



Newsletter Survey Analysis

Nov. 17, 2020

BACKGROUND

The City surveyed community members to assess the relevance and interest of individuals on the two, current city-produced newsletters – the printed, mailed *CitySource* and the online, e-mailed *e-Source*.

The objective of the survey was to receive feedback on the right “mix” of newsletter distribution, to learn of other sources the community might be using for City information, to establish what topics are of highest community interest, and, finally, to assess how well the City is communicating. Information from this survey will be shared with City leadership and relevant community partners.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

The survey went live Oct. 12 and closed on Oct. 27, 2020. It was only accessible via web link.

e-Source - web link was provided within the City’s second email newsletter featured as an “invitation.” The e-Source was also released Oct. 12. The link to the survey in the newsletter invite was clicked on by 180* subscribers.

City Facebook - three social posts included links to the survey as an invitation and reminder to take the survey. A total of 308* link clicks (to SurveyMonkey and e-Source for survey) were recorded.

Mayor Dan’s Weekly Update video - a reminder to take the survey was given by Mayor Dan in two of his videos. A web link was provided in one of the two video posts for a total of 15* clicks.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

There was a total of 13 questions. All questions were optional.

WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

319

People took the survey

269

Residents of River Falls

1.7%

Of City’s population**

*Records an idea of foot traffic in the direction of the survey and not a completion of the survey.

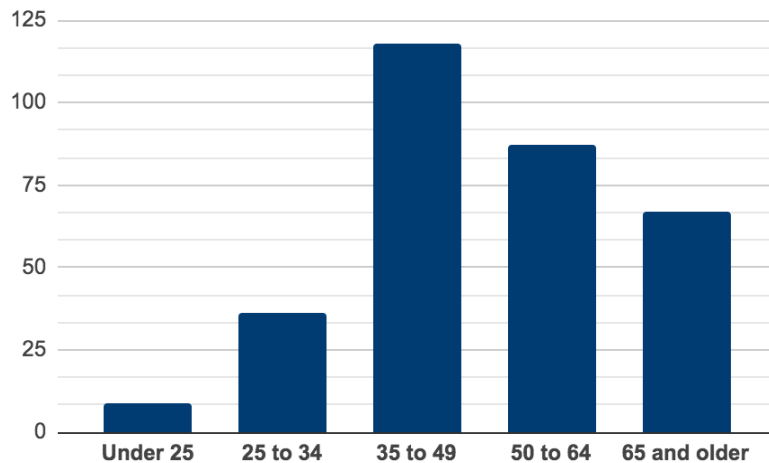
**Based on the City’s 2019 population. May include undergraduate students at UWRF and CVTC.

Other areas of residency:

City/Town	Number				
River Falls area	41	Roberts	1	Clear Lake	1
River Falls Township	2	Ellsworth	1	Superior	1
Twin Cities metro area	1	New Richmond	1		

Given these results, we can calculate at least **84.6%** of survey participants reside in the City of River Falls.

Age of participants



NEWSLETTER ENGAGEMENT/PREFERENCE

There were four questions regarding newsletter engagement and/or preference in the survey. Questions asked about both newsletters. The following charts show the response to each question. For clearer calculations, these results show **City of River Falls residents only** due to the fact the majority of external participants had never received either of the newsletters before taking this survey. The highlighted areas represent the most popular result.

Question 3

Do you receive the City of River Falls printed newsletter, CitySource?		
Response	Percent	Number
Yes	63.94%	172
No	23.42%	63
I don't know	12.64%	34

Question 4

If you answered "yes" to Question #3, do you prefer to read the CitySource newsletter in print or on the City's website?		
Response	Percent	Number
Printed version	59.40%	139
City's website	18.80%	44
Both	0.43%	1
N/A	23.08%	54

Question 5

Did you receive the first two issues of the electronic newsletter, called e-Source, (distributed in July and October 2020 via email)?		
Response	Percent	Number
Yes	47.39%	127
No	24.25%	65
I don't know	27.61%	74
N/A	0.75%	2

Question 6

Which is your newsletter preference?		
Response	Percent	Number
Printed newsletter only (12-16 pages), 3 times per year	31.97%	86
8-10 electronic newsletters sent via email (more frequent, less content, more web links)	37.17%	100
7-9 electronic newsletters and a printed annual report	18.96%	51
N/A	5.58%	15

An option listed as “other” was left open-ended and we received 17 responses. These “other” suggestions were themed, grouped, and quantified.

Percentage	Theme		
35.29%	Combination of the existing two	17.64%	Whatever method is most cost efficient or eco friendly
	- Monthly electronic and a few printed yearly		- Printed on less expensive paper
	- Printed newsletter with email blast of specific items between publications		- Print is nice but cut down on paper waste
	- Two print and six electronic		- Whichever costs less taxpayer money
	- Three printed and monthly updates (on COVID-19 especially) between	17.64%	Printed suggestions
17.64%	Social media and City website		- Monthly or bi-monthly printed
	- Facebook or other social media		- One every month or two
	- Just have it accessible on the City page		- Printed twice a year

Question 7

WHERE DOES THE COMMUNITY GET THEIR CITY INFORMATION?

Participants were asked to share which sources they use to get their City information. Chart 1 shows where **City of River Falls residents** are receiving their information. 12 participants listed additional sources; these results were grouped and shown in Chart 2. The highlighted areas represent the highest percentage.

Chart 1

Source	Most	Some	A little	None
City Council meetings	3.02%	15.09%	30.57%	49.43%
City/department Facebook pages	37.69%	31.34%	16.42%	12.69%
City print newsletter	22.85%	34.83%	19.48%	17.60%
City electronic newsletter (new)	10.27%	37.26%	21.67%	22.81%
City-produced videos (Facebook/YouTube)	15.67%	36.94%	24.25%	22.01%
City website	12.12%	42.42%	33.33%	10.61%
Serve on City board/committee/commission	1.13%	3.76%	4.14%	51.50%
Star-Observer online	2.66%	9.51%	18.63%	55.13%
Star-Observer print	5.68%	7.95%	9.09%	60.98%
Community-run Facebook pages	26.79%	33.96%	21.51%	14.34%

Chart 2

Other sources	
- Word of mouth	- Nextdoor
- Digital Pioneer Press	- City mail
- Newsletters with utility bills	- Council meeting minutes

Chart 3 shows the top four sources used by anyone living **outside** the City of River Falls.

Chart 3

Rank	Source
1	City/department Facebook pages
2	Community-run Facebook pages
3	City-produced videos (Facebook/YouTube)
4	City website

NEWSLETTER: CONTENT AND DESIGN

The survey asked participants to rate the quality of the newsletter. They were then asked to share which types of information is of most interest. For clearer results for our community, the second graph to follow was analyzed with data from City of River Falls residents only. The highlighted areas represent the highest percentage.

Question 8

Please rate the quality of the printed newsletter.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Content	18.71%	41.94%	11.61%	1.29%	0.32%
Ease of reading	24.68%	42.63%	5.77%	1.28%	0.00%
Layout and design	21.54%	43.73%	7.40%	1.61%	0.32%
Type size	19.68%	46.13%	7.10%	1.61%	0.00%
Photography	19.87%	41.99%	11.22%	1.92%	0.00%
Writing	17.57%	44.41%	11.18%	1.60%	0.00%

Question 9

Which types of information and articles are of most interest to you?

Topic	Very interesting	Interesting	Total first two columns	Moderately interesting	Not interesting
City and community calendar	35.47%	46.79%	82.3%	15.09%	1.89%
City Hall operational news (infrastructure progress, budget, hires/retirements, etc.)	17.91%	39.93%	57.8%	32.46%	8.96%
County public health information	35.82%	42.54%	78.4%	18.66%	2.24%
Economic development	26.79%	49.81%	76.6%	20.00%	2.26%
Housing development	25.75%	42.91%	70%	27.24%	3.36%
Library information, events, calendar	35.82%	40.30%	76.1%	17.91%	4.85%
Mayor's updates and messages	29.96%	37.08%	67%	25.47%	6.37%
Parks and trails	43.40%	41.13%	84.5%	13.96%	0.38%
Public safety (Police and Fire)	27.99%	52.61%	80.6%	18.28%	0.37%
Recreation programs	40.98%	39.10%	80%	15.79%	2.26%
River Falls Municipal Utilities (RFMU) news	15.30%	42.91%	58%	35.82%	5.22%
UWRF/CVTC news	11.65%	35.71%	47.4%	40.60%	10.90%

Eight participants listed additional sources; these results were grouped and shown below.

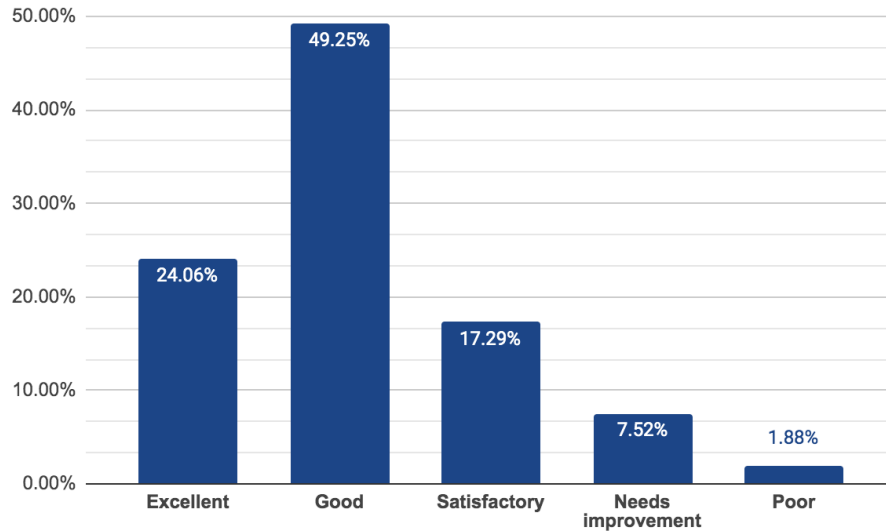
Other topics
COVID-19 information and updates
Recycling
All related City info

COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Two questions in the survey sought to analyze the current status of the City’s communications. For a “close to home” understanding of results, data below was taken only from City of River Falls residents.

Question 10

Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the City’s public communications efforts?



Question 11 was intended for survey participants to leave suggestions. There were 95 comments. These suggestions were themed, grouped, and quantified based upon topic. Chart one shows comments from City of River Falls residents (78 comments recorded). Chart 2 shows top comments from non-residents (17 comments recorded). Please see the separate document, “City of River Falls Newsletter Survey: Comments,” for full and all comments.

Question 11

What suggestions do you have for improvements in how the City communicates with you?

Chart 1

Percentage	Theme		
15.00%	Newsletters	11.00%	General comments
	- More frequent, short news updates	8.00%	Print
	- Have community vote on content		- The local newspaper is missed
	- Stick with print – e-mail is more likely to get deleted or missed		- Local City print items available on campus
	- More printed newsletters to replace City newspaper		- Bring back RF Journal

	- Clearer organization		- Publication just for upcoming events
	- More e-newsletters		- Transcripts for videos
	- Opt-in option for print	5.00%	Community mindfulness
14.00%	Timing and Transparency		- Some don't have access to a computer
	- Release news as up to date as possible		- Not everyone has e-mail
	- City should be releasing info before other sources (Nextdoor)		- Keep up the multimedia approach
	- More information on housing developments		- Diverse Council meeting times for broad attendance
	- Share more frequently about where to find various info		- Not everyone has social media
	- Keep supporting two-way communication methods	4.00%	Organization
	- More frequent information		- Find information all in one place
	- More information about Council agenda		- More comprehensive place to find events
	- Availability for questions	3.00%	Other department communications
	- Keep live streaming Council and board meetings		- Cleaner Library website
14.00%	Praise		- Updated Emergency numbers
14.00%	Fine/none/not sure		
12.00%	Social Media		
	- Reach younger generation more		
	- See more overlap in all the City FB pages		
	- Partner with community groups more (share material)		
	- Frequent Council meeting posts with short agenda info		

Chart 2

Top comments from non-residents
- More social media updates
- Easy newsletter accessibility for non-residents
- E-source is a good idea
- More transparency

CONTEST AND SIGN-UP

As an incentive for participating in this survey, each participant had an opportunity to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Chamber Check. 272 individuals entered the drawing. Audina O'Connor, a City of River Falls resident, was randomly selected as the winner.

The last question in the survey asked participants if they would like to be signed up to receive the City's *e-Source*. 229 participants selected yes.

HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

Print newsletter versus e-newsletter: According to the survey participants, the preference is still very back and forth; however, there is a slight lean towards e-newsletters. A combination of the two would be ideal. Some comments to consider are being mindful of cost and the environment.

Information sources: People are going to the City/department Facebook pages for their primary sources of information. Other popular sources are the City website, the Mayor's video updates on Facebook, and the new *e-Source*. People are not getting their information from the *Star-Observer* and City Council meetings. However, several comments indicated they would like better publicity of Council agendas and minutes.

Newsletter content and design: The design of the newsletter was rated as "good" across the board. Most people are very interested in information about the City's parks and trails and recreational related material. The least favorite topic of interest, according to this survey, was UWRF/CVTC information.

Communication efforts: 74% of survey participants rated the City's current communication efforts as "good" or "excellent." Many of the general suggestions included posting more frequent social updates and having a clearer "one-stop shop" for City information. Some respondents requested "quicker" communication and others offered a reminder to be mindful of people who may not have access to certain resources.

Positives: People really like and make use of the City's Facebook page. Videos are also very popular and appreciated.