

Central Jackson County Fire Protection District

2008 Citizen Survey – Executive Summary

May 9, 2008

During April 2008, a 10-minute telephone survey was conducted with 400 residents of the area served by the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District in an effort to determine citizen satisfaction with various government services, and to seek input on a funding request being considered for the future.

Specifically, the survey asked citizens to:

- Rate the area’s ambulance, police, and fire services, the city government, the school district, and the parks and recreation programs either excellent, good, fair or poor. (Those who rated an item “poor” were asked to provide specific reasons for their rating.)
- Demonstrate their level of awareness regarding the specific name of their local fire protection service, and state whether they believe that this service is funded through property taxes or by city funds.
- State their level of support or opposition to two different funding proposals for expanded and upgraded fire protection equipment: a 1/2-cent sales tax increase (with the equivalent of 1/4-cent “returned” through reduced property taxes), and a tax levy increase.
- Select which of these two options they would prefer (or whether they would oppose any request for increased funding).
- Provide demographic information, including the length of time they had lived in their community, their age, whether they own or rent their present residence, whether they have any children under the age of 18 living at home, and their gender.

To participate in the survey, a respondent had to be a head of household (either male or female) and a registered voter.

Completed surveys were divided to match the general population density patterns within the CJCFPD in a manner that would be simple for the respondents to report. The decision was made by the client to divide the calling group into four, 100-completed call segments:

- Grain Valley
- Blue Springs, North of I-70
- Blue Springs, Between I-70 and Highway 40
- Blue Springs, South of Highway 40

While this approach did eliminate a segment of the area covered by the Fire Protection District (primarily Lake Tapawingo), it was the client's judgment this division would provide an adequate review of the opinions of the vast majority of the citizens who are served.

Generally speaking, the survey participants seem to be extremely pleased with all the various government and city services, and with their local school district. In terms of the funding options, the strong preference (at the time this survey was taken) was for the 1/2-cent sales tax option. Specifically:

- Combined “excellent” and “good” percentages for the six rated services (fire, police, ambulance, city government, the school district, and the parks and recreation programs) ranged from 84%, for the school district, down to 63% for the ambulance service.
- For “the fire department,” respondents offered a combined excellent/good score of 78% (with nearly half of that 78% rating it “excellent”). In fact, of those who did not offer this score, 78 (20%) said “don’t know,” and 11 (3%) said “fair.” No respondents said that their fire department was “poor.”
- Not surprisingly “don’t know” was the most popular answer when respondents were asked to name their local fire department, as 144 out of the 400 respondents didn’t want to offer a guess. Within the regions, 53% of Grain Valley residents said “don’t know,” while all three segments of Blue Springs had “don’t know” or “Blue Springs Fire Department” as the most popular or second-most popular answer, with “Central Jackson County Fire Protection” not far behind.
- More than half (53%) of the respondents said that their fire protection service was funded through property taxes, with 29% saying “don’t know” and 18% saying it was “city funded.”
- A total of 63% said they would either “strongly favor” or “favor” the idea of a 1/2-cent sales tax increase – with an accompanying rollback of property taxes to make the net impact of the increase 1/4-cent – to fund additional fire equipment and to upgrade existing equipment.
- Only 27%, however, offered the same support for an alternative that would provide the necessary funds through an increase in the operating tax levy that would result in a tax increase of approximately \$69 per year for the owner of a \$200,000 home in the district.
- When asked to choose between the two, support for the sales tax increase remained consistent – at 61% -- while “don’t like either one” was actually more popular than the levy increase idea (17% and 14%, respectively).

The following report contains a series of findings, discussion of each of those findings, all the questions and answers, and appropriate cross-tabulations. A brief summary concludes the report.

Central Jackson County Fire Protection District 2008 Citizen Survey – Final Report May 9, 2008

Findings

Finding 1: Residents appear to be generally satisfied with the core government services, with all but one (of six) receiving combined “excellent/good” scores of 78% or higher.

After a respondent had identified that he or she was a head of household (male or female) and a registered voter, the survey asked the potential participant to pinpoint the location of his or her residence to ensure that the division of completed calls closely matched the general population density patterns found within the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District.

Specifically, respondents were asked if they lived “in or near” Grain Valley or “in or near” Blue Springs. Those who selected “Blue Springs” were asked an additional question to determine whether they lived north of I-70, between I-70 and Highway 40, or south of Highway 40. One hundred surveys were completed in each region.

Assuming that the individual lived in a region where there was still room under the quota when he or she was contacted, the survey began in earnest by asking each respondent to rate six services – city government, fire, police, ambulance, the school district, and the parks and recreation programs – either “excellent,” “good,” “fair,” or “poor.”

The responses show a population that could best be described as “very satisfied.” Specifically, the combined “excellent” and “good” scores were as follows:

- School district – 84%
- Parks and recreation programs – 83%
- Police department – 83%
- City government – 83%
- Fire department – 78%
- Ambulance services – 63%

Most of the remaining respondents said either “fair” or “don’t know.” In fact, only 15 times was a service given a rating of “poor.” Considering that a total of 2,400 votes were cast (six services x 400 respondents), the good feelings are quite evident.

Those scant few who graded an area “fair” or “poor” were asked to explain their ratings. Not surprisingly, speed of service was the chief complaint for such components as fire, police and ambulance, while other services received fairly typical comments from those who find such areas less than exemplary.

A review of the results by demographic group and by geographic region shows very little in the way of notable differences. While scores did vary somewhat based on the location of the respondent’s residence, how long he or she had lived in the community, his or her age, whether the person owned or rented their current residence, and whether they had children in the home or not, these differences were not statistically significant. In fact, the lowest score on any area (57% “excellent/good” combined score for ambulance service among the Blue Springs residents who lived south of Highway 40) still was relatively strong.

All of these results seem to suggest that there are no systemic, nagging issues which would cause a significant number of potential voters to automatically reject the idea of enhanced funding, simply because they are dissatisfied with the services currently being provided.

First of all, I’d like you to rate each of the following services, based on your experience, what you may have heard from others, or just your general impression. Please rate each one either excellent, good, fair, or poor. Questions 5 through 16 were rotated, but the pairs were kept together so they made sense to the respondent. “Don’t know” was not read to respondents. All questions reported in percentages may add to more or less than 100%, due to rounding.

5. Ambulance service

Response	Percentage
Excellent	24%
Good	39%
Fair	2%
Poor	1%
Don’t know (not read)	35%

6. Why did you rate the ambulance service FAIR/POOR? Asked only of the 9 respondents who answered question 5 either “fair” or “poor.” All verbatim responses detailed below.

I haven't heard good things about them getting somewhere quickly when they are called.

Just don't seem to be too responsive when needed.

Slow to respond at times is what I hear.

I had a neighbor that had a stroke and it took them what seemed like a long time to get there. I think they got lost.

911 took forever to get the information so they could respond.

My friend said they were very slow when they needed them. I really don't have any experience with them, though.

Some of the paramedics are rude and very condescending.

There is just nothing special about them. They are OK; fair.

I have Prairie Township. It is 8 miles away.

7. Police department

Response	Percentage
Excellent	25%
Good	58%
Fair	5%
Poor	2%
Don't know (not read)	10%

8. Why did you rate the police department FAIR/POOR? *Asked only of the 29 respondents who answered question 7 either "fair" or "poor." Of those who were asked this question, 24 complained about the response time. Verbatim comments from the other five respondents are listed below.*

The time I needed help they were unresponsive. We did not get suggestions from them when we asked about getting neighborhood patrols. We asked for a speed sign and they did not do it.

I have known people who have gotten off because of improper police searches of their car. That should not happen.

I had a car accident and I got a ticket, which was unfair. I tried to call the officer and he never returned my call.

They need to address the speeding in our area. They say they don't have a traffic department.

Had an incident at my house and nothing got taken care of.

9. Fire department

Response	Percentage
Excellent	37%
Good	41%
Fair	3%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	20%

10. Why did you rate the fire department FAIR/POOR? *Asked only of the 11 respondents who answered question 9 either "fair" or "poor." All verbatim responses detailed below.*

I don't know much about them, but I don't think they have what is needed equipment-wise.

It seems to take them a while to respond.

They are just an average fire district.

Again, they don't seem to respond very fast.

I think they could use more resources.

We need to update and expand, and until we do we will probably not be as efficient.

Their response time could be better, and I am not sure they have what they need to protect us today.

I really don't know a lot about them, but I think they are just average.

Our growing community has put a lot of stress on them. We need to modernize.

Poor response time. I had a neighbor whose house burned down and it took them forever to get there. They also were slow getting the hydrant hooked up. They also didn't post a guard at the house like they said they would.

Nothing special.

11. School district

Response	Percentage
Excellent	38%
Good	46%
Fair	4%
Poor	0%
Don't know (not read)	12%

12. Why did you rate the school district FAIR/POOR? *Asked only of the 16 respondents who answered question 11 either "fair" or "poor." All verbatim responses detailed below.*

They don't teach; they baby-sit.

Schools are getting more students and getting crowded.

The district could use some focus and leadership.

Continued growth has made the district need more resources.

Just an average district.

We need to hire quality teachers to keep our district on par.

Classrooms are getting crowded.

The area continues to grow and more schools are needed.

We need to upgrade the technology in the classrooms.

They lack direction in administration.

The community is growing and we need more quality teachers.

We need to upgrade our teachers.

There are not good schools here. Staff is low quality.

We are overcrowded because we don't have as many schools as needed.

They go overboard on discipline. They are too severe in disciplinary procedures.

I don't have kids, but I have heard they need to improve.

13. City government

Response	Percentage
Excellent	11%
Good	72%
Fair	8%
Poor	1%
Don't know (not read)	9%

14. Why did you rate the city government FAIR/POOR? *Asked only of the 35 respondents who answered question 13 either "fair" or "poor." Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Other (see below)	15
They lack vision/direction	13
Don't trust them	7

Verbatim "other" comments

Overall leadership needs improvement.

Our taxes are high and we don't have much to show for it.

Our infrastructure needs improvement.

They do not take care of basic infrastructure and they lack vision.

Because of what they allowed to happen in Blue Springs. The homes that they have allowed to be built are starter homes.

We need new officials. We are getting a new mayor, but others need to be replaced as well.

City government officials are too reserved and do not seem friendly to the community.

Too many special interest groups with agendas that hurt the government.

They don't follow through on promises or plans.

There are some departments in need of improvement, and we recently mailed in a survey for the government.

I don't think they are entirely forthright in their dealings.

There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed, and they are not concerned about them.

Too much bureaucratic nonsense.

They lack vision. Too many poor quality businesses and fast food chains are here.

The south side is not as good as the north side.

15. Parks and recreation programs

Response	Percentage
Excellent	34%
Good	49%
Fair	6%
Poor	<1%
Don't know (not read)	11%

16. Why did you rate the parks and recreation programs FAIR/POOR? *Asked only of the 23 respondents who answered question 15 either "fair" or "poor." All verbatim comments displayed below.*

They are just not very friendly to work with when you need something.

I wish there were more tennis courts.

I just think they could be improved...kept up better.

More variety in programs and more parks.

I would like to see more walking trails.

They are not oriented towards taking pets.

Not bad, just nothing special.

The Rec programs are just OK.

I think they need more off-leash parks.

There seems to be plenty of baseball and softball, but not enough for families.

Just average.

There doesn't seem to be good quality ones.

Other than softball and baseball fields, there is little.

They are not clean, in my opinion.

They are not maintained well.

Not enough of them.

We could use some more.

Offering more types of summer camps for kids would be nice.

The programs are fine, but they don't get the information out well that a program is actually going to start.

They could do a little more to make our parks pet friendly, and many are not easily accessible by foot.

We need more parks and higher quality ones.

Parks are mediocre. Nothing out of the ordinary. The baseball fields are good, however.

There are not enough facilities for basketball and volleyball.

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Excellent” and “Fair” percentages, followed by “Excellent” percentage in parentheses

Item	Combined “Excellent/Good” percentage (“Excellent” percentage in parentheses)
School District	84% (38%)
Parks and Recreation Programs	83% (34%)
Police Department	83% (25%)
City Government	83% (11%)
Fire Department	78% (37%)
Ambulance Services	63% (24%)

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Excellent/Good” percentage by geographic region and length of time living in the community.
Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

Item rated	Combined “Excellent/Good” percentage overall	Grain Valley (n=100)	Blue Springs, N of I-70 (n=100)	Blue Springs, between 70/40 (n=100)	Blue Springs, south of 40 Highway (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=52)	More than 5 years to 15 years (n=118)	More than 15 years (n=230)
School District	84%	87%	82%	82%	86%	83%	82%	86%
Parks/Rec	83%	82%	90%	81%	81%	85%	82%	84%
Police	83%	81%	86%	83%	84%	83%	84%	83%
City Gov.	83%	78%	87%	80%	85%	83%	81%	83%
Fire	78%	78%	77%	80%	76%	81%	79%	77%
Ambulance	63%	69%	65%	59%	57%	63%	62%	63%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Excellent/Good” percentage by age, own or rent home, and presence (or lack) of children under 18 in the home. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that “age” will note square with “overall” because three respondents refused to answer this question.

Item rated	Combined “Excellent/Good” percentage overall	18 to 34 (n=90)	35 to 54 (n=165)	55 or older (n=142)	Own (n=331)	Rent (n=69)	Kids, yes (n=138)	Kids, no (n=262)
School District	84%	82%	86%	83%	85%	78%	88%	82%
Parks/Rec	83%	87%	82%	83%	84%	81%	86%	82%
Police	83%	91%	81%	82%	85%	75%	85%	83%
City Gov.	83%	80%	83%	83%	83%	78%	79%	84%
Fire	78%	79%	77%	78%	77%	81%	75%	79%
Ambulance	63%	64%	63%	61%	63%	62%	65%	61%

Finding 2: Awareness of the specific names of the fire department serving the region is not overwhelming, with most respondents saying “don’t know,” and a meaningful segment of the remaining participants offering incorrect responses. More than half of the overall respondent group believes that fire protection is funded through property taxes, although that awareness level varies significantly among the subgroups studied.

To develop a sense of how well residents are informed about the specific name of their fire protection service – awareness that will be critical when they are asked for their support in the future on a funding proposal – each participant was asked to name the fire department that serves his or her community.

Overall, “don’t know” was the most popular answer (144 respondents), with “Blue Springs Fire Department” (94), “Central Jackson County Fire Protection District” (91), and “Jackson County Fire Department” (56) following in terms of popularity. (It is important to note that these names were NOT read to the respondents, but were recorded by the interviewer based on the unaided comments of survey participants.)

Even more interesting was the study of responses by geographic region. Specifically:

- Grain Valley – 53% “don’t know,” 20% “Central Jackson County Fire Protection District,” and 19% “Jackson County Fire Department.”
- Blue Springs, north of I-70 – 31% “Blue Springs Fire Department,” 29% “don’t know,” 21% “Central Jackson County Fire Protection District,” and, 17% “Jackson County Fire Department.”
- Blue Springs, between I-70 and Highway 40 – 33% “don’t know,” 32% “Blue Springs Fire Department,” 23% “Central Jackson County Fire Protection District,” 8% “Jackson County Fire Department.”
- Blue Springs, south of Highway 40 – 31% “Blue Springs Fire Department,” 29% “don’t know,” 27% “Central Jackson County Fire Protection District,” and 12% “Jackson County Fire Department.”

These results would seem to indicate that there will be need to further educate individuals as to the exact name of their fire protection service, to ensure that potential voters do not ignore the ballot issue under the assumption that it does not apply to them.

The survey then asked individuals whether they believed that fire protection was funded by property taxes or by their local city. Overall, 53% said “property taxes,” 29% said “don’t know,” and 18% said “city funded.” Interestingly, however, while the order did not change based on the respondent’s demographic characteristics or geographic area, the scores did vary.

For example, while 62% of those living between I-70 and Highway 40 said “property taxes,” only 48% of those living in Grain Valley said the same thing. Similar statistically significant variations were seen in other regions but, again, the order remained the same.

17. Thinking now just about fire protection, what, as far as you know, is the name of the fire department that serves your community? *List was NOT read to respondents, nor was “don’t know.” Interviewers were allowed to ask clarifying questions when a respondent gave a partial answer. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
Don't know	144
Blue Springs Fire Department	94
Central Jackson County Fire Protection District	91
Jackson County Fire Department	56
Eastern Jackson County Fire Department	6
Grain Valley Fire Department	3
Sni A Bar Fire Department	2
Prairie Township Fire Department	2
Sni Valley Fire Department	1
Mid Continent Fire Protection District	1

**Cross-tabulation: Perception of local fire department name by geographic region
(only top answers shown below)**

	Overall	Grain Valley	Blue Springs/N of I-70	Blue Springs/ Between 70 and 40	Blue Springs/ S of 40
Don't know	36%	53%	29%	33%	29%
"Blue Springs Fire Department"	24%	0%	31%	32%	31%
"Central Jackson County Fire Protection"	23%	20%	21%	23%	27%
"Jackson County Fire Department"	14%	19%	17%	8%	12%

18. As far as you know, how is your fire protection service funded? Is it funded by your city, through property taxes or some other means? "Don't know" was not read.

Response	Percentage
Property taxes	53%
City funded	18%
Don't know (not read)	29%

Cross-tabulation: Funding awareness by geographic region and length of time living in the community. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

Funding source	Overall	Grain Valley (n=100)	Blue Springs, N of I-70 (n=100)	Blue Springs, between 70/40 (n=100)	Blue Springs, south of 40 Highway (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=52)	More than 5 years to 15 years (n=118)	More than 15 years (n=230)
Property taxes	53%	48%	51%	62%	51%	42%	57%	53%
Don't know	29%	35%	30%	20%	32%	37%	27%	29%
City funded	18%	17%	19%	18%	17%	21%	16%	18%

Cross-tabulation: Funding awareness by age, own or rent home, and presence (or lack) of children under 18 in the home. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that “age” will note square with “overall” because three respondents refused to answer this question.

Item rated	Overall	18 to 34 (n=90)	35 to 54 (n=165)	55 or older (n=142)	Own (n=331)	Rent (n=69)	Kids, yes (n=138)	Kids, no (n=262)
Property taxes	53%	53%	47%	61%	53%	51%	44%	58%
Don't know	29%	30%	35%	22%	28%	33%	33%	27%
City funded	18%	17%	18%	18%	18%	16%	22%	15%

Finding 3: Survey participants found favor with the sales tax option, but were much less enthusiastic about an alternative approach that would result in an increase in the operating tax levy. When asked to choose between the two, the sales tax option was the clear choice at the time this survey was taken.

Having now introduced the topic of fire protection and its funding, the survey then presented voters with two options for addressing the increasing equipment needs that come with serving a growing region.

The first option described the possibility of a 1/2-cent sales tax within the boundaries of the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District that, if enacted, would result in a rollback of property taxes to make the net increase 1/4-cent. When asked how they would vote on such a proposal, 63% of survey participants said they would either “strongly favor” or “favor” such an idea. (The use of “softer” response choices – rather than yes/no – is intentional, because the concepts being presented are *ideas* being considered. The intent is to seek comment, not commitment, at this stage.)

Those who found favor with this idea liked the fact that the cost would be shared by all, recognized that the department needs additional equipment, and appreciated that there would be a property tax rollback. Opponents said they didn’t want to add another tax, and that it would “add to the cost of everything.”

The reaction to option two – an increase in the operating tax levy that would result in additional tax of approximately \$69 per year for the owner of a \$200,000 home – was not nearly so warmly received. In fact, only 27% said they would “strongly favor” or “favor” this idea, while 49% said they would “oppose” or “strongly oppose” it. Those who supported the idea said they wanted to support the fire district, and that it seemed like the overall cost to taxpayers would be less than option one. Opponents didn’t want their taxes raised, and preferred the idea of a sales tax instead.

After being given the chance to share their thoughts about the merits of each option, respondents were asked to select the one that they would prefer.

Once again, the sales tax was the clear preference, as 61% chose this option, while 17% said they didn’t like either option, 14% said they preferred the levy increase, and 8% said “don’t know.” (“Don’t like either option,” and “don’t know” were not offered as answer choices, but were recorded by the interviewer if the individual made such a comment.)

There are three important items of note on the answers to this particular question.

First, the sales tax option only lost 2% of its support between the general, “How do you feel about this idea?” question and the specific, “Which one would you choose?” This means that those who liked the idea retained their support even after hearing the other concept.

Second, a review of the various demographic and geographic subgroups shows no meaningful differences of opinion. The sales tax option is the clear choice, no matter where the respondent lives, and no matter what his or her demographic characteristics may be.

Third, while the support of this option appears solid, it should be considered a starting point for a strong communications program to inform citizens about the specific proposal components.

The reason for the recommendation is that this survey has an “error factor” of +/- 5%, meaning that if this survey were conducted with *all* residents of the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District – instead of just 400 – the results that would be achieved would be +/- 5% of the numbers in this survey. In other words, the actual support for a sales tax increase, as of April 2008, is between 56% and 66%.

Certainly, these are positive numbers, but there is work to be done to present a compelling message that solidified those who are in support.

The specific fire department that serves each community can be confusing. In fact, most residents of the cities of Blue Springs, Grain Valley and Lake Tapawingo, and some surrounding rural areas, are served by the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District. Based on the increasing residential and commercial population in the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District, the leadership of the District is considering asking voters in an upcoming election to support additional funding. This funding would be used to increase staffing, to add new fire equipment and upgrade existing equipment to allow for a reduction of response time and to enhance the safety of the community and the firefighters.

19. One of the ideas being considered for this funding request is to ask voters to support a one-half cent increase in the sales tax on all purchases made within the boundaries of the Fire Protection district. However, if this were passed, Missouri law dictates that all residents would see a reduction in their property taxes equal to half of the sales tax increase. In other words, while the increase in the sales tax would be one-half cent, the actual net increase – because of the reduction in property tax – would be one-quarter cent. If the Fire Protection District decided to place a one-half cent sales tax increase – with the property tax reduction – on the ballot in the future, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose it? “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” and “Don’t know” were not read to respondents.

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	21%
Favor	42%
Lean favor (not read)	3%
Lean oppose (not read)	0%
Oppose	14%
Strongly oppose	1%
Don’t know (not read)	19%

20. Why do you think that you would favor such a proposal? *Asked only of the 265 respondents who answered “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor” on question 19. (Those who did not skipped to question 21.) Those who answered this question then skipped to question 22. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
Cost would be shared by all	109
Fire Department needs to upgrade its facilities and equipment	69
I like the idea of property taxes going down	38
It would generate more money with a sales tax	30
Other (see below)	19

Verbatim “other” comments

It would only affect those who buy things.

We would actually only pay 1/4-cent sales tax.

I am a great believer in supporting all the services that serve our community.

It would be worth it for our protection.

I am for anything that helps protect our community.

Because it is necessary for better fire protection.

We need to assist in funding those that protect us and our property.

I realize how much this community is growing.

It seems fair.

I support what they do and think they need more to help protect us.

It would control how much I would buy.

It might work, but the amount is confusing to me. I do not know how much our cost would actually amount to.

It is a half-cent, and we throw that away daily.

I think it would be a fair way to raise money.

I would like protection and quick service.

It would take additional funding to meet the necessary needs of the department.

For the safety of our residents.

It would provide us with more protection and would cost less in the long run.

It would be a good way to manage my spending.

21. Why do you think you would oppose such a proposal? *Asked only of the 59 respondents who answered “Lean oppose,” “Oppose,” or “Strongly oppose” on question 19. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
It is another tax we don't want	28
It will raise the cost of everything	26
Other (see below)	5

Verbatim “other” comments

It would be better to put it on the property tax.

They can find the funds elsewhere.

Because the sales tax would fall under the burden of shoppers who don't live here and only shop here.

I saw such poor performance in my neighbor's fire. They are so close, just at the bottom of the hill, but it took so long to get here.

I don't have any property yet, so my taxes can't be reduced.

- 22. Another option – instead of an increase in the sales tax – would be to increase the operating tax levy for the Fire Protection District. Doing so would result in a tax increase of 69 dollars per year for the owner of a \$200,000 home. If the Fire Protection District decided to place an increase in the operating tax levy on the ballot in the future – rather than an increase in the sales tax – would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose it? “Lean favor,” “Lean oppose,” and “Don’t know” were not read to respondents.**

Response	Percentage
Strongly favor	4%
Favor	23%
Lean favor (not read)	1%
Lean oppose (not read)	3%
Oppose	36%
Strongly oppose	13%
Don’t know (not read)	21%

23. Why do you think that you would favor such a proposal? *Asked only of the 112 respondents who answered “Strongly favor,” “Favor,” or “Lean favor” on question 22. (Those who did not skip to question 24.) Those who answered this question then skipped to question 25. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
Would help to improve the fire department	41
Would be less expensive	37
Those who own property that needs protection should pay the cost	15
Other (see below)	11
Because I rent, so it wouldn't affect me	8

Verbatim “other” comments

It would be quick and painless.

I don't think that is too much money to fund what they need.

With it on the property tax the people benefiting from it would control the cost.

I would prefer the first option, but this would not be too much of a hardship.

It would be unfair for the people who don't live here to pay for these services.

Either option would be fine.

Everybody would be taxed the same.

It is a definite amount. I know exactly how we would be impacted. It seems fair.

It would help make our community safer.

It would be less of a financial impact on us.

It is more for people who live in an expensive house, and I don't have that type of home.

24. Why do you think you would oppose such a proposal? *Asked only of the 204 respondents who answered “Lean oppose,” “Oppose,” or “Strongly oppose” on question 22. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
Don't want my taxes raised	111
Prefer having a sales tax	64
Only affects property owners	20
Other (see below)	9

Verbatim “other” comments

It sounds like it would cost more people more money.

It would penalize a certain group of people.

It should be split evenly.

I do not think extra staff or new equipment will do any good. They are inept.

The entire community should pay for it.

It would be easier to spread it out over time. Plus, it would be more funding than with a sales tax.

It would hurt us financially.

It wouldn't be good for the economy like the other proposal.

It would take too much money out of my pocket.

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage for each option by geographic region and length of time living in the community. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

Options	Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage overall	Grain Valley (n=100)	Blue Springs, N of I-70 (n=100)	Blue Springs, between 70/40 (n=100)	Blue Springs, south of 40 Highway (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=52)	More than 5 years to 15 years (n=118)	More than 15 years (n=230)
Sales tax	63%	61%	66%	60%	65%	69%	60%	63%
Levy increase	27%	22%	25%	30%	30%	33%	22%	28%

Cross-tabulation: Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage for each option by age, own or rent home, and presence (or lack) of children under 18 in the home. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that “age” will note square with “overall” because three respondents refused to answer this question.

Options	Combined “Strongly favor/Favor” percentage overall	18 to 34 (n=90)	35 to 54 (n=165)	55 or older (n=142)	Own (n=331)	Rent (n=69)	Kids, yes (n=138)	Kids, no (n=262)
Sales tax	63%	58%	68%	61%	64%	59%	68%	60%
Levy increase	27%	27%	27%	27%	27%	23%	25%	28%

25. Of the two choices – either a one-half cent sales tax increase that would come with a property tax reduction, or an increase in the operating tax levy that would result in a tax increase of 69 dollars for the owner of a \$200,000 home – which one do you think is the best option? “Don’t like either one” and “Don’t know” were not read.

Response	Percentage
Sales tax increase	61%
Don’t like either one (not read)	17%
Levy increase	14%
Don’t know (not read)	8%

26. Why do you prefer the sales tax increase option? *Asked only of the 243 respondents who answered “Sales tax increase” on question 25. After answer this question, respondents skipped to question 28. Those who did not answer this question skipped to question 27. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
Many more will pay/ share in the cost	109
Lowers property taxes	52
Is less of a burden than property tax	40
Provides more funds	37
Other (see below)	5

Verbatim “other” comments

It would be fair. Even renters would contribute.

It would be the fastest way to get things done.

I think it would have more success in passing with the voters.

A quarter-cent seems fair for all.

It would be the easiest way to raise the money needed.

27. Why do you prefer the levy increase option? *Asked only of the 57 respondents who answered “Levy increase” on question 25. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. Answers below were not provided to respondents, but were coded from open-ended responses based on similar words and phrases.*

Response	Number
Costs less than a sales tax	24
People with property benefit and so they should bear the burden	19
It would not affect me, because I don't own property	7
Other (see below)	7

Verbatim “other” comments

I could go with either, because we need to improve our Fire Department and protect our people.

Either would be fine.

It would be done and over with just paying that one time.

Because my home is not worth \$200,000.

It seems fair and I know how much it would impact us.

It would be less stressful for us.

I don't have to pay, because I don't have a house that expensive.

Cross-tabulation: Preferred option by geographic region and length of time living in the community. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group.

Preferred option	Overall	Grain Valley (n=100)	Blue Springs, N of I-70 (n=100)	Blue Springs, between 70/40 (n=100)	Blue Springs, south of 40 Highway (n=100)	Up to 5 years (n=52)	More than 5 years to 15 years (n=118)	More than 15 years (n=230)
Sales tax	61%	59%	65%	57%	62%	65%	58%	61%
Neither	17%	14%	15%	17%	22%	12%	19%	17%
Levy increase	14%	16%	14%	16%	11%	17%	14%	13%

Cross-tabulation: Preferred option by age, own or rent home, and presence (or lack) of children under 18 in the home. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and that “age” will note square with “overall” because three respondents refused to answer this question.

Preferred option	Overall	18 to 34 (n=90)	35 to 54 (n=165)	55 or older (n=142)	Own (n=331)	Rent (n=69)	Kids, yes (n=138)	Kids, no (n=262)
Sales tax	61%	59%	67%	56%	61%	59%	65%	58%
Neither	17%	16%	16%	19%	18%	14%	13%	19%
Levy increase	14%	17%	10%	17%	15%	12%	14%	14%

Finding 4: The survey group consists of a good mix of relatively new and long-term residents, a variety of ages, an abundance of homeowners, and a decent number of individuals who currently have children in the home.

While potential participants had to be a head of household and a registered voter, and they had to live in a region of the fire district that still had room under the quota when they were contacted, the rest of the demographic characteristics were left up to the random digit dialing process. As is always the case, this process produces a good cross-section of participants.

For example:

- While the majority (57%) had lived in their community more than 15 years, there was also solid representation from those who had been there no more than five years (13%).
- A total of 22% were between 18 and 34 years old, while 41% were 35 to 54, and 36% were 55 or older. (Three respondents refused to provide their age.)
- Homeowners dominated the survey group (83%).
- Nearly 2/3 of survey participants (65%) did not have a child under 18 in the home at the present time, but 35% did.

My last few questions will also help us divide our interviews into groups.

28. How long have you, yourself, lived in your community? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	2%
2 years to 5 years	11%
More than 5 years to 10 years	9%
More than 10 years to 15 years	20%
More than 15 years	48%
I've lived here all my life	9%

29. In what age group are you? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents. "Refused" was not read.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	4%
25 to 34	18%
35 to 44	20%
45 to 54	21%
55 to 64	19%
65 or older	17%
Refused (not read)	1%

30. Do you own or rent your present residence?

Response	Percentage
Own	83%
Rent	17%

31. Do you presently have any children under the age of 18 living at your residence?

Response	Percentage
Yes	35%
No	65%

32. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	56%
Male	44%

Summary

The citizens served by the Central Jackson County Fire Protection District sent some clear messages through their responses to this survey. Specifically:

- They find significant favor with the services they are receiving from the police and fire department, the city government (including parks and recreation) and their school district. Even the somewhat lower rated ambulance service was still given “excellent” or “good” marks by almost 2/3 of the respondents. This means that residents are positively inclined toward ongoing support of these key services.
- They struggle to correctly identify who provides their fire protection service, and only a little more than half (53%) believe that such services are funded by property taxes. This means that they will need to be educated as to the fact that any proposal will, in fact, impact their fire protection because it is addressing the needs of those who provide that service to them.
- They see the need to upgrade equipment for fire protection, and would much prefer to do so through a sales tax that includes a property tax rollback versus an increase in the operating tax levy. While the clarity of opinion is good news, it is also clear that education will be critical to ensure the residents truly understand that, indeed, this property tax rollback is not a “sales tactic,” but is, actually, a point of law.

The greatest risk found in these results is the risk of complacency. Clearly, the support for the service is there, and the strong preference for the sales tax option is evident as of April 2008. To solidify that support will require a comprehensive, clear communications program from the point that the proposal is finalized until Election Day. That program should detail:

- The need – in real, not dramatic, terms
- The benefit to residents
- How the tax/rollback works

Doing so will demonstrate to voters that they do, in fact, need to go to the polls and publicly demonstrate their support for enhanced fire protection in this steadily growing region.