

PRESS RELEASE FOR ST. CROIX COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Resident Survey Results Reviewed by County Board

January 2013, St. Croix County partnered with the Survey Research Center at the University of Wisconsin- River Falls to issue a resident survey as part of ongoing strategic planning. Resident input was sought about the importance of and future spending for County functions. A full copy of the survey report is available from the Home page of the County's website, <http://www.co.saint-croix.wi.us/>

A random sample of 1,057 St. Croix County residents received surveys. 388 completed surveys were returned, achieving a 34% response rate. Based on the estimated number of adults in the population of the County (61,462), the results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 5% with 95% confidence.

Survey respondent demographics included; 64% men, 76% age 45 or older, 67% currently employed or self-employed, 95% homeowners, 46% had annual household income of \$75,000 or more. Top five ZIP codes were Hudson (39%), New Richmond (18%), River Falls (9%), Somerset (7%) and Roberts (5%).

The survey presented County programs and functions divided into five categories; health and human services, community development, public safety & criminal justice, transportation, and economic development and financial health of the County. Respondents were first asked to rate the current importance of the each listed program using a scale of very important, somewhat important, not important, or don't know. Then respondents were asked to indicate their preferences with respect to the level of spending by the year 2018, choosing: increase, not change, shrink, or don't know.

Protection of abused and neglected children stood out at the top in both importance and future spending. Timely response to emergencies and county highway maintenance were in a statistical tie for second place in both importance and spending.

Law enforcement ranked fourth in importance, but respondents gave it a slightly lower rank for future spending. Rounding out remaining programs/services in the top ten were the following: recruit more manufacturing businesses, conservation of natural resources, conservation of groundwater/drinking water, veteran services, highway and bridge construction, and nutritional services for elderly and disabled persons.

At the other end of the importance scale, respondents gave the overall lowest importance and funding ratings to programs that address healthy lifestyles. Other programs/services with lower ratings in both importance and funding included criminal rehabilitation, additional highway width for pedestrian and bicycle lanes and public transportation.

Respondents are reluctant to increase spending levels. Of the programs listed, there was only one for which a majority of respondents favored increased funding (protection of abused and neglected children). Across all programs, 48% of respondents said spending should remain the same, 28% preferred an increase and 16% wanted a reduction.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide written comments. 147 comments were provided. The budget/taxes category contained 33% of the comments. The following quotes are representative of the topic:

“Government on all levels needs to be more efficient and accountable. Attempt to do more with less. Public sector compensation needs to be more aligned with the private sector compensation.”

“Do not increase spending or budgets, reduce size of government.”

The second most common topic among the written comments comprised 9% of the total and was about government assistance programs:

“Less government involvement so as to hold individuals accountable for their own lives and actions.”

Results of the survey were presented to the County Board on September 3, 2013 by Jim Janke of the Survey Research Center. County Administrator, Patrick Thompson followed Janke’s presentation with an update on the County’s strategic plan, introducing four Strategic Initiatives developed to encompass resident feedback and focus department and employee (Pay for Performance) goal setting.

The four new strategic initiatives include;

Continuous Improvement (CI)

Improve service delivery and the responsible use of tax dollars by making County Government more efficient & affordable through streamlined processes and elimination of waste.

Growth Management (GM)

Proactively plan for the impact of continued growth on the County’s resources and its service delivery to the public.

Safety & Health (SH)

Improve and protect the safety, health and welfare of the County’s citizens and its natural resources

Outreach (O)

Enhance public awareness of County services and how they are funded.

Engage employees and maintain a high performing workforce.

The County updates the strategic plan annually. The County plans to issue a resident survey about every five years. The survey cost a total of \$5543.

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