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City Council

Review Results of a Citizen Survey Concerning Public Safety and Affordable Housing Needs

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Title

Review Results of a Citizen Survey Concerning Public Safety and Affordable Housing Needs

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive a briefing from Stuart Elway of Elway Research about the results of a survey concerning affordable housing and public safety needs.

Report

Issue:

Whether to review the results of citizen survey to test public support for public safety and affordable housing needs.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Stewart Elway, Elway Research

Background and Analysis:

Over the course of the last two years and more - citizens, stakeholders and others have expressed the need for expanded 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. Finally, 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 package 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

The citizen survey asked about the level of citizen support for these proposals.

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 tested 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. On May 2, the City Council reviewed the survey questions and directed the survey proceed.

The survey results included both telephone and online responses. As of May 31, 2017, over 550 total responses have been tallied. The online tally will continue through June 1. Elway Research will then tabulate and analyze the results and present them to City Council on June 6.

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:

- Receive a briefing on the survey results.
- Do not receive a briefing on the survey results.

Financial Impact:

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

Attachments:

None