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City Council

Proposal to Conduct a Professionally Developed and Administered Opinion Survey

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Title

Proposal to Conduct a Professionally Developed and Administered Opinion Survey

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

As part of the City's 2015 budget engagement, the Finance Committee recommends seeking citizen input through a survey.

City Manager Recommendation:

Concur with staff's recommendation to conduct a professionally developed and administered survey to benchmark satisfaction with City services; prioritize City services; and explore how best to communicate and engage the public

Report

Issue:

Whether to conduct a professional survey to measure residents' opinion.

Staff Contact:

Cathie Butler, Communications Manager, 360.753.8361

Debbie Sullivan, Deputy Public Works Director, 360.753.8494

Jane Kirkemo, Administrative Services Director, 360.753.8499

Paul Simmons, Parks, Arts and Recreation Director, 360.753.8462

Jay Burney, Assistant City Manager, 360.8740

Stacey Ray, Associate Planner, 360.753.8046

Presenter(s):

Cathie Butler, Communications Manager

Background and Analysis:

Finance Committee Discussions:

Recently the Finance Committee discussed a public engagement process for the 2015 budget. Staff proposed using some of the survey tools available on Legistar. Through the Washington State Auditor's office who is working with Stuart Elway of Elway Research, they developed a survey tool to

measure general satisfaction with city services. Staff discussed the survey with the committee, and the committee was in general agreement with it. Attached is a draft of the survey considered by the Finance Committee.

Staff Discussions:

At the same time, Communications Manager Cathie Butler and Public Works Deputy Director Debbie Sullivan were discussing a survey to solicit citizen opinion about Public Works services and city communication / outreach efforts. They met with Stuart Elway of Elway Research to understand current survey methodology and to discuss the possibility of replicating some of the survey Elway conducted on behalf of the City from 1996-2006 (copy attached). Public Works intends to use results to develop performance measurements and a department-wide strategic initiative of informing and engaging a broader demographic in decision-making.

In addition, Paul Simmons, Parks Director, was considering a survey as a part of the Parks Plan update.

Also, an interdepartmental staff team is working to identify key performance measurements to track implementation of the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies, including citizen satisfaction and engagement.

Relevant Council Priority/Goal:

Priority: Inspire Strong Relationships

Goal: Enrich public participation so that the community has a role in shaping public policy.

Relevant Draft Comprehensive Plan Strategy/Policy:

- PP 1.2. Annually measure and highlight progress towards achieving the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.
- PP4.4. Evaluate public participation strategies to measure their effectiveness in meeting desired goals.

Olympia's 2006 Survey

Elway Research conducted Olympia's prior citizen surveys from 1996 - 2006 and is also working with the Washington State Auditor's Local Government Performance Center on a model survey.

Olympia's 2006 survey included 57 questions, some of which are similar to ones currently being used statewide by the Performance Center. (Attachment #1 is the questionnaire portion of the 2006 survey; Attachment #2 is the complete 2006 survey report.)

Staff Proposal

Since various departments were considering possible community opinion surveys during the same time period, we felt it would be more efficient and effective to combine efforts.

Staff proposes that the City contract with Elway Research to develop a combined survey to benchmark satisfaction with City services; prioritize City services; and explore how best to communicate and engage the public given new methods such as social media. Staff expects the survey will contain some of the questions from 2006 - as several are relevant today and serve as a benchmark of prior opinion; new ones to establish a benchmark for current and future performance measurement; and questions considered by the Finance Committee. Staff will rely on the

professional expertise of Elway Research for survey methodology, wording, presentation order, and the overall number of questions to pose.

The City's Parks, Arts & Recreation Department may follow-up in 2015 with a second survey more specifically tailored to gather community opinion as part of the Parks Plan update process.

If conducted in late September or early October, survey results may be available for Council and staff consideration before finalizing the 2015 budget; or alternatively as a baseline for performance measurement reporting in 2015.

Information about the survey methodology will be presented at Tuesday's Council meeting.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Professionally administered opinion surveys are a common method of civic engagement and performance measurement.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) includes surveys in its toolbox of outreach methods with the following comments:

- Provides input from individuals who would be unlikely to attend meetings.
- Provides input from cross-section of public, not just those on mailing lists.
- Survey questionnaire should be professionally developed and administered to avoid bias.
- Most suitable for general attitudinal surveys.

Options:

1. Contract for a single, professionally administered community survey to measure general satisfaction regarding city services, communications, and budget priorities. This may be followed up next year with more in-depth parks-related survey for the Parks Plan update process
2. Conduct 3 separate professionally administered surveys this year - one for utilities, budget and parks.
3. Use another survey method.
4. Do not conduct a citizen survey in 2014.

Financial Impact:

Staff estimates the cost of a professionally developed and administered survey at \$25,000-\$30,000 with funding from 2014 City utility and department budgets and the PEG fund (cable franchise fees earmarked for public-education-government access and outreach).

Attachments:

1. Questionnaire Portion of 2006 Survey
2. Hyperlink to Complete 2006 Survey
3. Survey considered by Finance Committee