

Winslow Public Library Community Needs Survey

Pamela Fesq Bonney, Library Director

Judy Ellis, Chair, Winslow Public Library Board of Trustees

Wanda Terp, Winslow Public Library Board of Trustees

Karen Andrus, Winslow Public Library Board of Trustees

Charles Morrill, Winslow Public Library Board of Trustees

Betty Perry, Winslow Public Library Board of Trustees

Samantha Cote, Youth Services/Technology Librarian

March 14, 2018

Introduction

Inspired by the Aspen Institute's 2014 report *Rising to the Challenge; Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, a study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Library Director Pamela Bonney and the Winslow Library Board of Trustees decided to conduct a community survey. We are in the early phase of creating a long-term strategic plan for the library and want to do so with a greater knowledge of the community we serve. A survey seemed the ideal way to gain such knowledge. Maureen Sullivan, past president of the American Library Association, created the questions we used.

Here are the four survey questions:

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?
2. Why is that important to you?
3. How is that different from how you see things now?
4. What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?

The surveys were mailed out with the Town's tax bills in mid- August. An online version was also made available on the Library's web site. It was publicized with flyers in the library, by word of mouth, on the library's web page and Facebook page, and on the What's Happening in Winslow Maine Facebook group. The library also set up a table outside the Town's polling place on Election Day in November, where surveys were offered to voters as they left the building. They were also offered to people who voted early at the Town Office. The survey was closed on November 30, 2017. We received 61 completed surveys, 58 of which were usable. (One had nonsensical answers and 2 were online duplicates – someone had hit "submit" more than once.) In the study of statistics a sample size of 30 is considered to be adequate for a

univariate population. (A univariate population is one that is not broken down into subgroups.) Therefore our sample is considered to be of adequate size to draw conclusions.

Categories of responses

Several broad categories of responses to the questions became apparent after a committee of seven, which included library trustees and library staff members, read through the surveys. We ranked the categories by both number of responses that fell into each and by the number of respondents (individual people) whose answers were about that category.

There was a lot of overlap, with many answers covering more than one category. We made copies of these answers and placed them in all the categories they pertained to. We looked for specifics and tried to avoid generalization.

This process of analysis led to the following insights (categories are listed in order by number of responses):

The respondents are very concerned about **safety and drug problems** in town. (53 responses, 27 respondents) People expressed the desire to live in a safe community. They are concerned about a perceived increase in drug use in the area and in drug-related crime. They expressed the need for drug abuse prevention education and for support for drug users and their families.

Respondents expressed a strong desire to live in a **caring community**. (52 responses, 31 respondents) They want a caring, welcoming, friendly, supportive community, where neighbors help neighbors.

There were a variety of comments about **Town Departments/Services**. (38 responses, 24 respondents) Positive comments were made about the Police Department, with requests for more police presence, i.e. more officers. Comments about Public Works focused on concerns about recycling and road maintenance. There were specific concerns expressed regarding town government transparency, and town management and services. The library was also commented on, with some positive comments and some specific comments about a need for more adult activities, a need for a bigger budget, better lawn maintenance, as well as a question about the need for a library at all.

A **need for more adult activities** in Winslow, including specific mentions of those for seniors and families, was expressed. (26 responses, 10 respondents)

Many respondents are **satisfied with the status quo**, happy with the way things are in town. (25 responses and 16 respondents)

There were a number of **unique topics** that don't fit in any of the large categories. (21 responses, 13 respondents) The committee felt that the main ideas expressed were that we need to revitalize the town, bring in new businesses, create a community center, and take risks and think outside the box.

Quality education and an educated community, two distinct but closely related concerns, were commented on. (18 responses, 12 respondents) Respondents said they want good schools and school facilities; some feel that we have good schools now, and that good schools attract young families to town. Respondents want a well-informed community that is educated on issues and is well-educated in general.

Community engagement and communication (12 responses, 9 respondents) is of concern to respondents, who feel there is not enough communication between the town and citizens, that people need to be more involved in the community and that more communication about what is going on in Winslow is needed.

Closely related to the topic of the need for more adult activities is the category of responses specifically dealing with the **need for more arts and cultural activities in town**. (9 responses, 5 respondents)

The need to **lower taxes** was expressed. (8 responses, 4 respondents) Respondents said they thought taxes were too high and needed to be kept reasonable or as low as possible.

Some respondents listed **the environment and environmental sustainability** as a concern. (6 responses, 3 respondents) They want the town to be environmentally responsible.

The **promotion of community events in general and library events specifically** was an expressed concern and relates to the topics of town government and services and community engagement and communication. (6 responses, 5 respondents) Respondents expressed a need for a way to widely publicize all activities offered in Winslow.

Conclusions

Our findings have brought us to the conclusion that these are things that Winslow residents would like to see:

Create a community newsletter to publicize events and share information about such things as elections, town government, and the schools.

Create more activities in town for adults.

Explore the possibility of connecting with Waterville Creates to bring cultural activities to Winslow.

Create a senior meeting place or activity center.

Continue to support good schools.