

Appendix A

Public Attitude Survey (1998)

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Public Attitude Survey

The Township conducted a public survey in 1998 to solicit information about the attitudes of township residents and property owners. Responding to the survey, residents and property owners voiced their opinions on issues and priorities facing the township in the coming years. This section of the plan presents a summary of responses to survey questions regarding the following issues:

- Natural resource protection and conservation;
- Farming;
- Residential development;
- Commercial and industrial development; and
- Recreational opportunities.

Methodology

Surveys were mailed to 1,700 registered voters and property owners listed on the township's voter registration and tax records. An unknown number of the surveys were undeliverable as mailed due to insufficient or outdated address information. Four hundred surveys (twenty-four percent) were returned for analysis.

The survey contained 62 questions. Twenty-one of the questions were about natural resource protection and conservation issues, four about farming, eight about residential development and zoning, eight about commercial and industrial development, fourteen about specific land use allocation issues, and seven about public services and recreational opportunity issues.

Analysis

Select questions from each section are presented with percentages of respondents for each opinion category. Respondents who "strongly agree" and "agree" are frequently grouped together as are those who "strongly disagree" and "disagree." Those questions that respondents answered that they "didn't know" what their opinion was or those to which there was no response, indicate that additional information about development options and property rights for Hayes Township constituents may be needed. For this reason, they are frequently grouped together and presented with the other more definitive responses.

Overview of Respondents

The largest age of class of the 400 respondents was comprised of those between 46 and 55 years of age (23.75%). This was followed closely by the 36 to 45 year-old age group (22%) and the over 65 age group (21.5%). Of the remaining respondents, 17.5% are 56-65 years, 12.75% are 26-35 years, and a very small percentage (1.25%) are 18-25 years.

More than one-half of the respondents (65.5%) indicated that they are permanent residents of Hayes Township. Seasonal residents made up only 17.75%. Fifteen percent of the total respondents indicated that they are not residents of Hayes Township and are most likely property owners residing elsewhere.

A majority of the respondents (78.25%) own a home in Hayes Township and more than half (64.25%) are registered voters. The highest percentage of total respondents (23%) have lived in Hayes Township for 20 years or more, followed by 1 to 4 year residents (18%), 10 to 14 year residents (16%), and 5 to 9 year residents (15.5%). Low numbers (9%) indicate they had lived 15-19 years in the township and 9% less than 1 year. The remaining percentage did not respond and are most likely made up of property owners who are not residents.

The largest percentage of respondents described where they live as the Lake Charlevoix/Susan Lake area of the township (37.5%), followed by the Bayshore area (26.25%), central township area (15.25%), and Pincherry Road area (10.75%).

The most common amount of land owned by respondents is 6-10 acres (19.5%). Eighteen percent of the total respondents own less than 1 acre, 16% own 3-5 acres, and almost 11% own more than 41 acres.

Thirty percent of the respondents stated that they own waterfront property. Twenty-two percent said they use their land for agricultural purposes. Fifteen percent said they participate in farming activities in Hayes Township.

Almost 3/4 of those who own more than 41 acres stated that they use their land for agricultural purposes indicating that a majority of large property owners in Hayes Township consider their land agricultural. Of those respondents who own 11-20 acres, 40% said they used land for agricultural purposes.

Natural Resources

General attitudes concerning the importance of protecting the natural resources of Hayes Township:

When asked how important it is to protect the natural resources of the township respondents showed a clear interest in the protection of scenic county roads, scenic views of lakes, farms and fields, groundwater resources, water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitats and forestlands. An overwhelming majority of township residents feel strongly that these resources are important and should be protected. Water resources (lakes, streams, and groundwater) were mentioned

more frequently than any other resource as extremely important.

Attitudes concerning water issues:

Water resources are clearly the main concern of the majority of respondents. More than 90% feel it is extremely important to protect the quality of lakes and streams. More than 80% feel that groundwater resources were extremely important, and more than 60% feel that wetlands were extremely important. Residents and property owners also feel that these resources should have

active protections applied. More than 3/4 of the respondents (83.5%) feel that all waterways should have protective “greenbelts” along them.

Attitudes relating to water and sewer issues:

Over half (60%) of respondents agree that private sewer and septic systems should have a regularly required inspection to protect water quality and 59% feel that housing density should be planned so that public water/sewer systems are not necessary. It should also be noted that seven respondents suggested in the General Comments Section of the Survey that they would like a public water and sewer system investigated.

Concern about overcrowding on the lakes:

A substantial majority of respondents are concerned about overcrowding on the lakes. Eighty four percent of the 400 respondents agree or strongly agree that they are concerned. How strongly one feels about overcrowding on the lakes is significantly correlated to whether one owns waterfront property or not. This dependency is statistically dependent. Fifty three percent of those who do not own waterfront property strongly agreed, compared to 36.44% of those who do own waterfront property. Because of this concern, more than 80% of residents and property owners overall also agree that new shoreline developments should have a limited number of boats slips to prevent overcrowding.

Attitudes relating to the role of the township in protecting natural resources:

When asked how Hayes Township should protect and conserve its resources, residents and property owners chose “requiring open space in new developments” over other protection measures. Eighty-two percent agree. This was followed by other protection measures including: stricter regulations (64.75% agree), land purchases (55.75% agree), a special millage (18.25% agree), and a real estate tax (11% agree). The high percentage of those who responded that they “Didn’t Know” how they feel about a special millage (28.25%) indicates that respondents may benefit from additional information about a millage and the possibilities it holds for protecting priority resources.

Farming Issues

Attitudes towards agriculture as an important land use:

It is clear that residents and property owners of Hayes Township responding to the survey feel that agriculture is an important land use and should be encouraged (84.5% agreed with Question Z). Ninety percent of those who said they use their land for agricultural purposes agreed with this statement. Two people mentioned in the general comments section that farmers should be given special tax relief for farming their land.

Attitudes towards creating a farm district:

When asked if a farming district should be created 48.5% agree and a high percentage, 24.5% don't know. This may be due to insufficient knowledge of what a "farm district" and "nuisance complaint" is and indicates that additional information on this issue would be helpful. Of those who stated they use their land for agricultural purposes, 37% strongly agree that a farm district should be created compared to only 17% of those who do not use their land for agriculture. This dependency is also true for the amount of land owned. Those who own more land agree more strongly that a farm district be created.

Attitudes towards farmers selling small pieces of land:

Almost 70% of the total number of respondents feel that the township should provide the means for farmers to sell off small pieces of their property not suited for farming while continuing to farm the remaining acreage. Of those who use their land for agricultural purposes, 44% strongly agree and 34% agree, 78% agreeing overall, that farmers should have the means to sell off small pieces of their land. The data show that the more land one owns the more strongly one agrees and disagrees with this statement. Of those who own 21 or more acres, 36.36% strongly agree that farmers should be able to sell off small pieces of land, compared to 14%, 14%, 33% for the remaining land ownership categories (less than 1 acre, 1-5, and 6-10 respectively). Interestingly, also 32% of those who strongly disagree with this statement own 21 or more acres, whereas just 8% who strongly disagree own less than 1 acre. Each of these land ownership categories make up about 20% of the total number answering this question.

Attitudes towards building near woodlands rather than on farmland:

Forty-one percent of the total respondents agree that additional development should be located near or in woodlands rather than on pre-existing farmland. A high percentage of respondents (20.5%) don't know if new development should be located near or in woodlands for the preservation of farmland recognizing the dilemma between preserving woodlands and wildlife habitats as well as the scenic farmland. Many people expressed concern in their comments about the loss of the woodlands that this statement implied.

Residential Land Uses

General attitudes concerning the pattern of development:

Echoing their attitudes towards natural resources, 76% of the survey respondents felt that development should be concentrated to preserve Hayes Township's natural resources. Over half (55%) felt that the Township should adopt a pattern of development that would reduce the amount of land converted to residential development and almost one fifth of the respondents, 19%, stated that they didn't know. In addition, 82% stated that development should be required to preserve open space while 76% stated that smaller lots should be surrounded by open space. Just under half of the respondents (47%) agreed that if the predominant zoning was one dwelling unit per 10 acres that this development should be clustered. In addition, 73% of the respondents preferred commercial development surrounded by open space i.e., cluster over strip development.

Data regarding the preservation of natural resources clearly show that Hayes Township residents and property owners feel very strongly about the area's natural qualities. This sentiment emerges several places throughout the survey.

Compared to this, the 47% response rate supporting clustering residences under a 1/10 acre zoning density may seem inconsistent. This lower response may indicate, although one can not be sure, that people may either be confused as to how one can cluster development while retaining the ten acre zoning density, or they may not agree with ten-acre zoning in general. It should be noted, however, that a significant number of respondents indicated that they would prefer 10 acres with clustered development rather than those who simply indicated a preference for conventional ten acre zoning. In summary, the high level of support for clustering (condensing and surround development with open space) demonstrates that a substantial portion of the respondents support the concept of cluster development if it is used to preserve the area's natural resources.

Attitudes concerning residential zoning density:

Over half of those responding agree that Hayes Township should provide additional opportunities for residential zoning density of one dwelling unit per 10 acres, and of these respondents who agree, 36% strongly agree. Over one third of the 270 who responded agree that there should be additional 5-acre residential density and almost 1/4 of the 263 people responding agree that there should be additional 2-acre zoning. Only 9% of the 243 responding agree that 3/4 acre zoning be increased.

Commercial and Industrial Land Uses

Attitudes towards industrial development:

Forty-one percent of the total respondents agree that they would like to see additional industrial development, 20% don't know, and 36% disagree, essentially an even split

between those who agree and disagree. Sixty-six percent of the total respondents agree that the township should invite additional commercial and industrial development when the Big Rock plant closes.

The highest percentage responding who agree with the statement that "additional industrial development should be limited to the pre-existing area along US-31" define themselves as being from the Lake Charlevoix and Susan Lake areas of Hayes Township. Of those who agree, 46.26% are from the lake areas of the township, or 65.5% of those from the lake areas agree. The highest percentage who disagree with the above statement define themselves as from the Pincherry Road area (16.84% of those disagreeing out of the total or 38.09% of Pincherry residents). Bayshore area residents and Central Township residents feel similarly on this issue. Over half (54.37%) of the Bayshore residents answering this question agree and half of the Central township area residents.

Attitudes toward commercial development:

More than half of Hayes Township residents overall seem to agree that additional commercial development should be encouraged. Sixty-one percent feel that this additional development should be located in the pre-existing commercial area of Bayshore.

How respondents feel about the Bayshore area expanding if new commercial space is needed is dependent upon the area of the township in which respondents live. For those who define themselves as living in the Lake Charlevoix and Susan Lake area (41.83% of the total), 72% agree that the Bayshore commercial area should expand rather than creating new commercial areas and 7.53% disagree (20.55% didn't know). For those living in the Bayshore area (29% of the total), 58% agree and 30% disagree, with just 11.88% stating they don't know.

Public Services and Recreation

Attitudes towards potential recreational opportunities:

Almost three fourths (74%) of total respondents strongly agree that bicycle paths should be created along the main roads, and 66% agree that a network of trails for horseback riding, and cross country skiing should be established. Furthermore, these residents feel Hayes Township should establish a public park for picnicking. Almost 50% strongly agreed that the township should acquire land for a public sports park.

Almost three fourths of the total respondents agree that the township should acquire land for public access to Lake Charlevoix. A higher percentage of people (82.35%) who do not own waterfront property also feel that the township should acquire land for public access to Lake Charlevoix. These respondents, who do not own waterfront property, make up 70% of the total number of respondents. This compares to the 50% of those who do own waterfront property and agree that the township should acquire land for lake access. The opinion of respondents as to whether they agree or strongly agree to this question is significantly dependent upon whether

they own waterfront property. Forty-two percent of those who do not own waterfront property strongly agree on this issue, compared to 11.97% of those who do own waterfront property.

General Comments Section

Respondents were asked to provide additional comments including what they like about Hayes Township and what they feel are some of the problems the Township should address.

Survey respondents offered an overwhelming number of positive comments about the rural character, open space, clean air and water found in Hayes. The township was also commended for its efforts to plan for growth.

More than any other problem addressed was the perceived lack of enforcement of the blight ordinance and interest in clean up as a priority for the township. Fourteen surveys specifically raised this concern including the condition of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings and properties. Addressed in 7 surveys was an interest in obtaining lakefront property on Lake Charlevoix for public access, boating, picnicking and preservation purposes. Seven surveys also mentioned an interest in public water and sewer system or the investigation thereof. The same number felt that roads were in need of better maintenance, repair, or improvements. Five surveys commented that bicycle paths should be established along the old railroad bed and/or Boyne City Road. One suggested that paved shoulders would be safer for bicyclist, walkers, and joggers. Six respondents suggested that the speed limits be decreased along Old 31. Other problems, from most often commented to least, included noise pollution (auto and boat traffic as well as dirt bikes), better zoning ordinance enforcement (regulations exist but are not enforced or are unevenly enforced, either too rigid or not at all), roaming cats and dogs, the limits on affordable housing options for those who can't afford 10 acre lots, better enforcement of regulations for the H & D Gravel Pit and concern about water pollution from the same, and the need for a sign ordinance.