

March 10, 2011

Dear Mayor Bartlett and Black Mountain Board of Alderman,

I read this morning's article in the CITIZENS-TIMES regarding the census count being wrong in Black Mountain and wanted encourage you all to pursue your town's effort to challenge the 2010 U.S. Census reported figures.

I am a retired educator from Ohio, now living in Fletcher since September 2008, and worked for the U.S. Census Office as an enumerator from April-August 2010. My first love and bachelor's college degree was in Political Science/Community Planning, so I can appreciate the work Elizabeth Teague has been doing to challenge the numbers reported.

The crew of U.S. Census Enumerators I was first assigned to from May-late June worked the Arden area. As we were completing our assigned Arden neighborhoods, we heard there were numerous problems with area from the Town of Black Mountain south down Route 9 to the county line near Gerton.

My crew was told we'd be assigned to help in the Black Mountain area to assist collecting the data. The day our crew met up with our crew leader to be given the assigned maps and forms for the Black Mountain neighborhoods, there was a problem.

The crew leader overseeing at least part of Black Mountain (if not all of your town) decided she was not going to cooperate and refused to provide the books, maps and forms. Upper management out of the Asheville Office was aware of the event and unwilling to "manage" the problem, and many eyebrows were raised among my co-workers. We also heard murmurs about the odd things going on with the crew leader overseeing your area.

I continued to heard things from my crew leader and other supervisors and it was evident the Black Mountain area was having significant problems. There were many major issues with the computer and records at the Asheville Regional Census Office, which affected all of WNC, but in the case of the Town of Black Mountain, I believe there was a high incidence of human error going on as well, unchecked and ignored by higher-level managers.

My work performance and productivity provided me the opportunity to continue employment with the census office in July and August, as many others were laid off.

I came away from my employment experience with the U.S. Census Office a bit disillusioned. I am not surprised to see what your town is facing today. I believe there were a significant number of mistakes made in the Black Mountain area in the collection of data by enumerators. I hope the Town of Black Mountain can be accurately "re-counted".

Sincerely
Carl Heikkinen