

TO: Water Supply Advisory Committee
FROM: Doug Engfer, Committee Member
Tina Shull and Rosemary Menard, City of Santa Cruz
RE: Community Attitudinal Survey – Concept Paper
DATE: August 21, 2014

Note: At the July 10 meeting of the WSAC Outreach Subcommittee, the idea of conducting a community attitudinal survey was raised as one way to generate information about community values and concerns that might be useful to the WSAC during its deliberations. Tina Shull was asked to do some preliminary research about such a survey and report back to the Outreach Subcommittee at its July 30th meeting. The Outreach Subcommittee report to the full Committee on July 31st included a brief mention of a potential survey and it was agreed that a concept paper on a potential community attitudinal survey would be prepared for discussion at the August WSAC meeting.

This concept paper describes preliminary thinking about how a community attitudinal survey might be used to capture attitudes, values and beliefs surrounding Santa Cruz's collective quality of life and community characteristics as they relate to water supply reliability issues. The following we trust will set up the Committee for a healthy discussion.

Why Collect Information from the Community?

The Water Supply Advisory Committee is in a position of substantial responsibility, tasked with delivering to the City Council policy recommendations to address the City of Santa Cruz's vulnerable water situation. These recommendations are to be rooted in a variety of criteria and inputs, and the Committee has obtained the services of experts to assist them to sort through the drivers of our water supply challenges and uncertainties, e.g., climate change, water releases for fish habitat, etc.

While the Committee can obtain clarity about the technical and scientific aspects of various options and thereby bracket uncertainties to some degree, what we lack is a lens through which to view the science and data in order to develop politically-feasible policy options. That lens, we submit, is the community's expressed values and desired quality of life and community characteristics, particularly as they relate to water. The Committee would be hard pressed to select viable options without gaining a better understanding of what matters most to the community and how our residents want to live and have our local economy operate. This perspective is important to advancing the Committee's work from Recon to the Real Deal. Moreover, as the City Council ponders the choices presented next year, having broad-based information about the community's values will be critical.

Question to the Committee: Do we agree that collecting such information from the community makes sense?

What would be the Goal of a Formal Community Survey?

The goal of a formal survey would be to gather statistically valid, reliable, and significant data to measure the greater community's attitudes about community character and quality of life, as they relate to water supply and demand. This survey would not serve as a vetting tool for possible strategies or options; rather, it gets to the underlying criterion of community standards that any future strategies or options must at least take into account and, ideally, meet. In addition, survey results would help the Committee better understand and plan for the nature, scope, and content of the conversation it will be having with the community when it presents its recommendations.

Survey data can be used by the Committee as input for consideration during the evaluation of alternatives using MCDS, for example, as well as inform the creation and consideration of management actions and strategies related to scenarios. As the Committee develops and refines criteria for use in these evaluations, knowing that survey data will be available to inform rating and weighting of criteria would mean that Committee members don't have to depend entirely on personal judgment, anecdotal evidence, or other informal sources of information as they rate alternatives and weight criteria.

Question to the Committee: Do we agree that a formal survey of some form is the right way to collect this information?

In developing and deploying a formal survey, there are critical questions to be answered beforehand:

1. **Who** should conduct the survey?
 - a. Committee or its consultants?
 - b. The City?
 - c. An independent 3rd party?

The City has used a polling professional (Gene Bregman) to conduct a number of similar surveys for many years. We would suggest that the Committee engage this firm, with Council approval and funding, to do this work and that the Outreach Sub-committee, our consulting team, and City staff be actively engaged in working with the firm to consider and develop the sampling strategy, the survey questions, and the approach to analyzing the results. In order to avoid survey bias, it's important that the content of the survey remain confidential prior to its administration. Therefore, the Outreach Sub-committee will be responsible for the survey content (acting on behalf of the Committee as a whole). The Committee would review and approve the strategy and analytic plan (but not the actual survey questions).

Questions to the Committee: Do we agree that we should work with the City's incumbent survey firm as described here?

2. **Whom** do we ask and **How**?
 - a. City residents?
 - b. Water service single and multi-family residential customers?
 - c. Registered voters?
 - d. Likely voters?
 - e. Other?

There are several modes of data collection available to the Committee. The classic tool for developing statistically valid polling-type data is a randomized telephone survey. Others tools include web-based surveys, focus groups, “man on the street” or door to door interviews, comment cards, online forums, etc. Each of these tools has its special strengths and limitations. We propose that the formal survey be conducted as a randomized, phone-based survey. However, it is highly likely that a wide variety community based information gathering tools will be developed and applied during the WSAC process.

We asked Gene Bregman to comment and he provided the following guidance.

Sample Size. $n = \sim 400$ for statistical significance, drawn from Santa Cruz Water Service Area.

Survey Options:

1. **Telephone Survey Using Voter registration data.** Administered over a weekend. Voter registration data can be culled to fit the geographic area desired. In this case, the survey administrator would overlay a map on precinct data to create a bank of telephone numbers associated with people registered in that area.
 - a. Cell v. landline. Telephone contact information is provided on the voter registry card. Survey administrators would call the numbers provided (randomly selected from the total bank). This naturally produces a sample with a mix of cell and landlines as voters use both cell and land lines as their contact numbers when registering to vote. Recent surveys conducted by the survey administrator showed between 38% and 53% of numbers called were cell phones (survey administrators ask this question). Nationwide, it is estimated that about 40% of households have cell phones only.
 - b. Cost. For a 400-respondent survey with an average length of about 18 minutes, the costs are approximately \$22,000. Shortening the survey, which is very possible here because a ballot measure is not being tested, reduces the cost.
 - c. Pros. Most efficient method of collecting quantitative data (geographic area is pre-vetted, survey administrators know respondents live in the designated area). Queries the most civically engaged citizens who may be more likely to be involved in future civic issues. Captures local residents who have out of area cell phones.

- d. Cons. Does not capture data from people who are not registered to vote or do not have telephones. Demographics may be viewed as narrow: trend toward longer-term residency, home owners, more aged.
- 2. **Telephone Survey Using Random Digit Dial.** Administered over a weekend (but requires more time than a voter registry based survey). The surveying agency must determine what proportion of land to cell phones it desires. Then, a random dialer is deployed that uses the 831 area code and the most common three-digit prefixes in the desired geographic area. Location still must be screened by the survey administrator (confirming usually by zip code, but we may need to refine further given the sample area spanning parts of several zip codes).
 - a. Cell v. landline. Survey administrators need to ask if cell or land line was called and once the pre-designated quota for either cell or land line is fulfilled, will only administer survey to the other category of phone lines.
 - b. Cost. Add about 50% in cost to a voter registry based survey due to complexity of deriving the sample and reduced efficiency when administering the survey. (~\$33,000).
 - c. Pros. Captures data from residents in an area as opposed to residents registered to vote in an area. Gathers a more general pool of opinions.
 - d. Cons. Costly and much less efficient. Will miss those who live locally but have out of area cell phones.
- 3. **Door-to-Door Field Survey.** A good random sample of addresses and a lot of manpower and time is required to administer this type of survey. Survey administrators receive a list of addresses and are deployed in the field to knock on the designated doors and administer the survey.
 - a. Cost. Will cost a lot more than a telephone survey because of labor costs and low efficiency. For example, during a telephone survey, if the line called is unanswered, the survey administrator moves on and is dialing a new number within five seconds. A field survey requires the administrator to physically travel to the next household on the list.
 - b. Pros. Reaches absolutely everyone in an area.
 - c. Cons. Much less efficient. Costly. Takes a lot more time.

We recommend a randomized phone-based survey that samples registered voters from the entire City's water service area.

Question to the Committee: *Do we agree on this mode of administration?*

Question to the Committee: *What is the target pool for the survey?*

3. **What** questions do we ask?

Drafting the questions for a survey is the most important component of this process. The survey(s) can't be too long, can't be leading or suggestive and must be fine-tuned to ask what you need to know. The Stratus team has indicated that it has experience in drafting survey questions and could therefore assist in the process. As noted above, we recommend that the

Outreach Committee lead this effort, with support from Stratus, City staff, and the professional survey firm. We recommend that input into the questions come from a variety of perspectives. The Committee's role in reviewing the questions would help ensure both balance and breadth.

Preliminary thinking about potential topics to address include:

- Degree of interest in aquatic habitat support (how much water should be provided for fish?)
- How important is it to citizens to maintain water for dry season irrigation for use in public and private landscapes, gardens and open spaces?
- Attitudes toward other outdoor water use (what about pools, hot tubs, car washing and driveway/sidewalk washing?)
- Attitudes toward recreational facilities (grass or artificial turf?)
- Extent of willingness to personally conserve (how long and how much?)
- Extent of willingness to regularly or frequently impose light or stringent conservation measures on community (what should everyone do?)
- Extent of tolerance for uncertainty in water supply and ad hoc water rationing as needed (to what degree does the community desire stability and predictability?)
- Willingness to have negative impacts on local economy (how acceptable are business losses, opportunity costs, and temporary to prolonged economic hardship?)

Question to the Committee: Any other suggested topics for consideration in the survey?

4. **When** should we survey?

We suggest conducting the survey in early fall in order to provide information for the Committee to consider as it finishes the Recon phase and begins transitioning into the Real Deal. This timing also allows us to collect information from the community when its focus on and awareness of water issues is high due to the continuing drought and current water restrictions.

Question to the Committee: Do we agree on this timing?

Developing and Deploying Additional Community and Sector Specific Input Tools for Consideration

In addition to a survey which has the benefit of providing statistically valid information, there are other tools that the Committee might consider to supplement and complement results from a survey of registered voters. For example, the Committee might want to consider the following questions:

- Does the Committee (or the constituencies Committee members represent) want additional specific sector opinions (Business, tourism, agriculture, education)?
- Does the Committee want to deploy online tools in addition to or instead of other tools or strategies (understanding the self-selective aspects of these tools)?

- Does the Committee want to consider other specialized services to gather more general input such as Civinomics' iPad surveys or Peak Democracy's online forum, or focus groups to delve into more details about trends, values, and issues?

As indicated earlier in this concept paper, the WSAC's work will create many opportunities for gathering information from the public and incorporating the information gathered into the Committee's analysis. We recommend that the Committee further task the Outreach Subcommittee (along with its consultant and staff support) to consider, as it develops its outreach strategies, what tools should be developed and deployed to support the various outreach initiatives it will be developing and implementing.

Question to the Committee: *Do we agree that this is the ongoing responsibility of the Outreach subcommittee?*