

Report on 2009 Citizen's Budget Survey

Last fall the Borough sent out a *Citizen Budget Survey* to all box holders to get public input in advance of the budget process. 199 surveys were turned in with names on them before the October 30 deadline. Another 19 were received without names or after the deadline. All 218 are included in this report. The following is a compilation of answers from the survey. When you review the responses, please keep in mind that *this was an unscientific survey* and as such the results may not be as reliable as you would expect from a scientific survey.

Maintain/Reduce/Increase

The first section of the survey asked individuals to indicate whether they would like to see individual departmental budgets be maintained at their current level, reduced, or increased.

In general respondents supported maintaining the current level of funding for departments. 56% of the answers indicated a preference for maintaining current funding levels, 24% supporting reducing current funding levels, and 20% supported increasing funding levels.

The following chart summarizes the answers we received:

	Maintain	Reduce	Increase
Public Building Maintenance	63%	7%	30%
Household Hazardous Waste Disposal	73%	11%	16%
Small Boat Harbor	64%	17%	20%
Chilkat Center for the Arts	41%	27%	32%
Haines Borough School District	62%	19%	19%
Haines Borough Library	54%	27%	19%
Sheldon Museum	56%	34%	10%
Park Maintenance	65%	13%	22%
Community Youth Development	56%	14%	30%
Swimming Pool	57%	20%	22%
Townsite Police	50%	41%	9%
Townsite Road Maintenance	57%	14%	30%
Townsite Animal Control	54%	43%	3%
Ambulance Service	80%	9%	11%
Tourism Promotion	36%	53%	11%
Economic Development	39%	39%	23%
Appropriations to Local Non-profits	49%	27%	24%

The following departments seemed to have the most support from respondents:

- Public Building Maintenance – 93% wanted to maintain or increase the budget
- Ambulance Service – 91 % to maintain or increase
- Household Hazardous Waste – 89 % to maintain or increase
- Park Maintenance – 87 % to maintain or increase
- Townsite Road Maintenance– 86 % to maintain or increase
- Community Youth Dev. – 86 % to maintain or increase

Public Building Maintenance, the Chilkat Center for the Arts, Community Youth Development, and Townsite Road Maintenance all got high scores for “increasing.” 30% or more of those responding

wanted to increase these budgets; however Chilkat Center for the Arts seemed to polarize respondents and it also got very high scores for reducingt.

Tax Rates

Respondents were asked whether they felt sales and property tax rates were about right, too high, or too low. The results were as follows:

	About Right	Too High	Too Low
Sales Tax	154	46	14
	72%	21%	7%

Property Tax	109	95	9
	51%	45%	4%

Recreation / Fitness

The survey asked:

Do you support the Borough funding an expanded role in recreation/fitness activities and programs, including the creation of a recreation/fitness center using unrestricted property tax, sales tax, and or state revenue sharing?

The results were:

Yes	100	48%
No	109	52%

Prioritize

The last section of the survey did not have very good results. It asked respondents to prioritize Borough departments into those that were the highest and lowest priorities for additional resources. The instructions may have been too complex. Some people skipped this section and others who filled it out did not follow the instructions completely. Its also seems like people were confused about whether they were supposed to identify which departments are the most/least important or whether they were supposed to identify departments that needed more/fewer resources. For example, I might believe that the school is the most important function of the Borough, but that it currently has adequate funding. For these reasons the results in this section may unreliable

Generally the following departments received scores indicating that people felt the department is a priority deserving additional funding:

- Fire Service
- Ambulance Service
- Public Building Maintenance
- Haines Borough School District
- Townsite Road Maintenance

Comments

We received too many comments to include them all here, but you may stop by the Borough office and review them if you like. Here is a sample of the comments:

Fitness center should be a private enterprise.

Borough buildings are poorly maintained. Resources should be used to maintain existing infrastructure rather than creating new obligations.

The last section of the survey involving prioritizing was confusing / difficult to fill out.

The condition of the roads both inside and outside of the townsite reflect and apparent lack of concern for both citizens and visitors alike.

The Chilkat Center is in bad shape.

Economic Development and Tourism promotion should be our highest priority.

Every department should strive to minimize waste.

Scrap the huge toilet funding, put in porta-potties, and buy picture point.

Stop discretionary spending. Stop traveling to conventions and unnecessary training that requires travel.

Buy Picture Point if Head Tax money can be used.

Free shuttle for cruise ship passengers is a great use of tourism funds and is appreciated by visitors.

Do not raise taxes. If there aren't enough revenues, reduce spending.

The Borough needs to cut spending just as I have had to do this year.

Seek grants rather than raising taxes.

Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

Tourism should pay its own way.

Property should be reassessed.

Take advantage of volunteer labor to accomplish more.

Haines is a treasure. Keep Haines, Haines. Don't try to turn it into something its not.

Work with other agencies to resurrect barracks building.

Get the elementary school property on the tax roll.

Economic Development should include long range planning.

Use "imminent domain" to get garbage point.

Don't fill in the beach to make a parking lot.

Create a teen center.

Divert money from tourism to economic development.

Try to attract telecommuters.

Have on-call police rather than 24-7 service.

Put tourism dollars into infrastructure instead of advertising.

Cut spending and employees.

Economic development is not the business of government.

We need a recreation center.

Rethink the \$1.5 million restrooms. The \$50,000 restrooms are fine.

The library is used heavily by tourists.

The Borough is spending money like a drunken sailor.

Expand the boat harbor.

Put the cruise ship toilets across the street from the beach.

Sales tax currently used for tourism should be used for local citizen's needs.

Market Haines as a quiet destination. Don't market heli-skiing.

Increase sales tax in summer / decrease sales tax in winter.

I need more information in order to make an informed decision.

The Chilkat Center is an important part of local life in Haines. Fix the roof.

Maintain pool and Chilkat Center instead of creating new facilities.

Put Head tax funds toward seawalk and purchasing picture point and stick with seasonal bathrooms.

We are spending like there is no recession.

The best tourism and economic developments tools are to have an excellent school and excellent public facilities.

Raise salaries for Borough employees.

Tourism 1% sales tax should help support facilities that enhance experience for tourists: Museum, Library, and Chilkat Center.

Make Borough buildings more energy efficient.

Property taxes are way too high.

Borough should have a planning department with a grant writer.

Borough should partner more with CIA.

Push for mining and things that will provide more work.

Get the Chilkat Center into other hands.

Expand Letnikof Boat Harbor.

Keep up good start on road improvement.

Non-profits should receive less funding because they have other sources including the new Chilkat Valley Foundation.

Borough should charge for ambulance service.

Tourism does not create enough year-round jobs. Haines needs other industry.

Take care of roads and sidewalks.

Change gas tax to a per gallon tax instead of a % of sale price.

Demolish old maintenance yard building. Put some planted screening around new yard and encourage AK DOT to do the same.

I appreciate the improvements that took place this year. The Assembly did a good job.

Exempt food from Sales Tax. Eliminate 1% for economic development.

Reduce Borough office staff.

Property Tax rate should be the same all across the Borough.

Taxes shouldn't be used to subsidize special interest groups or organizations that serve a small group.

Library should have longer weekend hours.

Pool should have a Sunday swim.

Build / fix sidewalks.

Keep up the good work.

Maintain, clean-up, and fix what we have now.

Do something about the dog poop in my yard and on sidewalks.

Focus on essential services and maintenance of infrastructure.

Lower taxes and increase fees for service and user fees.

It's difficult to prioritize because all are important.

Use general fund balance to fix roads.

Invest in alternate energy.

Create a parks and recreation department funded with an alcohol tax.

Tax second homes at a higher rate.

Longer weekend pool and library hours.

Eliminate dedicated tax for tourism promotion.

Give money / tax incentives to property owners to spruce up rather than spending thousands of dollars on downtown drawings.

We have the lowest paid police department in SE Alaska. If the Borough can afford to give raises to the Manager and officers it can afford to do something for the police officers and dispatchers.

Fix the roads.

Extend water lines down Mud Bay / Small Tracts.

Thank you for asking / giving me the opportunity to weigh in.