

2013 Citizen Advisory Survey

In March close to 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--a very good response rate for an all-mail-in effort. This was our second time using mail-in balloting and we were pleased to receive citizens' opinions and concerns on key issues.

Area Council Member Election Results

The Area Council consists of four Community Areas: Francis, Hobart, Ravensdale, and River Heights. The Area Council has 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 received enough write-in candidates to fill the eight empty seats on the council. Never take your vote for granted as every write-in candidate was kept on file and we went down the list according to the highest votes received.

Those incumbents that were reelected are: Francis--Steve Heister and Peter Rimbo; Hobart--Warren Iverson; and Ravensdale--Susan Harvey. The write in candidates that received the most votes and were duly elected are: Hobart--Lorraine Blacklock; Ravensdale--Craig Duckering, Carl Buchholz, and Rhys Sterling; and River Heights--Charles Meis, Anne Meis, and Sue Neuner. Congratulations to our new members and your newest representatives.

Citizens' Advisory Survey Results

For the first time in the 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

Regarding demographics, most people (91%) own their own property and 82% have lived in the area more than 10 years (note that each of these two statistics far exceed the 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 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%). 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. Numerical results and comments (no names) will be sent to our elected County officials.

Thank you for continuing to help the Area Council understand the sentiments of unincorporated area residents and accurately convey them to our elected officials.