

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 04/18/05

Reviewed by: _____

SUBJECT: Unfunded Capital, Operations, and Maintenance Needs Community Survey

BY: Judy Lieberman, Assistant City Administrator
Beth Pollard, City Administrator

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the topics to be covered in a public opinion survey.

BACKGROUND

On March 7, 2005, City Council conducted a work session to review a list of unfunded operational needs, capital projects and potential funding sources. On April 4, 2005, staff returned to Council to follow up on the issues that were raised at the work session, and to obtain direction with regard to a citywide random-sample survey. Council approved proceeding with a community survey, but requested additional information about the survey contents.

DISCUSSION

One of the concerns discussed by Council was that more specific information be provided regarding the questions that would be asked in such a survey. The survey conducted in 2002 by Godbe Research is attached so that the types of questions asked previously can be reviewed.

Based on the unfunded needs report and feedback from Council regarding priority, specific areas suggested for inclusion to be included in the survey questionnaire, include the following:

- Storm Drain Improvements: Eight high priority storm drain needs, including the Curtis-Nielson project (\$2 million)
- Street Paving: Funding to ensure continued street paving and rehabilitation (annual up to \$300,000)
- New Recreational Facilities, specifically the purchase and development of the Veteran's Building and Pierce Street Park (\$2.1 million)
- Other Recreational Improvements, specifically the Waterfront area, the Ohlone

Greenway, the Key Route Median (\$1 million)

- Improved maintenance for existing landscaping and facilities (annual up to \$210,000)
- Maintenance for the new recreational items listed above, namely Pierce Street Park and the Veterans Memorial Building (annual up to \$55,000)
- Additional programs for Youth, particularly mental health and recreation, including the Veterans Building (unknown, but up to \$150,000)
- Additional funds for the Albany Library (The City's special tax subsidy for the library is currently \$420,000 annually.)

Other areas researched by the survey include:

- What combination of issues noted above provides the most broad based level of support?
- What is the threshold amount of funding that residents are willing to pay?

ANALYSIS

Although November 8, 2005 is an established election date in California, there is nothing scheduled in the Albany area of the County on that day unless the Governor calls for a special election. Calling for a city-only election would cost the City an estimated \$35,000 and staff does not recommend this option. Earlier this year, the Governor announced his intention to call a November special election on a variety of measures. Last week, he announced he was withdrawing his pension reform measure from a November ballot, however he is still considering other initiatives for November. The Governor and State Legislature have until June 13 to call for a November election.

If there is no November election but Council wishes to have the results of the election effective in the 2006-07 fiscal year, the only other eligible election date is the primary election date in June, 2006. The next election date is the general election of November 2006, but the results would not be effective until the 2007-08 fiscal year.

If a special election is called for November, 2005, the City's deadline for ballot language is August 12, 2005. Because a public opinion survey takes six to eight weeks, and follow-up discussion with the community regarding the results is recommended, the City is unable to wait until after the State's June 13th deadline before deciding whether to proceed with a public opinion survey or delay it until closer to the June, 2006 election date. The deadline for submission of ballot language for a June, 2006 election is February.

If Council decided to wait until closer to a June, 2006 election date to conduct the public opinion survey, staff recommends conducting it no later than October, 2005.

Despite the uncertainty about whether there will be a November election, and concerns about the timing of a survey close to an election date, staff recommends proceeding with a survey at this time, for the following reasons:

- If there is a November election, a successful ballot measure in November has the advantage over a June date because it allows the City to proceed with planning and design on projects for which construction and other forms of implementation could begin in 2006-07. A June election date would delay the planning and start dates for the capital, operations, and maintenance projects and programs to be funded by a tax measure.
- The topics to be covered are unlikely to change significantly between now and an October survey date. While there would likely be more information available to the City in October than is currently available on certain issues or projects (such as Pierce Street Park), and there could always be an additional issue that could arise, the level of specificity for purposes of a public opinion survey will not likely change dramatically.
- Conducting a survey at this time will provide the City with feedback from the community on issues, concerns, priorities, and support for funding; if there is no November election it just provides the Council and community more time to develop a ballot measure.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The source of funds for the survey is the discretionary fund line in the General Fund, non-departmental budget, which has an unallocated balance of \$22,500. The cost of the survey ranges from \$15,650 to \$16,700 for a 12-minute to 15-minute survey, with 300 respondents. A survey could be accomplished with fewer respondents, but the confidence level and quality of analysis would also decrease.

Attachments

1. Godbe Research Survey, May 2002.