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City to contest census count

Officials believe number should be about 6,000 higher

By Alan George
Staff writer

O'Fallon officials plan to contest the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 population count of 46,169 for the city.

The contention is based, in part, on a special census the city conducted in 1996, in which the population was determined to be more than 34,000.

"From 1996 until 2000, using an average of 2.2 people per home, puts (the city population) at just over 52,000," said City Administrator Patrick Banger. "That is for single-family homes; it

doesn't include apartments or villas."

Census Bureau officials have not said whether they will conduct a recount of O'Fallon's population, Banger said.

The impetus behind the city's recount push, Banger said, is the possibility of losing money. "For us, it comes down to lost tax revenue that we feel we deserve," he said. "We know what our population is."

There is always the possibility that the city's population could be revised downward after a recount. However, Banger said, "I don't see how they could possibly revise us downwards."

John Griesenauer, assistant to the city administrator, said city officials

are not criticizing the Census Bureau. They just want an accurate count.

"We just want to get a true count of what our figures are," Griesenauer said. "We don't know how long a recount would take at this time, or if they would even allow it."

The bureau would not conduct a new census even if officials decided to do a recount, Griesenauer said. Instead, Census Bureau officials would look through the city's figures again.

"Mostly it's to make sure certain areas of the city were included in the count," Griesenauer said. "There's certain information we would have to supply, but they would have to do the veri-

fication. It's too early in the game to determine how it's going to go."

Griesenauer said Friday that city officials were waiting to hear if the Census Bureau will give the recount the go-ahead.

"The census bureau is looking at doing special censuses again," he said. "They don't allow them at all now. Most cities that would do one are in high growth areas like O'Fallon."

The city's population growth is beginning to level off now, Banger said. "I see at least three to five more years of solid residential growth," he said. "We'll stabilize at 75,000 residents around 2006."

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