that show three Back Mountain communities declining in population and most of the rest gaining only slightly. Using words like "lousy", "ridiculous", and "laughable" local officials are showing their disappointment with the figures, saying that the figures are just plain wrong.

Many local officials say they plan to file an objection with the census bureau.

Challenging the Census is difficult

The preliminary figures have been sent to municipalities for their review. If officials do not agree with the figures they can request that the census bureau look further into the local numbers. However, time is running out for some of the local governments, which had 15 days to voice their objections from the date they received the preliminary figures.

Communities that plan to challenge the count have a tough chore on their hands. Municipal officials will have to count every housing unit and every street in an effort to find fault with the census. Even if this is done there is no guarantee that the results will change, because only the number of housing units, not the population figures can be challenged.

Group quarters and apartment complexes create more difficulties for those who want to question the figures.

Census

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Kingston Township Manager Jeff Box said although the results sent to the township showed an increase of 47 people, township officials are positive there was more growth in population with all the development which has occurred in the township since 1980.

"We used an average of 30 houses more per year and the report indicated 250 units more for the 10 years. That doesn't seem too bad but in one household block unit alone, zoning officer Ben Gorey found 126 dwellings less than there should be," explained Box. "That one is a glaring error and there are others that indicate three, four and five units less. There may be others. We will go out and count dwelling units.

Box said a municipality loses \$7.00 per person for each decrease in population, which in some cases can mean a large "bite" in annual income. The township also receives \$12.50 per mile which in Kingston Township's case is 39.5 miles. "Multiply this figure times the \$12.50 and it's a sizeable amount each year," Box explained.

Zoning Officer Ben Gorey has had experience working on such projects as the census and has been working on the map and other information received from the Census Bureau.

Box said according to the instructions the township received, a municipality must file within 15 working days from the date of receipt of the information. The township plans to file a protest by September 25.

Dallas Borough Manager Milt Lutsey said he and the police chief plan to go around the borough and count the dwellings in the community.

"They show only 1,046 housing units in the borough, 53 of them vacant. That is ridiculous especially when we have had building on the increase in the borough during the past 10 years. They show our population down as well as our household units. We certainly plan to protest the figures; they're just not right," Lutsey explained.

Lehman Township supervisor David Sutton said although Lehman Township showed an increase of five people, the supervisors did not agree with the census figure.

"Looking at the map sent to us, we could see in every zone the count was in error as far as household units were concerned," Sutton said.

"We will file a protest and if we have to count dwelling units we will have to do it. We have no one to help with it as the Census Bureau did, but it will have to be done and we do know our township. We have to have reasonable proof."

None of the officials could understand why the census figures showed an increase of nearly 3,000 over the 1980 census in Jackson Township. But they all agreed there were mistakes made, so many Back Mountain officials will be out counting housing units during the next week or 10 days.

Estimates, census figures far apart

The preliminary census data conflict markedly with estimates made throughout the 1980's by the Bureau of Census.

For instance, this past January the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census released population estimates for local municipalities. These numbers estimated that Kingston Township grew continually from 1980 to 1988. The numbers estimated that the township's population grew by up to 735 people in those eight years. However, the 1990 preliminary census figures show that from 1988 to the present the township's population dropped by 688 people leaving it only 47 higher than in 1980.

But the census estimate of households shows a growth of 239 in the township in the decade.

Jackson Township turned up with the greatest growth of any Back Mountain community, a whopping 2,238 people since 1980. According to the earlier estimates, the township's population had grown from 2,941 in 1980 to 3,610 in 1988. But the early 1990 figures gave Jackson Township a population of 5,179.

The Census shows several Back Mountain communities declining in population. Dallas Township and Dallas Borough had fluctuating populations from 1980-1988. The estimates say that both municipalities had a rise in population from 1980-1982, a decline from 1982-1986 and then another increase from 1986-1988. Overall, both recorded higher populations in 1988 than in 1980. That changed when the 1990 figures were released; according to these numbers the borough lost 180 residents while the township

dropped 321.

Some other statistics that are considered important in the census count is the housing units in a municipality. These figures help officials locate mistakes that may have been made in figuring out the census.

The number of housing units is another important statistic gathered by the Census. According to the preliminary 1990 figures there has been an increase in housing units in both Dallas Borough and Dallas Township yet both municipalities show a drop in population.

Harveys Lake Borough had the opposite result. Preliminary numbers show that there was a drop in housing units in the last decade; however the population is up by 377 people.

Kingston Township and Lehman Township both show a rise in the number of housing units, but only a small increase in population. In Kingston Township there are 239 more housing units than in 1980 but only 47 more people, while in Lehman Township there are 78 more housing units and only five more people, according to the census.

All Census figures are important

The census figures play a major role in government and they should be taken very seriously, according to Howard Grossman, Executive Director of Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"We should be alarmed at how low these figures are," said Grossman. "Once the numbers become official they will be used for the next 10 years to determine a lot of things including grants and other funding for municipalities." The official population count is used to deter-

mine state and federal funding for a large number of projects and revenues.

Grossman, who lives in Dallas, said that it's difficult to believe the numbers for the Back Mountain, and feels that area officials should take time to look over their results and do the work to challenge the figures. However, he reminds everyone that these early figures are the preliminary numbers. "The census puts everyone on the defensive but we have to work to make sure this area gets the proper count," said Grossman.

He added that other useful information besides the population count will be useful from the census. "The demographics are awfully crucial for a lot of people," said Grossman. "There are going to be a lot of eyes watching for the rest of the year how the census results are coming."

Grossman said that the EDCNP will be one of the groups watching the census results. Local municipalities will also keep an eye on the figures closely. "There has been strong growth in the Back Mountain," said Jackson Township supervisor Joseph Stager. "I am not sure the numbers coming in for the Back Mountain are accurate and they need to be." Jackson Township was one of the few townships in Luzerne County to have a population increase.

Grossman said that the EDCNP has made some of its information available to area municipalities that want to look into the census. Some of the more important data is the housing units for the area. "This can help show some of the areas that may have been missed by the census people," said Grossman.

The work with the census figures will continue for the rest of the year and must be presented to President Bush by December 31.

Jackson Twp., Harveys Lake lead area changes

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

Even though there have been numerous complaints about the preliminary figures released for the 1990 census, three Back Mountain municipalities show the largest population increases in Luzerne County.

Jackson Township, Harveys Lake Borough and Ross Township showed the three highest increases in residents in the county, according to preliminary figures released by the census bureau.

The preliminary results show that only 20 of the 74 municipalities in the county had a population increase; six of those municipalities are in the Back Mountain.

Jackson Township showed by far the largest increase. According to preliminary figures, the township gained 2,238 residents in the last ten years.

Many people question those numbers. In 1980 Jackson Township had a population of 2,941. The 1990 numbers show the population at 5,197. While the increase is very high, one township official feels that there has been growth in the area.

"I know that it seems like a big increase," said Supervisor Joseph Stager, Jr. "But I can honestly say that the township has grown quite a bit in 10 years." Stager added that there have been a number of major developments added to the township in the last decade.

Stager agreed that the preliminary numbers are high and he said that township officials are looking into the census numbers.

He also said that in Jackson Township's case the numbers may not be wrong in 1990. "I can't say how accurate the last census was," said Stager.

Officials have said that when taking the census in the town-

ship the prisoners at the State Correctional Institution in Dallas are counted.

Harveys Lake had the second largest population increase in the county, growing from 2,310 in 1980 to its current 2,687; an increase of 377 residents.

Borough officials weren't surprised when they found out they had one of the largest increases. Council Chairman William Wilson said that the borough is one of the fastest growing areas in the county.

"We've picked up more people," said Wilson. "But if you look at the numbers it is not an alarming rate. It really only averages out to about 37 people a year."

"We are continuing to grow all the time," added Wilson. "We looked at some figures earlier this year and noted we were ahead of schedule in growth."

In March, the council applied for state development grants and in doing so, listed the population and development growth over the years. According to those numbers the borough's population rose 36 percent and housing increased 108 percent.

Wilson noted that he was satisfied with the preliminary census numbers for the borough and said that he did not think the borough would file an objection to the statistics.

Ross Township was third in the county for increased population. The preliminary figures show the township increased by 248 residents from 2,323 in 1980 to the current 2,571.

Lake Township also showed a substantial increase. Its population rose 136 from 1,783 in 1980 to 1,919 in 1990.

The other two Back Mountain municipalities which had population increases were Kingston Township which went from 6,535 to 6,582 and Lehman Township which increased from 3,030 in 1980 to 3,035.

Lake planning commission reorganizes

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

The Harveys Lake Planning Commission has a new chairman and vice-chairman after the former chairman was replaced when he was not reappointed to another term.

The Harveys Lake Borough Council did not reappoint Joseph Schappert to the planning commission at a special meeting last week. Schappert's term on the

board expired earlier this year and the borough council appointed Joseph Kolesar to fill Schappert's vacancy on the planning commission.

This action came after the council received complaints about some of Schappert's actions while he served on the commission.

On Monday night, the planning commission held its first meeting after replacing Schappert. Commission members appointed William Gallagher as the new chairman and Keith Harry as vice-chair-

man. Also at Monday night's meeting, the planning commission tabled a minor subdivision proposal for Flora Anderson. The proposal was for a subdivision of a lot and some lakefront property along Anderson St. The proposal was tabled until the county's planning commission could look over the plans and make a comment.

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