



## Budget Survey Results Cause Controversy

Lincoln

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Mayor Chris Beutler announced the results of the "taking charge" online survey today. The survey reveals the opinions of Lincoln residents on what should be kept or cut in the 2009 - 2010 city budget.

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Mayor Beutler says he's pleased with the results of the "Taking Charge" survey.

"All in all, they demonstrated the common sense and balanced view that I think defines us as Lincoln residents," Beutler said.

But balanced is not the word even the survey overseer, Alan Tompkins of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, says can describe the survey, since this year, the sample wasn't random; people could choose to participate.

"Do we know what the average Jane or Joe Lincolnite thinks about these issues, based on the 1,800 people who responded to the survey? The answer is no, we don't know," said Tompkins.

The survey results show the 1,812 participants would support paying for services like neighborhood libraries and pools, but would pass on the continuation of costs for storm water reviews, or tobacco use prevention.

Overall, the survey report says two-thirds of participants agreed to some sort of property tax increase to pay for the programs they want to keep.

"I do not regard this as a mandate for raising property taxes. Surveys have limitations that must be recognized, but it would be equally unfair to ignore the opinions of over 1,800 people that demonstrated an interest in saving some city services," Beutler said.

But City Council Member Jon Camp says he's not sure the survey should be used as a measure at all.

"It's often too easy in an unscientific type situation to draw the results you want to draw, so we need to be careful in that regard. And if you ask enough people the questions, at some point you're going to get the answer you want," said Camp.

Coby Mach, executive director of the Lincoln Independent Business Association, agrees with Camp.

"The survey is worthless, the results are not only unscientific, but when you have questions that contain errors, all you get is bad information," said Mach. "I think it's unfortunate that the mayor would use any information from this survey," he said.

Overall, Beutler says he's still discussing his final plans for the budget, and what cuts and levy increases, if any, to make.

For the full survey results, just click on the link below.

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