

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES

By David A. DeTroye

Over the course of the last two years of participation with the City of Kiel, WI Common Council, I have come to notice that a gap exists between citizen and city hall. It is no more than a lack of communication amongst taxpayer and elected officials who have been appointed for the best interest of the people. This “gap” or lack of participation by citizens has what I believe is a detrimental effect on the performance of local government. I question ethics, roles, spending, and find myself wondering if greater participation by citizens would increase the performance of my local municipality and elected officials. In search for methods of measurement, as well as quantitative data that relates to the topic, I have drawn many blanks. I have turned my interest to forming a survey in which I intend to administer to the general public. This citizen survey will ask questions related to participation and will also be used to gauge citizen satisfaction as a whole. The data that I hope to collect will shed light as to why participation is low, and analysis may prove beneficial in the future for the municipality. I will conclude my research with a presentation to the city in hopes that elected officials will use the information to make necessary changes that can only benefit the city in the years to come. An opportunity such as this survey has not been offered in the City of

Kiel since 1987. While I am aiming for positive feedback, I also fear that many comments or suggested resolutions may have negative connotations.

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by

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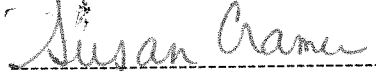
  
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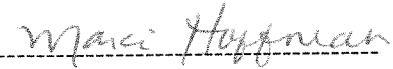
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## **The Need for More Public Participation Within Municipalities**

Public participation and community development are at an all-time low within the City of Kiel, WI. As a member of the business community, a devoted volunteer to the community, and an involved citizen with the public government, it is apparent that a gap exists amongst citizen and city hall. It is obvious that many of the elected officials and government personnel operate at a level that is not in the best interest of the people involved. I blame a lack of public participation as a major contributor to the issues at city hall, and call for changes to occur which will improve the performance of the municipality. This paper will introduce the reader to the topic of public participation, community development, and finally empowerment. The premise of this information is to educate the reader on the benefits of each of these topics, and prove how municipalities will better perform if each of the topics is properly addressed and emphasized within local government. A participation plan is also outlined.

## **Literature Review**

The premise of this literature review is to identify how other researchers have looked at the topic of citizen participation as well as community development. These two topics are essential to strong communities and the end goal of public empowerment. The issue at hand is the lack of involvement with the citizens in the community and even the greater sense of “burden” that exists when members of the elected council, the mayor, and even the administrator feel when they need to involve citizens in city decisions. The purpose of involving citizens in government is to devolve power and influence to the citizens. It lets citizens be involved in decision-making, and aims to improve services, accountability and community welfare as a whole. Over the last ten years, citizen and community involvement in government has become a key component to policy formation and programming. However, there are conflicting views as to how far communities and citizens should influence decisions regarding public services. The debate continues, but it is important to note that the demand and desire for citizen participation is on the rise.

## **Participation**

Citizen participation encompasses increasing citizens' input and involvement in the community. According to Hertzberg (1998), the primary goal of citizen participation is to increase citizen involvement in public decision-making. Arnstein (1969) comments that "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power", and highlights the importance of distinguishing between merely engaging in acts of participation and having the actual power one needs to impact outcomes. Arnstein maintains that true citizen participation allows citizens to bring about social reform and share society's benefits. According to Arnstein, a redistribution of power is important to give all citizens genuine power to affect outcomes. To illustrate the importance of distinguishing between nonparticipation and various types of participation, Arnstein devised a participation example in the form of a ladder. Each rung of the ladder is comprised of one of eight levels of participation. The first two rungs of the ladder represent nonparticipation, the next three indicate degrees of minimalism, and the last three levels illustrate degrees of citizen power.

**Table 1 – The Ladder of Participation**

1.	Manipulation: citizens are arranged on advisory committees or boards merely to "educate" them or to get their support; participation becomes distorted into the power holders' public relations instrument
2.	Therapy: power holders involve citizens in extensive activity, but the focus is on curing them of their "pathology" instead of changing the social structures that create their "pathologies"
3.	Informing: involves advising citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options; often involves one-way communication (from officials to citizens) with no means for citizens to express their opinions and no power for negotiation
4.	Consultation: involves inviting citizens' opinions (often through surveys, meetings, etc.); power holders gain evidence that they have gone through the necessary steps for involving "those people"
5.	Placation: occurs when ground rules allow the have-nots to advise, but the power holders still have the decision-making power; truly appeasing citizens depends on the quality of technical support they have in expressing their priorities and the extent to which the community has been organized to argue for those priorities
6.	Partnership: power is redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders and they agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities
7.	Delegated power: negotiations occur between citizens and public officials that give citizens the power to make decisions and maintain control over plans and programs
8.	Citizen Control: participants and residents are able to control a program or an institution, govern policy an managerial aspects, and negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" can make changes

The last three rungs of the ladder, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control, illustrate true citizen participation. Therefore, outreach professionals trying to increase citizen participation should endeavor to reach these levels. Heberlein, (1976)

discusses citizen participation in the form of public involvement. According to Heberlein, the goal of involving the public in decisions is to help planners and managers make better decisions, which should save both time and money by creating inclusive action and decisions that are less likely to be reversed or criticized.

## Development

Community development is a critical component for building healthy communities. Wilkonson (1988) highlights this issue in a discussion about how social problems confronting communities are unlikely to be solved unless communities are strengthened. Strengthening communities requires an improved capability of citizens to act collectively to achieve goals. L

Lofquist (1983) discusses the importance of a community development approach to make citizens more likely to take action in preventing community problems. He comments by saying that a community development approach can make people feel empowered to make things better and can mobilize people to take shared responsibility for improving their community. In a paper about citizen participation, Hertzberg (1998) discusses that one major goal of community development is to create an infrastructure that will guarantee that all citizens participate in decision making and share responsibility for decisions. Schmidt also discusses contemporary thinking in the citizen participation area and concludes that current citizen participation efforts focus on building relationships, involving local people in the process, and fully using strengths, assets, and capacities of individuals in the community. These ideas are very similar to those proposed by Lofquist (1983). The approach to citizen participation in these types of communities often focuses on deficits instead of strengths, which can have negative impacts on these communities. Kauffman and Poulin (1994) discuss the importance of

citizen participation and assert that the success of community prevention activities partially depends on the extent to which the entire community is motivated to participate and take responsibility for community problems and changes in attitudes.

## Objectives

There is an abundance of information that explains why the benefits of citizen participation in government and community development outweigh the negatives. However, for the sake of summary, it can be concluded that three main objectives are formulated by empowering citizens. First, it helps improve the design and responsiveness of services offered by government. It also helps with citizen inclusion and the acceptance of policy. Second, it helps to create a bond between citizen and government, which creates networks and cohesion in communities. Finally, it helps improve the quality of decisions being made, their legitimacy, and holds decision makers accountable. This accountability encourages more civic involvement and helps foster future partnerships. However, barriers of conflict often exist. Barriers relating to age, wealth, culture, language, organizational structure, and lack of information make it difficult for community participants to feel valued and effective. Often times, no account is taken of the amount of time demanded for meetings and representation. Citizens begin to feel overburdened and question whether or not they are making a difference or have any influence at all.

## Discussion

The success of a public participation is largely determined by how thoroughly and thoughtfully it is planned. Successful meetings and events are determined by the degree to which any elected official effectively commits to and prepares for the entire process, especially creating and providing the information needed by citizens and building effective relationships. Relationships are often the key variable to success. You cannot effectively participate with people you do not know. Formal public hearings where elected officials never actually meet or interact with the public often fail because there are simply no relationships upon which to base communication. Relationships define the ability to fully understand one another and give proper consideration to one another's needs, issues, and concerns. In designing a public participation program, you need to pay a great deal of attention to creating the opportunities to get to know key stakeholders and create the kinds of dialogue needed to build trust and understanding. The planning process for increased public participation usually abides by a five step approach, it is as follows.

### Step 1. Organize for Participation

The first step in planning for public participation is to ensure that you are seeking to obtain and use public input and not merely seeking public buy-in to an already

determined outcome. If there is little or no room for public influence over the decision, then public participation is not a reasonable option for your project.

### Step 2. Identify and Get to Know Your Stakeholders

It is important to assess the situation to understand who might be impacted, who should be involved, and what concerns they bring to the process. It is essential that you identify all of the viewpoints and interests that must be heard to create a fully participatory process.

### Step 3. Select an Appropriate Level of Public Participation

There is no “right” level of public participation. For each local project, elected officials must consider the circumstances, their willingness and ability to share power, and the nature of the citizens’ desire and need to participate. It is a good idea to try to meet the participation needs and desires of the citizens. Those people who are shut out of a process that is important to them will not simply go away. Rather, they will look for other venues – such as legal, political, or media – in which to influence the decision.

### Step 4. Integrate Public Participation in the Decision Process

In order to have clear and meaningful public participation, it is important for all citizens to fully understand the decision process being used. Creating a visual representation of this process is helpful. Both internal and external stakeholders must have the same

understanding and expectations regarding the decision process and how and when public input will be obtained.

#### Step 5. Match Public Participation Tools to Objectives Through-out the Process

Once the decision process is mapped out, it will become clear where and how the public is to be engaged. At each point that the public is to be informed or provide input, it is important to identify a clear objective for that interaction in order to design an effective process and to maintain clear expectations among all stakeholders. Only after clear goals and objectives are established can appropriate tools be selected and customized to the circumstances and audience in order to best meet the established objectives.

Communication often times is the greatest key to success. All public participation requires effective communication with stakeholders. Communication is much more than creating fact sheets or web sites. Creating an environment for dialogue, particularly by breaking into smaller groups, is an effective way to both get public input and help the public learn about each other's viewpoints.

### **Hypothesis**

“Greater citizen involvement would help to improve the performance of any municipality, especially that of Kiel, WI.”

## **Methodology and Framework**

The scope of this project will involve a survey to be distributed to the citizens of Kiel, WI. In review of text and research on the topic of public participation, it has become very obvious that more qualitative information is available than quantitative. With that being said, I, as the author of the survey, hope to obtain sufficient information that will serve as a needed data to potentially realize changes within local government. The survey that will be administered is derived from previous citizen satisfaction surveys that have been used within the Master of Public Administration Department at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Using these previous surveys as a model, I was able to make a survey that was geared directly towards the citizens of Kiel, WI. The intent is to measure a level of satisfaction as a general precursor but also divulge information on participation or the lack of it that currently exists within the city. The survey, with the permission of the common council, will be delivered to a 600 home random sample of the households in Kiel. The method of delivery that is preferred by the city is to mail the survey utilizing the Kiel Chamber of Commerce post office box as the return address. The data, collected by me, will be interpreted and reported to the city government in hopes of realizing the need for change within city government practices. All addresses were acquired through solicitation of Calumet and Manitowoc Counties taxpayer information.

### **Needs Analysis**

In recent days, weeks, and months, the City of Kiel, WI has experienced a series of instances in which a proper level of public participation in the decision process may have helped to alleviate a lot of on-going issues. No municipality is without struggle. Today, it is commonplace to either pick up a newspaper or turn on the television and continually hear about public debate issues that plaque municipalities. Often times, the common denominator that is factored in is that the public is looking for the opportunity to be heard.

The hypothesis that I have generated may seem very vague. However, much qualitative data exists to properly support it. The premise of this survey is to collect data that in the future will prove to the city of Kiel that changes need to be made to better incorporate public participation within government. The direct results of this data may not instill policy changes, but rather may help to foster procedural changes that in turn would aid in the increase of public participation. It is the belief of the author of this paper that no information is as important, than that of the people. It is a common practice of mine to ask questions of as many people as possible who are involved in any scenario before I make major decisions. More often than not, the information that I acquire from my subordinates proves to be the most beneficial information I use to make important decisions.

Future public participation research is a necessity, and surveys such as the one devised for this project, must become commonplace in society today. As I stated earlier in this paper, the city of Kiel has not surveyed the citizens of their town since 1987. I am unaware of any other better means of retrieving information than that of just asking for it. It is the right of the people to be heard, and the responsibility of elected or appointed officials to give them this right. Strife, struggle, and concurrent issues within municipalities will not subside until the proper level of public participation and input is achieved.

## Results of the Study

254 replies out of 600 mailed – 42% return ratio

1. Please check the box that comes closest to your opinion for each of the following questions.

How would you rate?

	Excellent 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1	No Opinion
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	# of replies	Average level of satisfaction of those who replied
Kiel as a place to live?	254	3.34
Feeling a part of the community?	248	2.83
Overall appearance of the city?	253	2.98
Overall safety of the residents?	253	3.33
Fremont Street?	250	2.65
Kiel as a place to raise children?	234	3.31
Kiel as a place to retire?	232	2.93
Community openness and acceptance of diversity?	231	2.62
The overall quality of life in Kiel?	251	3.04
Kiel as an environmentally responsible city?	238	2.86
Kiel as a place to work?	218	2.88

The direction Kiel is moving in the future?	228	2.84
The city website and online services?	148	2.57

**2. Please answer yes or no to each of the following question in regard to the city of Kiel**

**Check the appropriate box.**

	Yes	No
Do you know who the Mayor is?	74%	26%
Do you know who the City administrator is?	72%	28%
Kiel has 6 wards. Do you know what ward you live in?	54%	46%
Kiel has 6 alderpersons. Do you know your alderperson?	47%	53%
Do you know the official Kiel web address?	41%	59%
Have you ever attended a city council meeting?	32%	68%
Do you know when city council meetings are held?	43%	57%

**3. We would like your opinion on the quality of services offered by the city of Kiel. For each service, please check the box that best represents your opinion of the quality of each city service.**

	Excellent Quality 4	Good Quality 3	Fair Quality 2	Poor Quality 1	Don't Know

	# of replies	Average level of satisfaction of those who replied
Animal control.	194	2.74
Bike and Pedestrian trail accommodations.	242	3.13
Building permits and inspections.	192	2.69
Economic development assistance to businesses.	140	2.77
Emergency medical and rescue services.	237	3.50

Enforcement of property maintenance and nuisance codes.	202	2.50
Festivals and Special Events.	247	3.24
Fire protection and prevention services.	241	3.45
Maintenance and appearance of city parks.	249	2.90
Maintenance and appearance of the city cemeteries.	237	3.02
Maintenance and appearance of the city owned buildings.	241	2.95
Online services (website).	163	2.33
Parks and Recreation.	237	2.97
Police services.	248	3.23
Refuse collection and Recycling Services.	239	3.23
Regulation and Zoning for land use.	157	2.47
Removal of ice and snow from city streets.	252	2.60
Residential leaf pick up.	233	2.68
Response to citizen requests and complaints.	164	2.56
Sheboygan River appearance & maintenance	243	2.16
Sidewalk systems	241	2.42
Storm drainage system	225	2.52
Street Lighting	247	2.57
Street Paving, Maintenance, sweeping & repair.	249	2.08
Kiel Electric Utilities	243	3.00
Accommodations & usefulness of the Kiel Community Center	231	3.10
Kiel Public Library Services	230	3.33
Senior Services	167	3.12

**4. How engaged do you consider yourself to be with city government?**

**Choose the appropriate column.**

Not at all Engaged	Not very Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Very Engaged	No Response
72 replies or 29%	91 replies or 36 %	75 replies or 30%	9 replies or 3%	7 replies or 2%

**5. If you do not consider yourself to be engaged in city government, select the reason that best fits.**

Meeting times are inconvenient	17 replies or 7%
I am confident in the performance of city government without my involvement	44 replies or 19%
No interest in city government	48 replies or 21%
Too many personal / business commitments	44 replies or 19%
I do not think anyone will listen to me	28 replies or 12%
Lack of information technology or social media	13 replies or 5%
Other	29 replies or 13%

**6. Gender**    Male    41%                      Female    59%

**7. Married**    Yes    73%                      No    27%

**8. Select the appropriate box that describes how long you have lived in Kiel.**

5 or less years	6 – 10 years	11- 15 years	16 – 20 years	20 or more years
23 replies or 9%	29 replies or 11%	35 replies or 13%	27 replies or 10%	140 replies or 55%

**9. Select the appropriate box that fits your age classification.**

18 -25	26 -35	36 – 45	46 -55	56 - 65	66 or older
0 replies or 0%	28 replies or 11%	46 replies or 18%	56 replies or 22%	58 replies or 22%	66 replies or 25%

**10. Do you own your home or rent?**

Own	Rent
100%	

**11. How many children in your household are under the age of 18?**

1	2	3+
179 replies or 70%	30 replies or 11%	45 replies or 17%

**12. Select the appropriate box that describes your annual income level.**

Less than 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 74,999	75,000 – 99,999	100,000 or more
35 replies or 13%	68 replies or 26%	71 replies or 27%	53 replies or 20%	27 replies or 10%

**13. Select the appropriate box that describes your level of education.**

Less than High School	High School / GED	Associate Degree /Some College	Bachelors' Degree	Masters' Degree or Higher
8 replies or 3%	82 replies or 32%	85 replies or 33%	37 replies or 14%	42 replies Or 16%

**14. Please include any suggestions or additional comments that you feel may help improve the performance of your municipality.**

## **Citizen Suggestions or Comments**

- Police force needs to work on their friendliness. Seem to act as foes rather than officials paid for by tax dollars.
- Narrow minded Council Members who seem to pass judgment prior to looking at all of the information.
- Work with New Holstein on shared services especially the police department.
- Less “buddy system” with the law enforcement, police.
- Sidewalks need to be checked in winter to make sure residents are clearing snow and ice.
- Trees should be checked to make sure limbs are 8 feet above sidewalks.
- City needs to be proactive in economic development downtown.
- Police services are over staffed.
- City needs to address garbage pick-up with the disposal company. Often times, garbage ends up on the road and not in the truck.
- City government is a group of people who consider themselves better than the rest of the citizens.
- More attention could be focused on city streets. They are getting worse every year.
- The city website needs major updates.
- The city sidewalks need to be ADA accessible.
- Roads could be salted better in winter.
- Too many potholes.
- City needs to find better alternatives for street repair other than patching potholes.
- If you cut trees in the city, you need to replace them.
- Sheboygan River is an eyesore. Not only do weeds need control but riverbanks need maintenance.

- Need better sources for community news and information.
- Many of Kiel's events are poorly advertised.
- Streets are hard on vehicles.
- City hall needs transparency.
- City hall needs to properly list their fee schedule; where is their money going?
- Would like to see reports of what the elected officials have worked on and the results.
- City could use more informational billboards in highly visible areas.
- Streets are in bad condition.
- Downtown needs renovation and attention.
- The Sheboygan River should be an attribute not an embarrassment.
- The condition of the streets in town are beyond horrible.
- Develop a tree program. Kiel used to have many more trees.
- The city needs future plans.
- Downtown street signs could be made more appealing.
- The senior center needs a new director; someone who is willing to get more seniors involved.
- Thanks for your concerns about the community.
- I am not an investigator but I have witnessed several transactions of drugs in the city park.
- Kiel is a nice community but needs direction.
- There needs to be better support of the Kiel baseball club from the mayor and city administrator. The lack of city involvement is disheartening.
- Downtown needs more businesses and culture. Both will help it grow. More restaurants, less bars.
- Property taxes are ridiculous.
- Kids need something to do.

- Kiel is an uptight, racist town that will never grow up. (I am white).
- People have a tendency to be snobby and mean.
- Most students that were friends of mine in high school want to leave because the city has nothing to offer.
- Better plans could have been made for the second city cemetery.
- The collection center could be open at least once or twice in the winter.
- Park and rec needs to do more for the seniors especially in the winter months; day trips, concerts, etc.
- Cats need to be treated like dogs; if they run at large they should be licensed and fined.
- First impressions on Fremont Street could use some work; flags, signs and Christmas décor.
- Kiel needs more community programs; park and rec offerings have gone hill for adults.
- Need more programs for community services.
- Police department is excellent.
- Great place to live!
- Streets, streets, streets!
- Roads are in terrible shape.
- Wonder where tax dollars are actually going?!
- City streets, utilities and entire infrastructure are in shambles. Does anyone care?
- Main Street is dangerous at night. Poor lighting.
- Sidewalks in the city are in very poor shape. As are the streets. Neighbors need to do a better job of snow removal.
- Kiel is fortunate to have the Tri-County news as a source of information.
- City hall has little or no transparency regarding agendas and tax dollars spent.

- Kiel keeps moving forward but its services and amenities are moving backwards.
- Could use bulk item and lawn waste pick-up again; would pay a fee if needed.
- Council members seem to have their own personal agendas and care for themselves rather than the city as a whole.
- Fremont Street lights are terrible.
- Better equipment needed at parks and access to bathrooms at all parks is needed.
- The city could communicate the minutes from city government meetings better.
- Path lights along river and behind the river on the north side of town are needed.
- Wish there was a place to recycle the kinds of batteries and light bulbs you aren't supposed to throw away.
- It would be nice to have brush/shrub clippings picked up in Rockville at least once in spring and fall.
- I read the minutes in the paper and feel that city council and elected officials are doing fine.
- Failure for dog walkers/owners to clean up after their pets should result in a fine.
- Cars drive too fast down the one way alley behind the post office and kids play back there.
- Need to open franchise restaurants.
- In the summer the river looks bad. Can that get cleaned up?
- The flower boxes are nice but the algae blooms need serious attention along the river.
- I believe the changes in the electric department are good. We need some changes across the board, some fresh blood.
- People have gotten too comfortable and lazy. Or maybe it is a lack of accountability?

- The city needs to have some residents clean up their homes and yard appearances.
- We have no dog parks and no dogs are allowed in any of our parks.
- I don't know when city council meetings are but am sure I could easily find out.
- We should be budgeting yearly to continue a section of streets instead of consistently patching all streets.
- I feel the spraying of pesticides and herbicides by the city on city owned property and the river is a public health hazard as well as a waste of taxpayer funds.
- I don't know much about the future growth of the city.
- You need to hire more local residents. My husband is unemployed even though several local businesses are advertising jobs. Husband hasn't even been considered so we are looking to relocate to a different city or town.
- How many years is a building permit good for? Some houses in Kiel need improvements because they have terrible looking exteriors.
- We need to look into grants and loans to improve the economic development and aesthetic appeal of Fremont Street.
- Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion and good luck to you!
- I don't know which way the city staff works with local businesses, but it seems to be very effective with the growth I am seeing.
- If seniors take a closer look, there is much here for us retirees.
- Broken park equipment needs to be checked and fixed.
- Calumet Ave between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> still has lead water pipes. Water stands in driveway approach on Calumet Ave between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> on the north side of the street.
- The city streets are horrible, work needs to be done on them.

- We live on a busy street and would like someone to crack down on the loud motorcycles and cars that these kids are modifying to be “loud”. It makes me want to move.
- I hate the street lights on Main Street.
- Street paving, sweeping, maintenance and repair are very poor!
- Stop people from burning garbage.
- Hire a building inspector without an attitude.
- Adjust setbacks to work for people with small lots.
- Please take a hard look at streets and sidewalks.
- Better snow plowing, ice removal and street maintenance.
- Consider alternate side street parking for the winter.
- I feel that the recycling/compost area could be easily and cost effectively upgraded to be a self-service area open 24/7.
- The condition of the streets has deteriorated and needs to be addressed.
- I think this survey was great. I wish the city would do this too. Thanks for your time and effort with this. I hope the city sees what’s going on.
- I think the city is very biased against citizens who do not have long-standing roots and family residing in Kiel.
- We were never offered any economic development assistance with our business.
- Something could be done about the river and the street lighting.
- There needs to be more street lights on Teckla Street. There could be cars sitting down there and we wouldn’t know unless we drove to the end.
- We spend way too much on police services. There are too many cops for a town this size. In general, they hassle the youth and have a negative impact. For a small town, the police should be welcoming and tolerant.
- We have had several issues with water leaks and water damage and never get complete answers. Still waiting for a response!

- The streets need repairs.
- Very poor street conditions. 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets are very bad.
- Pave 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> street. Make handicap accessible crosswalks on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> street.
- Remove snow from sidewalks around soccer fields so people who walk for exercise don't have to walk in the street.
- It's very inconvenient and unbelievable that utilities cannot be paid online.
- There is a severe lack of pride in rivers and parks! What could be beautiful are eyesores.
- Continue to clean up the river!
- I feel it is a conflict of interest to have the owner of a carpentry business as a building inspector.
- Instead of 2 or 3 city personnel driving around in a truck at a time, 1 or 2 could be cutting the lawns in the parks to keep the dandelions down before the weekends.
- Pieces of paper stating that one has a degree are lovely decorations but it does not mean that one has an education!
- We need brighter lights in the Rockville subdivision. The streets out here are terrible.
- Brighter lights on Cemetery Road.
- Street parking in winter could alternate between even and odd days in winter.
- Street lights just go off at night on 7<sup>th</sup> street.
- Poor lighting on Fremont Street. It's hard to see people.
- The parks need lots of help.
- Have our Kwik Trip be open 24 hours so the police stay in Kiel.
- The city employees should not blow people off when they come to them for help.

- It would be nice to clean up the river and mill pond before the picnic each year in August.
- Fix the humungous potholes in our streets. They are pitiful.
- City streets are in very poor condition.
- The community center and Stoelting House outdoor maintenance is very poor.
- I feel some council members are only focused on their own personal agendas and not their constituents.
- Thank you Dave, for giving us a voice!
- Women have little or no representation on the school board and city council and it is disappointing.
- Kiel looks and feels old and tired.
- Forward progress would be a nice goal for Kiel. The HS pool is a great example of this but the people here vote anything down that costs money. The pool would benefit those of all ages.
- Would like to see active programs for the retired citizens not just hanging out and playing cards at the senior center.
- I feel some members of the council are there because it gives them something to do rather than to move Kiel forward. I don't ever see them out and about in the community.
- Very proud of our city, especially the industrial growth.
- Is the hiring process for city employees performed by quality HR people?
- City employees would be better served with a standard requirement of aptitude and intelligence; this would improve the public and private sector relationships.
- It's time for a change in the city administration. The mayor is moving backwards!
- Some of the city streets need some repairs.
- There are very cordial employees at city hall.

- Roads need to be greatly improved.
- People are not open-minded; it's very "clicky" here.
- It is a very clean city.
- Would like to see some grocery store competition.
- Mueller Road needs to be salted more. It seems to be the last road to be plowed and salted because it is on the outskirts of town.
- Correct the terrible sewage smell from the treatment plant.
- The streets need repair.
- Explore another TIF for residential but make it on high ground unlike Rockville.
- Why are the sidewalks by the soccer field not maintained in the fall and winter? Why doesn't the city have to abide by the same snow removal rules as the citizens?
- Mueller road has 3 or 4 different widths to it and no sidewalks for people to be out walking.
- When the plows are out, I would hope they could get closer to the curbs and not 4-5 feet away from them.
- The river looks terrible with vegetation. They have been talking about this for years but nothing seems to get done.
- Paving of the roads is terrible and repair is even worse.
- The streets wreck our cars and we have to pay for the repairs to them.
- I have needed the police for one issue in the 40 years I have lived here and when I went to the police station, I had to wait for 32 minutes before the chief came out to see me. He said he needed to go to another call and blew me off. I will be handling my own concerns from now on.
- Instead of building a new pool that money could be used in a better place.
- Downtown looks dumpy!
- Improvements like Plymouth made would be excellent.

- The city's website is difficult to navigate.
- The city buildings look great.
- We enjoy the parks but they are just maintained, nothing special.

## Summary of Findings

Most citizens enjoy the city as a whole but are looking past the basic needs and demand more from public government. Fire, EMS, and police services are strong, but poor maintenance of parks, river, streets, and public buildings has left the city looking old and tired. Citizens have been asking for better senior services and advancements in park and recreation. The City of Kiel relies heavily on service organizations to keep the city vibrant and on-going.

- The City of Kiel has maintained a high level of integrity and is still considered a great place to live, work, and retire. Corporate growth has contributed to the success of the city but old pockets and “ghetto-like” neighborhoods are appearing.
- City services are faltering in regards to Web based services, nuisance code enforcement, economic development and urban revitalization. The city continues to grow outward but has all but abandoned its’ main street backbone.
- Citizen engagement is at an all-time low, but so is the percentage of people who know and understand the city council procedure. These citizens are unaware of ward districts, alderperson representation, and how to properly voice concerns or make improvement suggestions.
- People seem to only engage when faced with referendums or costly expenditures. Otherwise they feel they have no voice in government or simply do not care. It was evident by cross referencing complaints and age demographics that many of the tenured citizens are disappointed in current services.

- Most respondents were married (73%) females (59%) over the age of 45 (69%) who have lived in Kiel 10 years or more (78%).
- 57% of the households earn better than \$50,000.00 per year.
- 63% have post-high school education.
- Age demographics in Kiel seem to be a detriment to progress and development. Many of the respondents who shared written comments about tax rates and the need for stability are also the ones who seem to be asking for expanded services within the senior services sector.

### **Recommendations – Short Term for Increasing Citizen Engagement**

- Immediate revision of city web-based services to make all information available on-line. This could be achieved by a continually updating residents with direct mailings included among electric utility billing.
- Create a social media movement that includes but is not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap-chat, and Pinterest.
- Advertise for the creation of an involved community action group that is created to help set goals and agendas for the progression of the city. The current council format is not working. There is little or no interest, and council members seem complacent with empty meeting rooms and light agendas.
- Continuous invitations from the Mayor and City Administrator for attendance at council meetings and greater involvement. If citizens feel welcome, they may partake in city affairs. Currently, citizen engagement merely exists when complaints are on the agenda.

### **Recommendations – Long Term for Increasing Citizen Engagement**

- Continue soliciting information from citizens by conducting citizen surveys at least bi-annually.
- Work on the structure of city council and consider moving to an at-large format that is structured similar to that of the school board. Citizens may be more involved or interested in running for public office if they represent the entire city and not just a ward. Citizens may feel more eligible if they do not have to compete against a tenured incumbent, or a neighbor, or a friend.
- Initiate programs in the school district to encourage work with-in or for public government. It could be modeled as a junior council and could prove to be an excellent learning opportunity for the youth.
- Suggest mandatory agendas for council members that include improved interaction with citizens. It is common practice today for municipalities to encourage each alderperson to bring a different citizen to scheduled council meetings.

### **Recommendations – To Improve City Services**

Revise nuisance codes to better define and establish limits. Many of the complaints were in regards to issues dealing with trees, sidewalks, yards, fences, and neighborhood complaints. The current codes are written to vague and do not have “teeth”. A progressive look at these issues may help to alleviate citizen complaints.

- Police, Fire, and EMS comprise the majority of the annual budget. It is imperative to continue to look at the cost savings of shared services with neighboring municipalities.
- Take an aggressive look at down town revitalization which may include expenditures to purchase vacant store fronts and make properties available for sale to franchise or other business opportunities. Grant opportunities do exist for revitalization and TIF district creations in existing areas. This area needs to become vibrant once again and is the backbone of the city.
- Move forward with re-establishing a more thorough park and recreation department. Many of the social programs are driven by service organizations and volunteerism is decreasing rapidly. Programs and grant money is available for charters that work with youth, middle age and seniors.
- The City of Kiel needs to take a proactive approach to city planning and not a reactive approach. This means they need to ask questions, gather advice, and involve citizens before making decisions. This lies at the core responsibility of council representation, but it is not effective.
- Establish a plan to correct street conditions and the aging infrastructure of the city. Keeping a low tax base is important but so is the necessity of maintaining the sanity of citizens. In this survey, better than 75% of the comments were directed at the poor conditions of streets and alleys within the city. Transparency

of budgets and expenditures will help alleviate citizen complaints. However it is imperative the city acts now to put in place a plan for repair.

### **Shortcomings from Research**

The address data bank that was used for direct mailings came from property tax information. Upon soliciting both Manitowoc and Calumet Counties of Wisconsin, I received a list of addresses of current property owners within the city limits of Kiel. I however was not able to obtain any potential renters that may live within the city. The information they may have given could have changed some of the outcomes to this study. It is my belief that many may have had children, would be younger, and would have offered a greater variety of comments and suggestions.

- Business owners who do not reside also were not able to voice an opinion.
- Lack of comparable data. The last survey of this type was conducted in Kiel in 1987. Upon research, no data was available to compare and contrast.
- The City of Kiel has many corporate partners. In the future it may be necessary to reach out to heads of these corporations and ask what they could contribute to research and how they could help with future citizen engaging.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Local governments can be in the forefront of advancing citizen engagement. To do so, they must understand what engagement is and identify the ways to expand and connect their engagement activities and share ownership of those activities with citizens. Citizen engagement is the right thing to do because it promotes democracy and community building. It is also a smart thing to do to expand support from citizens and get buy-in for achieving goals that government cannot achieve on its own.

Engagement is a kind of connection and commitment not traditionally found in many of the interactions between citizens and government. There are lots of ways that local governments exchange information with citizens. They help get citizens involved but that should not be equated with engagement. Likewise, providing services and good “customer-relations” do not make citizens partners in solving community problems. Exchange activities that are extensive, vigorous and include all groups are essential, but they should be viewed as one-way interactions, not citizen engagement.

Engagement moves involvement to a higher level. It is qualitatively different interaction that provides the opportunity for citizens and officials to listen to and learn from each other and to work together over time to address issues or problems that they feel are important. Some discussions of citizen engagement are based on the assumption that anything governments do to relate to citizens is engagement, but governments will be more effective if they carefully determine whether true

engagement is occurring. Local government can encourage and support engagement, it can be a facilitator of action by others and it can be receptive to initiatives that come from citizens, community organizations and “social entrepreneurs”-individuals and groups that take it upon themselves to solve a community problem. In any of their interactions with citizens, local governments may consider encouraging engagement rather than simply seeking a one-way interaction.

Both exchange and engagement can occur in two broad areas of community governance: how the community decides what goals they should pursue and what policies they could make and how the community delivers services to residents and works together to address ways to make the community better. Local governments should broaden their perspective to see how engagement occurs in delivering services and meeting needs as well in making decisions. Examples of engagement in decision-making include community forums to set goals or citizen advisory committees. Examples of engagement in delivering service and meeting needs are citizen campaigns to meet sustainability goals or neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Citizen engagement involves much more than just public participation at meetings and events or invitations to public hearings. It involves deliberate work by local governments to develop plans for engagement, understand the purpose behind engagement and deliver opportunities that create meaningful occasions for public participation.

Faced with major fiscal challenges, it's easy for city/county managers to get bogged down in the quest for efficiency. While making the organization more efficient is on your list, your ultimate goal is adding purpose and meaning to the lives of people in the community. Job number one is community building – and this includes finding a way for all those who become engaged in the community to fulfill the dreams of the community.

In conclusion, citizen engagement enables communities to build a sense of community, strengthen attachments and tackle persistent problems that can only be solved by people working together to help themselves and one another in a connected community. Local government is an essential and often lead partner with citizens in fostering authentic, meaningful and effective citizen engagement. It is important for local governments to encourage residents and employees alike to think of themselves as citizens who are engaged in the activities of governance and who work together to make their community better.

**Appendix A**

**Kiel Citizen Survey**



Dear City of Kiel Resident,

*“Information is a source of learning. But unless it is organized, processed, and available to the right people in a format for decision making, it is a burden, not a benefit.”*

With permission granted by the City of Kiel, I am conducting a survey to gauge the level of citizen participation and the satisfaction you may have of city services. All answers are completely anonymous and will help in future decisions made within and for the city of Kiel. The survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Please fill out the survey in its entirety and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided by (date). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

David DeTroye

Candidate for Graduation May 2015 – University of Wisconsin Oshkosh  
Master’s Degree in Public Administration

- 1. Please check the box that comes closest to your opinion for each of the following questions.**

**How would you rate?**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Kiel as a place to live?					
Feeling a part of the community?					
Overall appearance of the city?					
Overall safety of the residents?					
Fremont Street?					
Kiel as a place to raise children?					
Kiel as a place to retire?					
Community openness and acceptance of diversity?					
The overall quality of life in Kiel?					
Kiel as an environmentally responsible city?					
Kiel as a place to work?					
The direction Kiel is moving in the future?					
The city website and online services?					

- 2. Please answer yes or no to each of the following question in regard to the city of Kiel**

**Check the appropriate box.**

	Yes	No
Do you know who the Mayor is?		
Do you know who the City administrator is?		
Kiel has 6 wards. Do you know what ward you live in?		
Kiel has 6 alderpersons. Do you know your alderperson?		
Do you know the official Kiel web address?		
Have you ever attended a city council meeting?		
Do you know when city council meetings are held?		

**3. We would like your opinion on the quality of services offered by the city of Kiel. For each service, please check the box that best represents your opinion of the quality of each city service.**

	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Fair Quality	Poor Quality	Don't Know
Animal control.					
Bike and Pedestrian trail accommodations.					
Building permits and inspections.					
Economic development assistance to businesses.					
Emergency medical and rescue services.					
Enforcement of property maintenance and nuisance codes.					
Festivals and Special Events.					
Fire protection and prevention services.					
Maintenance and appearance of city parks.					
Maintenance and appearance of the city cemeteries.					
Maintenance and appearance of the city owned buildings.					
Online services (website).					
Parks and Recreation.					
Police services.					
Refuse collection and Recycling Services.					
Regulation and Zoning for land use.					
Removal of ice and snow from city streets.					
Residential leaf pick up.					
Response to citizen requests and complaints.					
Sheboygan River appearance & maintenance					
Sidewalk systems					

Storm drainage system					
Street Lighting					
Street Paving, Maintenance, sweeping & repair.					
Kiel Electric Utilities					
Accommodations & usefulness of the Kiel Community Center					
Kiel Public Library Services					
Senior Services					

**4. How engaged do you consider yourself to be with city government?**

**Choose the appropriate column.**

Not at all Engaged	Not very Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Very Engaged	No Response

**If you do not consider yourself to be engaged in city government, select the reason that best fits.**

Meeting times are inconvenient	
I am confident in the performance of city government without my involvement	
No interest in city government	
Too many personal / business commitments	
I do not think anyone will listen to me	
Lack of information technology or social media	
Other	

**Demographic Section**

5. **Gender**      Male \_\_\_\_\_      Female \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Married**      Yes \_\_\_\_\_      No \_\_\_\_\_

7. **Select the appropriate box that describes how long you have lived in Kiel.**

5 or less years	6 – 10 years	11- 15 years	16 – 20 years	20 or more years

8. **Select the appropriate box that fits your age classification.**

18 -25	26 -35	36 – 45	46 -55	56 - 65	66 or older

9. **Do you own your home or rent?**

Own	Rent

10. **How many children in your household are under the age of 18?**

1	2	3+

11. **Select the appropriate box that describes your annual income level.**

Less than 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 – 74,999	75,000 – 99,999	100,000 or more

**12. Select the appropriate box that describes your level of education.**

Less than High School	High School / GED	Associate Degree /Some College	Bachelors' Degree	Masters' Degree or Higher

**13. Please include any suggestions or additional comments that you feel may help improve the performance of your municipality.**

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