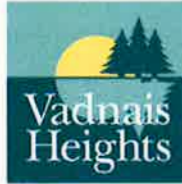


**Kevin Watson**  
City Administrator

651.204.6010 Phone  
651.204.6110 Fax  
Kevin.watson@cityvadnaisheights.com



**The City of Vadnais Heights**  
800 East County Road E  
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127

## *Memorandum:*

**TO:** Mayor Gunderson and City Council Members  
**FROM:** Kevin Watson, City Administrator  
**DATE:** February 19, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Polco Survey Tool

### **Background**

In the past, the City has regularly engaged its residents in a community phone survey. Previously, the City has used a company called Morris and Leatherman to execute this effort. They are the established entity that provides many communities this service. The last time this was executed was Spring 2016 and was compensated \$23,000. Best practice is to conduct one every 2-3 years, and at the very least, every 5 years. Prior to 2016, we hadn't conducted one since 2006. Surveys are a great tool to get a snapshot in time on the general opinion of the community members. These surveys are conducted over the phone via land lines and cell phones.

Recently, I became aware of a new tool that is partnering with many cities in the metro. The company is called Polco and the service is provided through a sophisticated software over the internet and phone app. The tool would allow the City to ask questions as needed to its constituents to receive instant feedback. We could ask one question a week for a full year. The City would have the ability to measure feedback on an annual basis to identify trend lines. We could ask questions about a particular project (i.e. Garceau). Currently, the system is tied to voter registration and ultimately precincts. They hope to find a way to drill down to individual neighborhoods. The idea being, if there's a sudden change in feedback (public safety, parks, etc.), we could identify the area and try to understand the problem before it escalates too quickly.

Communication is a key to the future success of any community. Furthermore, I believe the City has to do MORE than be on social media and keep our website up-to-date. Those are essential and the foundation to our communication efforts but they become washed out by all the other information everyone is inundated with on a daily basis. Too often, people "miss" us on facebook or twitter because we posted at a time that wasn't convenient for them. I believe our future success will be tied to our ability to get on people's notifications directly on their phone. If we can get people to sign up for this software and we can send questions to them directly to their phones, we can keep people better informed, we can dispel misinformation, and we can make better decisions for our constituency.

The current price is \$4,000 but has been offered at \$3,000 per year. If we were to choose a 3-year contract, there's a 15% discount. I'd recommend the 3-year contract for \$7,650. This is significantly less expensive than a phone survey and allows us more flexibility to ask one issue questions and receive ongoing feedback. Finally, as a funding source, it's my intent that when we renegotiate with Comcast, this new funding stream can pay for this.

Matt Fulton with Polco will be present to present and discuss the tool. Survey question examples are attached.



## Polco's Annual Community Survey

### **Ensuring a Safe Community**

1. Do you feel safe in your community?
2. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
3. Do you believe that the public safety services (Police/Fire/Emergency Services) in your community will be able to serve you in your time of need?

### **Quality of Infrastructure**

4. How would you rate the physical condition of your community's infrastructure (Roads/Sidewalks/Bridges)?
5. How often are you able to get to your desired destination in your community within a reasonable time?
6. Do you have access to the technology and connectivity you need on a daily basis?

### **Physical Appearance of the Community**

7. How would you rate the overall appearance of the community?
8. How would you rate the overall appearance of your neighborhood?

### **Quality of Community Life**

9. Does your community do a good job at keeping you informed on important local issues?
10. Are there enough activities in your community for you to enjoy during your free time?
11. Does your community have adequate retail, dining, and entertainment options for you?

### **Return on Community Investment**

12. How would you rate the value you receive for the amount of local property taxes you pay?
13. Do you feel you have adequate opportunities to engage in community decision making?
14. How strongly would you recommend your community to others as a good place to live?

### **Quality of Public Service Delivery**

15. How would you rate the overall quality of public services provided by your community?
16. How satisfied are you with the level of communication from the community government?

### **General**

Do you have any parting thoughts for your community leaders



## Polco Baseline Question Scheduling

### January

- Is the community moving in the right direction?
- Do you think that economic conditions in the community as a whole are getting better, staying the same, or getting worse?
- What is your favorite thing about the community?
- How would you rate the overall image or reputation of the community?

### February

- How would you rate your community as a place to live?
- How would you rate the community as a place to raise children?
- How would you rate the community as a place to work?
- How would you rate this community as a place to visit?
- How would you rate this community as a place to retire?
- How would you rate this community as a place to play?

### March

- How would you rate the overall performance of the community's police department?
- How would you rate the overall performance of the community's fire department?
- How would you rate the overall performance of the community's emergency medical response teams?
- How would you rate the availability of recreational programs in the community?
- How would you rate the community's communication and engagement with the public?

### April

- How satisfied are you with the community's government? Is this the best month for this question? Locals re elected in April in WI
- How would you rate the sense of community?
- What areas would you like to see the community improve in?  
How would you rate the community's overall performance in maintaining its streets and utilities (Water/Sanitary Sewer/Stormwater)?

### May

- How would you rate the condition of streets in the community as a whole?
- How would you rate the condition of streets in your neighborhood?
- How would you rate the ease of getting around the community?

### June

- How would you rate the quality of the community's maintenance of streets throughout the year?



- How would you rate the appearance and maintenance of the community's public parks and open spaces?

#### **July**

- How much should the community prioritize funding for parks?
- How much should the community prioritize funding for bike and walking trails?
- How much should the community prioritize funding for playing fields and playgrounds?

#### **August**

- How would you rate the community as a place to live?
- How would you rate the community as a place to raise children?
- How would you rate the community as a place to work?
- How would you rate this community as a place to visit?
- How would you rate this community as a place to retire?
- How would you rate this community as a place to play?

#### **September**

- How easy or difficult is it for you to access to groceries and food in the community?
- Is there adequate supply of different housing types in the community?
- How satisfied are you with the housing affordability in the community?
- How would you rate the community's enforcement of property maintenance and code compliance?

#### **October**

- Polco's Annual Community Survey

#### **November**

- How would you characterize health and wellness opportunities in the community?
- How would you rate the availability of employment opportunities in the community?
- How would you rate the ease of walking in the community?
- How would you rate the community's openness and acceptance toward people of diverse backgrounds?

**Kevin Watson**

---

**From:** Matt Fulton <matful@polco.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2019 11:47 AM  
**To:** Kevin Watson  
**Subject:** Re: list

Hi Kevin,

Current Metro Cities:

Maplewood

Fridley

New Brighton

Stillwater

North St Paul

North Oaks

Cottage Grove (with changes going on with personnel recently, still waiting for their 2019 renewal, but anticipate it coming next week or so)

Rosemount (first MN City)

Wayzata

Hennepin County

Brooklyn Center

Eden Prairie

Lake Elmo

Mendota Heights

Close:

Northfield

Rochester

Mankato

Red Wing (starting within the next couple of weeks)

Hope that helps.



**Matt Fulton**

**National Engagement Director**

**c:651-242-2422/ [www.polco.us](http://www.polco.us)**