

Greater Maple Valley
Unincorporated Area Council
“Working to keep the Rural Area rural”

Area Council Citizens’ Advisory Survey Results

By Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

Thank you to all who participated in the **Area Council Member Election and Citizens’ Advisory Survey**. 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 ~350 ballot/surveys. This was first time we included an option to use your computer to vote to augment our mail-in balloting. We did experience several problems related to P.O. Boxes and the King County voter registration lists, which we plan to rectify in our next Bi-Annual Election and Survey. Nevertheless, we were pleased to receive citizens’ opinions and concerns on key issues.

Results of the **Area Council Member Election** follow:

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 four open seats (plus three members on Leaves of Absence) on the Area Council. We are pleased to announce we filled all four open seats. However, longtime member, Rob Morris, recently announced his resignation to be able to continue his many other community activities. We thank Rob for all his years of service on the Area Council and wish him well.

New members elected were: Francis--Teresa Sweet; Hobart--Linda Harer and Adam Sterling; and River Heights--Stephen Deutschman. We welcome our new members and their enthusiasm to aid in understanding local issues and communicate them with our *local* government--King County.

Results of the **Citizens’ Advisory Survey** follow:

We again 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 student team for volunteering to help their community by providing both a diligent and quality effort. We especially thank Tahoma Senior Shannon Evans--soon-to-be UW Freshman--for compiling all the information.

Demographics

Regarding demographics, most people (94%) own their own property and 66% have lived in the area more than 10 years (note that each of these two statistics exceed the County and city averages.). Just less than half (47%) live on 2 1/2 or more acres. A slight majority (51%) have a private or small group well. Nearly all (91%) do not want to be annexed to an urban area.

This is one of the reasons the Area Council repeatedly has voiced to the County that we do not want any urban-serving facilities placed in the Rural Area.

Transportation

Past surveys have shown traffic is a major problem in the greater Maple Valley area. Most people commute to work (57%). When respondents rated the overall road conditions for their area, most (57%) felt they were adequate. When it comes to how to pay for roads and bridges, favored options vary: gas taxes (53%), vehicle taxes (23%), and sales taxes (16%). Regarding either Bus Service to Auburn or a Bust Stop on SR-18, respondents were more or less equally split between Yes, No, and Undecided.

Because of the consistency in survey after survey on this topic, the Area Council’s Transportation Committee continues to work with the other Rural Area Unincorporated Area Councils to evaluate 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 the vast majority 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 (60%); 3. Parks, Trails, & Open Space (52%); and 4. Emergency Response & Public Safety such as law enforcement (21%).

The last item remains a concern. The Sheriff’s Office has endured many budget cuts in recent years which has had a detrimental effect on service in the Rural Area.

Marijuana Operations and Facilities

We included a new series of questions regarding the siting of now legal Marijuana businesses, especially with several being considered in our Rural Area. The results on what such businesses would not be desired were pretty consistent as follows: Growing Operations (62%); Processing Facilities (64%); and Distribution Businesses (65%).

Because of these concerns, the Area Council will be recommending potential changes to Zoning and related regulations to the King County Council, which, on April 25, declared a 4-month moratorium on Marijuana applications in the Unincorporated Area.

Cedar River Stream Concerns

More than half (52%) the respondents use the river for recreation. Exactly half the respondents are concerned about flooding. Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents want additional protection for trout and salmon. Many respondents (60%) want King County to continue to purchase land that is flood prone.

The Area Council members serve on the Cedar River Council and will continue to voice citizen concerns.

Excessive Noise Levels

We asked six questions on noise levels from Traffic, Recreation, Neighbors/pets, Aviation, Business, and Adjoining Cities. In every case respondents felt noise was not excessive (67% - 88%).

King County Representation

A majority of respondents (60%) felt they were not adequately represented. One solution was to add more positions to the King County Council (60%). Another was to redistrict (70%).

We believe much of voter angst is the belief the King County Council does not understand the Rural Area, as evidenced for example by the allowing the siting of Marijuana Operations in an area where most respondents believe both law enforcement (as discussed above) and code enforcement are inadequate.

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 your Area Council understand the sentiments of Rural Area residents and accurately convey them to our elected officials. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org for more information on your Area Council and rural issues. You are welcome to attend any of our meetings on the first Monday of the month (except when this is a holiday, then it moves to the second Monday) at 7 PM, at the Maple Valley Fire Department building. Hope to see you soon!