



MEMORANDUM

TO: Milton Dohoney, Jr. City Administrator

FROM: Missy Stults, Sustainability and Innovations Director

DATE: July 29, 2022

RE: Public Results from Sustainable Energy Utility Outreach

BACKGROUND

In January of 2022, City Council directed the City Administrator via [R-22-017](#) to “begin registering public interest in a potential [Sustainable Energy Utility](#) (SEU)”. In response to this request, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations (OSI) and the Communications Department (Communications) put together a multi-pronged community engagement strategy to collect and analyze community sentiment regarding a potential SEU. The following document reports the findings of the data, illuminating patterns and insights gleaned from this engagement.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

To guide public engagement, OSI and Communications put together a community engagement and input strategy that involved the following tools and techniques:

- One-on-one interviews with residents across different socio-economic and demographic profiles
- Live and written presentation to Boards and Commissions
- Large public meetings
- Presentations at neighborhood association meetings and to other community stakeholders
- Video development and placement on CTN and city outreach channels
- Development and distribution of a community-wide mailer (distributed to all households)
- Website creation
- Development of FAQ document and a fact sheet
- Inclusion of SEU-related content and a request for feedback in City newsletters and social media accounts
- One national webinar
- Presentations with internal City staff and departments

All the above provided general information about the proposed SEU and encouraged people to complete a public input survey. Appendix One is a copy of the survey instrument. The survey was open for April through June 30th, 2022.

RESULTS

In total, 1,867 separate responses were recorded through the survey. The sample population reflects the distribution of economic, gender, and cultural backgrounds of the Ann Arbor population (Appendix Two provides the aggregated results from the survey). This does mean, however, that the views of low-income populations are not prominent in the survey responses, despite efforts to specifically engage these residents.

Is there public support to move forward with a potential SEU?

Over 66% of respondents indicated an interest in the SEU if cost were same or slightly less than what they current pay to DTE (over 1,200 respondents). Just over 57% indicated an interest in the SEU even if costs were more than what they

currently pay DTE. In contrast, 8.6% of respondents indicated they would not be interested in an SEU regardless of the cost, and 7.8% indicated needing more information before deciding (Figure 1). Because respondents could select multiple responses, in total 83.6% of respondents were interested in an SEU if it was able to provide electricity at lower rates than to what is currently offered by DTE.

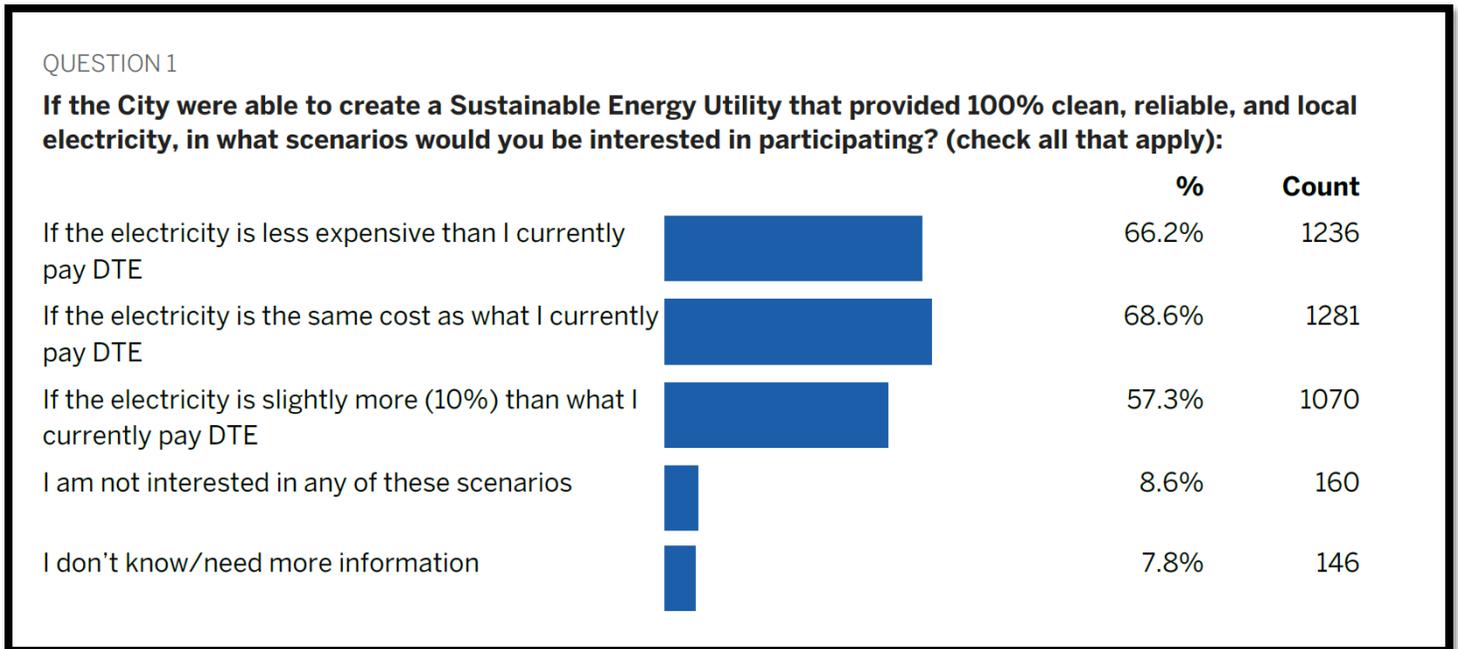


Figure 1: Results from Question 1 of SEU Survey

Key characteristics of energy system

Respondents were also asked to identify the three characteristics they most desire in an electric utility system. They were given six choices and the option of writing in additional characteristics. Responses to "other characteristics" were coded and grouped with similar comments to identify themes or patterns. As shown in Appendix C, nearly all "other characteristics" offered were reinforcements of the one six main characteristics noted below. T

In terms of results, three characteristics were clearly identified as being the most important to respondents:

1. 100% clean and renewable energy (82% support)
2. Reliable so I can keep the lights on (nearly 74% support)
3. Resilience so I can have power during emergencies (71% support)

The three least important attributes desired by respondents were:

- Low-cost energy (54%)
- Community ownership (nearly 43%)
- Locally generated energy (34%).

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of responses by characteristic.



Waitlist Registration

Finally, individuals were asked if they would like to join a waitlist to stay up to date on and potentially subscribe to the SEU should Council move forward with creating an SEU. Over 650 respondents opted to join the waitlist.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Results from the survey and associated public outreach show broad public support for moving the concept of a Sustainable Energy Utility forward. Ensuring the SEU provides cost effective, clean, reliable, and resilient power will be important to ensuring continued public support and economic viability. Specifically, ensuring the SEU can provide 100% renewable power at the same or, ideally, lower costs than current electric rates is important for sustained public support.

Due to the strong support shown from survey respondents, staff are working with a contractor to prepare a preliminary rate analysis for the SEU. Staff are also working on a proposed staffing and governance structure to help the community, Council, and staff understand what will be necessary to continue moving the concept of the SEU forward. These materials will be coming to Council for review and consideration in the coming months.

Appendix One: Public Survey on SEU

The City of Ann Arbor is exploring the creation of Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU), a community owned energy utility that provides electricity from local solar and battery storage systems installed on homes and businesses throughout the City, along with energy waste reduction support. The SEU would operate in addition (or supplemental) to DTE and would provide 100% clean, reliable, locally built, affordable, and community-owned electricity. Ultimately, an SEU gives residents a choice for where to procure their energy. For more details on the proposed Ann Arbor Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU), see www.a2gov.org/a2seu.

Below are 5 questions to understand how interested community members are in moving the concept of an SEU forward. Responses do not commit any resident to further action but will inform the City's next steps as it relates to an SEU. All responses are anonymous.

QUESTIONS

1. **[Required]** If the City were able to create a Sustainable Energy Utility that provided 100% clean, reliable, and local electricity, in what scenarios would you be interested in participating? (check all that apply):
 - If the electricity is less expensive than I currently pay DTE
 - If the electricity is the same cost as what I currently pay DTE
 - If the electricity is slightly more (10%) than what I currently pay DTE
 - I am not interested in any of these scenarios
 - I don't know/need more information
2. **[Required]** What are the three most important attributes you want in your energy system? (**RANK**)
 - Low cost energy
 - Locally generated energy
 - Community owned
 - 100% clean and renewable energy
 - Reliable so I can keep the lights on
 - Resilient so I can have power during emergencies
 - Other:
3. **[Optional]** Do you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts about the City potentially creating a Sustainable Energy Utility? (**Open Response**)
4. **[Optional]** If you'd like to be added to the waitlist to learn more about the SEU should the concept move forward, please enter your name, address, and email.
5. **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION** (INSERTED THE CITY'S STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY)

To learn more about the potential Sustainable Energy Utility, including how you can get involved, see: www.a2gov.org/a2seu.

APPENDIX TWO: AGGREGATED SURVEY RESULTS



Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

July 1, 2022, 1:08 PM

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Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?

Summary Of Responses

As of July 1, 2022, 1:08 PM, this forum had:

Attendees:	2206
Responses:	1867
Hours of Public Comment:	93.4

Topic Start

March 31, 2022, 11:53 AM

Topic End

June 30, 2022, 11:59 PM

QUESTION 1

If the City were able to create a Sustainable Energy Utility that provided 100% clean, reliable, and local electricity, in what scenarios would you be interested in participating? (check all that apply):

		%	Count
If the electricity is less expensive than I currently pay DTE		66.2%	1236
If the electricity is the same cost as what I currently pay DTE		68.6%	1281
If the electricity is slightly more (10%) than what I currently pay DTE		57.3%	1070
I am not interested in any of these scenarios		8.6%	160
I don't know/need more information		7.8%	146

QUESTION 2

What are the three (3) most important attributes you want in your energy system?

1. 100% clean and renewable energy
2. Reliable so I can keep the lights on
3. Resilient so I can have power during emergencies
4. Low cost energy
5. Community owned
6. Locally generated energy

Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?

QUESTION 3

Is there anything else that is important to you about your energy system?

Answered	800
Skipped	1,067

QUESTION 4

Do you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts about the City potentially creating a Sustainable Energy Utility?

Answered	898
Skipped	969

QUESTION 5

If you'd like to be added to the waitlist to learn more about the Sustainable Energy Utility should the concept move forward, please enter your name, address, and email.

Answered	696
Skipped	1,171

QUESTION 6

Do you live in Ann Arbor?

		%	Count
Yes		96.8%	1772
No		3.2%	59

QUESTION 7

Do you work in Ann Arbor?

Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?

		%	Count
Yes		64.3%	1170
No		12.1%	221
Retired		23.5%	428

QUESTION 8

What is your age?

		%	Count
Under 15 years		0.1%	1
15-19 years		0.6%	10
20-29 years		9.9%	177
30-39 years		19.6%	351
40-49 years		17.7%	317
50-59 years		17.8%	319
60-69 years		18.8%	337
70 years or older		15.5%	277

QUESTION 9

Which identifiers would you use to describe yourself?

		%	Count
American Indian or Alaska Native		1.0%	16
Asian		3.3%	55

Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?

		%	Count
Asian Indian		1.9%	32
Black or African-American		1.3%	21
Chamorro		0.2%	3
Chinese		0.6%	10
Filipino		0.4%	6
Japanese		0.6%	10
Korean		0.1%	2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander		0.2%	4
Samoan		0.2%	3
White		89.1%	1474
Middle Eastern or North African		1.5%	25
Hispanic or Latinx		3.1%	51
Other		3.9%	64

QUESTION 10

What is your gender identity?

		%	Count
Woman/girl		41.8%	700
Man/boy		54.5%	913
Transgender Woman/girl		0.3%	5

Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?

		%	Count
Transgender Man/boy		0.2%	3
Gender non-conforming or non-binary		1.3%	22
Other		1.9%	31

QUESTION 11

How do you identify your sexual orientation? (select all that apply):

		%	Count
Asexual		1.6%	24
Bisexual		5.2%	77
Heterosexual or straight		83.8%	1233
Homosexual or lesbian or gay		4.8%	71
Pansexual		1.6%	24
Queer		3.4%	50
Same-gender loving		0.4%	6
Other		3.3%	49

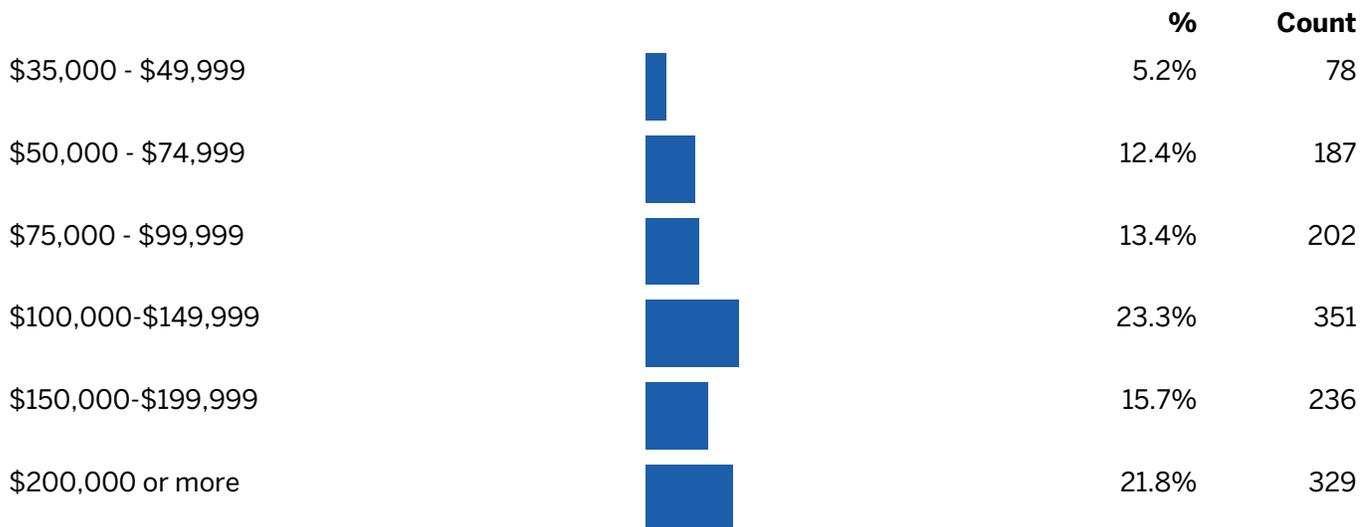
QUESTION 12

Which best describes your household income last year?

		%	Count
Less than \$24,999		3.4%	51
\$25,000 - \$34,999		4.8%	72

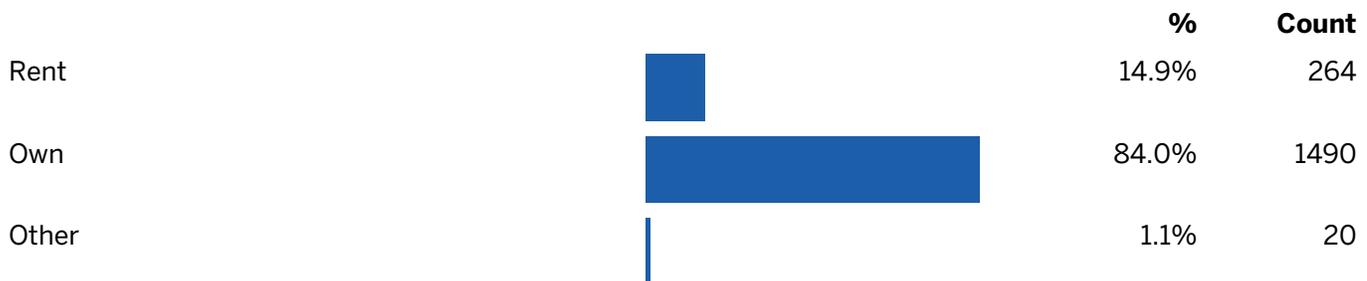
Sustainable Energy Utility (SEU)

Are you interested in advancing a Sustainable Energy Utility?



QUESTION 13

Do you rent or own your primary residence?



QUESTION 14

What would make it easier for you to engage with the city?

Answered	357
Skipped	1,510

APPENDIX THREE: AGGREGATED RESULTS FROM OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Summary of Written Responses

Modernized Utility for Efficient, Robust, and Thorough Clean Energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to choose the best options for renewable energy • Important to ensure the entire life cycle of the project is considered in terms of sustainability • Important that the transition is actually reduces CO2 emissions • Important that the SEU include up to date technology concerning renewable energy, including storage 		361
Allows for localized energy production	55	
Net metering that allows sharing and overproduction of energy across A2	37	
Combining infrustrcture to maximize Energy efficiency and conservation	28	
Transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to avoid green-washing • Equitable between supplier and consumers • Responsibility of supplier 		82
Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction or at least maintain current energy prices for consumers • Important the cost not be directly shouldered by the public, including through taxes and millages • Equitable performance across Ann Arbor • Options for subsidies, especially for low-income residents • Acknowledgement and inclusion of renters and residents with neighborhood barriers such as non-supportive HOA • Knowledge accessibility, everyone understands the process and the transition is easy 		380
Incentives for those who have already installed solar panels	45	
Schools and businesses included	3	
Resilience and Reliability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes future investment in infrastructure • Important that regular maintenance takes place • Important that the utility be competitive in efficiency and built to support continual upgrades 		183
Representative of Community Needs, Desires, and Opinions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community oversight • Avoiding unsightly infrastructure developments • Limited political influence 		138

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom of choice concerning all aspects of the SEU The creation of fair and good paying jobs 							
Concerns of Preemptive Method, Time Line, Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of depreciated grid Management of utility <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Is the project technically feasible?</td> <td>35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Importance of partnerships</td> <td>44</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Will DTE be pressured to do more?</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </table>	Is the project technically feasible?	35	Importance of partnerships	44	Will DTE be pressured to do more?	8	231
Is the project technically feasible?	35						
Importance of partnerships	44						
Will DTE be pressured to do more?	8						
Concern for the Capability of the City to Own and Operate the Proposed SEU	136						
Low Profit Incentive	52						
Do Not Support Moving Forward	18						
Excitement for the Idea	96						
Ownership Community ownership Privately owned	27 3						
Positively effects surrounding areas and communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including Townships Including the University of Michigan A2 as an example for other cities 	25						
Secure	13						