

Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council
P.O. Box 101
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September 13, 2013

King County Executive Constantine (kcexec@kingcounty.gov)
King County Chinook Building
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Executive Constantine,

Earlier this year the Area Council conducted its Member Election and Citizens' Advisory Survey as nearly 11,000 ballots/surveys were mailed to registered voters in the unincorporated area of the Tahoma School District--the Area Council's territory. We received 1,315 ballot/surveys returns--a very good response rate for an all-mail-in effort, not coinciding with a scheduled King County Election. Our efforts were aided by a Community Service Area (CSA) Grant and wish to express our thanks to Mr. Alan Painter and the CSA Program.

Area Council Member Election

The Area Council consists of four Community Areas: Francis, Hobart, Ravensdale, and River Heights and is comprised of sixteen members with four representatives for each of these four areas. Every two years two seats from each of the four areas are up for election--half the Area Council's seats.

Prior to this election there were eight open seats on the Area Council for various reasons: retirement, sickness, etc. We are pleased to announce we filled all open seats

Incumbents reelected were: Francis--Steve Heister and Peter Rimbo; Hobart--Warren Iverson; and Ravensdale--Susan Harvey. New members elected were: Hobart--Lorraine Blacklock; Ravensdale--Craig Duckering, Carl Buchholz, and Rhys Sterling; and River Heights--Charles Meis, Anne Meis, and Sue Neuner. We welcome our new members and their enthusiasm to aid in communication between our constituents and our local government--King County.

Citizens' Advisory Survey

For the first time in our Citizens' Advisory Survey history the Area Council had the benefit of Tahoma High Students in the Advanced Placement Statistics class, who provided excellent statistical analysis and interpretation of all results. The Area Council thanks the 5-student team for volunteering to help their community by providing both a diligent and quality effort.

Demographics

Most people (91%) own their own property and most (82%) have lived in the area more than 10 years (note that each of these two statistics far exceed County and city averages). A majority (54%) live on 2 1/2 or more acres. A majority (63%) also have a private or small group well. Most (53%) do not want to be annexed to an urban area with many (26%) undecided.

Transportation

Past surveys have shown that traffic is a major problem in the greater Maple Valley area. Most people commute to work or school (53%). Nearly half (48%) would not like to see carpool lanes added to SR-169 (Maple Valley Hwy.). Similarly, nearly half (45%) would not like to see light rail or commuter train service along SR-169. While many are undecided, few people (33% & 32%) would like to see expanded capacity on SR-516 (Kent-Kangley Rd.) and Petrovitsky Rd., respectively. Compared to past surveys there was a big change in people's desires for expanded transit options with nearly half (42%) saying yes.

When respondents rated the overall road conditions for their area, most (58%) felt they were adequate. When it comes to how to pay for transportation infrastructure, favored options vary: gas taxes (32%), vehicle taxes (28%), sales taxes (21%), auto meters (10%), and tolls (9%). Although many want better infrastructure, they also want existing monies used wisely before any new taxes are considered. In fact, many responded: "No New Taxes"!

Because of the consistency in survey after survey on this topic, the Area Council's Transportation Committee is working with the other Rural Area Unincorporated Area Councils to ascertain both the sources and the uses of road monies. The goal of which is to identify more equitable ways to maintain and improve roads that primarily are used by residents who live in cities, not in unincorporated areas. Currently, property taxes paid only by unincorporated area residents provide a good portion of such funding.

Public Services

Respondents prioritized the “adequacy” of key King County-supplied services as follows: 1. Flood Control & Emergency Management (68%); 2. Human Services such as mental health, services to the needy, senior services (64%); 3. Parks, Trails, & Open Space (53%); and 4. Emergency Response & Public Safety such as law enforcement (35%). Fittingly, many only responded to the areas of service with which they had experience or knowledge about.

Permitting

We asked several questions regarding the Department of Permitting and Environmental Resources (DPER, formerly the Department of Development & Environmental Services--DDES) and the Health Department. Many skipped filling out this section unless they had experience or knowledge on these departments and their services. Respondents rated permitting services received using a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rate of satisfaction: Cost of permits: Most (70%) dissatisfied; Processing permits: Most (74%) dissatisfied; Septic Permits: Nearly half dissatisfied (46%) or felt adequate (41%); and Well Permits: Nearly half dissatisfied (43%) or felt adequate (41%). In all cases, on average, there was more dissatisfaction (61%), than satisfaction (11%).

Levies

Support for levies and fees varied greatly. On the Fire Levy: Yes – 44%; No – 32%; and Undecided – 24%. On the Surface Water Management Increase: Yes – 9%; No – 65%; Undecided – 26%. On the upcoming School Levy: Yes – 30%; No – 53%; Undecided – 17%.

Community Service Areas

In the last year, King County started a new program called Community Service Areas (CSAs) to try to serve the Rural Areas of the County better. The Area Council is part of the Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River CSA. We asked how many were aware of this new program with a clear majority responding they were unaware (86%).

The Area Council expresses its deepest appreciation to all those who took the time and effort to participate in the election of its members and to complete our advisory survey. This will better enable us to serve the needs and desires of our community. We also especially thank those who took the extra time and effort to provide your own valuable comments.

The Area Council believes this and our other Citizen’s Advisory Surveys help convey the sentiments of unincorporated Rural Area residents. Detailed results, including those from past Citizens’ Advisory Surveys, can be found on the Area Council’s web site’s Citizens’ Survey page: <http://greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org/LatestAdvisorySurveyResults.html>.

Sincerely,

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Chairman, Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council

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