

Summary of Results for Bell Acres Resident Survey Comprehensive Plan Update

At the April 16th Planning Commission meeting, Jim Pashek, consultant on the Borough's Comprehensive Plan update, shared the results of the online resident survey which closed on March 31st. Ten hard copies were submitted as well.

Listed below are the highlights of Jim's summary:

- A total of 189 surveys were submitted which is considered to be an excellent response
- 1.6% of respondents were in the 20-29 age group, and about 30% were in the 31-50 age group – so about 32% of those responding to the survey were 50 or under. About 36% of respondents were in the 51-64 age group, and 32% were in the 65+ age group – so about 68% of respondents were 51 or older. Each age group was fairly close in representation, except for the very youngest group – so the results are skewed towards the older generations.
- About 58% of the respondents have lived in Bell Acres for over 15 years, so the community is considered to be well established.
- The top three reasons that respondents like living in Bell Acres were: 1) the attractive rural character with scenic landscapes and abundant green space, 2) a safe and healthy place to raise children, and 3) the school district quality.
- The top four aspects of living in the Borough that were most satisfying to respondents were: 1) police protection, 2) fire and emergency protection, 3) green space preservation, and 4) types of housing found in Borough.
- The top three issues that were most important to respondents were: 1) protection of historic and scenic resources, 2) protection of open space from development, and 3) future development to be guided towards areas where roads, sewers, and other infrastructure already exist.
- An overwhelming 98% of respondents believe that green space is valuable.
- 90% would support initiatives that would preserve green space.
- 68% would be willing to support some kind of annual donation per household for a greenway preservation fund that could be used as a source of matching funds for land protection grants.
- The respondents did not provide a clear direction as to whether the Borough should accommodate denser housing in Bell Acres – 53% - no – and 47% - yes.

- To the question about whether respondents support the approach the Borough has taken of locating surface oil and gas development in the Borough's industrial district, 38% supported this approach and about 55% did not support this approach.
- 69 of 100 respondents who were against the Borough approach followed up this question with a comment. The comments from 58 of these reflected concerns about allowing any oil and gas development in the Borough due to ecological concerns, pollution, noise, traffic, and damage to property values, and the other 11 stated they did not have enough information to weigh positives against negatives.
- 26 of 70 respondents who supported the Borough's approach followed up with a comment, and of these, 17 seemed to be in support of the Borough's actual placement of oil and gas development in the industrial zoning district, while 9 seemed to be in support of oil and gas development in general.
- 78% of respondents supported the concept of the Borough facilitating the dissemination of information to residents on leasing and on sub-surface oil and gas drilling/fracking.
- 78% of respondents supported the concept of the Borough working towards preserving additional green space to connect fragmented land that is already protected green space.
- 86% of respondents supported the concept of the Borough exploring further the option of the "citizen bill of rights". More information about this "bill of rights" can be found on the PA Land Trust website: www.conserveland.org – and that this is based on the Environmental Rights Amendment in Article 1 Section 27 of the PA State Constitution.
- Of 186 who responded to the question of storm water flooding, 51 have actually experienced flooding on their property during rain events.
- Of the 67 respondents on private well water, 33 were interested in converting to public water.
- Of the 108 respondents on septic systems, 47 were interested in connecting to public sewers.
- 82% of respondents learn about Bell Acres activities and issues by word-of-mouth. The next most important source of information was the newspaper.
- 51 of the respondents gave their names and email addresses, so they could be contacted about taking part in planning for the Borough's future through the Comprehensive Plan update.