



**STAFF REPORT**

**City Council**

**Meeting Date:** 10/20/2015

**Staff Report Number:** 15-159-CC

**Informational Item:** Initiation of a Community Wide Survey by Godbe Research

**Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Council receive the following plan for initiation of a community survey to be conducted by Godbe Research in November and December, 2015, with results presented in time for consideration in the annual Council Goal Setting Process in January, 2016.

**Policy Issues**

The City Council has previously approved and engaged in Community-Wide Surveys of residents to evaluate overall perceptions of living in Menlo Park, quality of life, satisfaction with performance in providing services and programs, and to gather resident feedback on specific issues. The Community Survey has been a helpful tool for informing the Council's annual goal setting process and in support of numerous policy decisions, including the City Budget. Council members are encouraged to let the City Manager know of any policy topics they would like included in the upcoming survey.

**Background**

The City of Menlo Park began doing statistically valid community surveys in the early 1990's. Most recently, beginning in 2008, the City utilized the International City Management Association (ICMA) sponsored National Citizen Survey, which was repeated in 2010 and 2012. Results of the surveys were made available to the community on the City's web site and used by Departments for planning and decision making and were presented to Council for use in annual goal setting sessions.

**Analysis**

With the increase in smart phone proliferation and the elimination of "land lines" from many households, telephone survey response rates have declined in recent years. The National Citizens Survey used by Menlo Park in previous years was a mail-in instrument and had several disadvantages, including providing less random and statistically valid results because the sample was less self-selective and generally reflective of English-speaking older residents. Given these issues, staff determined that a telephone survey with a live person administering it has room for some flexibility in the manner and order of the questions. The survey caller also can guide respondents through any questions that might not be understood and quality control is generally better because a handful of trained individuals are entering the answers.

Several other area communities, including Mountain View, San Carlos, San Mateo and Redwood City, have used Godbe Research and their “hybrid” survey methodology which, while competitive in cost with the National Citizens Survey, leverages response technologies preferred by certain age groups and includes both internet and telephone survey responses. Godbe conducts an internet survey of registered resident voters (typically ages 18 to 49) and then uses a telephone survey to round out demographic and geographic quotas to match community census data. The voter sample list includes residents’ self-reported primary phone number, allowing efficient phone solicitation rather than random digit dial of “land lines.”

Godbe has proposed an eight to ten week time frame for the survey, with data collection beginning in early November and December and presentation of results to Council in mid-January or in conjunction with the annual goal-setting process. Staff is proposing using the month of October to work with Godbe on development of the survey instrument and invite Council input on issues or topics to include during this development phase. There is adequate funding in the City Manager’s Office budget to cover the \$29,000 cost of the survey.

### **Public Notice**

Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

### **Attachments**

A. No attachments for this item.

Report prepared by:

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