

## 2002 Winnetka Caucus Council Proposed Platforms

### **Library Platform:**

After reviewing the Library Survey results, it is clear that the respondents are generally very satisfied with the overall job that the Library is doing for the community. Over 94% of the respondents use the Library at least once a month. The helpfulness and attitude of the staff is outstanding. The children's programs and collection get exceptionally high marks. However, the Caucus Library Committee suggests that the Board of Trustees focus on the following issues:

1. Continue to place emphasis on the children's collections and programs. It is of paramount importance to a large percentage of the community.
2. Continue to invest in Books on Tape/CDs. The respondents are most dissatisfied with this aspect of the Library.
3. As the budget permits, consider expanding parking and hours of operation during the summer. These remain the number 2 and 3 points of dissatisfaction with the Library.
4. The Source, The Winnetka Talk and The Winnetka Newsletter continue to be the main sources of information about the Library. However, community awareness of the Library's offerings is critical and needs to be improved. The Library must proactively and aggressively reach out and connect with the community.

Specifically, the Library Committee recommends:

- a) The Library host a well-advertised and creatively-produced open house touting its capabilities, coordinating with school groups to ensure maximum attendance.
  - b) The Library should attempt to erect a bulletin board or computer screen in a high pedestrian traffic area around town (i.e. The Grand, The Community House, The RR Station).
5. By a 3 to 2 margin, survey respondents declared they go first to the Internet (not the Library), when conducting research. Therefore, the Library Committee feels it is imperative that the Library initiate a specific campaign to highlight home access to on-line databases, e-mail reference services and other interactive capabilities offered by the Library.
  6. Add at least one more interactive computer terminal to the Library. This issue is very important to a large number of survey respondents.

## **Parks Platform**

The Caucus recommends that the Park Board develop and implement a strategic plan that includes the following:

1. Gathering of data that provides fact based summaries of issues and options.
2. Major challenges facing the Park Board. These challenges include changing demographics, increased pressure on generating revenue and conflicting daily demands for services and facilities.
3. Priorities for on-going services and programs. Explicit priorities for upgrading and/or building new facilities while recognizing the need to maintain scarce open space.

Survey respondents indicate a clear plan is needed to set facility priorities based upon community needs. Once again, it is a virtual 50-50 split between the creation of new facilities and not building new structures. (52% no additional facilities, 48% build facilities)

Of the respondents that want the new facilities, it was a three way majority split. (28% outdoor pool, 28% indoor pool, 28% recreation center, 6% additional sheet of ice, 5% expanded paddle tennis facilities)

The Caucus recommends that the Park Board continue to support youth programs. These should include Park District related activities relevant for young men and women, ages 11-14 as well as teens.

Survey respondents cited a definite need of offerings for this group. Perhaps continuing work with the Winnetka Youth Organization may be an avenue for a Teen Center.

The Caucus recommends Park Board adopt self imposed term limits for the Park commissioners.

Survey respondents indicated a desire to set term limits. (14% limit to one term, 61% limit to two terms and 24%, no term limit)

The Caucus recommends a major communications and public relations effort is needed to inform the constituents of the progress and results of the strategic plan as well as ongoing issues.

The survey response indicated that 34% want a LOW COST quarterly newsletter (like the Winnetka Public Library's The Source), 35% would like a page added to the Park District's Program offerings, 14% would utilize the Web, 8% would like the information attached to the school Bulletins and 3% want notices on Community Bulletin Boards.

## **School Platform**

### Main Initiative:

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration launch a major campaign to educate the residents of Winnetka on District 36's fiscal management policy and issues. This campaign is especially important due to the proposed April 2003 referendum. When asked what were the most important issues facing the school district, survey respondents most frequently listed fiscal management/budgetary issues and concerns. Survey results also indicated that many residents were not aware of or did not fully understand the ramifications of tax cap legislation and the need to pass referenda to meet future budget shortfalls.

The educational campaign for District 36 should focus on a number of specific areas:

- tax cap legislation and the impact it has on the school district's revenue;
- a reconciliation of the prior year's projected versus actual budget;
- the criteria used to develop the five-year plan; and,
- a discussion of other key fiscal decisions such as facilities versus operations spending.

### Secondary Initiatives:

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration undertake a comprehensive study to determine the community's response regarding the size and the frequency of future referenda requests. When asked about referenda, village residents were split on frequency vs. size with 52% favoring higher rate increases less frequently while 48% favored lower rate increases more frequently. Because survey responses indicated that there is a great deal of concern about long range fiscal planning, the Board should study the perceptions and reactions of the community regarding the frequency and the size of future referenda.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration examine alternative sources of funding for Winnetka public schools. When asked about other ways to fund Winnetka public schools, survey respondents were in favor of efforts to use private funding such as donations while commercial funding was not a popular source of raising school funds. User fees were also mentioned as a possibility. An examination of what is taking place in other school districts in Illinois as well as in other states could provide some creative ways to help fund future budget shortfalls.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration investigate and communicate the differing impact of reducing each budget line item expenditure in the event future referenda do not pass and/or alternative means of funding are not secured. While survey respondents clearly favored deferring spending on capital improvements and technology to reducing student/teacher ratios, cutting teacher salaries or eliminating programming such as music, art, or languages, it is necessary to reevaluate the soundness of each alternative.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration review alternative ways to communicate with the community about school issues. Good communication is essential to the success of the upcoming referendum. The Pioneer Press was the most frequently cited source of school related information by village residents. Other means of communication were not utilized as extensively. The Internet, which could be a more effective communication tool, surprisingly had the lowest usage rating of all vehicles, likely due to its infrequent updates and lack of marketing. A plan to better centralize the dissemination of information and the creation of an archive on the Internet of past communications could help raise the awareness of the activities and accomplishments of District 36 to village residents.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration annually circulate new and/or revised guidelines that set forth District 36's policies and its developmental curriculum approach to learning. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied, the average rating of the level of education provided by District 36 was 4.2. Further, when asked how well District 36 prepared children for high school, the average score, with 5 being very prepared, was also high at 4.1. Despite these strong scores, which indicate a high level of satisfaction with the education being provided by District 36, written survey responses often cited issues regarding the district's curriculum. These comments revealed some misunderstanding surrounding the "developmental approach" to learning, specifically the practical implications this approach has for the classroom and curriculum. Residents need to be continually updated on this educational approach through communication at every grade level. A concerted, multi-media parent educational process would be helpful. Many of curriculum issues, such as the effort underway for district-wide improvement in math, might be better understood and embraced if the principals and teachers reintroduced and highlighted the developmental philosophy throughout the school year at PTA events, Go to School Night functions as well as teacher conferences.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board and Administration prepare a formal report on the progress that was made on the prior year's Caucus platform. The School Board has an obligation to address these issues and provide all village residents with a status report. Every year at the annual village meeting, the Board is asked to report on the progress it has made with regard to the Caucus platform. Since, unfortunately, few residents actually attend the village meeting, there is limited communication of these progress reports to village residents. In order to enlighten the community on how well the School Board and Administration are performing relative to the Caucus platform, a more formal progress report should be published via the Pioneer Press, the Internet and District 36's and the various school newsletters.

## **Village Platform**

### Communications

The Caucus commends the Village on the continued development of its excellent website.

84% of survey respondents were neutral to positive about the Village website. (16% opposed, 26%, neutral, 58% in favor)

The Caucus recommends that the Village provide internet access to historical meeting minutes for all Village boards (Village Council, ZBA, Plan Commission, etc...).

Survey respondents support this by a margin of 7.5 to 1. (9% opposed, 23% neutral, 68% in favor)

The Caucus also recommends (if possible) that the village provide internet access for all standardized forms relating to Village business (building permits, parking permits, etc...) and that the village include more detailed census data and community development data. In aggregate survey respondents favor these additions by a margin of 4.5 to 1. (15% opposed, 17% neutral, 68% in favor)

#### Public Safety

The Caucus recommends that the Village not adopt an ordinance requiring fire sprinkler systems in all new residential home construction.

Survey respondents rejected this idea by a margin of 2.4 to 1. (55% oppose, 22% neutral, 23% in favor)

#### Zoning

Acknowledging that the Village recently made major amendments to zoning regulations the Caucus recommends that if more changes are made the Village should take into account residents' ranking of the importance of a few general elements.

From most important to least important these elements are:

1. House footprint as a percentage of lot size
2. Mass or total volume of structure
3. Height of structure
4. Front and side setbacks
5. Square footage of floor area
6. Location and size of garage

The survey showed an average ranking for each of the above criterion (using a scale of 1 – most important to 6 – least important) of 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, and 4.8, respectively.

#### Binding Residential Design Review Board

Given the lack of consensus the Caucus recommends that the Village take no action on moving to create a Residential Design Review Board with enforcement powers.

The Village Council specifically asked that the Caucus follow up on a question from last year and measure the public's desire for a binding Residential Design Review Board.

While the response showed no consensus (40% opposed, 13% neutral, 47% in favor) the polarity of the response should be noted. Approximately 54% of respondents were either strongly opposed or strongly in favor. (27% strongly opposed, 27% strongly in favor)

This polarity may indicate the potential contentiousness of the issue.

This was the only question that showed a statistically significant difference by demographic. Residents over the age of 60 were more likely than the general population to favor a binding Residential Design Review Board. (37% opposed, 9% neutral, 54% in favor)

#### Underground Parking Deck

The Caucus recommends that the Village not build a taxpayer-funded underground parking deck behind the Galleria and adjacent to the Community House. Survey respondents reject the idea by a margin of 1.8 to 1. (53% opposed, 17% neutral, 30% in favor)

#### Village Beautification

The Caucus recommends that the Village consider creating a tax-exempt village beautification fund.

While the survey showed no consensus on making taxpayer-funded beautification of the business districts a high priority (37% opposed, 29% neutral, 34% in favor) 40% of respondents indicated some desire to make a tax-deductible contribution to a village beautification fund if one existed. (36% opposed, 24% neutral, 40% in favor)

#### Back Door Garbage Pickup

The Caucus recommends that the Village maintain “back-door garbage pickup” since it is viewed as a high priority service.

By a margin of 2.9 to 1 respondents consider “back-door garbage pickup” to be a high priority service. (23% opposed, 11% neutral, 66% in favor) However, respondents were split equally on their desire to pay to keep the service. (47% opposed, 12% neutral, 41% in favor)