

City of Leon Valley Town Hall Meeting—January 23, 2016
Summary Report and Recommendations

Prepared by:

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Introduction:

The City of Leon Valley held its 6th Annual Town Hall Meeting on January 23, 2016 at the Leon Valley Conference Center. Approximately 90 people attended. In addition to a diverse group of citizens, this included Mayor Chris Riley, City Manager Kelly Kuenstler, Council members Sanchez, Edwards, Alcocer, Martinez, and Jordan, as well as several department directors and City staff.

Following introductory comments and an update on emergency preparedness by Assistant Fire Chief Billy Lawson, the assemblage moved to consideration of four policy questions. Selection of these topics was based on earlier public input as well as Council discussion. Each issue was introduced through an initial presentation, and followed by an instant polling exercise to gauge initial opinions/reactions. The topics were then turned over to the citizens to discuss in their table groups. Outcomes for each table were recorded on a flipchart, and then presented to the entire room.

Below, a summary of each topic is presented, including highlights of the initial presentation, results of instant polling, key ideas to emerge from table discussion and finally a set of recommendations based on all the ideas expressed.

I. Partnership/Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between City and Leon Valley Historical Society

The City Manager provided an overview of a proposal for a MOU-based partnership that would facilitate restoration of the Huebner-Onion Homestead and Stagecoach Stop, and the eventual opening of a museum at the site. An overview of meetings that had already been held on this topic and the basic expectations of each party, as outlined in a draft MOU, was reviewed.

[LINK: DRAFT MOU LANGUAGE]

Instant polling questions on this topic revealed the following:

[LINK: QUESTIONS 8-11]

No opposition to the partnership per se emerged during the table discussions. Participants supported the option as an innovative means to effectively and efficiently move forward on the project, especially in regard to securing necessary grant funding.

Although some participants were familiar with the existing Master Plan for the property, many were not, as the poll had already demonstrated. Furthermore, all agreed that this Plan, which the MOU references as a “road map” to the partnership, needs to be much more broadly available throughout the community. It is difficult to navigate to the full Plan online, whether from the City or Society webpage. The Plan’s availability first needs to be improved, through easier online access and/or by producing and circulating paper copies. Then, the City needs to publicize this improved accessibility to citizens.

Key questions posed by participants in this Meeting should be addressed as soon as possible, even before the MOU is finalized. Answers to all or some of these may be premature at this stage but, if so, it would be helpful for the public to know that. These included the following:

- Expected length of term of MOU
- City's expected financial contributions
- Potential use of the hotel/motel occupancy tax by either party
- Whether Triangle Park plans/usage will be covered in this MOU

Citizens also articulated a number of suggestions and concerns about the overall project moving forward, and once this MOU is in place, there needs to be a venue in which their ideas can be heard. They include the topics of staffing, restrooms, traffic flow, parking, and commemoration/protection of the gravesite.

Summary recommendations:

1. Adopt a ***strategy for providing better access to the Master Plan***, including easier Internet access and availability of paper copies, and then let the public know about it. This could be tasked to the Society as part of the MOU, or the City could take responsibility.
2. The City Manager should ***address the questions listed above*** at the Council meeting where the MOU is considered/adopted; add additional verbiage to the MOU if necessary and appropriate, in order to alleviate public concern on this matter.
3. Require, as one of the conditions of the MOU, that the ***Society provide regular open meetings for public input*** on the future of the project.
4. The Society's website is out of date and somewhat difficult to navigate. The City might consider asking for an ***update to the site***, since it would enhance recommendations 1 and 3, above.

II. Police Enforcement and Presence

Chief Randall Wallace presented recent trends in the City, including growth of population and responsibility area, and emphasized particular areas of citizen concern such as the decline in traffic citations issued, and Police Department staffing shortages.

In addition to gauging general knowledge on the force, instant polling questions on this topic revealed the following outcomes:

[LINK: QUESTIONS 14-15]

Table discussions demonstrated that the public fully recognizes the challenges faced by Chief Wallace and his force. While citizens may be frustrated with some conditions, this was a constructive and not a contentious discussion. Residents appreciate the relative safety and tranquility of Leon Valley. In return, they appear more than willing to engage in meaningful collaboration with the Department to address key issues. The top three concerns emerging this day were the following: traffic hotspots and perceived lack of enforcement of violations; public relations; and, the challenges of personnel recruitment and retention.

Traffic hotspots and limited enforcement received the most vigorous discussion. One notable aspect was how easily citizens reached consensus on the most problematic intersections and stretches of roadway City-wide, rather than separately focusing on issues in their respective neighborhoods. Numerous specific suggestions for remedies for these problems were offered, and all deserve a full hearing and response from the Department.

In regard to public relations, Meeting attendees described officers, to a degree, as less friendly and accessible than expected. Within this general theme, several responses focused on lack of police visibility and need for the Department to do more to foster citizen policing efforts such as Neighborhood Watch.

Finally, citizens echoed the obstacles to officer recruitment and retention that Chief Wallace highlighted. Here, too, they had a number of constructive suggestions on how to rectify this problem. Ideas included commissioning a report on pay comparability and the need to consider additional benefits, such as tuition reimbursement.

Summary recommendations:

It is difficult simply to endorse public recommendations on public safety matters without full vetting by the Department. Rather, what this Meeting clearly demonstrated is that the City needs to establish some sort of *Citizens Police Advisory Commission*. Based on what appear to be the most effective models from other small cities, the Commission could be based on the following model:

- Residents apply for Commission membership and are appointed by City Council for two year terms. (The Department itself should not be involved in selection of Commissioners.)

- The Commission, at least initially, would not possess independent authority, but the Chief would be required to meet with them on a monthly basis for an open dialogue.
- The Commission Chair would provide an update to City Council on a quarterly basis.
- The City might also consider initiating a *Citizens Policy Academy*, to allow citizens the opportunity to view enforcement challenges from the Department's perspective.
- In combining these two ideas, one option would be to have the initially appointed Commissioners also serve as the inaugural cohort in the Academy.

III. Forest Oaks Pool

Larry Proffitt of the Forest Oaks Community made a presentation on the need for immediate attention to the Forest Oaks Pool and associated amenities. Deeded to the Forest Oaks Community Association (FOCA) in 1972, the pool has since been maintained by unpaid volunteers. Because FOCA is not a homeowners association, it cannot assess fees. Furthermore, since the City eliminated usage fees for the Leon Valley Pool in 2014, paid membership in the Forest Oaks Pool dropped by 16%. Given this financial situation, and the unsustainability of volunteer maintenance and administration, the pool may be forced to close.

Instant polling questions on this topic revealed the following:

[LINK: QUESTIONS 17-19; NOTE ERROR IN 17, REFERRING TO LV POOL, SHOULD BE FOREST OAKS.]

Instant polling answers indicated overwhelming support for saving the Forest Oaks pool, by having the City conduct or commission a study on the most efficient mechanism for acquiring and managing this asset. There was broad agreement that continued reliance on volunteer administrators is not viable, but sincere thanks were directed to Tom and Lori Kelley, who have led this effort for many years. Therefore, table discussions centered on best practices for achieving an optimal outcome. Citizens focused in particular on how a second city run pool would open up enhanced options for flexibility and expansion of services.

Specific notions emphasized utilizing the additional amenity to provide targeted recreational opportunities for seniors, the disabled, adult-only and youth groups. Residents recognized that a plan for City acquisition of this pool must be considered in conjunction with a management review of the Leon Valley pool, in order to most efficiently utilize both resources. Questions arose in regard to: fee structures; opportunities for the pool to serve as income generator through event rentals; and the feasibility of adding a splash pad. Furthermore, while all recognized the utility of moving toward City management of the site, residents were enthusiastic about helping to plan for the transition and to continue to be involved as volunteers.

Summary recommendation:

- A *Citizen Task Force* should be convened by the City Manager, in order to more formally discuss planning and implementation of the conversion. It may be best to task two teams, respectively focused on finances and amenities. These teams can provide feedback and suggestions on the City's draft plans to acquire and manage the Forest Oaks pool, within a context of most efficient use of both the Forest Oaks and Leon Valley facilities. As strongly advocated by their fellow citizens, Tom and Lori Kelly should be asked to serve on the Task Force. Other members may be chosen from key stakeholder groups such as the senior and disabled communities, and the school district.

IV. Hike and Bike Trail

Melinda Moritz, City of Leon Valley Public Works Director presented on the ongoing effort to finalize a trail in this location, providing background information on funding, phasing, and location.

Instant polling questions on this topic revealed the following:

[LINK: QUESTIONS 20-21]

Furthermore, for this issue, attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire on this topic during or after the table discussions; 39 responses were received.

[LINK: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS]

As with the Forest Park pool issue, citizens are enthusiastic about being engaged in this decision process. However, there seemed to be more confusion on this topic than the others. Participants were not entirely sure what opportunity for input they still had on this project, but did indicate strong preferences in favor of connecting to the Homestead and for the trail passing under (versus over) Bandera Rd.

Beyond that consensus, some conflicting opinions on the desirability of various future amenities emerged. One area of disagreement concerned whether or not the trail should include any water-based features, such as aquatic displays, drinking fountains (for people and/or pets), or restrooms. There was also a lack of unanimity on provision of benches and trash/recycling containers, and whether dogs should be allowed. Overall, this reflects a common struggle encountered by cities—keeping natural areas as unspoiled as possible, while still facilitating the comfort of visitors.

Summary recommendations:

- Citizens need further education on where the plan stands, what decisions still need to be made, and the costs/benefits of various options. If in fact there are still choices to be made on these issues, it would be extremely helpful for the City to hold one or more ***educational tours*** so that citizens can be shown, or experience first-hand, the impact of various options. For example, the difficulty of installing drinking fountains and the impact those might have on the natural setting, could likely be imparted most effectively on-site.
- The City could then recruit volunteers from those tours to serve on a ***Citizens Advisory Panel*** to provide feedback on future decisions.
- Going forward, it would be optimal if the Citizens Advisory group could then evolve into a ***non-profit “Friends of the Trail” organization*** that could advocate for responsible stewardship into the future.

Conclusions

The City of Leon Valley's elected and appointed officials, and most of all its citizens, are to be commended for their Town Hall tradition. This 6th Annual Meeting was notable for the high level of public attendance and engagement, lack of rancor, and the generation of feasible and innovative ideas. This City occupies an enviable position as a model of genuine civic engagement, in which citizens are treated as partners whose opinions are solicited, valued, and heeded. The thoughtful feedback provided at this Meeting forms a solid foundation for policy development throughout 2016 and beyond.

Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Leon Valley Historical Society and the City of Leon Valley is intended to describe the objective of forming a partnership to work together on the restoration and eventual opening of a museum at the Huebner-Onion Homestead & Stagecoach Stop. The Homestead is a two story structure along Bandera Road that dates to the 1850s, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has received a Texas Historical Marker. Last year, the Leon Valley Historical Society received a Historic Texas Cemetery Designation from the Texas Historical Commission for the Joseph Huebner gravesite in the Natural Area.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the partners are identified below. Furthermore, some time frames are included as a means to develop a roadmap for the partnership going forward:

The Leon Valley Historical Society:

The Leon Valley Historical Society, a 501 (c) (3) non profit organization, intends to:

- a. Identify significant sources for funding support and potential grants by February 28, 2016, recognizing that funding sources have specific deadlines during the year and research for grants and funding is a continuous process.
- b. Apply for funding for the Heritage Center and the Triangle Park during the 2016 calendar year and after.
- c. Work in conjunction with the Leon Valley Economic Development Commission and the Leon Valley Area Chamber of Commerce in an effort to spur economic development in the area of the Heritage Center and Triangle Park.
- d. Work with the Northside Independent School District to develop curriculum and tour packages for local students.
- e. Staff the potential Heritage Center on a part-time basis (volunteer or paid) depending on funding sources and potential traffic after the opening of the Heritage Center.

The City of Leon Valley:

The City of Leon Valley, incorporated in 1952 as a General Law City in the State of Texas, intends to:

- a. Assist the project through the use of the 36 acre natural area that is adjacent to the Huebner-Onion Homestead;

- b. Provide a designated parking area for museum goers at the Raymond Rimkus Park ;
- c. Maintain the grounds and facility of the 36 acre natural area and the Huebner Onion Homestead;
- d. Work in conjunction with the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) in an effort to facilitate a curb cut for entrance to the Huebner Onion Homestead during the 2016 calendar year.
- e. Present a budget request to the Leon Valley City Council for consideration of matching funds, if necessary, for the project on future grant applications.

Attached to this Memorandum of Understanding (as Exhibit A) is a copy of the Master Plan completed in July of 2013 which outlines the methodology, the preservation philosophy, the history and the cost estimate of above stated venture. This Master Plan should be used as a road map for parties as the potential partnership forms.

The parties enter into this MOU wishing to maintain their own separate and unique missions and mandates, and their own accountabilities. Unless specifically provided otherwise, the cooperation among the Parties as outlined in this MOU shall not be construed as a partnership or other type of legal entity or personality. Each Party shall accept full and sole responsibility for any and all expenses incurred by itself relating to this MOU. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as superseding or interfering in any way with any agreements or contracts entered into among the Parties, either prior to or subsequent to the signing of this MOU. Nothing in this MOU shall be construed as an exclusive working relationship. The Parties specifically acknowledge that this MOU is not an obligation of funds, nor does it constitute a legally binding commitment by any Party or create any rights in any third party.

Leon Valley Historical Society
Mark Eisenhower, President

City of Leon Valley
Mayor

Session Name: New Session 1-23-2016 11-42 AM

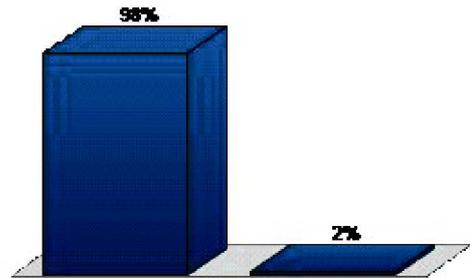
Date Created: 1/23/2016 7:38:53 AM Active Participants: 77 of 77

Average Score: 0.00% Questions: 21

Results by Question

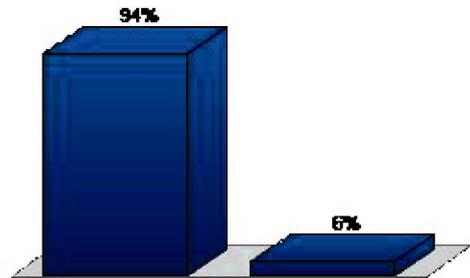
1. Test : Are you a Leon Valley Resident? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	98.15%	53
No	1.85%	1
Totals	100%	54



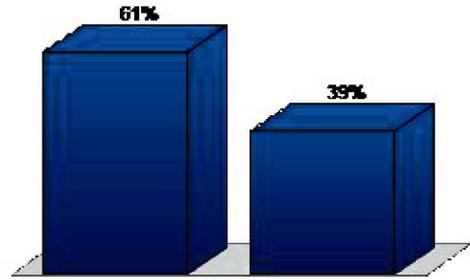
2. Do You Have a Smoke Detector at Home? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	93.65%	59
No	6.35%	4
Totals	100%	63



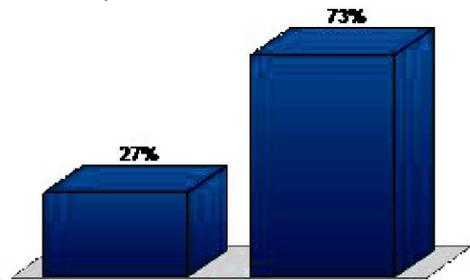
3. Do you know CPR? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	60.87%	42
No	39.13%	27
Totals	100%	69



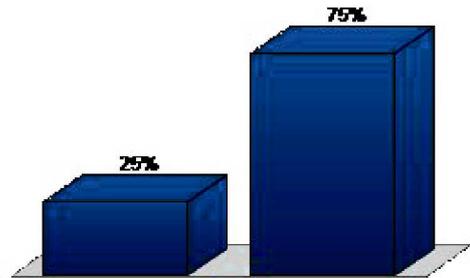
4. Do you know where the public shelters are in Leon Valley? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	27.27%	18
No	72.73%	48
Totals	100%	66



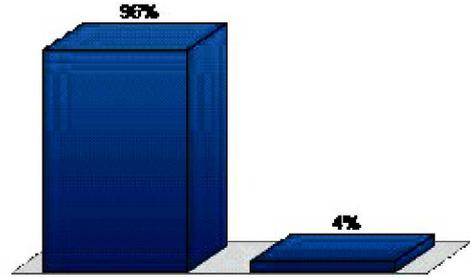
5. Do you know what FERP is? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	25%	17
No	75%	51
Totals	100%	68



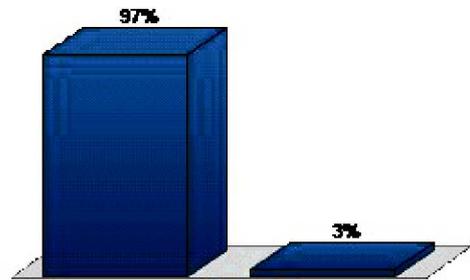
6. Do you know where the public shelters are in Leon Valley? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	95.52%	64
No	4.48%	3
Totals	100%	67



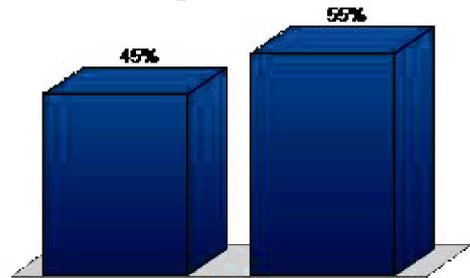
7. Do you know what FERP is? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	97.1%	67
No	2.9%	2
Totals	100%	69



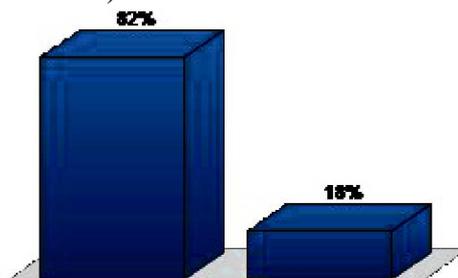
8. Are you familiar with the Master Plan for the Huebner –Onion Homestead? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	44.78%	30
No	55.22%	37
Totals	100%	67



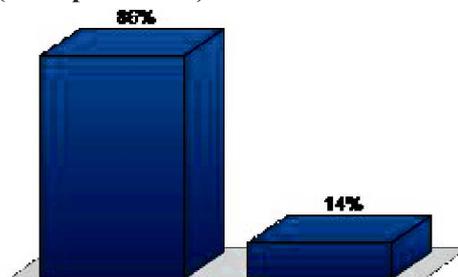
9. If you are familiar with the Master Plan. Do you support it? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	82.35%	28
No	17.65%	6
Totals	100%	34



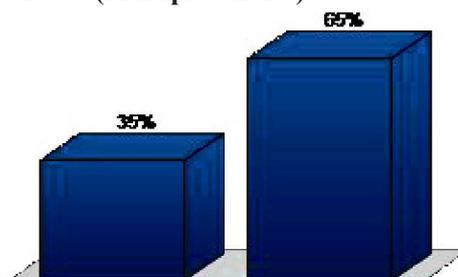
10. Would you agree or disagree, with the City signing a MOU with the Historical Society, if it included the roles and responsibilities that were outlined in the draft MOU above? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Agree	85.94%	55
Disagree	14.06%	9
Totals	100%	64



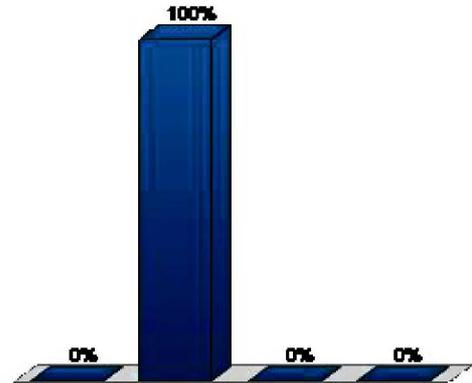
11. Are there any additions or deletions you would suggest in the draft MOU? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	35%	7
No	65%	13
Totals	100%	20



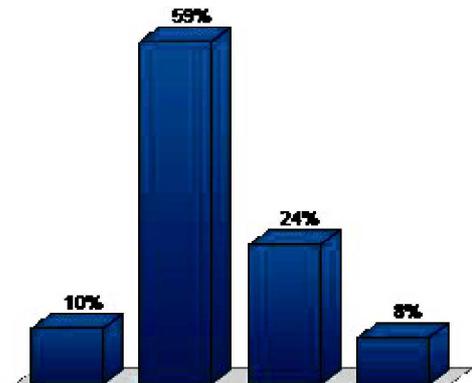
12. How many Officers are on patrol at any given time? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
1-2	0%	0
3-4	100%	1
5-6	0%	0
7-8	0%	0
Totals	100%	1



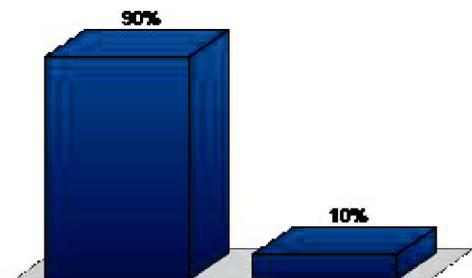
13. How many Officers are on patrol at any given time? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
1-2	9.52%	6
3-4	58.73%	37
5-6	23.81%	15
7-8	7.94%	5
Totals	100%	63



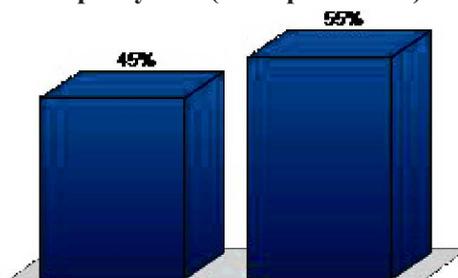
14. Do you feel safe living in Leon Valley? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	89.86%	62
No	10.14%	7
Totals	100%	69



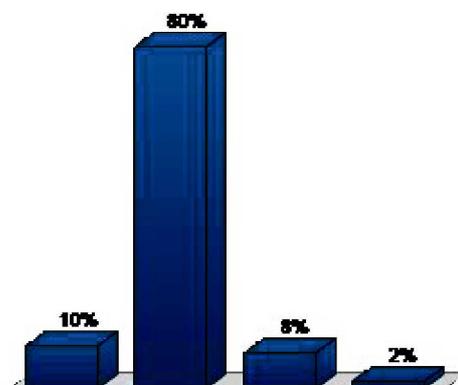
15. Have you called the Leon Valley Police Department for assistance in the past year? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	44.93%	31
No	55.07%	38
Totals	100%	69



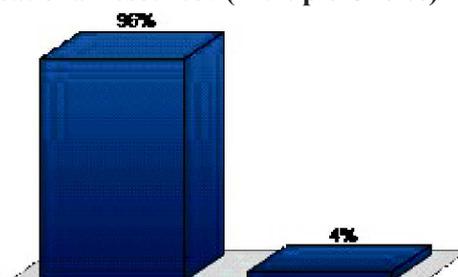
16. How many Officers are on patrol at any given time? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
1-2	10.17%	6
3-4	79.66%	47
5-6	8.47%	5
7-8	1.69%	1
Totals	100%	59



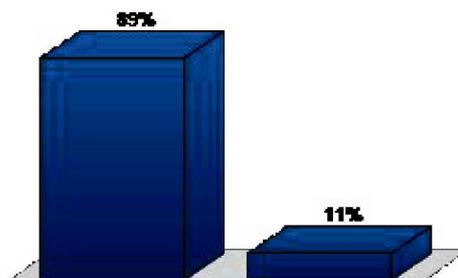
17. Would you like to save the Leon Valley Pool as a Leon Valley recreational resource? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	96.49%	55
No	3.51%	2
Totals	100%	57



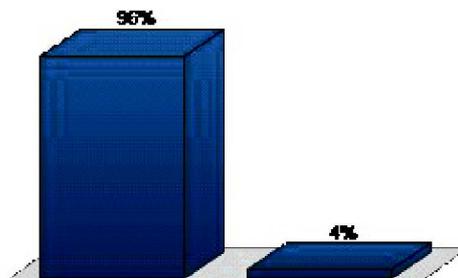
18. Would you like the City to conduct a survey or study to determine if the City should own, operate and maintain the Forest Oaks Pool and its other assets? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	89.47%	51
No	10.53%	6
Totals	100%	57



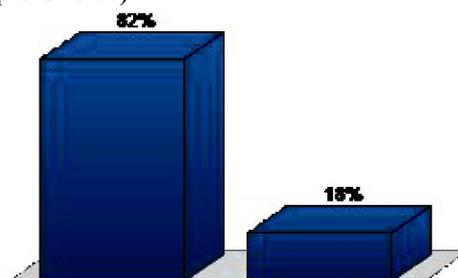
19. Would you like the City to also investigate how programs offered at the Forest Oaks Pool can be combined with other City programs to provide a more integrated recreational program for the City? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	96.49%	55
No	3.51%	2
Totals	100%	57



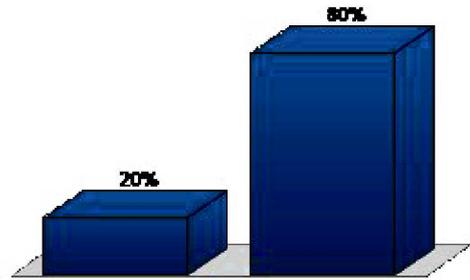
20. Should the trail connect to the Huebner-Onion Homestead? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Yes	82.14%	46
No	17.86%	10
Totals	100%	56



21. In order to get to the Homestead would you rather go over or under the Bandera Road bridge? (Multiple Choice)

Responses		
	Percent	Count
Over	20.34%	12
Under	79.66%	47
Totals	100%	59



Questionnaires

39 Received January 23, 2016

1. Would you like the proposed trail to connect to the Huebner – Onion Homestead?

35 Yes 3 No 1 Blank

2. Is so, would you prefer traversing under the Bandera Road bridge or at street level, in order to get to the Homestead?

27 Under the bridge 6 Street level

Comments:

- Need more info?
- A lot of flooding under, what plans have been explored for over Bandera. Not to the gravesite, disrupts the natural area

Under

- WC accessible
- Under for safety concerns - Xing at level is scary on Bandera Road.
- Why not both?
- Is it feasible?
- Safety concerns
- The trail would not be used in rainy conditions & feasibility/ascetics are diminished going at or above street level – at street level generates safety concerns.

Street level

- Too dangerous & nasty under - too much trash
- Adequate lighting for safety
- Want to know cost of going under
- Use the new Z-crossing to help make it easier & safer

3. What types of recreational facilities or amenities would you like to see included as a part of the trail?

- Mile markers – restrooms – picnic area benches
- Benches with back support
- Physical fitness equipment for seniors, call boxes, memorial benches to be paid by residents, parking
- Parking and restrooms
- Restrooms & natural walkway as far as possible
- At least one restroom and maybe a couple of durable ADA compliant benches
- Benches, 911 boxes, dog waste bags, amphitheater
- Dog waste bags (just like R.R. Park)- A painted center stripe with arrows (to direct traffic flow)- A separate dedicated lane for bike riders only – Mile markers that show distance

to beginning /end of trail – Provide watering stations (for people and dogs) with dog bowls like at the SA city dog parks – ADA Accessible

- Some type of restrooms & café
- Safety for walkers/runners/bikers – designated lanes
- Restrooms – benches – water fountain
- As few as possible – Recycling bins for water bottles
- Restrooms – signs showing wildlife to be found in area
- Some type of benches – Eco friendly
- Trail head behind Huebner/Onion house
- Wood benches to sit on
- Rest areas – H2O fountains – trail markers (distance) – maintenance
- Trail signage under bridge; recycle bins, solar lights, and shaded rest areas
- Water, benches or some sort of seating, picnic areas, mile markers, maps of connections to Huebner Creek & Leon Creek Greenway
- Rest area with benches, Restrooms facilities and pavilion for small events on the 13 acre triangle.
- Restrooms, benches
- Exercise type things along the way like in Medical Center track, Restrooms needed
- Restrooms and water at trailhead - without water, it poses a safety concern for people out in the heat
- Very little
- Benches, mile markers, restrooms
- Solar lighting – Info plaques – map of trail – Path –pug mill natural drainage – 0 water plants- outdoor amphitheater – Promote local talent
- Benches for walkers – stone etc.
- Trails should be built and used before rec. facilities are included other than rock /re-used wood from trees as benches
- Benches
- Leave natural as original plan. Natural amenities – such as trees that are leaning take out for LC17
- Restrooms, picnic areas in triangle area
- Benches – dog poop bags

4. Do you have any other concerns or comments about this project that you think should be considered by City officials?

- Not a lot of concrete paths to take away from natural path
- Lighting and safety in the evenings for those who do not leave promptly at park closing times
- Please no concrete in natural area, under bridge ok – restrooms – water fountains – dogs on leashes – benches – upkeep
- Water
- No – safety for children and enjoyment of walking of all and visit nature
- Ensure the trail is complementary to LC17 work done & keep it natural – No pavement
- Make it happen already! Thank you!
- Where will people park their cars? – Trash/recycle bins should be “animal proof” example: Google - Bear Box

- Flooding warning system in case of flash flood
- Keep it natural
- Safety, lighting, restrooms, water fountain
- Parking lot in the Ball field area to serve the City park - the ball fields & the H/O house
- Lighting along the trail
- It should affect the natural area as little as possible – attractive design material – no concrete surface – island on Bandera
- Safety for users
- Concerned about flooding & Taking out any amenities
- Need more info – study on cost and more options – discussion on route of trail for LV patrons – committee?
- Timeline –may have to move further out depending on when flood control project is completed? – What about SAWS replacement of sewer lines – How will this impact construction of trail?
- Natural materials used in trail, not concrete
- Crime and safety, up keep after flood events
- Only that any materials used in construction of trails be environmentally sound
- Crime along trail – safety
- A full time staff person that would be knowledgeable about the historical significance of the house. A museum gift shop would also generate revenue for the city(in the future)
- Ongoing maintenance - having reduced traffic on trail spur vs main trail – monitor trailhead for metrics of who is using the trail
- Don't waste money
- Make sure a clear plan of timeline – steps – design are communicated to citizens – entire so that politics does not delay a trail or stop project
- No hike and bike trail thru natural area – no lights along trail – no concrete/amphitheater on trail – Need to think about the citizens who live next to the trail – Noise & light concerns
- It should not interfere with Raymond Rimkus Park
- No lights – trail should be for daylight use only – No amphitheater – would be disruptive to homeowners living next to the trail & Huebner creek
- Trail map, trash and recycle cans, citizen input
- Preserve & Support the Huebner Onion Homestead as an historical area – no dogs
- Linkage to Shadow Mist Park – Access from Rimkus Park – Dedicate as City Park
- Drainage
- No hard pavement – keep trail natural as possible – Flood warning alarms, to warn walkers & runners