

Worksession

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| Agenda Item # | 5 |
| Meeting Date | October 26, 2009 |
| Prepared By | Barbara B. Matthews City Manager |
| Approved By | |

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| Discussion Item | Discussion of Resident Survey |
| Background | <p>On July 27, 2009, the Council approved Ordinance 2009-45, authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract with National Research Center, Inc. to conduct a survey of City residents. A contract with National Research Center (NRC) was subsequently executed for a price not to exceed \$37,000. The base contract price for a six-page survey is approximately \$32,000; the higher contract amount was requested in July to allow for flexibility in terms of the number of survey pages and the number of open-ended questions.</p> <p>NRC had previously conducted the 2007 Takoma Park Residents Survey. The survey provided community feedback on a variety of issues from a cross section of City residents.</p> <p>Results of the 2007 survey were helpful in identifying public safety concerns, communication methods by demographic, and perception differences by ward. Cross-tabulations provided surprising information on the residents who watch City Council meetings on television and detailed information on perceptions of neighborhood safety. The survey's write-in comments were particularly helpful for the Police Department and resulted in new deployment strategies as well as a change in uniforms. Write-in comments also identified a number of otherwise unreported code enforcement problems.</p> <p>In preparing a draft of the 2009 survey, staff reviewed comments made by Councilmembers and residents about the wording of the survey and reviewed the write in answers on the open-ended questions. Some wording changes are recommended as a result of these comments. Staff also worked with NRC staff in drafting questions relating to City survey priorities in a time of budget cuts, on questions proposed by the Washington Adventist Hospital Land Use Committee (WAHLUC) related to the future use of the hospital site, and on questions proposed by the Emergency Preparedness Committee. The questions on the 2007 survey related to the gymnasium were deleted.</p> <p>The 2007 survey was six pages long. The 2009 survey could go to seven pages and not cost more than a six page survey due to changes in the cover letter which saves a page. The additional survey page and the space saved by deleting the gymnasium questions could allow space for the City service priorities, hospital and emergency preparedness questions, if the Council wishes for them to be included.</p> <p>Following the worksession on October 26 and receipt of additional Council comments, staff will work with NRC to finalize the survey instrument. NRC can have the survey mailed to a random sample of Takoma Park residents in November, compile results in December, and have a final report by mid-January 2010. This timing would work well</p> |

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| | with the return of the new Council after the December recess and the beginning of the FY 2011 budget process. |
| Policy | The City Council is interested in learning community opinions on service delivery and significant community issues via a professionally designed, random survey of City residents. |
| Fiscal Impact | n/a |
| Attachments | Comparison of 2007 survey and draft 2009 survey |
| Recommendation | Discuss survey draft and provide direction to staff on any desired modifications. |
| Special Consideration | |

Changes between 2007 Resident Survey and Draft 2009 Resident Survey

Almost all of the questions asked in the 2007 Resident Survey remain the same or had minor wording changes. It is important that base survey questions carry through from survey to survey if accurate comparisons are desired.

On the attached 2007 survey, questions that are shown in green are proposed to be used again in the 2009 survey. Questions that are in blue are proposed to be used in the 2009 survey, with minor wording changes. Questions in orange are not proposed to be included in the 2009 survey.

On the attached draft 2009 survey, the blue-marked questions from the 2007 survey are shown so that it is easy to compare the wording changes. Yellow-marked questions are new questions proposed for the 2009 survey.

A detailed summary of the proposed changes from the 2007 survey follows, referring to the numbering of the questions from the 2007 survey.

1. No change
2. Minor change in the housing question
3. A large number of respondents to the 2007 survey wrote "Trees" in the space for other, so we propose to add it to the list and combine the "My family lives here" and "I was born/raised here" option
4. Option "d" was shortened and there was a request to place "Neighbor conflicts" in the middle of the list
5. In items "c" through "f" the name "Takoma" was added before "Junction" or "Metro," as appropriate
6. "Used" was changed to "visited" for several of the items and there was interest in giving an option to persons who use the City's Wi-Fi connection in parts of the Community Center other than the Library.
7. This question was reworded to get to a question that may be more easily answered than that in the 2007 survey. It is probably harder to know how particular programs may have deterred crime than having an opinion on the effectiveness of the Police Department in reducing crime.
8. No change
9. No change
10. No change
11. No change
12. No change
13. No change – Note that a new question is proposed to be added to the Police Services question regarding visibility of the Police Department in neighborhoods.
14. Several changes were made to the City Services list. Planning and economic development are proposed to be added to the 2009 survey. A split between parks and recreation facilities was

made, as different departments are responsible for each, and types of recreation programs were separated. "City TV-13" is proposed to be removed here and throughout the survey as Verizon does not carry the City's cable station on channel 13. On several items, clarifying language was added.

15. No change
16. No change
17. No change
18. No change
19. No change
20. The gym questions are proposed to be deleted
21. The gym questions are proposed to be deleted
22. Again, "City TV-13" is proposed to be deleted. Also, there is an effort to be consistent in how the Takoma Park Newsletter and Recreation Guide is titled, so minor changes were made. A proposed new question asks if the respondent has signed up for recreation programs on-line.
23. Deleted
24. Deleted. Information on this and other communication options is proposed to be derived through a new electronic communications question. Currently, the City uses e-mail lists, text messages and "My TkPk" and there have been suggestions that blogs, Facebook, Twitter or other methods may be desirable options to consider. A proposed new question asks how likely the respondent is to use various electronic communications methods.
25. Titles of publications are proposed to be changed to be consistent throughout the survey. Publications of the City of Takoma Park are proposed to be clearly identified to address the concern that respondents may be confusing publications. "Posters or flyers in public buildings" is proposed to be added as an option.
26. No change
27. No change
28. No change
29. No change
30. No change
31. "DSL" and "Cable broadband" are proposed to be combined into a "High-speed" option
32. No change
33. No change
34. No change
35. No change
36. No change
37. No change
38. No change
39. No change
40. No change
41. No change

42. Few, if any, respondents to the 2007 survey indicated that Vietnamese, Farsi or Korean were spoken in their household, while German, Haitian Creole and Tigrigna received multiple write-in submissions, so we propose to substitute these languages.
43. No change

Additional questions proposed for the 2009 survey:

Besides the question on electronic communication preferences mentioned above, three new question categories are proposed to be added for the 2009 survey, as well as a question about phone service for the demographic page.

Emergency Preparedness

The City's Emergency Preparedness Committee has requested that questions be included on the survey about a household's preparedness in case of an emergency and on how a household may have learned about needed emergency preparedness measures.

Washington Adventist Hospital

The Washington Adventist Hospital Land Use Committee (WAHLUC) has requested that the City include questions on the survey to help gauge preferences for future land use at the hospital site. The mix of a ranking question and an open-ended question is designed to get the most helpful information on this topic in a relatively small space.

Policy Question

The timing of the proposed 2009 survey is fortuitous in allowing for a large and statistically-representative sample of resident opinion on how Takoma Park should address its FY 2011 budget difficulties. The open-ended question is designed to allow specific suggestions by residents.

Phone Service

Changes in the types of telephones available to consumers have had an effect on the ways governments may communicate with their residents. Reverse 911 systems rely on land lines; most cell phones can receive text messages; governments can tax some phone systems and not others; and new communications methods are being developed to reach people in innovative ways. Having a sense of what kinds of phones are used by whom will be helpful as we consider communications and emergency management systems. For that reason, two questions on phone service are proposed to be added to the survey.