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City Council

Approval to Conduct a Citizen Survey Concerning Public Safety and Affordable Housing Needs

Agenda Date: 5/2/2017
Agenda Item Number: 6.C
File Number: 17-0480

Type: decision **Version:** 1 **Status:** Passed

Title

Approval to Conduct a Citizen Survey Concerning Public Safety and Affordable Housing Needs

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to direct staff to enter in a professional services contract with Elway Research to conduct a scientifically valid survey to test public support for affordable housing and public safety needs.

Report

Issue:

Whether to conduct a citizen survey to test public support for public safety and affordable housing needs.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Steve Hall, City Manager

Background and Analysis:

Over the course of the last two years and more - citizens, stakeholders and others have expressed the need for City services and assistance in the areas of affordable housing and public safety/court/law enforcement efforts.

Public Safety:

The Olympia Police Department (OPD) has been working to build stronger, trusting relationships with all segments of the Olympia community. In addition, the Department and the City have been responding to concerns and articulated public safety priority needs of citizens expressed through

neighborhoods, downtown users, merchants, minority populations and others.

OPD has been able to build strong liaison relationships with a number of groups ranging from the Hispanic Roundtable to the YWCA to the PBIA and many more. The Department has also been innovative in the use of limited resources in meeting community requests. Finally, the Department has also undertaken significant training and policy development to lead in the era of 21st Century policing principles.

Much has been done within existing resources. However, lack of further resources is holding the City back from meeting community needs and expectations. Consequently, the City has crafted a unique set of public safety/community security service proposals in response to what the public has said. They include:

- Walking Patrol - expanded day time and adding night time
- Community Court - continue the program (grant expires in 2018)
- Mental Health Response - contract with a mental health provider for outreach in downtown
- Neighborhood liaison police officers and expanded code enforcement
- Support for training, policy development and diversity recruitment

A citizen survey will help test the level of citizen support for these proposals. It will also help to hear from the public about their public safety priorities.

Affordable Housing:

For the past several years, the issue of affordable housing has become a growing issue regionally and in Thurston County. Not only are housing costs becoming less affordable for many segments of the population, but the needs of homeless and the most vulnerable citizens throughout Thurston County are underserved.

A citizen group has been working with the cities of Olympia, Tumwater and Lacey to encourage more local housing dollars targeted specifically toward permanent supportive housing for the most vulnerable citizens in our area.

These dollars could serve vulnerable populations ranging for families with children to the elderly to the mentally ill.

Recent funding measures in Bellingham and Vancouver have provided added local dollars to meet housing needs in those communities.

The survey can test citizen support and priorities in the area of affordable housing.

The Survey:

On April 11, the City Council approved \$25,000 to conduct the survey.

Elway Research has developed questions to test public interest while avoiding language that could bias responses.

If the City Council approves the project, next steps will include:

- Random telephone responses from at least 400 households (landline and cell)
- On-line surveys for invited random citizens (this yielded nearly 900 responses from our parks survey)
- About one week to conduct the actual survey with another 2-3 weeks to finalize all the reporting
- Estimated cost of \$25,000

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There is significant and widespread interest and support in each of these areas. In addition, at a recent discussion with the Coalition of neighborhoods, there was enthusiastic support for the public safety proposals.

Options:

- Approve moving ahead with the survey
- Ask Elway Research to add questions or remove/change fatal flaw
- Decide not to conduct the survey

Financial Impact:

Estimated - \$25,000 approved use of Council Goal money.

Attachments:

Housing/Public Safety Citizen Survey