

The Workshop Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was called to order by President Patinkin at 7:01 p.m. via remote access by Zoom video. Attendance was taken and the following were:

Present: Antokal, Caron, Cohen, Lapin, Patinkin (5)
Absent: None (0)

And there was a quorum in attendance. Also present were Jeff Nehila, Secretary/Executive Director; Jeff Harvey, Laura McCarty, Jay Zahn, Tony Korzyniewski, Jason Mannina, staff members; Tod Stanton, Public Research Group; Jeff Andreasen, aQity Research.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received by email prior to the meeting.

Community Survey Firm Presentations

Executive Director Nehila provided background information on the process to date. The 2021 Budget includes funding a Community Survey. As discussed, the survey will provide us with rather immediate and very important information on resident needs, wants and expectations going forward as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also provide us with valuable insight on the satisfaction levels of programs and services provided over the last year and what expectations and desires may be relating to the continuance of these programs.

The survey will be also utilized as a planning guide as we move even farther in the post-pandemic timeframe and will help the district in formulating its next Strategic Plan in 2022.

A Request for Qualifications was posted on our website and sent to known firms that perform this scope of work. RFQ's were due March 1, 2021. A total of 4 RFQ's were received. After staff review, a total of 2 firms were recommended by staff to continue in the selection process. Both firms display a strong background in the areas we are looking to explore and have worked with a number of park districts in Illinois. Executive Director Nehila worked with both firms or representatives from the firms. (While in Grayslake worked with Public Research Group and while in Round Lake worked with aQity owner Jeff Andreasen while he was with Richard Day Research). Both firms performed admirably on their survey projects.

Public Research Group

Tod Stanton from Public Research Group, (PRG), presented on his firm's qualifications and experience in performing community surveys. PRG's approach is to gather significant data via defensible methods while exploring creative, cutting edge research techniques that are not being fully employed by other research consulting firms. We utilize the best practices to custom tailor the efforts to each park district with emphasis on interpretation of the data to achieve success. Additional data gathering opportunities are included in the scope of work like the Delphi Committee process, stakeholder interviews and the opportunity to partner with virtual public on-line engagement options to allow for as much input as possible from the community. These items should fall within the district's budget expectations providing the best value for your research dollars.

Our firm has been deploying and adjusting our approach over the years with a multiple survey delivery method then blending the independent data set to reduce bias and generating a stronger confidence in our survey findings. Our ability to utilize a random sampling e-mail survey component is at the forefront of our leisure research. The firm is always seeking better ways to accomplish our work and looks forward to each project as a way to connect with our clients providing a high level of professional skill and personal attention. The creative utilization of technology prior to the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to seamlessly engage the community during these unique times.

Project Approach

It is our understanding that the park district is seeking to develop an understanding of its resident's opinions and interests on park and recreational facilities, services, programs, capital improvements and needs for the future. The park district will use the research as a tool to guide the district in future decision making which serves a population of approximately 18,000 residents. The results of the survey will be utilized by primarily district management as well as the Park Board. Results will be used to identify goals for recreation services and facilities and to establish priorities for future projects.

We firmly believe the best approach is generated by listening first and then taking action based on accurate data analysis. We employ the technique on many of our assignments to provide a high degree of comfort in the decision-making process.

Public Research Group's approach to gathering public feedback through survey instruments is to develop a common survey document, gather independent data sets through a random sample, and then blend the data together through a technique developed by PRG named Data Layering. This technique will generate a clear picture of the survey outcomes by removing the inherent biases associated with each survey type. This allows for a higher degree of confidence than relying on one survey type. The benefit by using PRG's technique is the findings paint a clearer picture of the issues providing better decision-making information.

PRG will approach the survey as the district requested with a multi-step approach using mail and e-mail surveys with a common questionnaire. Furthermore, PRG would develop an advanced database to track both the outgoing and incoming samples as well as ensuring a separate stratified random sample for each type of survey deployment. This will allow PRG to track its sample to ensure that the data gathered is reflective of the community it was gathered for.

PRG has two primary sources for household addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses and considers those vendors proprietary to the firm. PRG does an extensive development of the sample through Geographic Information Systems mapping of our database with an overlay by political boundaries. In an interest to address clients concerns for speed, cost and quality control, PRG performs all services in-house. PRG's GIS system integrates into its survey database and allows for accurate sample development among the different survey types. This allow PRG to make quick decisions in the survey administration process to ensure our sub-target area samples are met. Finally, all data can easily accommodate cross-tabular comparisons and be bench marked against the district's past surveys as well as our database of completed surveys as requested.

The email sample development starts with our current database which includes the name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address for the potential survey sample.

It is then run through our sampling software in GIS to translate the raw data into a geographic map which then advances into the final sample for the district. We are able to validate the e-mail address to a mailing address which allows us to generate a random sample using e-mail addresses. PRG also provides opportunities to translate the survey data into mapping applications that allows the data to reflect a geographic understanding beyond static charts and tables.

Base Scope of Services

Project Start Up

PRG will meet with appropriate park district staff members to fully define the work plan, including initial survey questions as well as request documentation from past research efforts. We will work with staff to define an action plan for both survey participants and content.

Survey

We will administer a community-based parks and recreation needs assessment survey and the results will be shared with the community via the district's website and at a Park Board meeting. We believe a survey is a valuable tool to provide validity to any decision that could impact the community. By using this tool, staff and the Park Board can feel confident about making decisions based on real, relevant data. A sample of 450 total household returns will be sufficient for the size of the park district for a 95% confidence level and +/-4.8% confidence interval. We will utilize a survey instrument of up to 20 questions in length to gather data from the common questionnaire. We will then layer the data between the survey results to formalize a stronger confidence in the survey findings.

Online Public Engagement Virtual Polling Opportunities

PRG will prepare a series of online community polling engagement services. The virtual polling platform generates a broader audience and creates more effective community participation, leading to measurable results and valuable insights from the community. The site will be operational for the life of the input process to collect multiple rounds of data from the community from a series of short polls with targeted questions.

Analysis of Findings & Report

PRG will compile all relevant data from the survey instrument into a comprehensive findings report with an emphasis on data interpretation. The report will be edited and revised once from the draft review process. A presentation at a regularly scheduled board meeting will be made in a PowerPoint format. The final deliverable products will be five bound color copies of the final report, a PDF of the report as well as the PowerPoint presentation.

After his presentation, Tod answered questions from staff members and commissioners. Staff and the Park Board thanked Tod for his presentation.

aQity Research

Jeff Andreasen from aQity Research shared information on his firm's qualifications and experience in performing community surveys. It is aQity's understanding that the key objectives of this survey are to gauge the community's priorities for programming, parks, and facility needs to help form the district's

strategic plan; more specifically, understand how the park district household's assess the district's response to address COVID-related health concerns since march 2020, both for programming in general and at specific facilities; and identify any expected shifts in resident preferences and outlook for future park district program participation, facility usage, broader priorities, and any unmet needs for fitness and recreation activities going forward.

As a result, it is imperative that the survey findings are accurate and representative of all park district households – not just current or recent users, but non-users/non-participants and all other key demographic groups.

As you may know, aQity is developing an upcoming survey for another local park agency to gauge local residents' perceptions of that district's response to COVID, the policies put in place, and upcoming expectations for health-related best practices and how the pandemic will impact fitness behaviors and recreational activities. That survey is expected to launch in May/June, so we may be able to incorporate some key learnings as part of our design for the Deerfield Park District survey.

aQity Research is uniquely qualified to provide the needs assessment that the park district seeks, for several reasons:

A More Customized Solution

aQity doesn't take a "cookie cutter" approach by forcing your survey into pre-set template. This will be especially important for the park district, as the objectives for the community are specific to COVID-related perceptions, behaviors and expectations – very different from the typical needs assessment.

We appreciate that each district has unique needs, populations and issues. As with all of our engagements, we will invest the time upfront to work with and carefully listen to park district staff and board members to clarify the specific research goals to develop a research approach that delivers your desired outcomes.

Greater Emphasis on Accuracy

aQity clients rely heavily on our survey findings to help inform their decision-making and planning. The results must be accurate and representative of all district residents, not just the current users of district parks, facilities and programs.

To ensure this accuracy, we carefully design and monitor our random samples to include all of these key subgroups. The demographics of our final respondent sample will be compared to updated US Census data for Deerfield, and (if necessary) we will weight our sample to align with Census targets by age, gender, region and presence of children in the household.

Providing Insight Beyond Just Numbers

aQity analysis is more detailed and comprehensive than many other surveys. Anyone can report numbers; we dig deeper to find meaningful differences by key groups and clearly profile those segments.

We also utilize qualitative open-ended responses to understand the “why” behind the numbers. When appropriate, we use advanced statistical tools to identify key concerns or priorities that residents report, the perceived value that the district represents, and program or service adjustments that represent the best improvement opportunities.

Given that the survey findings will be leveraged to help inform your strategic planning and capital priorities/improvements, having clear and actionable insights (not just data) will represent added value when making these important decisions.

It’s a Relationship, Not a Project

Most of our clients select (and continue to engage) aQity because we go above and beyond the standard approach and basic deliverables, as demonstrated by the points described.

We seek to be your partner, not just a research vendor. We remain available for follow-up phone consultation after the final presentation to answer questions, provide ideas, consult on action items and next steps, etc.

This partnership is a key difference for aQity Research compared to other survey firms.

After his presentation, Jeff answered questions from staff members and commissioners. Staff and the Park Board thanked Jeff for his presentation.

After both presentations, the board and staff shared their insights on each of the firms. The next step, upon reaching a consensus, could be to officially select a firm at the April Board Meeting. From that point, staff will develop an agreement to be brought back to the May Board Meeting if the cost exceeds \$25,000.

After the agreement is official, we can then start developing the template of the survey and providing the firm with our desired outcomes.

Motion made by Treasurer Cohen, seconded by Commissioner Antokal, to adjourn the Workshop Meeting at 10:03 p.m. Roll call vote as follows:

AYES: Cohen, Antokal, Caron, Lapin, Patinkin (5)

NAYS: None (0)

Motion passed in a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Nehila, Secretary