

REQUEST FOR DECISION



Meeting: Regular Council
Meeting Date: January 25, 2021
Presented By: Ren Goode, Communications Manager
Title: Results of 2020 Customer Service Survey
Report Type: Information Update

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:



Building the Community



Building the Economy



Building Infrastructure



Building Strong
Government

RFD PURPOSE:

To inform City Council of the results of the customer service survey undertaken in mid-2020.

REPORT:

While the attached report provides in-depth feedback, the following are important highlights found within the survey results:

- The top three preferred methods of contact specified by survey participants were email, online (social media, website) and phone.
Note: This aligns with the recently revised advertising bylaw brought forward by the Planning and Engineering department.
- Utilities, waste & recycle, and recreation were the three service areas members of the public dealt with most often.
Note: This helps with prioritizing customer service training.
- The City's customer service ranking **improved overall** following the initial closure of City facilities to the public due to COVID 19 in March of 2020 (the only exception was a 3% rating reduction regarding employees responding to requests in a professional and friendly manner).
- The City received feedback that staff could improve on the timeliness of responses to public enquiries (40% of survey respondents felt they did not receive a response within a reasonable amount of time). While most responses were addressed within two days, 16% of survey respondents stated they were waiting weeks to be followed up with.
- Nearly every survey participant had visited the City's official website, but only 60% of those found it easy to navigate.
- Conversely, while only 41% of respondents had visited the City's COVID portal, 87% of visitors found it easy to navigate. Additionally, 87% of the respondents found value in having a dedicated space for COVID-19.
- While some respondents did indicate in the comment section that they were very happy with the service they received from City employees, many of those who took the survey shared frustration with not receiving a response back right away. This has been identified as an area

for improvement within the City's current customer service manual, and City employees are now directed to respond within 48 hours--even if it's just to say that they are still looking into the initial enquiry.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):

I recommend that City Council receive this report as information.

IMPLICATIONS:

a) Financial: N/A

b) Legal / Risk: The City could be held liable if time-sensitive information is not passed on or delivered by set deadlines.

c) Program or Service: The City could see decreased participation in City programs/services if employees deliver poor customer service.

d) Organizational: The quality of customer service provided by City employees is largely an indicator of the culture of the organization itself. While prescriptive measures have been implemented to help create a baseline of service, it is the intent of the Senior Leadership Team to promote the delivery of phenomenal customer service through a connective, empowered organizational culture.

STAKEHOLDER OR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

Consult (two way communication)

Goal: To obtain feedback, listen and respond to public concerns

Tools: Survey

NEXT STEPS:

We will conduct this survey again mid-2021 and compare those results to the 2020 report to determine if we are improving our excellent customer service deliverables. Senior Leadership has added 'customer service' as a standing agenda item to all Leadership Team meetings and will continue updating the current customer service manual based on feedback received.

Note: While these results are good indicators of where the City can improve its delivery of customer service, this is not a statistically relevant survey.

APPROVAL(S):

Leah Latimer, Manager of Human Resources

Karin Boddy, Legislative Executive Assistant

Sue Howard, City Manager

Approved - 18 Jan 2021

Approved - 18 Jan 2021

Approved - 18 Jan 2021

ATTACHMENTS:



EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE REPORT

Synthesized Results of Customer Service Survey – Open from May 21 to June 15, 2020

November 18, 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many people have different ideas about what excellent customer service means to them. It was the intent of this survey to engage City of Wetaskiwin residents in a comprehensive survey where the data collected can be used in developing a customer service policy to ensure the consistent delivery of customer service throughout the organization.

RESULTS (HIGH-LEVEL)

341 participants visited at least one page of the survey, while 200 (58.7%) participants visited multiple pages and 113 (33.1%) completed the survey. Of the 113 completed surveys, 105 participants were from the City of Wetaskiwin, and 8 were from the County of Wetaskiwin. 74.3% of participants who completed the survey were female, 23.9% were male, and 1.8% were unspecified.

Most users accessed the survey through the link on the mobile version of the City Facebook page.

Results were collected about various areas of customer service both before and after most City facilities were closed to the public on March 17, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey ran from May 20, 2020 until June 15, 2020.

RESULTS (IN-DEPTH)

Preferred methods of communication

Participants indicated their preferred method of communication with the City of Wetaskiwin when sending or receiving information (ranked from most preferred to least preferred):

1. *Email*
2. *Online (social media, website)*
3. *Phone*
4. *In-person*
5. *Regular mail*
6. *Inserts (in utility bills, invoices, etc.)*

Department interactions

Utilities, Waste and Recycle, and Recreation were the **top 3** departments people dealt with most often.

Contact made before and after COVID-19

The number of participants who contacted the City with a question or concern prior to City facilities being closed to the public on March 17:

- **67.3% (76 of 113) - Yes, they had contacted the City**
- 32.7% (37 of 113) - No, they had not contacted the City

The number of participants who contacted the City with a question or concern after City facilities were closed to the public on March 17:

- 32.7% (37 of 113) - Yes, they had contacted the City
- **67.3% (76 of 113) - No, they had not contacted the City**

Experiences of those who contacted the City

The experiences of those who were in contact with the City (either before or after the March 17 closure to the public) is captured in the table below.

Question	Response – Prior (76)	Response – After (37)
# of employees who assisted before receiving an answer	Most common: 2 Second most common: 1	Most common: 1 Second most common: 2
Question resolved within...	Most common: 24 hrs Second most common: 48 hrs	Most common: 24 hrs Second most common: 48 hrs
Was this timeframe acceptable	Yes (63.2%)	Yes (67.6%)
Were you satisfied with how your question was handled	Yes (68.4%)	Yes (73.0%)
Did the City employee introduce themselves by name	Yes (68.4%)	Yes (70.3%)
Was the City employee professional and friendly	Yes (81.6%)	Yes (78.4%)
City employee was knowledgeable and empowered	Yes (55.3%)	Yes (62.2%)
Did you feel like a valued customer	Yes (60.5%)	Yes (67.6%)

If person or department wasn't available, did someone offer to leave a message for you?

- **Yes – 55.8%**
- No – 23.0%
- Didn't want to leave message – 21.2%

65.5% of the 113 participants who completed the survey left a message for a City staff member they could not speak to at time of inquiry.

- **78.4% of those were by voicemail**
- 6.8% of those were in-person with a staff member
- 14.9% of those were over the phone with a staff member

74.3% of those who left a message received a response back either same day or the same week.

- 59.5% - felt the timeframe to get a response was reasonable
- 40.5% - felt the timeframe was not reasonable.

NOTE: At the time of the survey, 16.2% of participants were still waiting for an answer (longer than a couple of weeks).

Preferred communications avenues

City website (www.wetaskiwin.ca)

- 98.2% of 113 respondents said they have visited the website.
- 63.1% of 113 respondents found it easy to navigate; 36.9% did not find it easy to navigate.
- 72.1% of 113 respondents used the search bar to find what they were looking for.
- 88.3% of 113 respondents said the website loaded quickly.
- 84.7% of website visitors did not sign up for COVID-19 update emails through this website.

City's dedicated COVID-19 portal (wetaskiwin.ca/covid19)

- 41.6% of 113 respondents said they have visited this website; while 58.4% said they had not visited.
- 87.2% of 113 respondents found it easy to navigate; 12.8% did not find it easy to navigate.
- 74.5% of visitors did not sign up for COVID-19 update emails through the COVID portal.
- 87.2% of 113 respondents found value in having a dedicated space for COVID-19 information.

Comments

The comments are divided into two separate sections; one for those who contacted the City of Wetaskiwin prior to the March 17, 2020 City facilities closure, and one for those who contacted the City following the closure to the public.

Comments from those who contacted the City before March 17, 2020	
Question	Comments/Responses
What did we do right?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have always had questions answered quickly.• Information was timely and accurate.• Call was returned.• Asked my questions, received answers.• Concern was followed up.• Courteous, informative, helpful personnel.• Simple request, couldn't have been done better.• Staff were kind and professional.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person who answered the phone was very friendly and helped me to the best of her knowledge before having to transfer me to a different department. • Answered what I needed for firepit. • My question was answered by a return phone call within an hour. • Person I talked to had an answer and could refer me to the right department. • Called to request storm drain be steamed open to prevent street from flooding. They were here next morning. Always pleasantly surprised by their promptness.
What could we have done better?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received contradictory information. • Concerns about rude, abrupt, condescending people, mainly in public works/utilities office. Suggest phone etiquette training. Also concerned with lack of security screening when calling in to make changes to utilities account or with an inquiry. • Had to talk to 3 different people before changing the address on utility bill. Right person kept interrupting so it took longer to explain than it should have. • Still waiting for follow up from last fall. • Actually respond. • Have City staff properly follow up with concerns. Not too much to ask for an email response. • Should have been able to get response on first contact, not call multiple times. • Inquired about water being safe to drink due to water main break in area. Was told someone would return my call, had to call back 2 days later. Was told note was left at residence. Didn't get note or phone call. • Suggestion to eliminate "middle-man" and have direct communication to person in charge of the department. • Send question by email which was forwarded to Public Works. Never received an answer. • Friendlier staff. • Let people know what you're going to do about the issue and follow up. • Too much transferring and being put on hold. • People can answer the phone with a smile and identify themselves and their departments. • Took forever to have firepit inspected. • More engagement earlier. • There is a staff member at the recreation facility who is horrible to staff and public unless you are part of their circle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The above comment was altered to comply with FOIP</i> • Have knowledgeable people in place to answer questions. • Have your staff know where to direct a phone call.

<p>What could we have done better (con't)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with water bill issue. Felt the lady at the office where you pay was very short and borderline rude. Phoned and went in twice before got resolution. • Know the bylaws without me pointing them out. • Being overcharged for water bill. Receptionist was rude and started ignoring us. We are out thousands from being overcharged. • I wanted to discuss a non-typical permit concern with the Development Officer. I had discussed it with their assistant but the assistant agreed I should schedule a meeting with the Development Officer about this particular issue. A meeting time was arranged, and when I arrived at city hall for the meeting I was told by their assistant that they would not meet with me. There was no prior correspondence about this issue; they simply decided my issue was not worth their time and didn't bother calling off the meeting until I showed up for it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The above comment was altered to comply with FOIP</i> • Waited for call back from utilities department. Never did get one but spoke to a lady in Finance and she promptly answered my question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The above comment was altered to comply with FOIP</i> • Remove voice mails of individuals. Getting reception and instead of being told she's on another call just get voicemail. • Takes 3-4 times of calling in to get info actually changed. • Better follow up. • Lady in charge of lessons at the pool could have called back after leaving 2 messages. Front staff were very nice. • Told there were no development plans for my property, however there needed to be a plan filed prior to receiving permits for construction. No one was ever able to help me with this. • Return calls. • Had to call 3 times to get someone about a double billing on a utility bill, but once I talked to them it was resolved immediately. • Be quicker.
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Comments from those who contacted the City after March 17, 2020	
Question	Comments/Responses
What did we do right?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same level as before, well done. • Gave me the information I required. • Appreciated the 'right' person responding to my question. • It was fine. • They contacted me by phone. • Quick response and follow through was greatly appreciated.
What could we have done better?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return the call sooner. • Received contradictory information. • Leaving a message and hoping to get a call back. Leaving messages is not customer service, it is a lack of customer service. • Asked a simple question, or so I thought. • Not sure if the information I provided was ever used, so a follow-up from the department would have been appreciated. • More cross-training for staff and bosses need to delegate their authority so staff can better assist customers. Ex. – trying to reserve a facility/ice time/etc through the pool. Too many people and staff afraid of the boss at the pool and arena. • An actual call back. I understand people are working from home but it's been 3 weeks. • No one called me back to discuss my concern about the roads. I have left messages but not received any reply by phone. • I get it, covid, but staff should be better versed in the areas you put them to work in. • Stop hiding information from citizens. • Have not had my question even acknowledged. Have been attempting to contact someone in development for over a week and there has been no email or attempt to contact me to acknowledge me. No reason for this delay when all it would take was a response email. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The above comment was altered to comply with FOIP</i> • Wasn't done right because I had to call in to get my inquiry answered. That employee did well. The one I left a message for did not do well. • Person on the phone was rude and unpleasant. • Return calls. • Proper explanation not being hard to approach.

Comments from respondents who answered Yes to leaving a message for an individual/department of the City (pre & post City facilities closure).

Comments from those who answered 'yes' to leaving a message from an individual/department (both before and following the City's closure of its facilities to the public on March 17, 2020)	
Question	Comments/Responses
What could we have done to improve this experience for you?	<p>#DoBetter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return the call sooner. • The front desk lady was quite rude to deal with. It made me not want to go back there. • Respond. • Ended up leaving messages for 3 people and got responses from 2. Still think the response is questionable and now I have more questions and have to repeat the painful process of trying to work through the system. Not impressed. While COVID has made restrictions occur there is no reason to have staffing down this far. No excuse for poor service and being unable to reach people directly by phone especially key areas. Your office is spacious enough to house your staff and still observe social distancing rules. This does not mean the building needs to be open to the public but your department main office should be manned enough to answer phone calls without having to be directed to voicemails every time. There are ways to still get things done without essentially ceasing customer service. • My call wasn't returned after 48 hours so I called back. • Make your people more accountable to the public. When your voicemail says you will call back, do it! I have left voicemails with different departments and have never gotten a call back. • An actual call back. • Unless the staff member that I left the message for was away or sick or somehow unable to get the message, which I was not told, then I should have got a response back the same day or next day. • If the voicemail says they will return your call then I expect a reply. • Stop letting experienced staff go. Cuts should have been made to staff that were just sitting at a desk. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The above comment was altered to comply with FOIP</i> • Be more professional and not so rude (at water/utilities dept by recycling depot). • Answer the voicemail within 48 hours. • We've left multiple messages and still have not got a response. This was in February. • Having the person I'm trying to contact just let me know they have received my inquiry. Total silence so far. • Hold people accountable to answer their messages. Get them back to work at the office. • Remove voicemails.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make more information available on city website. • Call people back within a 24-hour period (during working days). • Return messages. • Return email or call. • I left a couple messages and didn't receive a response. I just finally spoke to someone who was able to help. • Quicker. Inter-office communication needs to be improved. I shouldn't have to repeat myself to four or five staff members only to not have the problem be resolved. <p>#DidGreat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing. (x3) • I was satisfied with the time it took. • Was happy with time frame and friendly people who answered the questions I asked. • Give staff a portion of their day to return calls. Responses should be the same day. Sometimes an angry customer may need a cooling off period and the next day might be a better time to phone. • All good. • Answered the voicemail within 48 hours. • Called back same day if possible. • Returned call the same day (this was mid week).
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Comments from responders on what services they would like to see provided online	
Category of Response	Comments/Responses
Billing/ Invoicing/ Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billing services. • Utility bills. • Utility changes. • Pay utility bill online. • Paying your utility bill. • City billing for utility changes – online form submission. • Bill payment. • Utility account information. • Online user accounts for utilities and taxes. I would love the option of going paperless and getting my bills either via email or an email saying it's ready and having to go log in to an online account (like Epcor or the CRA does). • Pay invoices online. • E-payments. • Online utility accounts. • Bills. • Virtual City Hall for payments and other services. • Online bills rather than paper. • Increases to utility rates. • Payments. • Access bills/pay bills. • Paying bills.
Permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of permits. • Permit applications. • Fire permit completed online. • Permits/application submission.
City website navigation/ Booking facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make city website easier to navigate, especially for things like arena schedules. • Easier to use website. • Booking facilities, booking ice time, arena/ball/soccer games listed so people might come and watch. • Recreation. • Better information about programs for families, specifically the pool and lessons.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for a job online. • Applying for jobs.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think you pretty much cover them all. • Complaints about roads and safety – online form submission. • Everything that is posted on social media. Some of us do not have social media.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'd expect that your contact page would actually get you to the person you need to talk to, or be at least answered by a person, rather than it going directly to voicemail! • Events. • An after hours phone number for bylaw, or on weekends or after 6. Issues arise at all hours and do not require a call to rcmp. • The services I require are already online. • Perhaps you could have a chat feature which could be used for people who are in a hurry and cannot wait for an email response or a phone call that is never going to come. • Easier to find information that is up to date. • A place to send messages instead of having to call. So someone could call you back without the hassle. • I'm happy with the current online services. • Open information, an easily accessible record of council members voting records. • Crime stats. • City news events. • Better search function. • Up to date hours, easily located info about current fire/water bans etc. Also scheduled maintenance hours, dates, addresses. • Support for First Nations. • Better access for mobile devices. • Easy access for hours of operation. • Bylaw complaints. • Better information about programs for families.
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Additional comments from respondents	
Category of Response	Comments/Responses
Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 Ave. near the ready mix is not safe for driving. You have put 'fill ins' in the potholes for 3 years, didn't even work as a temporary fix. It's hard on our vehicles for street parking. The road is a huge safety concern, it should be properly repaired. • I would like the spring street sweeping to be done in the same fashion as snow removal. The sides of our avenue are still loaded with gravel and sand from the winter. • Please repair 55 Avenue. It's the worst road in town. Huge safety issue. Filling in the potholes that have been there for years does nothing. It needs a proper repair. • I pay taxes for a reason. I would like to see the city actually maintain the infrastructure that we pay for. For example roads, the potholes in this city are unbelievable. If they are not filled in a timely manner they get worse, and then we end up needing to pay more to correct the damage that could have been prevented. There are some spots that will cause tire damage, I'm actually surprised you haven't had to repair someone's vehicle yet. Many of the potholes that were smaller at the begin of spring have become full home through all layers of pavement. Fix them before we have to repave the entire road! • Why are some of the roads left with pothole for so long before they are repaired?
Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park maintenance. The contracted service will have a youth time keeping up to the quality of work of the student staff. Time will tell...
City Website (www.wetaskiwin.ca)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website is hard to navigate, it is not mobile friendly either. • Your office could save a lot of money in the future by doing online billing. Many people like receiving their bills online, and you could cut mailing and postage expenses a lot. • The menus at the top of the home page help a lot to find what I was looking for. I appreciate having those short cuts to get to the information I'm looking for. I like the news section where I can look at relevant current city news and information. • I don't like the website. The icons feel childish. • I appreciate the responsiveness of whoever monitors the online concerns through the website. I appreciate being able to look at the news section to get the latest most important information from the city.
Dedicated COVID-19 website (www.wetaskiwin.ca/covid19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not sure that the City provided new/different information from the provincial website. • You're doing a great job with that website. • Confusing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a great resource if needed. • Thank you for the work you are all doing; continue to make the best decisions based on facts and information available at the time...not public pressure. • The negative people, if they read the Covid 19 information, could be totally informed rather than asking foolish questions and making ridiculous comments. • Visually, I didn't find this website appealing. There was definitely a lot of information, but nothing really visually leading me easily to what I was looking for. I think it was just overwhelming because it was a LOT of information. • There is a distinct discrepancy between what information the Health Unit discloses to what the City tells. What does one believe? • I would have appreciated seeing the update but all I've seen is what other people posted. I completely seemed to have missed the email part. • While the information was good on the site, I wanted to see current COVID numbers for the city and county as well. • Why did the city of Wetaskiwin refer to the city of St. Albert pertaining to playgrounds. The information was provided by the province why was the city of Wetaskiwin not following provincial guidelines?
Property Taxes/ Council/ Spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop pandering to us and do your best to keep rates low and considering our property taxes are one of Alberta's highest I think the council is irresponsibly spending on things that do not increase value to the community that they seem to treat as a endless tax stream only not people with day to day struggles.
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall I have always received timely customer service when contacting the City. • Again, thank you for trying to improve. Communication is key and I hope you are able to get some solid feedback to make any improvements that might be necessary. • Just a big thank you to the guys picking up our garbage who go way out to provide excellent service. • Thank you to the ladies at the library for doing such a great job during the covid crisis. • I think that anyone answering the City phone should answer in a pleasant way and not make people feel that they are intruding. • I'm very happy the library has continued service. • Gary Falenda is one of the City's best ambassadors and all staff could learn customer service from him. Harvey at the Recycling did a great job also, not sure why he's gone? Landfill person could be more cheerful.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a beautiful city hall, don't make it so people don't want to come there! • Staff attitudes towards customers. Sometimes I phone and get people who do well at speaking to people and others could care less and are very rude with their answers. • I appreciate the hard work and patience of people working at the recycle depot. I'm wondering if there's a better method of getting people through faster. I feel if people are going to have to wait in line, their recycle is going to end up in the landfill instead. Maybe even a sign reminding people it would be courteous to others if their recycle was sorted before coming to the depot? • Disappointed in this survey. Seems to only cover one area of customer service. Also disappointed that we have to sign in to do this. There are survey options that are much quicker and easier to use than this process. I know of several people who opted not to do this survey because it was too complicated to even get started. • The staff should be accommodating and should have lots of patience with the customers. • In two instances I've emailed the city manager (a previous one, to be fair) to commend city staff for the work they are doing and received no response. Just a quick acknowledgment is a must!
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks for working to make our city better and being concerned about ensuring there is good communication. • I appreciate how the Mayor's Facebook page is managed and how the Mayor has continued to update us. Well done. • This survey seems to be more for in the actual city of Wetaskiwin, not the surrounding areas. • What is the total cost of all the fire department parades? Including billed out man hours and equipment costs. • Handivan service could have extended hours. People who rely on this for transport can not go out on weekends or evenings. This limits a lot of outings in their life. It would be great if they could go out for supper, shopping, etc in early evenings or weekends and not just limit to day time. • Not sure why we contract people to clean the arena when we already have City staff? And when the contractors do clean, they do it while people are in the arena. This needs to be evaluated as should the number of staff in the pool. • Handivan services are a critical service and the operational hours does not allow for individuals who rely on this service to go out of their homes in the evening or weekends. This does not allow for a very inclusive lifestyle. • After moving and having to reapply for a home business license (which I had previously for 8 years), I was told the

	licensing had changed and I wasn't able to get the same type. So I settled for a minor home based business. 2 years in a row and they are sending the invoice to my old residence. This is unacceptable. I am calling in to cancel my business license as I have been forced to close my home business because of the rule changes.
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