

2007 Winnetka Caucus Platforms

► VILLAGE

General Environmental Issues

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents favor the Village providing economic incentives to reduce energy consumption and encourage environmentally friendly activities (16% against). Sixty percent of respondents use CFL's and a significant majority (87%) of respondents would purchase them at a discount from the Village. While 50% of respondents are not willing to pay higher rates to fund environmental incentives, 17% supported this concept and 33% needed for more information.

There was no clear consensus among respondents for the use of green technology in new public buildings (42% in favor, 35% needed more information, 23% did not support this concept). Nor was there a clear consensus regarding the purchase of renewable energy Certificates (53% either in favor or needing more information , 47% of respondents against).

Regarding the establishment of an Environmental Committee, 65% of respondents were in favor.

There was a clear interest in energy and environmental issues by respondents. However, in almost every instance, at least 33% of the respondents "Need More Information." At the same time, it was clear that respondents wanted to hold down Village spending.

Therefore, the Caucus recommends that the Village Council establish an Environmental Committee and consider it a vehicle for dissemination of information requested by survey respondents. In addition, the Caucus urges the Village to follow through on other environmental initiatives, (i.e. reducing energy consumption, encouraging environmentally-friendly activities, and exploring the economic feasibility of a CFL program), provide enough information for the public to make informed decisions, and explore ways of funding that will not translate into increased taxes.

Heritage Tree Designation and Protection Plank

Sixty-six percent of respondents felt that the Village should adopt a "Heritage Tree" designation. However, only 49% of respondents were in favor of an additional layer of protection with 51% either against the additional layer of protection (39%) or "Need More Information" (12%).

The Caucus recommends adopting a Heritage Tree designation but makes no recommendation on an additional layer of protection due to a lack of consensus.

► PARKS

Dogs in Parks

Ninety-eight percent of Survey respondents chose to answer this question, indicating strong concern for this issue. However, the responses were evenly divided, with no evidence of consensus in the community.

To advance the study of this issue, the Park District should allow leashed dogs in designated parks in addition to Centennial Park, on a trial basis in order to obtain residents' feedback, and usage data.

Service Center

Survey responses and written comments indicated that the most important factors to residents in determining the location of the proposed service center were controlling financial costs, preserving green space, and preserving recreational space, which were chosen by 65%, 64% and 63% respectively of respondents as their first or second most important factors. Only 5%, 11% and 11% respectively choose them as their least important factors.

However, 70% of those responding indicated that centralizing equipment, crews, and machinery under one roof was their least important factor.

The Park District should base its decision on the clear sentiment of the Survey participants that costs be controlled and green and recreational space be preserved.

Greenspace

When asked if the Park District should actively pursue an increase in new green space, 54% of the respondents answered no and 46% of respondents answered yes.

Based on these responses, the Park District should not actively pursue increasing green space at this time.

Recreation Space Preservation and Park District Enhancements

The Caucus notes that there is not strong support for a temporary ice rink or water/spray park, free Wi-Fi access in the parks, or for renovating the Tennis Center entryway.

The Caucus recommends that at this time, the Park District not pursue a temporary ice rink or water/spray park, free Wi-Fi access in the parks, or Tennis Center entryway renovation. Furthermore, the Park District should seek to fully educate the residents on those projects they wish to pursue, in order to develop a community consensus.

Hubbard Woods Shelter

Of the Survey respondents, more than half (58%) of respondents want some kind of a shelter at the Hubbard Woods Park (vs 12% who wanted to tear down the existing shelter and not replace it). A full 30% indicated that they needed more financial information regarding the possible replacement of the Hubbard Woods Shelter.

A clear majority of respondents indicate a preference for some type of shelter at Hubbard Woods Park. Therefore, the Caucus recommends the Park District revisit this issue and suggests public hearings to provide appropriate financial and design information, and to receive and act upon resident input regarding the replacement or renovation of the Hubbard Woods Shelter.

► SCHOOLS

Governance

The results of last year's Caucus Survey question concerning assessment indicated that 65% of survey respondents felt annual end-of-year parent surveys would be "most helpful" or "extremely helpful." Seventy-six percent of this year's respondents considered the establishment of a joint committee of parents, teachers, and administrative staff to develop and maintain school assessment tools, to be moderately to very important.

The Caucus reiterates its prior recommendation that the School Board establish a joint committee of parents, teachers and administrative staff to identify the highest priority areas for assessment, define assessment methodology and develop and maintain resulting assessment tools.

Communication of District 36 Financial Information

Over 58% of respondents indicated it was very important for the School Board to continue to communicate detailed information to residents regarding tax expenditures, revenue and cost drivers for high quality education, and the efficiency of District

operations.

The School Board should identify additional methods for communicating financial information to residents. Such methods should include regularly updated financial information on the District website. The School Board should present the data in a user-friendly, consistent format that enables residents to make year-to-year comparisons.

Calendar Recommendation

Among respondents, 62% said that they would like to see an effort made to more closely align the District 36 school calendar with the New Trier High School calendar. This number was fairly consistent in all households with children, regardless of age.

The Caucus recommends that the School Board develop a new annual calendar that more closely aligns with the published New Trier High School calendar.

Teaching Cultural Diversity

More than 70% of respondents indicated that the following resources were moderately important to very important to promoting an understanding of cultural diversity: Enhanced classroom study, teaching foreign language with an emphasis on cultural study and hands-on student involvement, including interaction with students from other schools such as Chicago Public Schools.

The School Board should ascertain the benefits and practicalities of adding resources to enhance the schools' teaching of cultural diversity.

► LIBRARY

Again this year as in recent years, respondents of the 2007 Caucus Survey indicate they are very satisfied with the services and programs of the Winnetka/Northfield Library District. The Library Board has done an exceptional job and has responded to previous Caucus recommendations such as increasing hours, raising awareness of library informational services, promoting use of online services, and increasing the classic movie DVD collection. The library staffs continue to deliver their high standard of service and the libraries remain popular; for instance, ninety-three percent (93%) of those surveyed have borrowed books within the past year. Our library district averages a circulation of over 30,000 items per month.

This year, residents were asked a new kind of question: whether they would like to see a new library built at the Post Office site. Many were intrigued by the prospect of a cost

effective "green" facility complementing Village Hall with indoor and outdoor settings that would invite community interaction. However, our financial question revealed that a majority of the respondents (57%) were opposed to funding a new library building in Winnetka either with tax levies or donated funds.

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the respondents use the Winnetka/Northfield Library facilities more than once a month. Only a combined thirteen percent (13%) visited the surrounding Wilmette and Glencoe libraries once a month or more. There is an indication, however, that some respondents want additional services that might be provided by a new library building in Winnetka, such as more children's activity space, more teen study space, additional books, and an expansive DVD and audio book collection, etc. There was not a majority, however, that wanted additional space for any one reason. Although the highest percentage of forty-one percent (41%) did not believe that there was any real need that would be served by a new Winnetka library building, this contrasted to the fifty-nine percent (59%) who identified one or more potential needs.

Therefore, the Caucus recommends the following:

► The Library Board should review the needs and wants of the respondents of the 2007 Caucus Survey and, taking these responses into account, determine and prioritize which services and programs could and should be improved at the existing locations.

► The Library Board should not focus its time and resources on pursuing a new location for the Winnetka Main Library or expansion of the Northfield Branch Library building.

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