

July 27, 2005 Meeting Minutes
Whatcom County Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Open Space Plan
Steering Committee

Mike McFarlane welcomed the committee members and indicated that the project surveys are still being received. He will compile a list showing the ranking by the committee for the next meeting. Today we will focus on the public survey. The County Council has already discussed the process and format at their July 19th work session.

Tom Beckwith began the discussion. The survey that will go out will include graphics and exaggerated maps, which will clearly show the item relating to the question. In doing this survey we aren't looking to get precise results, we're just looking to prioritize the responses. This is a random survey. However, only registered voters will be participating. The reason for this is that these are the persons who are going to be voting on the issues. This is the target group. This type of survey is a little more complex than others, however it gives the participant an opportunity to research the topic a bit more so that they have a better understanding of what they are responding to.

We need to contact 600 participants in order to get 300 completed surveys. We will try 5- times to contact the participants after they have received the information. This includes busy signals, answering machine pickups, not a convenient time, haven't had a chance to complete the survey etc. Once we have 300 completed surveys this part of the process will be done. There may be people who never get a phone call to take their answers to their survey. If this is the case and these people are still interested in having their opinions heard, they will have the opportunity to mail in their responses.

Keywords are standards and costs. There is a bias for who will participate. This is everywhere you go. Someone who hasn't been here for long or isn't very old is least likely to participate compared to those who have been here longer and are older.

Cover letter: Using the 1-5 scale gives them a more graded response rather than using yes or no questions. 1 and 2 will be graded as low scores, 3 will be graded as on the fence could go either way, and 4 and 5 will be graded as high scores.

Participants will be able to ask the person conducting the survey for clarification however the conductor may not be able to answer the question fully because they are not going to be local residents. Participants will also be given the opportunity to skip a question. Generally 95% of people will be able to give a complete survey without skipping any of the questions. There is also an opportunity at the end of the survey to give additional comments.

Survey outline:

It is important to generalize all facilities whether they are city, county or state because the general public doesn't know how they are split up among the different organizations.

There was a recommendation to split up the snowmobile and the x-country skiing into two different questions.

Rand Jack asked why does Lummi Island have so many questions aimed at it when to his knowledge they have in the past not been interested in having a county park

represented on the island. Wouldn't we rather have parks and trails at the more accessible areas where there is an interest in having the parks involved rather than somewhere they've made it known they don't want it around.

Mike McFarlane stated that based on the community meeting and responses received a low impact park area and beach accesses are desirable on the Island. LMP Rep- Need to use the word examples so it doesn't seem like it is conclusive as "these" are the only ones.

Tom Beckwith indicated there will be graphics that go out so that the participant will be able to visualize what the surveyor is talking about. We are trying to reduce the words used and increase the graphics to keep peoples attention. If we just give the examples it will reduce the amount of attention people give to the graphics. We want them to use the graphics so they don't get focused on just one aspect of the question.

The surveyors will not be probing the participant. A probing survey is altogether different. By just giving responses to the whole survey it will take 12 minutes. If you start probing it really lengthens the time of the call.

Daniel Tepper asked that the committee has been going through and ranking the topics and how will this will be integrated into the survey that goes out. How does it eventually get brought together? What's the point of ranking these things if it isn't really going to be shown with the public survey results?

Tom Beckwith responded that the committee and the public responses would be blended together to come up with a final recommendation. Once the public's responses come back and we see how they react to the proposal we will go through and see how much we can make the scenarios work. The County Council will have the final say.

Rand Jack stated it seems as though the people that are going to get in this survey are going to be the least informed. And it's dangerous to say that this will be the most important part of the process when these people haven't really been educated on the subject. They have limited knowledge on the topics.

A question was asked if the recreational activities on watersheds are compatible with the drinking water?

Tom Beckwith responded that we can't ask a question where we can't get an accurate response on. Need to design a question that has more structure. Possibly break down the activities and whether the public wants to allow them to take place on the lakes. However the bigger question is whether people just don't want them on the lakes. This isn't something the public is going to be able to tell us, they would only be able to give an opinion and that isn't anything we can use. Need to seek professionals for those kinds of questions. Don't ask the question unless you can really use the answer and do something about it.

After discussion, a motion was made to see how many people think watershed issues should be included in the survey. Majority showed that this issued should not be included.

Mike McFarlane stated that this topic has somewhat been brought up in the survey when the question is asked if more motorized boat launches should be developed.

Tom Beckwith explained the growth impact fees question: this is for new homes only. You have six years to use the fees once they are collected.

The three optional dedicated fees and taxes can all be passed with a 51% vote. One question not asked is about a metropolitan Park District. It has to have an elected group that facilitates it. It's separate. Should possibly propose it to see where the reaction is and whether it is something worth exploring.

When the question is proposed on what people are willing to pay for the different options there is a median taken as well as a ray. It's always a surprise to see what people are willing to pay to see these things through. It's almost always higher than what the elected official assumes.

Should sales tax be something that we consider? Need to test to see where people are at with that.

90% of the people included in the survey will have an opinion to add at the end of the survey. The opinion can be general or specific.

This week we will start getting the 600 participants and within a couple of weeks they will begin receiving the information. It will take about one week to get the 600 participants and then another 2 weeks to get 300 completed responses once they have been given sufficient time to receive the survey materials and work on them.

Mike McFarlane indicated that the final draft of the survey will be sent out to the committee members when the corrections are made.

Our next meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 24th. This will depend on how soon the survey results are received. A notice will be sent on the time and date for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00