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St. Croix County Resident Survey, 2013 Summary Report

**James Janke
David Trechter**

**Survey Research Center Report 2013/8
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Table of Contents

Survey Purpose	2
Survey Methods	2
Profile of Respondents	3
Overview	4
Protecting At Risk Populations: Quality Human and Health Services	8
Community Development	9
Public Safety and Criminal Justice	10
Transportation	11
Economic Development & Financial Health of the County	12
Comments	13
Conclusions	14
Appendix A – St. Croix County Resident Survey “Other” Responses and Open-Ended Comments.....	15
Appendix B- Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question	24

Survey Purpose

This survey is part of St. Croix County's strategic planning update and was developed to gather opinions from St. Croix County residents about the current importance of various County functions and future spending levels for those functions. The County chose to work with the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

Survey Methods

In January 2013, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to a random sample of 1,146 St. Croix County residents. Eighty-nine surveys were returned as non-deliverable, resulting in a net of 1,057 delivered surveys.

The overall response rate from the public was 34 percent (388 completed questionnaires). Based on the estimated number of adults in the population of the County (61,462)¹, the results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 5.0 percent with 95 percent confidence.

At the end of the survey, respondents were provided a space to write additional comments. In addition, a few questions contained an "Other" reply option in which the respondent could write an answer. **These written responses are contained in Appendix A.**

Appendix B contains a copy of the survey questionnaire with a complete quantitative summary of responses by question.

¹ 2010 US Census

Profile of Respondents

Tables 1a and 1b summarize the demographic profile of the 388 respondents.

- 64% were men.
- 76% were age 45 or older.
- 67% were currently employed or self-employed.
- 36% had a four-year college degree or higher.
- Nearly half (47%) were long-time residents of the county (25+ years).
- Most (95%) were homeowners.
- 54% resided in towns, 28% in cities, and 19% in villages.
- 46% had annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- The top five ZIP codes were Hudson (39%), New Richmond (18%), River Falls (9%), Somerset (7%) and Roberts (5%).

Table 1a. Demographic Profile of Respondents – St. Croix County Public Opinions							
Gender (Age 18+)	Count	Male	Female				
Survey sample	379	64%	36%				
Age 18+	Count	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65+
Survey sample	381	<1%	9%	16%	22%	28%	26%
Employment Status (age 16+)	Count	Full-Time	Part-Time	Self	Unemp.	Retired	Other
Survey sample	374	51%	6%	10%	2%	30%	1%
Highest Level of Education (Age 25+)	Count	Less than High Sch.	High Sch. Diploma	Some College/ Tech	Tech/ College Grad.	Bachelor Degree	Graduate/ Profess. Degree
Survey sample	375	2%	17%	21%	13%	27%	19%
Length of Residency	Count	<1 yr.	1-4 yrs.	5 – 9 yrs.	10-24 yrs.	25+ yrs.	
Survey sample	383	0%	7%	17%	28%	47%	
Residence type	Count	Own	Rent	Other			
Survey sample	378	95%	5%	1%			
Residence place	Count	City	Village	Town			
Survey sample	375	28%	19%	53%			
Household Income	Count	Less than \$25,000	\$25,000 – 34,999	\$35,000 – 49,999	\$50,000 – 74,999	\$75,000 – 99,999	\$100,000+
Survey sample	356	7%	9%	16%	21%	18%	28%

Table 1b. ZIP Code of Respondent – St. Croix County Public Opinions									
ZIP	54016	54017	54022	54025	54023	54002	54013	54028	54015
Count	139	64	34	25	19	18	18	12	10
Percent	39%	18%	9%	7%	5%	5%	5%	3%	3%
ZIP	54027	54007	54082	54012	33955	54026	54734	54749	
Count	7	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	
Percent	2%	1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	

Overview

The survey presented a list of 36 St Croix County programs and functions divided into five topical categories: health and human services, community development, public safety and criminal justice, transportation, and economic development and financial health of the county. Respondents were first asked to rate the current importance of each listed program or function using a scale of very important, somewhat important, not important, or don't know. Respondents were next asked to indicate their preferences with respect to the level of St. Croix County spending by the year 2018 for each of the listed items. Response choices were as follows: increase, not change, shrink, or don't know.

In order to aid in the analysis and interpretation of the data, the Survey Research Center assigned a numeric value to each of the response choices as shown in Table 2. Responses in the "don't know" category were excluded from the overview analysis in this section in order to focus the overview on the responses of those who expressed an opinion. The "don't know" responses are included in the tables throughout the report, but they comprise a relatively low percentage of the total, averaging about 5 percent among the importance ratings and 11 percent among the future spending ratings.

Table 2. Numeric Coding Values of Response Choices – St. Croix County Public Opinions			
Current Importance		Spending in 2018	
Response Choice	Value	Response Choice	Value
Very important	2	Increase	2
Somewhat important	1	Not change	1
Not important	0	Shrink	0
Don't know	Not included	Don't know	Not included

The following overview analysis compares programs by the paired values of current importance and preferred future spending levels. We will be particularly interested in paired values that are substantially larger than (1,1) indicating programs that respondents view as very important and that they would prefer to see spending levels increase, and those significantly smaller than (1,1), indicating programs of lesser importance for which respondents would be willing to see spending levels fall.

Using the numeric coding described above, Table 3 (page 5) and Chart 1 (page 6) present mean scores for each of the 36 pairs of questions on the survey. Table 3 indicates the rank order of the means in descending order on the importance scale. Corresponding mean values on the spending scale are adjacent to the importance values.

Protection of abused and neglected children stood out at the top in both importance and future spending. Timely response to emergencies and county highway maintenance were in a statistical tie for second place in both importance and spending.

Table 3. Rank Order Means – St. Croix County Public Opinions				
Item	Importance		Spending	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Protection of abused and neglected children Q5	1.73	1	1.54	1
Services to ensure timely response to emergencies Q24	1.58	2	1.41	3
County highway maintenance Q25	1.56	3	1.43	2
Law enforcement programs Q19	1.48	4	1.28	9
Recruit more manufacturing businesses Q31	1.42	5	1.37	4
Services to conserve natural resources Q 17	1.41	6	1.30	8
Services that conserve groundwater/drinking water Q13	1.40	7	1.30	7
Veteran services Q7	1.39	8	1.34	5
County highway and bridge construction Q26	1.39	9	1.34	6
Nutrition services to elderly and disabled Q2	1.37	10	1.23	11
Adequate access to transportation for elderly and disabled Q29	1.29	11	1.25	10
Services to families to meet needs of children with disabilities Q8	1.23	12	1.15	15
Programs to address juvenile criminal behavior Q6	1.22	13	1.17	14
Programs that assure the County is prepared for health emergencies Q11	1.21	14	1.05	23
Services to encourage recycling Q14	1.19	15	1.11	18
Mental health services Q3	1.17	16	1.13	17
Programs that support the developmentally disabled Q9	1.14	17	1.06	22
Programs to prevent emergencies Q23	1.14	18	1.08	19
Increase use of technology to deliver services Q36	1.13	19	1.19	12
Long range planning to balance development and conservation Q16	1.12	20	1.03	24
Recruit more retail/service businesses Q33	1.12	21	1.19	13
County jail Q20	1.12	22	1.01	26
Pay for performance system for county employees Q30	1.10	23	1.03	25
Public recreation services and facilities Q18	1.09	24	1.08	21
Partnerships with other governments to collaborate on services Q35	1.08	25	1.08	20
County court services Q22	1.04	26	0.97	27
Support for businesses (counseling, educ., tech. assistance) Q34	1.03	27	1.14	16
Local access to staff that determine eligibility for taxpayer supported benefits Q1	1.02	28	0.86	30
Programs that are preventative in nature Q12	0.94	29	0.93	29
Recruit more industrial businesses Q32	0.93	30	0.96	28
Services to address existing addiction problems Q4	0.86	31	0.81	33
Services to provide land records and tax assessment data Q15	0.82	32	0.80	35
Services to rehabilitate criminals Q21	0.78	33	0.81	34
Additional highway width for pedestrian and bicycle lanes Q27	0.77	34	0.83	32
Other public transportation (bus, taxi, train, park & ride) Q28	0.76	35	0.85	31
Programs that address healthy lifestyles Q10	0.69	36	0.70	36

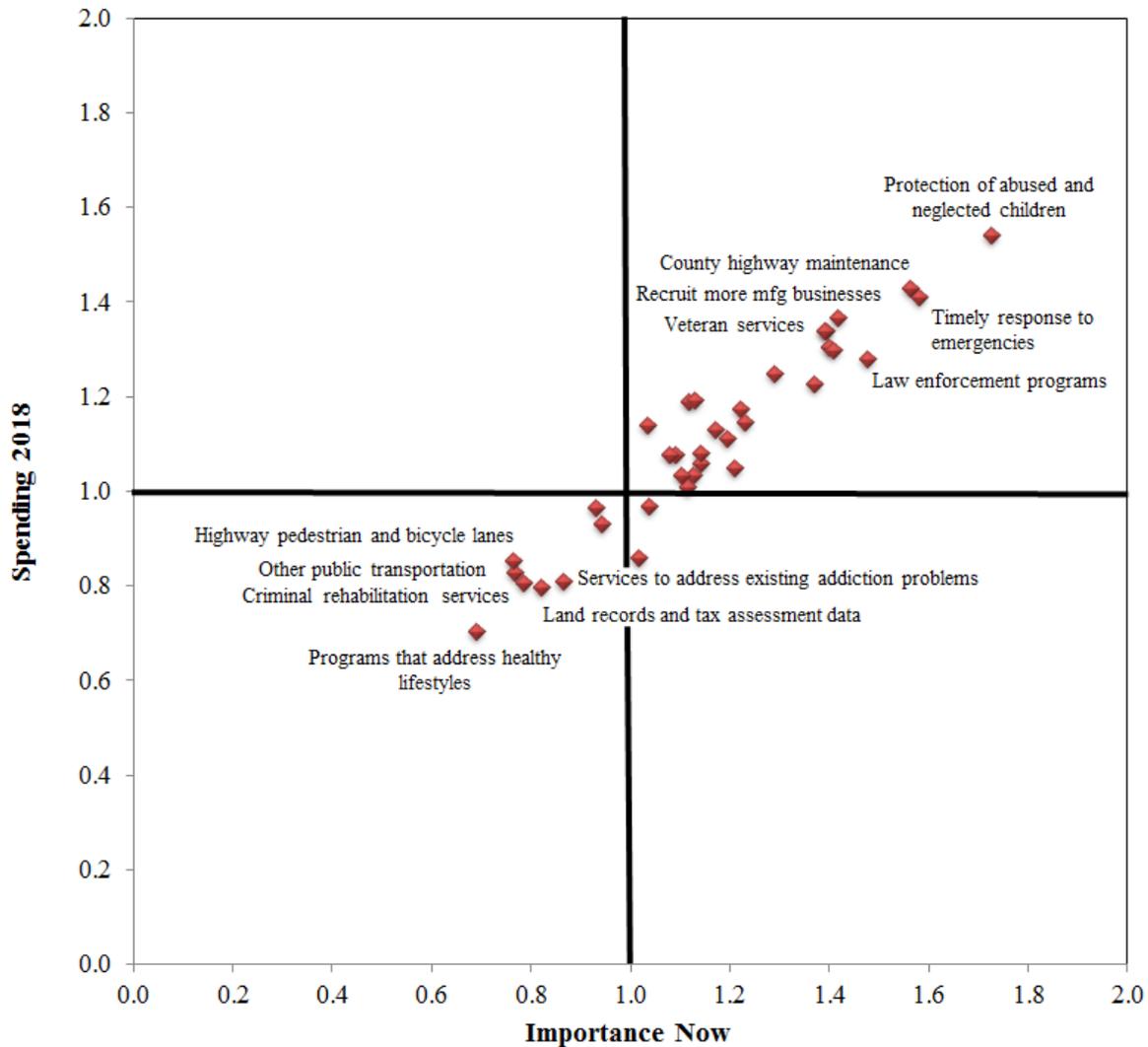
Law enforcement ranked fourth in importance, but respondents gave it a slightly lower rank for future spending. Rounding out remaining programs/services in the top ten were the following: recruit more manufacturing businesses, conservation of natural resources, conservation of groundwater/drinking water, veteran services, highway and bridge construction, and nutritional services for elderly and disabled persons.

At the other end of the importance scale, respondents gave the overall lowest importance and funding ratings to programs that address healthy lifestyles. Other programs/services with lower ratings in both importance and funding included criminal rehabilitation, additional highway width for pedestrian and bicycle lanes, and public transportation.

A comparison of the values in the importance column to the values in the spending column indicates, probably not surprisingly, that functions and services that have high importance ratings also tend to rate higher on the spending preference scale and vice versa.

Chart 1 is a graphical representation of the mean values for importance and for spending contained in Table 3. The pattern in Chart 1 shows the overall tendency for importance ratings and spending ratings to be positively associated as described above. Items of particular interest are those that are closest to the upper right corner (very important, increased spending) and those that are closest to the lower left corner (not important, decrease spending). These programs and functions are those that are near the top of Table 3 and near the bottom of Table 3.

Chart 1. Importance/Spending Matrix



The pattern on Chart 1 indicates that there are many programs and functions grouped in the middle. Mean values for these programs and functions are slightly above 1.0 (somewhat important) on the importance scale and slightly above 1.0 (no change) on the spending scale.

Table 3 and Chart 1 also show that mean values for spending tend to be slightly smaller than the corresponding values for importance.

On a percentage basis, the largest percentages of responses on the importance scale were in the somewhat important category for 26 of the 36 programs and functions. With respect to future spending, the largest percentages of responses were in the no change category for 34 of the 36 functions and services included in the survey.

Although there is an overall preference to retain current levels of spending for most services/programs included in the survey, there is a tendency among those respondents who favor a change in spending to prefer increases in future spending rather than spending cuts. Specifically, in 25 of the 36 programs included in the survey, a greater percentage of respondents favoring a change said they supported an increase in spending rather than a decrease.

Protecting At Risk Populations: Quality Human and Health Services

- With few exceptions, the largest percentages of respondents tended to rate health and human services/programs as somewhat important.
- The most important items were protection of abused and neglected children, veteran services, and nutrition services for the elderly and disabled.
- In eleven of twelve categories, the largest proportion favored no change in future spending, but 52% said future spending should increase for programs to protect abused and neglected children. This was the only program/service in the survey for which the percentage favoring a budget increase exceeded 50% of the respondents.
- Programs that address healthy lifestyles were rated lowest both in importance and future spending and had the lowest ratings of all programs/services included in the questionnaire.

Table 4. Quality Health & Human Services – St. Croix County Public Opinions								
	How Important Now				County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know	Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
1. Local access to staff that determine eligibility for taxpayer supported benefits	21%	51%	19%	8%	12%	53%	24%	12%
2. Services to ensure elderly and disabled residents have adequate and appropriate nutrition.	44%	45%	8%	3%	28%	55%	8%	9%
3. Services that promote mental health	32%	45%	17%	5%	27%	47%	15%	11%
4. Services that address existing addiction problems for residents	14%	53%	27%	7%	11%	47%	27%	14%
5. Protection of abused and neglected children	73%	24%	2%	2%	52%	38%	2%	8%
6. Programs to address juvenile (youth) criminal behavior	32%	53%	11%	4%	24%	53%	9%	14%
7. Veteran services	47%	41%	9%	3%	38%	46%	7%	9%
8. Services to assist families in meeting health and safety needs of their child(ren) with physical, emotional, or developmental disabilities	33%	52%	11%	3%	24%	53%	11%	12%
9. Programs that support the developmentally disabled	26%	58%	12%	4%	14%	64%	9%	13%
10. Programs that address healthy lifestyles for the County	12%	42%	42%	4%	10%	42%	36%	12%
11. Programs that assure the County is prepared for health emergencies	33%	52%	12%	3%	15%	62%	11%	12%
12. Programs that are preventative in nature	19%	47%	25%	9%	14%	49%	20%	16%

Community Development

- Conservation of natural resources such as groundwater, lakes, and agricultural land received the highest percentages in the very important category, with half of respondents rating them as very important.
- The largest percentage of the remaining community development services were viewed as somewhat important.
- Respondents said future spending should remain unchanged in this category, ranging from 45% to 59%.

Table 5. Community Development – St. Croix County Public Opinions

	How Important Now				County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know	Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
13. Services that conserve groundwater/ drinking water	50%	36%	11%	3%	38%	43%	10%	9%
14. Services to encourage recycling	35%	47%	16%	2%	26%	52%	16%	6%
15. Services to provide land records and tax assessment data	11%	53%	28%	8%	5%	58%	23%	13%
16. Long range planning services to balance development and conservation	27%	53%	15%	5%	19%	52%	16%	13%
17. Services to conserve natural resources (agricultural land, lakes, rivers, etc.)	49%	41%	9%	2%	37%	45%	10%	9%
18. Services and facilities that provide public recreation (boat ramps, parks, trails)	25%	56%	16%	3%	19%	59%	12%	9%

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

- Law enforcement and timely response to emergencies were rated very important by at least half of respondents.
- The largest percentages of respondents favored no changes in future spending across all programs/services listed.
- Criminal rehabilitation services rated lower than the other listed categories.

Table 6. Quality Public Safety and Criminal Justice – St. Croix County Public Opinions

	How Important Now				County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know	Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
19. Law enforcement programs (e.g. sheriff's office)	52%	41%	5%	2%	31%	55%	6%	9%
20. County jail	25%	57%	14%	4%	11%	67%	10%	12%
21. Services to rehabilitate criminals	14%	47%	34%	5%	11%	48%	27%	14%
22. County court services	19%	58%	16%	6%	8%	67%	11%	14%
23. Programs to prevent emergencies (e.g. fire codes, flood plain zoning, hazardous material disposal)	26%	58%	13%	3%	16%	63%	9%	12%
24. Services to ensure timely response to emergencies	59%	36%	2%	2%	39%	47%	3%	11%

Transportation

- Highway maintenance stood out at the top of the transportation categories with 58 percent rating it as very important.
- New highway and bridge construction was ranked in second place.
- Additional highway width for pedestrian and bicycle lanes and public transportation ranked lowest in importance and future spending among transportation.

Table 7. Quality Transportation – St. Croix County Public Opinions								
	How Important Now				County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know	Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
25. County highway maintenance (mowing, plowing, repairs)	58%	39%	2%	1%	42%	49%	2%	7%
26. County highway and bridge construction	44%	47%	6%	2%	35%	52%	4%	9%
27. Building/Maintaining additional highway width for pedestrian and bike lanes	15%	45%	37%	3%	15%	45%	31%	9%
28. Other public transportation (bus, taxi, train, park & ride, etc.) in addition to highway items listed above	16%	39%	39%	6%	16%	42%	29%	13%
29. Adequate access to transportation Services for elderly and disabled residents	35%	53%	8%	4%	29%	54%	6%	11%

Economic Development & Financial Health of the County

- Recruitment of more manufacturing business was the top ranked economic development category in both importance and future spending, ahead of recruitment of more industrial businesses and retail/service businesses.
- Recruitment of more industrial businesses was ranked the lowest in importance and future spending.
- Respondents evenly split their opinions with respect to the importance of a pay for performance system for county employees.
- With the exception of manufacturing recruitment, respondents favored no change in future spending in the programs/services included in the survey.

Table 8. Economic Development & Financial Health of the County – St. Croix County Public Opinions

	How Important Now				County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know	Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
30. Implement a pay for performance system for county employees	34%	32%	25%	9%	20%	45%	18%	17%
31. Recruit more manufacturing businesses to the county (e.g., equipment, plastics, electronics, etc.)	50%	36%	10%	4%	43%	40%	9%	9%
32. Recruit more industrial businesses to the County (e.g. gravel mining, power generation, etc.)	26%	35%	33%	6%	23%	42%	26%	10%
33. Recruit more retail/service businesses to the County (e.g. department stores, insurance companies, medical services, etc.)	33%	41%	22%	3%	32%	44%	15%	9%
34. Provide support for existing and start-up businesses and entrepreneurs (counseling, education, tech. assistance)	26%	46%	23%	6%	26%	47%	14%	12%
35. Establish partnerships with other government entities to collaborate on service delivery	25%	44%	18%	12%	21%	48%	14%	17%
36. Increase use of technology to deliver services (online, web-based)	28%	50%	16%	7%	27%	51%	10%	13%

Comments

Toward the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had additional comments they would like to share with the St. Croix County Board. 139 respondents provided written comments in the box provided on the questionnaire. The SRC transcribed the comments and divided their content into 13 categories plus a miscellaneous/other group and a category with comments pertaining to the survey questionnaire. Some respondents' comments contained more than one topic and were split into additional categories as needed, resulting in 147 comments. The results are shown in Table 9. The complete list of responses is included in Appendix A.

Not surprisingly, the budget/taxes category contained the most responses by far (49), accounting for 33% of the comments.

The following quotes are representative of this topic:

“Government on all levels needs to be more efficient and accountable. Attempt to do more with less. Public sector compensation needs to be more aligned with private sector compensation.”

“Make difficult decisions to cut spending while maintaining or increasing essential services.”

“Do not increase spending or budgets, reduce size of government.”

The second most common topic among the comments was about government assistance programs, and comprised 9 percent of the total. The following quotes express the sentiment of most comments on this topic.

“Cut money on assistance programs, too many people are abusing it (welfare, food stamps).”

“Less government involvement so as to hold individuals accountable for their own lives and actions.”

The seventeen comments about the survey questionnaire outnumbered all but the top two categories. Since these responses were not directly related to the services/programs that were the focus of the survey, they were placed at the end of the comment section.

Topic	Count	Percent
Budget/Taxes	49	33%
Gov't Assistance	13	9%
Transportation	11	7%
Health Center/Nursing Home	7	5%
Education	5	3%
Public Safety	5	3%
County Board	4	3%
Jobs/Economic Development	4	3%
Like it Here	4	3%
Natural Resources	4	3%
Pay for Performance	4	3%
Priorities	4	3%
Misc./Other	16	11%
Survey questionnaire	17	12%
Total	147	100%

Conclusions

On average, respondents tended to rate listed County program/services as somewhat important (46%) or very important (33%), while the average of ratings in the not important category was 17%. The top five in importance are protection of children from abuse and neglect, responding to residents in danger from emergencies, highway maintenance, and law enforcement. Rounding out the top ten are natural resource conservation, conservation of groundwater/drinking water, veteran services, construction of county highways and bridges, and nutrition services to the elderly and disabled.

Although there are a substantial proportion of programs and functions that are viewed as at least somewhat important by County residents, residents are reluctant to increase spending levels. Of the 36 programs/services listed, there was only one for which a majority of respondents favored increased funding (protection of abused and neglected children). This presents a dilemma for St. Croix County officials as they attempt to maintain the quality of services and programs in a difficult fiscal environment. The rankings in Table 3 provide a measure of public sentiment among the County's programs and functions, even if such sentiment is not clearly definitive in many cases.

Appendix A – St. Croix County Resident Survey “Other” Responses and Open-Ended Comments

39. Employment Status, Other (4 Responses)

- Homemaker
- Military disabled
- Stay at home mom
- Work two jobs for hours

40. Place of residence, Other (3 Responses)

- Family (2x)
- Trailer Court

46. What additional comments would you like to share with the St. Croix County Board? (147 comments)

Taxes/Budget/ (49 Responses)

- Accountability of spending in each of the forty seven budget areas. Cut wasteful spending.
- Balance the budget and don't raise taxes until our economy recovers.
- Because of the significant tax increases emanating from Washington, taxes at the local level will need to be decreased. The taxpayer is paying far too much in taxes. The government at all levels needs to cut spending.
- Comments made accordingly. Can't determine if taxes allocating of budget items when no info is provided on where/how county dollars are currently being spent! Not enough info provided by chart.
- Determine a budget and stick to it. Don't write checks that the budget cannot cash.
- Do not increase spending or budgets, reduce size of government.
- Don't borrow money. Pay off debt. Condense and prioritize live within budget. We cut back government (even county) needs to cut back. Don't increase taxes. Instead increase how many taxpayers there are. Lower property taxes. We will try to move out of county including businesses next move. Condense government programs and let citizens know of needs so we can step up.
- Don't raise property taxes!
- Even though some services could be increased, it is hard to justify raising taxes on the average citizen. The average citizen continues to lose ground and is becoming increasingly poorer and dependent on government services. Our weak dollar does not help.
- Everyone must cut - even if only a few percent per year-all departments!
- Everything is important. Funds are scarce. Prioritize - use funds wisely. Benefits and comp. should mirror middle of private sector.
- Fiscal responsibility
- Get government back to basics. Get government out of our everyday life. We need to get more from our services and providers without more pay. For what we pay, we do not seem to get as much as others. This survey was so vague it was difficult to answer.
- Government on all levels needs to be more efficient and accountable. Attempt to do more with less. Public sector compensation needs to be more aligned with private sector compensation.

- I appreciate it is hard to decrease any service - as they all have value. I would look for overlaps to eliminate and look for the pay back a program has. Some social services are well meaning, but like money down a black hole. Look for data of success. If businesses increase - some "nice to haves" might come back. Right now we can't afford luxuries. Thank you.
- I feel we are duplicating available state and federal funding. Should not do that!
- I marked many "increase" for 2018. That does not mean I want my taxes to increase to cover all of it. I'd like to see more efficiency in the debts. There are wasted dollars with inefficiency. Taxes raised minimum. I'd be fine if we added quality programs and depts.
- I remember hearing many years ago a politician ask a business person what they could do to help. The correct answer is got out of the way. You don't have to recruit/encourage businesses to come. Just make sure taxes are low, the roads are good for trucks, regulations are reasonable and the employer can read write and do math.
- I would like the county board to give back to the taxpayers the money they used to lobby on behalf of the mega bridge that goes across the St. Croix River. That was not necessary to spend the tax payers' money that foolishly.
- I would like to see a reduction in the size of all governments. I would like to see a reduction in nonessential services provided. I support increased care for those unable to care for themselves (i.e. elderly, physical and mentally handicapped and abused children)
- I'm about to purchase a home in St. Croix County. Why are the property taxes so high? And where does the money go? What am I getting here that others don't have?
- It is hard to ask for changes to budget when I don't know the present budget, or the demands.
- Keep property taxes low and relocate funds you are already spending. Stop increasing taxes. Our budget is already a very large sum!
- Less government overall!
- Less money spent on stupidity and more money spent on advancement of the obvious.
- Live below your means. Spend less money.
- Local government is getting too large to control. They take too much grant money from the state and federal, which is offered to the counties and cities to build or create entities that after it is built or instituted, the tax rates have to then increase to maintain and fund this entity that a majority of the residents didn't want in the first place. Why do cities build police and fire stations that cost upwards of \$30 million building has to be renovated for improvements for millions more. If I have to live on less as a business person, then government agencies should have to bear some pain also. It is time to be responsible and cut back and spend less.
- 1) Long range planning and budget is critical in this rapid developing area. 2) Coordinate and collaborate on the delivery of all county services. 3) Maximize federal and state funding in all service areas when available. 4) The task will be challenging.
- Make difficult decisions to cut spending while maintaining or increasing essential services. Public safety, transportation, and taking care of those who cannot care for themselves are your primary responsibilities. Eliminating unneeded services will provide the resources you need to keep essential programs funded. Thank you for your service.
- Make the hard decisions - cut some spending so our children have a future.
- No more taxes

- No tax (property) increase. Don't cut budget on those in need, young and old.
- Our taxes can't pay for everything-people should have insurance for some of the health/welfare/mental health/addiction issues covered. Our tax dollars spent recruiting more business should be spent not by us but some other development group that benefits directly by new business (land owners, realtors, builders). As tax payers new businesses and new employees and housing has not reduced taxes-just need to build more roads and more schools for them.
- Overall, taxes and spending need to decrease. We need to make St. Croix County a better place to live and work. Our focus should be on education instead of being on health and human services.
- Please take care not to over reach. Homeowners and landowners want lower not higher taxes. Also a pro-business approach for private sector and not projects that are government based that take money out of job creators and transfer to government where it almost always seems less efficient than private sector. Government has its place but does work for citizens who pay for these services. Also are our government employees' pensions greater than private? Would want similar steps to what the state government did in relationship to government pensions and forced union dues. Be a supporter and aid to private sector not hindrance. Private grows economy.
- State and county governments should create and maintain an environment to permit the private sector to act on its own. Just reduce taxes and fees and get out of the way. People know what to do better than the government.
- Stop raising my taxes and get rid of all the wasteful spending. Fix the roads and don't waste money on all the un-needed social programs.
- Take some road money and use it outside of the Hudson area-salt and sand and snowplowing would be great!
- Taxes are important. Many people want all of these services but don't want to pay for them. Society and our community need these programs. I feel that I don't have enough information on all of these programs to make an educated opinion on what should receive funding and what shouldn't.
- Taxes are killing us.
- Taxes, more taxes, and still more taxes! Death and taxes are the only two things in life that are certain. Not afraid of death but more taxes affect my paycheck and we all know that is less and less in these tough economic times.
- The government needs to tighten its belt just like everyone else has to!
- This county is still growing and therefore is creating the tax base, do not raise taxes to pay for new or additional programs, work within the budget you already have, just like the rest of us do.
- To keep property taxes low if possible and to keep good fire at police protection.
- Tough decisions-different needs-different people, areas, and wants. When looking at the future land use map of St. Croix County. The west half is where the finer things in life (big government, fancy homes, development, fine entertainment, best medical care, etc.) are to be located. The eastern half is where the undesirable things (like hog, turkey, and milking factories, gravel pits, frac sand mines, industrial wind turbines, and who knows what else) are to be located. This survey shows a lot of needs and desires to create more big government spending. The big question is how much money is spent versus how much value we receive.
- We need a more streamline government. All taxes need to be lowered or eliminated.

- We need to worry about balanced budget and lowering high property taxes. Protect our constitutional values and rights. Doing what right even when no one is looking.
- Why did the new administration get all new office furniture? No other department head would have been Ok'd for that! Waste of taxpayer dollars. Pay for performance is already been done! Let's cut some dollars on top and put down to people doing work!
- Would be interested in seeing more detail on the budget-break down of individual "pie" items from chart. Where is that available??

Government Assistance (13 comments)

- Anyone who has been on government assistance for more than 2 years needs to be kicked off. Too many people on the gravy train.
- Cut money on assistance programs, too many people are abusing it (welfare, food stamps)
- Don't be afraid to deal with services for those disadvantaged. If we help those in trouble they can actually increase the revenue base. Industrial development needs to be done so that we increase our tax base in the future but be done without only corporations getting the tax break.
- Government is not a charity or a community development program. Leave that to the individual. Provide well managed and economical use of my tax dollars for only necessary county services.
- Governments responsibilities to its citizens is to keep them from harm from foreign or domestic threats and provide them with a highway system that allows them to travel to and from work or wherever they choose to go in this great country. The problem is that government has taken over the caring for the needy that should belong to churches and families. The more government intrudes on the lives of its citizens the more money and freedom they lose.
- I look at all the services that are offered by St. Croix County as an insurance policy that no resident of St. Croix County can afford to be "not loved." If the majority of the services offered are not directly utilized by me personally, I should feel very fortunate and help provide for those who need them.
- In my profession, I help families in poverty in accessing the counties resources. County restrictions have not always been as warm and helpful to these families as I would expect.
- Less government involvement so as to hold individuals accountable for their own lives and actions.
- Shrink government! Zero time for free loaders!!
- The county keeps people, who support themselves, rather than depending on the county to support them.
- The health of a community (St. Croix) acknowledges its special populations and provides aid according to their special needs. Many main streamers lose sight of that out of their narrow mindedness. Every public servant needs to be an ambassador to that larger goal along with explaining of the public how each program enhances the community they live in.

Transportation (11 comments)

- Also the less dependent we can be on highways the better-e.g. could we work toward a BART-like system? (Cal. Bay Area)
- Cut snowplowing and salt applications if flakes appear and the armada of plows and salt hit the roads. Roads would not need as much repair if a lot less salt was used. Millions of dollars wasted!

- Develop a bike trail away from highways.
- Get rid of the salt trucks, and start using liquid device with sand. It's cheap and works better than salt.
- I think we should look into a rail system from Eau Claire to the twin cities. I know we should continue to keep the St. Croix health center nursing home open. It gives the best care in a 5 county area, I know this first hand. Excellent employees that give excellent care! We must provide this type of quality care for our seniors!
- I truly believe there needs to be more effort put forth to make sure our St. Croix County Highways and roadways are kept up. Traveling I94 through St. Croix County looks terrible with weeds and garbage littering the highway.
- In the village no snow plowing below 4 inches. Intersections only and salt!
- It does seem road maintenance and repair could be a greater focus for what I see and think of off-hand.
- Please let our county maintain departments for the highways. Tell them that they do a great job. Better than Minnesota.
- Rebuild county road H but Highway 35 and Star Prairie ASAP. It is one of the most traveled county roads in this area because of race track but the most neglected. Grading the gravel shoulders does nothing to improve the condition of Co Rd H! What a waste of money.
- We do need to repair or replace many streets, county and township roads. Less mowing and more road repair.

Health Center/Nursing Home (7 comments)

- County nursing home needs to be maintained and upgraded when needed. Current roads need to be maintained to prevent major repairs and for safety.
- Keep St. Croix County Health Center
- Maintain the nursing home keeping it open and available
- Please do not consider building a new county nursing home. Plenty of providers are available and the county should not compete with them.
- Save St. Croix Health Center. Was there two times with very good care!!!
- The St. Croix County health center should remain as a nursing home.
- Big mistake to sell land at county farm. Start listening to your constituents and give up your personal agendas.

Education (5 comments)

- Education and the care and safety of children need to be a bigger priority.
- If there is a population change, added changes should be looked at. Such as public transportation roads and upkeep. Environmental and healthcare services depend on growth. Education is most important to maintain change.
- Invest in education and no frac sand mines.

- Please invest more in education. Health and human services cases will likely go down. As well as adding new residents and businesses to the area this would obviously increase our tax base. Thank you.
- What about education? If you want to bring in more industry, increase the population, and continue to make this area a good place to live, good public education is a must. That means 3% of the budget will not be adequate.

Public Safety (5 comments)

- More strict laws and regulations concerning sexual assault against minors and adults.
- Pass gun control ordinances on assault weapons, high capacity magazines, and strict background checks, permit requirements, gun registration and ammunition quantity restrictions for all guns. Increase public safety budget to enforce said gun control.
- There are way too many deputies on duty at a time. I can drive 15 miles and pass 2-3 deputies each day.
- We live in a militarized police state. It is essential to cut funding and thus power to "law enforcement." Essentially, they only support laws that bank, big businesses, and wealthy individuals favor.
- We need more cops!

County Board (4 comments)

- Reduce the size of the county board ASAP (2x)
- County board should represent entire county land area not be dominated by western urban area and Minnesota residence residing in the county but employed in Minnesota.
- That county board would think of the good of the whole county and not just their area.

Jobs/Economic Development (4 comments)

- Need more jobs - higher wages. Unemployment rate is higher than stated many have stopped looking or taken something part time. There are no programs for people between 18-65 with no children or spouses.
- Recruit high tech jobs. These have a longer term survival rate. We need to increase skilled labor positions to differentiate our county.
- We have an ample work force and high quality of life. We don't need tax breaks to lure business.
- We need more services to help get people back to work. This will do more to bring in revenue, increase quality of life than any other programs.

Like It Here/Positive Remarks (4 comments)

- I am happy with St. Croix County for as much as I know about it and should probably involve myself more with the goings on around me.
- I have lived in Pierce and St. Croix counties for the last 48 years and I am very proud of our corner of the state. We just need to watch those that would move into our area and try to re-make what we have come to love and cherish. Thank you.

- St. Croix County is a great place to live! Keep up the good work!!
- Thank you to the town (Troy) board they have done a wonderful job.

Natural Resources/Conservation (4 comments)

- #32 concerns. Mining. Long term effect. Land, ground water, safety, health, what's left when done? Wind farm and maintenance and safety of towers. The interested companies need to be scrutinized in all areas so no one loses.
- Please protect our wildlife and natural areas.
- Preserve our lakes, underground water (manage irrigation of fields more), and zone housing development to cities alone.
- We do not need frac sand mining in Glenwood City!!

Pay for Performance (4 comments)

- I don't agree with the board's decision to implement an incentive program for county employees. Taking from them and giving it to the administrator. Bad idea.
- Not sure what a pay for performance system will do for the county. How many county employees have jobs that actually make money for the county? It seems to me that the county has spent way too much money on different entities evaluating job descriptions, wages... I'm a little concerned with the amount of money the county administrator is making compared to other counties.
- Pay a public employee a living wage and expect a full days work each day. Fire them if they do not. No performance pay. It's too subjective and will get abused.
- Question #30 if they don't do their job fire them!!

Priorities (4 comments)

- All the areas listed are important and with using cost added funding is needed in all areas but that is not possible. Our elderly handicapped and children must be taken care of first. The St. Croix County Board has a very difficult job when determining budget. Good Luck.
- The programs that are most important to our household are education, health care access for all, conserving groundwater (health), general conservation and environmental health. Thank you!
- I feel important things are social services for children and elderly people, recycling and most efficient ways to accomplish data storage and bookkeeping.
- Prevention seems a high priority to me in all areas: health, crime, environment protection. So education is vital.

Miscellaneous/Other (16 comments)

- Do more for the eastern part of the county. It seems all the money and benefits go to the western part of the county.
- Don't you have experts to help solve these problems?
- Dump Walker

- Healthy lifestyles should include and highlight anything that does not involve medical teams. Medical doctors and their staff all believe in treating symptoms with drugs! That's not health. Whole organic foods should be highlighted as well as health clubs and chiropractic.
- I only live in Hudson-April through September. Not familiar with the area.
- I wish there was more oversight at the Village of Hammond. It seems to me that they can impact the lives of residents in a negative way with no oversight.
- Increase access to St. Croix River
- Increase pay to county employees to offset costs incurred by Walker changes to benefits. Focus more on eastern St. Croix County
- Keep the Hudson Area Library running. Tell the needy fire, police, and EMT to quit whining over their buildings. Long range planning and consolidation of services on a regular basis should be explored. Capital needs for county growth need to be planned and funded-the county will need a 5th judge within 5 years or so.
- Open gun hunting in Perch Lake Park.
- Provide fiber/hi speed option other than that offered by BTI
- Re-talk small town values; do not slow population growth as a priority.
- The county does a great job providing services. I would like to see more movement towards providing services at convenient times/places for citizens. People in Glenwood City shouldn't have to go to Hudson to get tax info records, and services for vets and elderly. I don't care what a state or community or city service is. Government is government and I want to be able to access any service from places that are convenient to me. We need to use more technology to provide these services.
- The Hudson library does a wonderful job providing services to Hudson residents. To help meet expenses I think a fee should be charged for a library card.
- We need to monitor some public programs that do not have "lean" processes. There is a lot of duplication in care programs. Recruit business. Utilize technology. Synergy with Admin. Services.
- Most elected officials appear to be very mediocre in ability to handle jobs.
- While it's good to help people need; it's important that the individual is not given everything. I believe that if a person needs help, they should get it, but not free load off the system.
- Would like to see veteran services fully supported and funded by the federal government to free up county funding for other programs.

Survey Questionnaire (17 comments)

- Create survey so it is quicker to fill out provide online option to populate survey.
- For many of the "County Spending by 2018 should" responses, I indicated "Don't know" simply because I don't feel informed about how much is currently being spent in each category.
- How much did this cost?
- I also did a farm survey 40+ pages. I am all surveyed out.
- I don't think the average citizen is qualified to answer these questions. If our opinions help you to decide spending priorities, I hope my answers were helpful.
- I don't think the survey was well designed. Force ranking among the budget areas would have been more valuable.

- I found it difficult to assess the need to increase or decrease spending by line item without knowing what percentage of the total expenditures each line item represents. Also, what metrics are being used to assess the effectiveness of current programs?
- Next time you issue a questionnaire, I suggest that you offer an option that allows residents to express an opinion to decrease overall spending instead of this setup, which only provides for more spending. This survey is a waste of time and taxpayer money.
- Questions would be easier to answer if examples of current services were included. Answers would be more accurate.
- Some of your questions are quite misleading. I think the purpose towards a very republican agenda. You should give more examples of what each program provides.
- Some questions are way too broad. Seems as if surveyor could sway results any way they wanted.
- Such info could be shared with residents more regularly. More of the info contained here is new or unknown to me, although I am a rather new transplant to the area.
- Thank you, this was a great idea!
- This survey is very vague and doesn't explain very much. As with the public assist programs and this survey - tad bit waste of funding.
- Very disappointed to not see any questions/concerns regarding addressing the animal welfare services we are teaching in this county-should have some plans in place to address the needs beyond current animal control services.
- Very hard to answer most questions when the money is not broken down further. I think money will be spent wisely on selling how great an area it is to live in the new bridge coming to put money for criminal rehab. Make them pay for it and I don't believe in welfare year in and year out. I believe that people need help from time to time but not all the time. That is a waste of good money. Our natural resources (water-air) are extremely important.
- Why don't you take this survey electronically?

Appendix B – Quantitative Summary of Responses by Question

PROTECTING AT-RISK POPULATIONS: Quality Health & Human services for everyone, by everyone including family.

Please indicate how important each of the following St. Croix County budget items are now and how spending should change by 2018	How Important Now				→	County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know		Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
1. Local access to staff that determine eligibility for taxpayer supported benefits (Medical Assistance, day care, and food share services)	21%	51%	19%	8%		12%	53%	24%	12%
2. Services to ensure elderly and disabled residents have adequate and appropriate nutrition.	44%	45%	8%	3%		28%	55%	8%	9%
3. Services that promote mental health	32%	45%	17%	5%		27%	47%	15%	11%
4. Services that address existing addiction problems for residents	14%	53%	27%	7%		11%	47%	27%	14%
5. Protection of abused and neglected children	73%	24%	2%	2%		52%	38%	2%	8%
6. Programs to address juvenile (youth) criminal behavior	32%	53%	11%	4%		24%	53%	9%	14%
7. Veteran services	47%	41%	9%	3%		38%	46%	7%	9%
8. Services to assist families in meeting health and safety needs of their child(ren) with physical, emotional, or developmental disabilities	33%	52%	11%	3%		24%	53%	11%	12%
9. Programs that support the developmentally disabled	26%	58%	12%	4%		14%	64%	9%	13%
10. Programs that address healthy lifestyles for the County	12%	42%	42%	4%		10%	42%	36%	12%
11. Programs that assure the County is prepared for health emergencies	33%	52%	12%	3%		15%	62%	11%	12%
12. Programs that are preventative in nature	19%	47%	25%	9%		14%	49%	20%	16%

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Protecting and enhancing communities and natural resources.

Please indicate how important each of the following St. Croix County budget items are now and how spending should change by 2018	How Important Now				→	County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know		Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
13. Services that conserve groundwater/ drinking water	50%	36%	11%	3%		38%	43%	10%	9%
14. Services to encourage recycling	35%	47%	16%	2%		26%	52%	16%	6%
15. Services to provide land records and tax assessment data	11%	53%	28%	8%		5%	58%	23%	13%
16. Long range planning services to balance development and conservation	27%	53%	15%	5%		19%	52%	16%	13%
17. Services to conserve natural resources (agricultural land, lakes, rivers, etc)	49%	41%	9%	2%		37%	45%	10%	9%
18. Services and facilities that provide public recreation (boat ramps, parks, trails)	25%	56%	16%	3%		19%	59%	12%	9%

PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE : Protecting our citizens and promoting justice for all. Law enforcement, emergency services, criminal justice, hazardous materials disposal, etc.

Please indicate how important each of the following St. Croix County budget items are now and how spending should change by 2018	How Important Now				→	County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know		Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
19. Law enforcement programs (e.g. sheriff's office)	52%	41%	5%	2%		31%	55%	6%	9%
20. County jail	25%	57%	14%	4%		11%	67%	10%	12%
21. Services to rehabilitate criminals	14%	47%	34%	5%		11%	48%	27%	14%
22. County court services	19%	58%	16%	6%		8%	67%	11%	14%
23. Programs to prevent emergencies (e.g. fire codes, flood plain zoning, hazardous material disposal)	26%	58%	13%	3%		16%	63%	9%	12%
24. Services to ensure timely response to emergencies	59%	36%	2%	2%		39%	47%	3%	11%

TRANSPORTATION: Maintaining safe roads and building bridges for the future. Includes infrastructure highways and bridges.

Please indicate how important each of the following St. Croix County budget items are now and how spending should change by 2018	How Important Now				→	County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know		Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
25. County highway maintenance (mowing, plowing, repairs)	58%	39%	2%	1%		42%	49%	2%	7%
26. County highway and bridge construction	44%	47%	6%	2%		35%	52%	4%	9%
27. Building/Maintaining additional highway width for pedestrian and bike lanes	15%	45%	37%	3%		15%	45%	31%	9%
28. Other public transportation (bus, taxi, train, park & ride, etc.) in addition to highway items listed above	16%	39%	39%	6%		16%	42%	29%	13%
29. Adequate access to transportation Services for elderly and disabled residents	35%	53%	8%	4%		29%	54%	6%	11%

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE COUNTY: Includes County efforts to recruit/sustain businesses, regulatory structure, and job opportunities.

Please indicate how important each of the following St. Croix County budget items are now and how spending should change by 2018	How Important Now				→	County Spending by 2018 Should			
	Very	Some-what	Not	Don't Know		Increase	Not Change	Decrease	Don't Know
30. Implement a pay for performance system for county employees	34%	32%	25%	9%		20%	45%	18%	17%
31. Recruit more manufacturing businesses to the county (e.g., equipment, plastics, electronics, etc.)	50%	36%	10%	4%		43%	40%	9%	9%
32. Recruit more industrial businesses to the County (e.g. gravel mining, power generation, etc.)	26%	35%	33%	6%		23%	42%	26%	10%
33. Recruit more retail/service businesses to the County (e.g. department stores, insurance companies, medical services, etc.)	33%	41%	22%	3%		32%	44%	15%	9%
34. Provide support for existing and start-up businesses and entrepreneurs (counseling, education, tech. assistance)	26%	46%	23%	6%		26%	47%	14%	12%
35. Establish partnerships with other government entities to collaborate on service delivery	25%	44%	18%	12%		21%	48%	14%	17%
36. Increase use of technology to deliver services (online, web-based)	28%	50%	16%	7%		27%	51%	10%	13%

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: Please tell us something about yourself.

37. Gender:	Male 64%	Female 36%				
38. Age:	18-24 <1%	25-34 9%	35-44 16%	45-54 22%	55-64 28%	65 and older 26%
39. Employment status:	Employed Full Time 51%	Employed Part Time 6%	Self Employed 10%	Unemployed 2%	Retired 30%	Other: <u>See Appendix A</u> 1%
40. Place of residence:	Own 95%	Rent 5%	Other: <u>See Appendix A</u> 1%			
41. Household income range:	Less than \$25,000 7%	\$25,000 – 34,999 9%	\$35,000 – 49,999 16%	\$50,000 – 74,999 21%	\$75,000 – \$99,999 18%	\$100,000+ 28%
42. Highest level of education:	Less than high school 2%	High school diploma 17%	Some college/tech 21%	Tech college graduate 13%	Bachelor’s degree 27%	Graduate or professional degree 19%
43. How many years have you lived in St. Croix County?	Less than 1 0%	1 – 4 7%	5 - 9 17%	10 - 24 28%	25+ 47%	
44. Zip Code:	<u>See Table 1b</u>					
45. Do you live in a Town, Village, or City?	City 28%	Village 19%	Town 53%	Some cities and villages share the same name with an adjacent “town,” e.g, Baldwin, Hammond, Hudson, Somerset, and Star Prairie. “Towns” are the rural areas.		

46. What additional comments would you like to share with the St. Croix County Board?

See Appendix A