



INFORMATION ITEM MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager
Tanya Ange, Deputy City Manager
Sarah Huntley, Engagement Manager

Date: May 12, 2020

Subject: Information Item: Staff Recommendation to Postpone 2020 Community Survey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Boulder had anticipated conducting a community survey in 2020. The purpose of the survey is to collect data every two years about the community's perceptions of services, programs and local government performance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff is recommending the city postpone the community survey to 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT

Postponement of the survey will save the city approximately \$40,000 in 2020.

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS

- Economic: Cost savings of \$40,000
- Environmental: None
- Social: This recommendation takes into account limited capacity of community members to participate in non-urgent governmental affairs due to pandemic. It is anticipated that more vulnerable community members would be even less likely to participate in survey effort this year.

BACKGROUND

Since 2016, the City of Boulder has conducted a comprehensive community survey using the National Citizen Survey, administered by the Boulder-based National Research Center (NRC), to

measure community satisfaction with services, programs and local government performance. The questions for the survey mostly remain the same, to provide an opportunity for comparisons over time, although there are a couple of customized questions on each survey. The last survey was conducted in 2018, and the city was scheduled to conduct another one this upcoming fall.

ANALYSIS

City staff recommends that the 2020 community survey be postponed until 2021 for the following reasons:

- Surveys conducted during a time of crisis often produce data that reflects the moment in time instead of performance over time. The pandemic is an example of the kind of crisis that can skew survey results. The purpose of Boulder's community survey is to measure two years' worth of performance, as compared to data collected in 2016 and 2018. It would be difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about satisfaction ratings amid the current health and economic crisis.
- Capacity of staff and community members to complete a lengthy survey is limited at this time.
- Postponing the survey will result in a much-needed cost savings of approximately \$40,000 in 2020.
- Past iterations of the community survey were conducted every three years, so moving the survey by one year is not considerably different than previous practice.

NEXT STEPS

If council concurs with the staff recommendation, the city will inform NRC that Boulder will not conduct a community survey until Fall 2021.