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## Summary of Results

### *City of Grants Pass Survey*

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#### **Introduction**

The City of Grants Pass uses a variety of methods to inform its citizens and to encourage active participation in city government. As part of these efforts Grants Pass has for many years conducted an annual survey to assess the opinions of residents on the quality of city services, the quality of life in the city, and attitudes toward immediate issues currently before the city government. Working closely with the Grants Pass City Manager, Laurel Samson, Steve Johnson & Associates planned and implemented the 2010 annual telephone survey of Grants Pass residents.

#### **Survey Results**

This report summarizes the major survey results. Readers can look at the Topline Results section of the report for the exact question wording and the summarized responses to each question. Readers may refer to the tables in the Banners section of this report for more detail and to find cross-tabulations of each question with a wide range of demographic information. In addition, readers should look at the open-ended responses inside the Narrative Responses section, where respondents give narrative answers to questions. The open-ended questions asked what they enjoy about living in Grants Pass; what they would like to change about the City; what was wrong with any City services they rated as poor; what they think the City could do to improve communication with the public; what they would like added to the City Newsletter; and what might encourage them to attend city meetings. Finally, readers should look at the Annual Trends section to see graphs which reflect changes in the responses from 2000 through 2010 to the standard questions.

#### **Grants Pass as a Place to Live**

In general, residents think Grants Pass is a great place to live. When asked to rate living in Grants Pass on a five point scale, where one is "poor" and five is "excellent," 79% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of four or five (see Banner Table 40). This score is

one percent lower than last year and only 3% lower than the highest rating of the last 10 years (82% in 2005). In addition, 49% of respondents give Grants Pass a score of "excellent" as a place to live. In fact, "excellent" is the most common rating given. Only 7% of respondents gave Grants Pass a rating of one or two as a place to live.

The belief that Grants Pass is a "excellent" place to live is slightly stronger among respondents who have lived in Grants Pass for more than 10 years, 51% vs. 44%. Women are also slightly more likely to think Grants Pass is an "excellent" place to live, again by almost the same margin, 51% vs. 45%.

For the first time in the history of this survey, respondents 34 or younger were the most likely to give Grants Pass an "excellent" rating, at 62%. At the same time, only 33% of respondents 65 or older rated living in Grants Pass as "excellent." Respondents in between these ages give Grants Pass "excellent" ratings that range from 46% to 53%. However, for all age-groups, a least 65% of respondents give Grants Pass a rating of either "excellent" or "good."

This pattern of generally favorable responses is repeated when respondents were asked to rate how safe they felt living in Grants Pass. On a five-point scale, where one was "not at all safe" and five was "very safe," 73% of respondents gave a rating of four or five and only 6% gave a rating of one or two. This feeling of safety is the same as last year and 6% higher than three years ago. At the same time the percentage of respondents who felt the City to be unsafe equals the lowest level ever. Put in some perspective, the feeling that people are safe living in Grants Pass is higher than it was 11 years ago, and now equals the highest ratings in our 12 year involvement with this survey.

Perhaps more important than the high number of people who feel safe in Grants Pass is the fact that almost no one feels unsafe. Only 6% of the people report any sense of feeling unsafe and only 1% say they feel "not at all safe."

The feeling of Grants Pass as an unsafe place is highest among those who live in the Northwest portion of the City, and those who live in the newly annexed areas of Redwood, Fruitdale and Allendale. However, even in these areas the percentage of people who feel unsafe is only 7% and 8% respectively. Even with some variations among neighborhoods, a vast majority of all groups feel safe living in Grants Pass. See Banner Table 41.

This general feeling of safety was further reinforced by responses to a follow-up question where respondents were asked to compare the safety of their neighborhood to other neighborhoods in Grants Pass. On this question, 56% of respondents felt that their neighborhood was safer than other neighborhoods while 8% felt their neighborhood was "less safe." This perception of living in a neighborhood that is safer than others has remained very steady for the past 12 years.

However, people's comparative feeling of safety in their neighborhood varied significantly depending on what section of Grants Pass they lived in. The percentage of

respondents who were likely to feel that their neighborhood was "less safe" was much higher in the Southwest (15%) the Southeast (13%), and the newly annexed portions of the City (10%). At the same time, the feeling that your neighborhood was "less safe" was extremely low in the Northeast (3%) and the Northwest (3%).

Over the last few years an important change has taken place with the feelings of neighborhood safety among renters. Three years ago 25% of renters felt their neighborhood was "less safe." Two years ago that number was down to 11%, and one year ago it was only 8%. This year that number has gone back up to 14%, as compared to only 6% among home owners. Clearly renters are not as concerned about the safety of their neighborhoods as they were three years ago, but after two years where renters and owners both felt the same level of neighborhood safety renters are now more than twice as likely to feel that their neighborhoods are "less safe." See Banner Table 42.

### **Grants Pass City Services**

Respondents were asked a set of questions about 13 City services that people could reasonably be expected to have opinions about, even if they had not contacted the service providers directly. Grants Pass residents feel that these services generally provide excellent or close to excellent service on a five-point scale where one indicated "poor" service and five indicated "excellent" service. See Banner Tables 1-13.

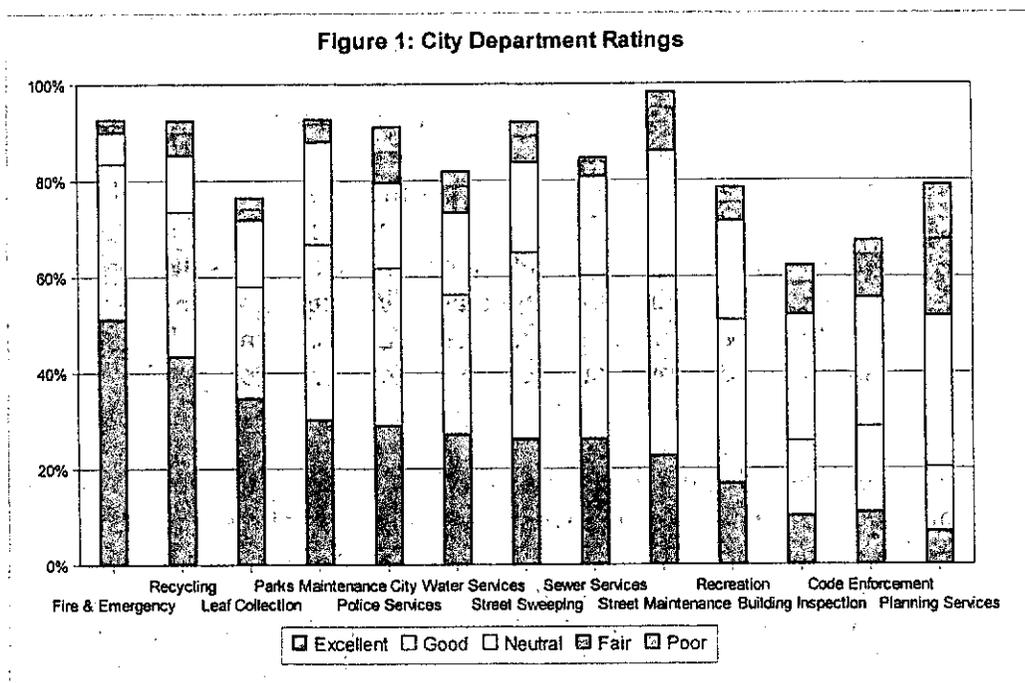
Of the 13 services respondents were asked about, ten services received "good" or "excellent" ratings by over 50% of respondents. The three services that did not get high ratings were Planning, where only 20% gave this department "good" or "excellent" ratings, Building Inspection, where only 26% gave these scores, and Code Enforcement, where 28% gave ratings of "good" or "excellent." For the last six years the same 10 services were highly rated and Building Inspection and Planning have had low ratings. This was the third year the survey has asked about Code Enforcement, following the 2007 survey where specific questions about the importance of enforcing codes were asked.

It should be noted, however, that the lower rated services, Building Inspection, Planning, and Code Enforcement, were also services where large numbers of respondents reported that they did not know how to rate the services (presumably because they had no experience with the service). In the case of Building Inspection, 38% of respondents were unable to provide a rating, and an additional 26% gave a neutral rating, which may also be an indicator of difficulty in giving a rating. The case of Planning was similar, where 21% of respondents felt unable to provide a rating, and an additional 32% gave a neutral rating. Code Enforcement was similar to Building Inspection, with 33% unable to give a rating and 27% giving a neutral rating.

Additionally, in the case of Planning, 27% of respondents also rated the service as "fair" or "poor." This was the largest percentage of low ratings given to any of the City services measured and is in line with the low ratings Planning has generally received for the past 12 years. By way of comparison, Code Enforcement only had 11% of respondents who thought the service was either "poor" or "fair."

Even among the 10 highly rated services, eight City services (parks maintenance, police services, street maintenance, city water, leaf collection, recreation programs, street sweeping, and sewer) also had large numbers of respondents (27% - 43%) who could not give a rating or gave a neutral rating, depending on the service.

It is also important to note that Grants Pass services rarely received a large number of "poor" ratings. With the exception of Planning Services as previously discussed, the ratings of "poor" range from 5% to less than 1%. However, when a respondent did give a rating of "poor" for any city service, they were then asked to explain why they thought that service was "poor." Most commonly, the comments reflect personal interactions the respondent had with the service in question, or a belief that city government is inefficient. However, there are quite a number of specific comments on Police services and the low priority given to property crimes or difficulty in getting service. In addition, the comments about the Planning Department speak specifically to the reason planning is rated poorly by so many respondents. Almost all comments about the Planning Department are about the respondent's difficulties in obtaining services and permits, or their concerns with city growth. For more detail see the Narrative Responses section of the report. See Figure 1 for departmental ratings.



For most of the thirteen services, there were significant differences in how they were rated based on the characteristics of the respondent. The most significant differences were based on age and length of residence in Grants Pass. Both young respondents, under age 34, and respondents aged 65 or older more generally gave higher ratings than the respondents in their middle years. Higher ratings were also given by respondents who had lived in Grants Pass for 21 years or more. Additionally, women were slightly more likely to give higher ratings for services. See Banner Tables 1-13 for examples.

### **Participation in City Government**

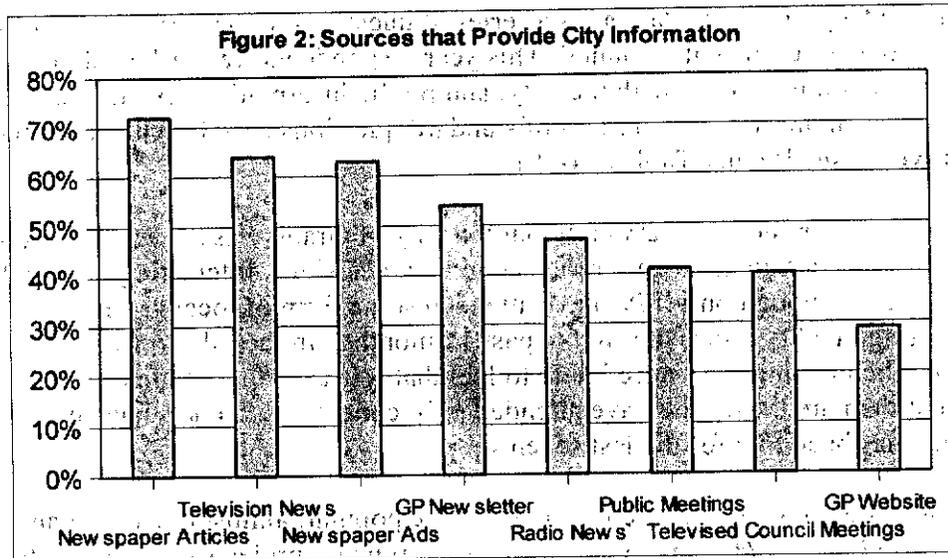
Each year the City of Grants Pass adds a series of questions to the survey on issues of immediate concern to the City Council. This year respondents were asked about public involvement, communication with the City, and public information. Additionally, a few basic questions on these topics are part of standard questions asked each year in the annual survey. (see Banner Tables 14-39).

The majority of respondents (52%) felt that the City of Grants Pass provides adequate opportunities for participation and influence in City decisions. Interestingly enough, this belief exists even though only 17% have attended some form of local government or public meeting on City issues during the past 12 months. In fact, those who have not attended public meetings are more likely to feel that it is easy to participate in City government than are those who have attended public meetings, 54% versus 39% – a finding that has been true for the last seven years.

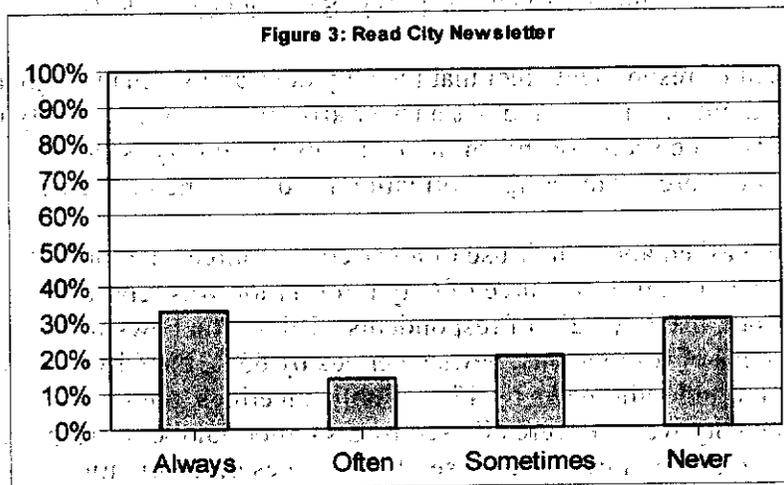
Even though attending public meetings may not be popular, almost twice as many respondents (33% vs. 17%) have volunteered their time on projects or activities that they feel were designed to make Grants Pass a better place to live. There are variations based on personal characteristics in those who are more likely to volunteer. Respondents under age 35 are the least likely to have volunteered (20%), while those between ages 45 and 54 are the most likely (40%). In addition, residents in the Southeast and the Northwest sections of the City were more likely to volunteer than residents of any other part of the City or residents from the newly annexed areas of the City. It is also interesting to note that those who volunteer are more likely to have attended a city meeting when compared with those who do not volunteer (27% vs. 11%). See Banner Table 16.

Forty-nine percent of respondents feel that the City does an excellent or good job of informing them about city issues and 6% answer affirmatively that the City meets their information needs. The score for informing residents about City issues was identical to last year, while the score for meeting information needs declined three percent.

Respondents were asked about their use of a variety of sources that provide information on city issues. The most useful source of City information was reported to be articles in the local newspaper, used by 72% of respondents. Television news was a source of City information for 64% of respondents, newspaper ads by 63%, the City of Grants Pass Newsletter by 54% and radio news by 47%. Public meetings, televised Council meetings, and the City website were all used by a smaller number of respondents. See Figure 2 below for a breakdown on the use of all sources of information.



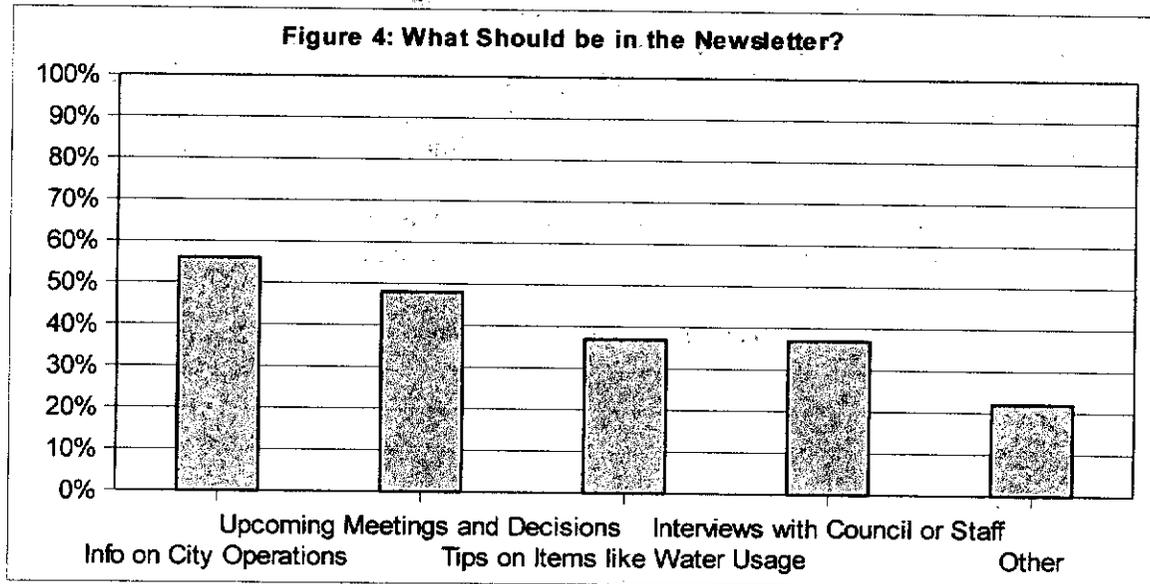
As part of this year's series of new questions respondents were asked additional questions about the Newsletter. Respondents were asked how often they read the Newsletter and if they would read it more often if it were delivered monthly, rather than bi-monthly as is now the case. Forty-seven percent of respondents claim to read the Newsletter either "always" or "often." In addition, 55% of respondents said they would read the Newsletter more often if it was delivered monthly. See Figure 3 below.



The respondents most likely to "always" read the Newsletter are those who have lived in Grants Pass for at least 10 years, and those who own homes in Grants Pass. See Banner Table 20 for more information.

Finally, respondents were given a list of possible Newsletter topics and asked which of them they would be most interested in seeing in the Newsletter. Figure 4 below shows the relative importance respondents placed on each of the possible topics.

**Figure 4: What Should be in the Newsletter?**



Respondents were also asked what would be the single most important thing the City could do to improve communication with the public. Ideas about improving communication included more television and radio advertising of City events, an improved City website, more televising of City meeting, and improvements to the City Newsletter (many people claim they do not get the newsletter). See the Narrative Responses Section of this report for the complete transcript of all responses to these questions.

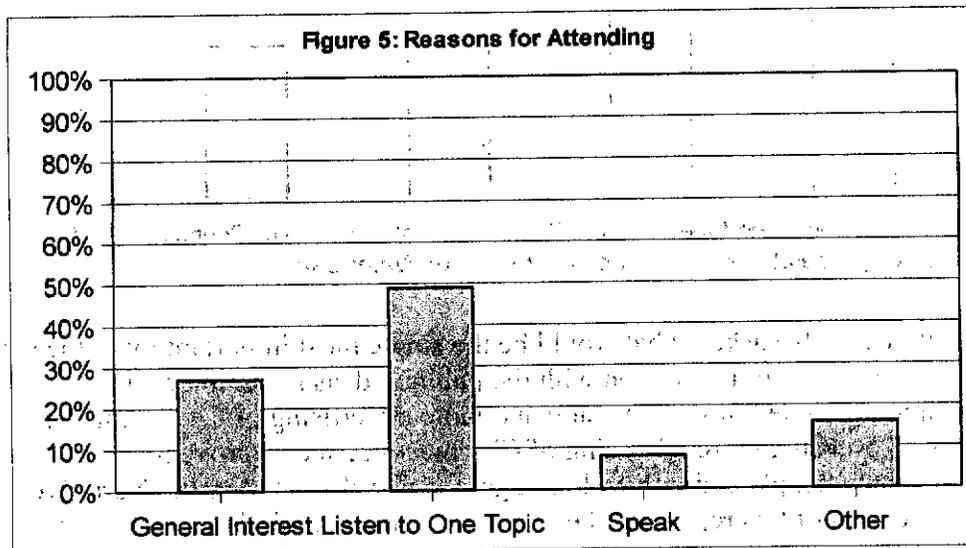
This year respondents were asked for the first time about their use of the City's website. Most respondents (59%) had never visited the website. Of the 40% who had visited the website, most of those (71%) visited the site less than once a month, while an additional 22% visited one or two times a month. Just over 80% of visitors to the website were able to find the information they needed. This is particularly interesting since a large number of people suggested improvements to the website as something the City could work on to improve communications, yet currently website visitors are highly successful at finding what they are looking for.

Respondents age 45 and older were much more likely to have visited the City website (55%), and those who had attended a City meeting within the last year were the most likely (68%). See Banner Table 23 for more information.

Respondents were asked this year whether or not they receive City news or announcements by email. Only 4% of respondents replied that they receive email from the City. However, almost all of those who do get them (93%) found the email useful. Clearly, email announcements are only likely to become more common over time and those who receive them feel they get a benefit.

This year's new questions also included a section on attendance at City Council meetings. Earlier in the survey respondents were asked if they had attended a council meeting during the last year and only 17% reported they had attended a meeting. In this section we asked had they ever attended a City meeting. A larger percentage of people (29%) have attended a city meeting at some time during the time they have lived in Grants Pass.

Respondents who had attended a City meeting were then asked why they had attended. See Figure 5 below for the most common reasons for attendance.



Almost half of those who attend a City meeting do so because of some specific topic on the agenda of that meeting. This is probably true of those who also say they go there to "speak" on an issue. Those respondents who said they had some other reason for attending a City meeting were then asked to describe the reason. In many cases they also listed the desire to learn about or interact over a specific issue. See the Narrative Responses Section of this report for the complete transcript of all other reasons people said they have attended a City meeting.

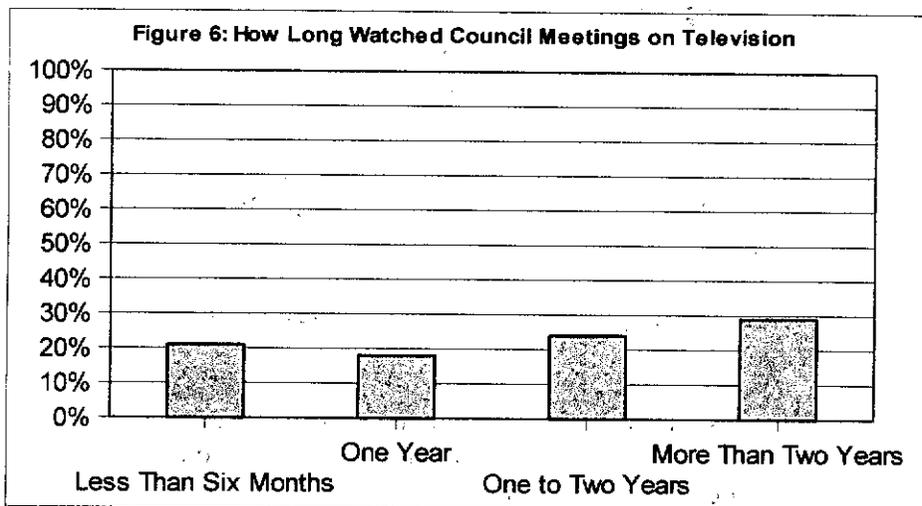
Respondents who have attended a City meeting were also asked how often they had been to a City meeting. A large majority (75%) had only attended "rarely," while another 21% attend every few months. Since this was only asked of those who have attended a meeting, it is important to keep in mind that only a small percentage of the population of Grants Pass attends City meetings with any regularity.

For the final question related to attendance at City meetings, all respondents were asked if they would be more likely to attend a meeting if it were held in their neighborhood. Thirty-seven percent said that they would.

In addition to attendance at Council meetings, respondents were asked if they ever watched City Council meetings on television. A much higher percentage of respondents

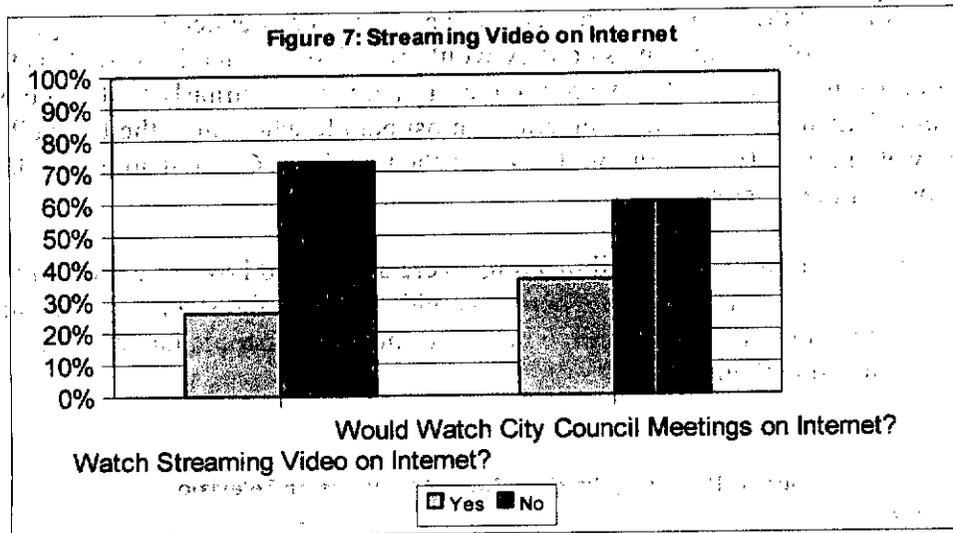
(43%) had watched the Council on television than had ever attended a meeting. Additionally, 54% of respondents said they would watch other meetings, such as those of the Planning Commission, if they were broadcast. However, similarly to the rate with which people had attended Council meetings, most people who watch the Council on television watch rarely (68%), although 26% of the television Council audience does watch "most" of the meetings.

The respondents who watch Council meetings were also asked how long they had been watching the Council on television. There was wide variety of answers to how long people had been watching. See Figure 6 below for how long people had been watching Council meetings on television.



As you can see from Figure 6, people have been watching Council meetings on television for varying lengths of time, with almost 30% watching for more than two years.

For the final section of new questions for this year's survey, respondents were asked about their use of the internet and whether or not they would use the net to watch City meetings. Respondents were first asked about their general use of the internet to watch streaming video. See Figure 7 below.



Only 26% of respondents have ever watched streaming video. Women in particular are unlikely to have ever watched streaming video (20%), while 35% of men have watched streaming video. See Banner Table 36 for more information.

However, a significantly higher percentage (36%) said they would watch City meetings if they were streamed.

In addition to these results, an even higher percentage of respondents (44%) say they would watch City Council meetings over the internet if they could download them and watch at a time that would fit their schedule.

While the idea of streaming City meetings over the internet has some popularity with respondents, when asked if they would prefer to watch City Council meetings over the internet or on television, 68% choose television. Although internet use can only increase over time, some caution is probably warranted with this response, since this is a much higher percentage of respondents than who have ever watched a Council meeting on television. It may be that there is a limit on how many people will watch Council meetings no matter how many ways it is possible to view the meetings.

### Grants Pass Growth Rate

Toward the end of the survey, respondents were asked their opinion about the rate of growth in the City. The largest percentage of respondents (48%) now feel that Grants Pass is growing at "about the right pace" a pace. A large number of respondents (39%) felt the City was growing "too fast," while only 10% felt the City was growing "too slowly." Over the twelve years that we have conducted this survey for the City, the responses to this question have changed significantly. The percentage of respondents who feel the City is growing "about the right pace" steadily declined from 1999 through 2006. At the same time, the percentage of respondents who feel the City is growing at "too fast a pace" increased about 5% each year from 2000 to 2004 and then jumped 7% in 2005 and an even larger 10% in 2006.

Starting with 2007, for the first time in seven years, residents of Grants Pass increased their support for the idea that growth was at about the right pace. This year the support for the idea that growth is at the right pace increased again by another 5%. In 2007 the increased support came almost exclusively from men. In 2008/2009 the change came primarily from women. This year the change came from both men and women. In addition, new residents are much less likely to think growth is too fast, when compared to residents who have lived in the City 5 or more years (19% vs. 45%).

Following changes of the last three years, support for the current growth rate is now approximately the same as it was during the period from 1998 through 2002. See Banner Table 43.

### **What People Would Like to Change and What They Enjoy about Grants Pass**

At the end of the standard survey questions, respondents were asked what they would like to change about Grants Pass and what they like most about Grants Pass. The responses to these questions cover a wide range of topics, however, the most common changes people would like to see include: reduction in crime; more funding for the library; activities for teens and young adults; improvements in traffic control and roads; increased policing, particularly for speeding and drug use; improved opportunities; and improved shopping. In addition, many people continue to express a fear that Grants Pass is losing its small town feel and want to see changes that will preserve the town as they would like to see it.

The things people enjoy about Grants Pass are first and foremost the weather or climate and the scenery. In addition many people list outdoor pursuits and nature issues, in particular the river and the parks. Finally, many people like the nature of the City and value highly the small town atmosphere and the friendly attitude of other residents. The things people enjoy about Grants Pass have remained the same for many years and did not change this year.

For the complete responses to what people would like to change and what they enjoy, see the Narrative Responses section.

### **Conclusion**

Once again this year's survey continues to show that residents of Grants Pass like the community they live in very much and have a high opinion of local government and the services it provides. Residents also feel reasonably informed and able to participate in their government. In addition, they generally feel safe in their neighborhoods.

This year's survey shows a substantial movement back toward the traditional concerns of Grants Pass residents. The overwhelming economic concerns that permeated last years survey are much less in evidence today. While concern about growing too fast remains less than it was two and three years ago, concern about jobs and economic opportunities has reduced. Once again, concerns about possible crime and violence remain high, as well as the desire for increased policing. Many of the older concerns about over-

development, City aesthetics, and the environment have also resurfaced, if not with the same frequency of past years.

Finally, since the City has been asking many of the questions in this survey for a number of years, the trends and changes in public attitudes are worth examining. For the sixth year, this report now contains a section of annual trend graphs. Please see this section for a long-term perspective on the reoccurring issues regarding City services, growth, and attitudes about living in Grants Pass.