COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

Department:	Parks and Recreation	Presenter(s):	Darryl Hicks
Meeting Date:	Thursday, April 26, 2012	Type of Request:	Old Business

Wording for the Agenda:

Discussion of the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey Results as presented by Darryl Hicks of the Fayette County Recreation Commission.

Background/History/Details:

In 2003, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment has been used to guide the County in planning, developing and maintaining Fayette County Parks since its adoption. To continue to adequately plan for the future and to ensure the Assessment is still representative of the community, the Needs Assessment needs to be updated. In September 2011, the Board of Commissioners approved conducting a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey. As part of the planning process, discussions and input regarding the survey was held with partners in the county who also are involved in this arena and/or who have a vested interest in the services provided by the department. Input was ascertained to survey questions. The survey was pilot tested and changes were made several times for clarity as needed. Several promotional strategies were implemented to notify all Fayette County Citizens about the survey. These strategies included water bill inserts, flyers sent home will students in the Fayette County School System, information posted on the County website and cable station, flyers posted in the parks, submission to the newspapers, and email blast to those on the current Fayette County Parks and Recreation Department database. Request was also submitted to the municipalities, county and municipality youth associations, Fayette Senior Services, Fayette County Chamber of Commerce and Fayette County Government Departments asking their help in advertising the survey. All efforts were used in an attempt to reach citizens in the most economical way possible. The survey opened for responses in January 2012 and closed on February 15, 2012. Survey results are now available for Board of Commission review and comment.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

No action is requested at this time. The purpose of this request is to submit the results of the Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

n/a

Has this request been considered within the past two years?	Yes	If so, when?	September 7, 2011
Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?*	No	Backup Provided with Request?	Yes

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

Approved by Finance	Not Applicable	Reviewed by Legal	
Approved by Purchasing	Not Applicable	County Clerk's Approval	Yes
Administrator's Approval	Yes		

Staff Notes:

Executive Summary
Fayette County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey
February 2012

As part of a planning process, the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Department undertook this survey in conjunction with discussions with partners in the county who are also involved in this arena and/or who have a vested interest in the services provided by the department. Input from these partners as well as the Board of Commissioners and the Recreation Board was obtained on the survey questions. The survey was pilot tested with a group and changes made for clarity as needed. The survey opened for responses in mid-January 2012 and closed on February 15, 2012. This summary contains information to help in the interpretation of the survey and an overview of key data points from the survey.

Prior to launching the survey, several promotional strategies were implemented to notify all Fayette County citizens regarding the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey. These strategies included water bill inserts, flyers sent home with all students in the Fayette County School System, information posted on the local cable station and on the county's website, flyers posted in the parks, submission to local papers, and email blasts to those on the current Fayette County Parks and Recreation database. A request was also submitted to the municipalities, county and municipality youth associations, Fayette County Senior Services, Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, and Fayette County Government Departments asking their help in advertising the survey either on their website , in email blasts or in newsletters. All marketing efforts were utilized in an effort to reach the citizens of the county in the most economical way possible.

Response to the survey provided an adequate sample according to the sampling rules for surveys. The laws of statistical probability mean that once your total target population reaches a certain size, then there are only a relatively modest number of responses you need to have an acceptable sample size. Required sample size is NOT a percentage of the total target population, contrary to most people's beliefs.

Here's the way sample size works. (You can Google "survey sample size calculator" to access a free one online.) Enter a Confidence Level of 95% (means you're 95% confident in the results) and a Confidence Interval of 5 (if you got answers from the entire population then between plus and minus 5% of the population would have picked that same answer). Plug in the population of Fayette County as 106,000. You'll see that you needed 383 responses to have a good statistical sample. A total of 1655 people started the survey. A total of 1336 people completed the survey. Subsets of respondents for specific question areas on the survey also exceed the sample size needed.

Regarding the number of people who started and completed the survey, in customer surveys an "abandonment rate" of from 5% to 20% is not uncommon. Surveys of the public typically experience even higher abandonment rates. The experience with this survey is in line with what typically occurs in surveys.

We did choose to go with a survey length at the outer limits of what's recommended to ensure that sufficient relevant data was collected for the planning purposes of the Fayette County Parks and Recreation Department and for the needs indicated by other departments and association who have an interest. Since another survey is not planned any time in the near future on this topic and the data from this survey is to be used in a larger planning process that will occur very soon, it was necessary to be sure we covered all the necessary topic areas in sufficient depth to be useful. There is a balance between getting the information you need and making a survey comfortable enough for the respondents to be willing to engage and complete it. Since we got more than enough responses to have a proper statistically representative sample and we received hundreds of mostly useful responses to the narrative questions, an indicator of engagement, we are very pleased with the participation in this survey.

Responses by zip code within the county are in line with the population estimates by zip code that were provided. Based on all these parameters, the survey responses are representative of the county residents as relates to how the population is distributed within the county.

Some Recommended Things to Keep in Mind in Reviewing the Data

When reviewing results of a survey like this, it is critical to keep a few things in mind, lest you come to conclusions not warranted by the data or have a personal reaction to something someone says, especially in the narrative responses.

It is typical in any survey that offers the opportunity for comment for some people to use that opportunity to vent about something about which they have an issue. That's true of people everywhere and, as you will see in these results, it's true of your respondents as well.

When reviewing the data, keep everything in perspective. A few remarks you don't like do not a pattern make, no matter how pointed they might be. The survey software includes a text analyzer tool that will tell you what topics come up with the most frequency in the narrative responses and what that frequency is. Generally, you would be surprised that topics you think are very hot because of the tone of a few narrative responses, are not so much when you actually look at the frequency with which that topic shows up in the narrative responses. Remember to put comments in perspective by understanding how they fit into the entire responses to the survey. Consider the statistical data provided on the question responses when you are considering related narrative comment responses.

Demographic Information about the Survey Respondents

63.8% have resided in the county for 10 or more years, 89.4% for 4 or more years, only 3% for less than one year

43.9% have been using the services of the Parks and Recreation Department for 10 or more years, another 13% for 7 to 9 years. Only 7.7% have never used the services and 4.8% for less than one year.

59.1% have participated in the programs, activities or services of the Parks and Recreation Department within the last year.

Zip code distribution for respondents was 21.2% for 30214, 33.5% for 30215 and 38.3% for 30269 with the remainder small percentages spread over the other zip codes.

38.1% are married with no children under 18 in the household
48.6% are married with children under 18 in the household
4.7% are single with children under 18 in the household
8.6% are single with no children under 18 in the household

The survey asked for age and gender for all residents in the household. Age ranges were set based on what would make sense for planning purposes for the Recreation Department. They are birth to 7, 8-18, 19-29, 30-49, 50-65, 66 and over. Taking into account that the range was not the same size in all of these groups, it was noted that the 8 to 18 age group is particularly well represented in the population.

Key Findings from the Survey Data
See actual survey results for more detail.

Program Information and Needs

1. The county residents are better informed about the youth sports and athletics programs than they are about the adult sports and athletics programs.

2. Greater than 50% of the respondents were aware of the availability of parks, picnic areas, playgrounds and walking/biking trails. For walking and biking trails alone, it's 71.4%.

3. In the group of programs characterized as Fitness, Cultural, Leisure, Education, Nature and Therapeutics, 56.6% were aware of Fitness programs, while only 18.7% are aware of programs in the Therapeutics areas with the other areas falling in between these two.

4. In the **Youth Sports and Athletics** area the percent of households using the top six programs in the last 12 months are:

Soccer	18.6%
Baseball	17.4%
Basketball	12.2%
Swimming	10.7%
Football	8.4%
Softball	6.6%

The percent of respondent households using the remainder of the programs ranged from .2% to 4.9%.

5. In the **Adult Sports and Athletics** area, the percent of households using the top five programs in the last 12 months are:

Swimming	7.9%
Tennis	6.4%
Softball	4.3%
Basketball	3.9%
Golf	3.7%

The percent of respondent households using the remainder of programs ranged from .1% to 2.8%.

6. In the other program areas, the percent using each one in the last 12 months is as follows:

Fitness	31.0%
Nature	20.7%
Leisure	15.6%
Cultural	5.8%
Education	4.7%
Therapeutics	3.0%

Here are the definitions for each of those areas:

Fitness - Jogging/Running/5K Races, Walking, Swimming/Water Aerobics, Yoga/Pilates/Tai Chi, Aerobics/Zumba/Jazzercise, Karate/Martial Arts, Weightlifting, Fitness Boot Camps, Kickboxing

Nature - Fishing, Birding, Hiking/backpacking, Star gazing/astronomy, Geocaching, Tree or Rock climbing, Nature walks, Camping, Adventure –Caving/Snorkeling/Scuba diving, Gardening

Leisure - Recreation sponsored trips/travel, Boating – sailing/rowing/kayaking/canoeing/rafting, Camps/clinics, Dancing –ballroom/line dancing, Misc. – Genealogy/Journaling/Reading Programs/Yard Selling, Home maker skills – Sewing/Quilting/Cooking, Indoor Games – Bunco/Board Games/Billiards/Non-gambling Card Games, Outdoor Games – Bocce/Horseshoes/Badminton/Pickleball/CornHole, Skateboarding/Skating- inline or roller, Biking – street/BMX/mountain

Cultural - Drawing/Painting, Ballet/Tap/Jazz, Pottery, Crafts, Music-playing or singing, Drama/Theater, Photography

Education - Defensive driving, Self-help classes, Environmental consciousness, Self-defense classes, Dog obedience

Therapeutics - Programs for Intellectual disability, Physical disability, Recovery, Veterans, Seniors, Special Olympics

7. When asked to rank order from 1 to 10, with 1 being most important and 10 being least important, the Youth and Adult Athletics programs as well as the 6 program areas listed above, these are the results. Note, here are the definitions used for the grouping of Athletics/Sports Programs.

   YOUTH Main Stream Athletics/Sports (Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Football – tackle/flag, Cheerleading, Basketball, Golf, Volleyball, Tennis, Track/Field)

   YOUTH Other Popular Athletics/Sports (Gymnastics, Table Tennis, Disc Golf, Lacrosse, Roller Hockey, Equestrian, Boxing, Wrestling, Shooting Sports –archery, skeet, bbgun, Kickball, Swimming)

   ADULT Main Stream Athletics/Sports (Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Flag football, Basketball, Golf, Volleyball, Tennis, Track/Field)

   ADULT Other Popular Athletics/Sports (Gymnastics, Table Tennis, Disc Golf, Lacrosse, Roller Hockey, Equestrian, Boxing, Wrestling, Shooting Sports –archery, skeet, bbgun, Kickball, Swimming)

   The winner by a large margin is the Youth Main Stream Athletics/Sports with 45.5% choosing it as the number one in importance. When first plus second rank choices for this are added together it's 52.9%.

   Next is Fitness with number 1 rating by 17.1% and combined 1 and 2 rating by 31.4%.

   Third is Nature with number 1 rating by 10.3% and combined 1 and 2 rating of 22.1%.

   Youth Other Popular Athletics/Sports was 6.2% for number 1 and 30.2% for combined 1 and 2.

   Combined ratings for first and second position for the remaining areas are as follows:

   Leisure is 19.4%
   Therapeutics showed as 19.2%, but this area also had the most #10 (least important) rating by far at 26.1% and it is the least used of all the services.
   Adult Main Stream Athletics/Sports is 13.9%
   Education is 13.9%
   Cultural is 13.7%
   Adult Other Athletics/Sports is 8.7%. Only 38.3% of the survey respondent households had any interest in this area at all.

The responses make it clear that Adult Athletics/Sports are much less important than the Youth Athletics/Sports as well as less important than some other areas such as Fitness and Nature.

Rating the Relative Importance of the Components within Youth and Adult, both Main Stream and Other Athletics and Sports

For items 8 and 9 below, the Youth items, only respondents indicating that they had children under the age of 18 in the household were offered the opportunity to answer the Youth athletics/sports related questions about the relative importance of each sport or activity in each category. This ensured that only people with a real interest and possibility of using those services were giving their opinion at this point in the survey.

Similarly, for items 10 and 11 below, respondents were asked if their household had any interest in the listed services related to the Adult Mainstream Athletics/Sports items and then asked separately if their household had any interest in the listed services related to the Other Adult Athletics/Sports category. In each case, if they said "No", then they were not offered the questions related to that category. Again, this ensures that at this point in the survey, only households with a real interest and possibility of using the services related to each athletics/sports group answered the questions about them.

Respondents were shown the list of activities/sports in each category and asked to assign relative importance on a scale of importance that ranged from 1 (most important) to 9, 10, or 11 depending on how many items were in that category group.

8. When the Youth Main Stream Athletics/Sports components were then rated separately (survey question #5) to show their importance to the households, the clear winners are baseball and soccer with football, basketball, and softball following and other choices even less important.

9. The top four choices, in order of importance, in the Youth Other Popular Athletics/Sports area (survey question #7) are swimming (by a very large margin, where the first and second position percentages combined were selected by 69% of the respondents answering this question), gymnastics (in contrast, for example, for gymnastics, the combined percentage for first and second position equals 30.4%), shooting sports and lacrosse. Kickball was also popular if you looked at the second and third rating position, but had a low rating in the first position of importance.

10. In the Adult Main Stream Athletics/Sports area (survey question #10), the top 3 choices, in order, are golf, tennis and softball.

11. In the Adult Other Athletics/Sports area (survey question #13), the choices, in order of importance, are swimming (by a large margin with 70.4% combined percentages for the first and second position), shooting sports (in contrast, for this item the combined percentage for positions one and two is 37.9%) , table tennis, equestrian and disc golf.

For survey questions 15 to 20, about the other categories of programming: Fitness, Cultural, Leisure, Education, Nature, and Therapeutics, all respondents could answer these questions. The instruction said this: "In the following section, your household is asked to indicate which activities your household would be most likely to use from the list in each activity area. You

don't have to choose any from a list if none of them are of significant interest." For all but the Therapeutics area, where they could choose any that are of interest to their household, there was a limit on how many items they could pick in each category. The limit was either two or three items, depending on how many items they could select from in a given category. They also answered questions on projected frequency of use. Please see pages 4 and 5 of this report for a reminder on what activities are included in each of the categories listed in items 12 to 17 here.

12. The top Fitness area choices, in order, are walking (64.5%), swimming/water aerobics (55.7%), jogging/running (39.5%).

13. The top choices in the Cultural area, in order, are photography (40.9%) and drawing/painting (30.6%).

14. The top choices in the Leisure area, in order, are boating (37.5%), biking (33.4%), trips (27.2%) and dancing (27.2%).

15. The top choices in the Education area, in order, are defensive driving (45.1%) and self defense (44%).

16. The top choices in Nature, in order, are nature walks (49.4%), fishing (39.8%), and gardening (37.6%). Note that a similar item "hiking/backpacking" got 31.6%, so when added to the top choice of nature walks, indicates a great deal of interest in walking related activities. This makes sense as it's accessible and physically possible for a wide range of participants as related to age, physical health, cost to participant, etc.

17. The top choices in Therapeutics, in order, are programs for seniors (70.4%) and for veterans (34.7%).

18. Based on the question about estimated frequency of use, survey question #22, Fitness is the program that would be used most often of any of them, up to 3 times per week. For Cultural, Leisure and Nature, the estimated frequency is in the 1-2 times/month or once/quarter range. For Education it is once/quarter or once/year. For this question, respondents could mark "NA" for Not Applicable if they feel their household would not use the program.

    The "NA" responses were these in descending order:

Therapeutics	65.0%
Cultural	27.4%
Education	27.3%
Leisure	19.8%
Fitness	13.3%

19. When asked to choose their top five facilities to create or expand from a potential list of 27, the top five winners, in order are:

Walking/Bike Trails	57%
Aquatic Facility	38.2%
Indoor Fitness Facility	34.5%
Nature Center/Trails	32.8%
Multi-Use Indoor Sports	23.6%

The remaining 22 choices got scores ranging from 2.4% to 20.9%, with 11 of the choices being less than 10%. Note that while 2 of the top 5 choices would be more costly to implement if facilities were constructed, the top choice and the fourth choice are about trails, which could potentially be much more economical to implement additions or improvements on.

20. How far are people willing to travel? 29.1% said less than 5 miles, 44.1% said 6 to 10 miles, with the remaining approximately 26% willing to travel further.

21. When asked what, if anything has prevented them from enjoying the services of the Recreation Department, 62.7% said nothing has prevented them. For the remaining, the top two issues are safety concerns and lack of restrooms at 14% each.

22. Right at 80% feel their household's area of the county is served from somewhat to very well as opposed to poorly, which was the other end of the response choice for this question.

Funding Issues – Survey Questions 33 to 37

Of those using the Parks and Recreation Department's services within the last year, 72.1% feel the fees are reasonable, with 9% feeling they are low and 19% feeling they are high. 45% said they'd be willing to pay a modest increase in fees, while 22.6% said they would not be willing and the remaining 32.4% were undecided.

Questions were asked about funding via a Special Local Option Sales Tax, Bonds and Taxes, assuming that the money would be spent on improvements that the household wanted in the services of the Parks and Recreation department. This was for the purpose of determining citizens' preferences among various funding options, for planning purposes ONLY. There are no current plans to implement any of the options listed below.

The response scale for each question was Very Likely, Likely, Don't Know, Somewhat Likely, Not Likely. Here are the results for each of these questions.

For 1% SLOST for defined time period and with specific improvements defined:

Very Likely	15.2%
Likely	24.6%
Don't Know	15.1%
Somewhat Likely	8.0%
Not Likely	37.2%

For Bond issue for defined amount of money, for specified time period and specific list of improvements

Very Likely	13.5%
Likely	26.3%
Don't Know	20.4%
Somewhat Likely	9.4%
Not Likely	30.4%

Would they be willing to pay more in taxes to fund a specified list of improvements?

Very Likely	8.4%
Likely	16.7%
Don't Know	18.5%
Somewhat Likely	9.1%
Not Likely	47.4%

In looking at the responses above, you can see that only 25.1% were willing to consider paying more taxes, while 47.4% said they would not. Some narrative comments were from respondents who felt the question should not even be asked even for planning purposes, given the economic times, and a few of those comments were heated. However, they don't represent the bulk of the comments made on the issue of funding. In addition, you can see above that in the case of both the SPLOST and the Bond Issue questions, 39.8% of respondents indicated a Very Likely or Likely response to those options, assuming that the improvement to be funded was something that there household would value.

For more detail on all the information shared above as well as some additional information, please see the full survey results. The Parks and Recreation Department will be proceeding with additional analysis of the survey results and communicating with partners in the county who provide or have a vested interest in services in the parks and recreation area. Various ways of communicating the survey finding to the county residents will be utilized. This survey is only one part of a comprehensive approach the parks and recreation department is taking to plan for the future needs of the citizens of the county as well as determine what current service areas need improvement.

For more information on the full planning process, please contact Anita Godbee at the Parks and Recreation Department.