



Communication Assessment Findings Presented to Lower Gwynedd Township



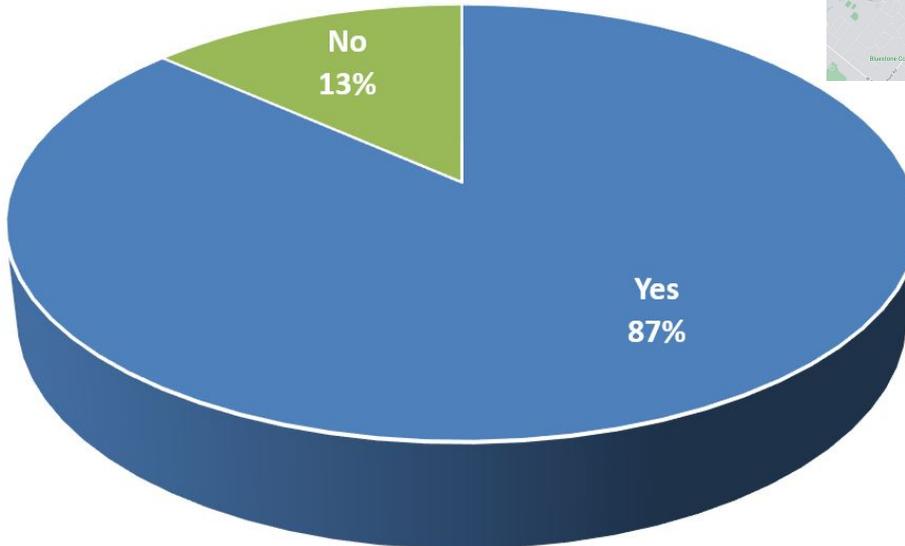
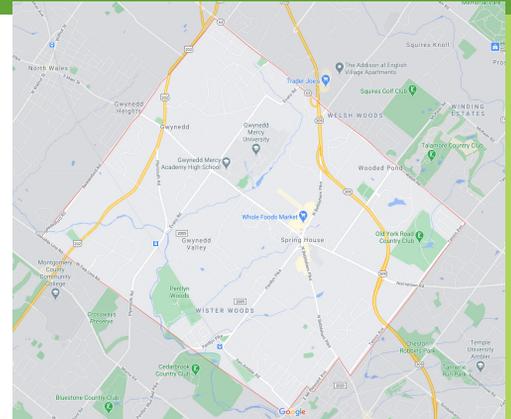
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www.comsolutions.com

Survey Details

- Communication Solutions met with Township supervisors and staff to identify survey priorities and current communication processes.
- Electronic survey administered between February 1 and 19.
- Survey promoted via Township website, email blast, and press release distributed to local media and shared through social media.
- Wissahickon School District shared a link with all families.
- A print version of the survey was hand delivered to independent and assisted living communities within the Township, resulting in an additional 120+ responses.
- A total of 1,097 surveys were received from respondents within the Township.
- 380 residents provided additional email addresses.

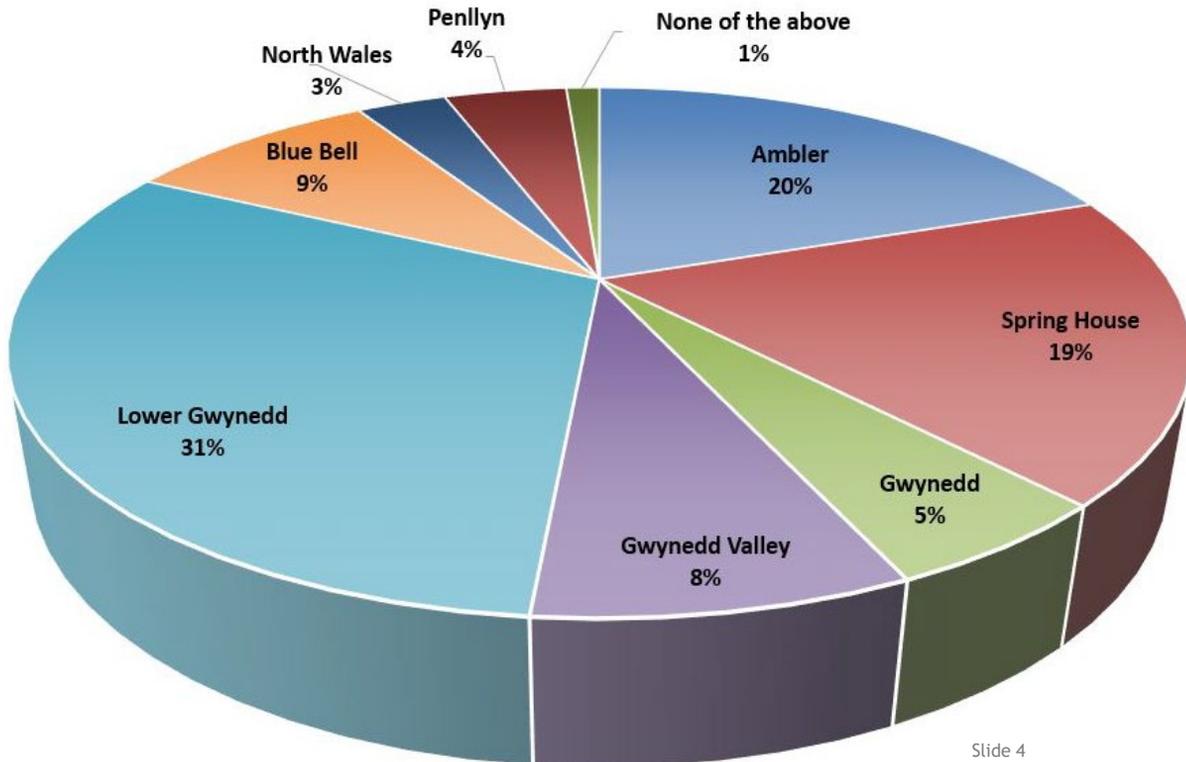
Respondent Profile

Based on the Red-Bordered Map Below, Do You Live in Lower Gwynedd Township?



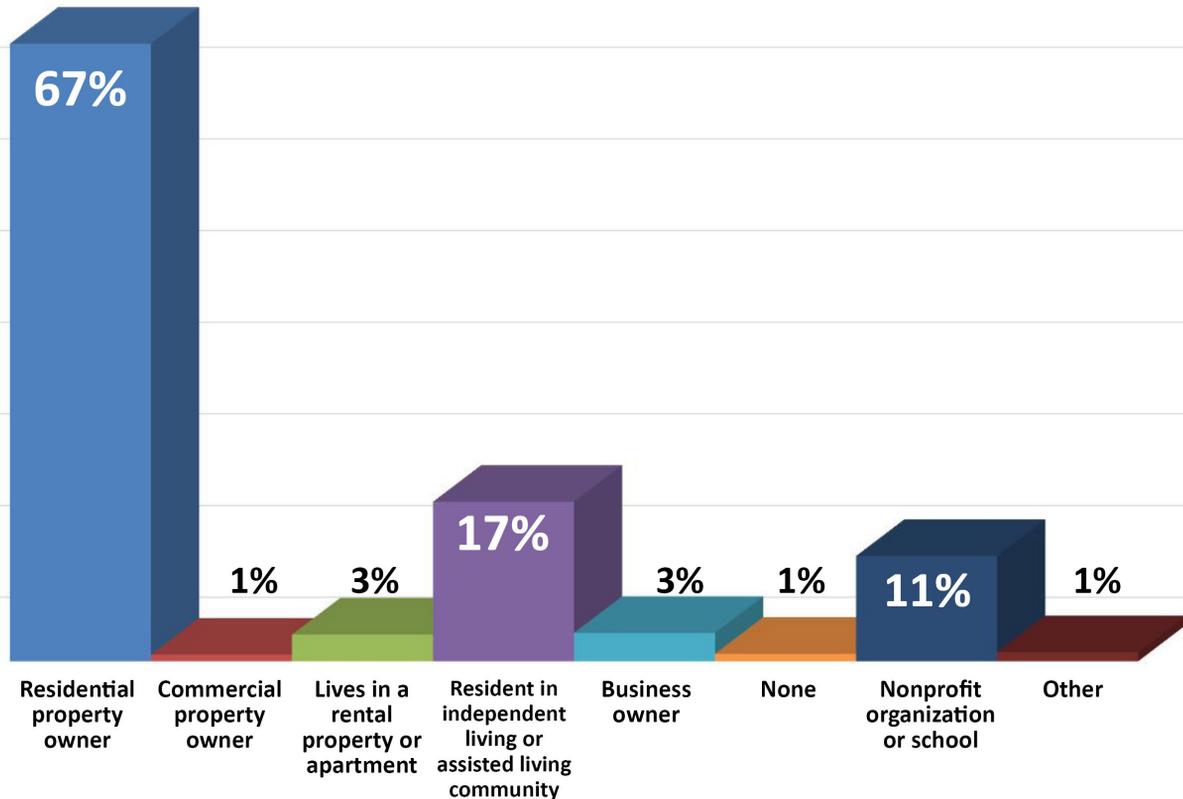
Community Identity

Which of the Following Locations Do You Most Identify With?



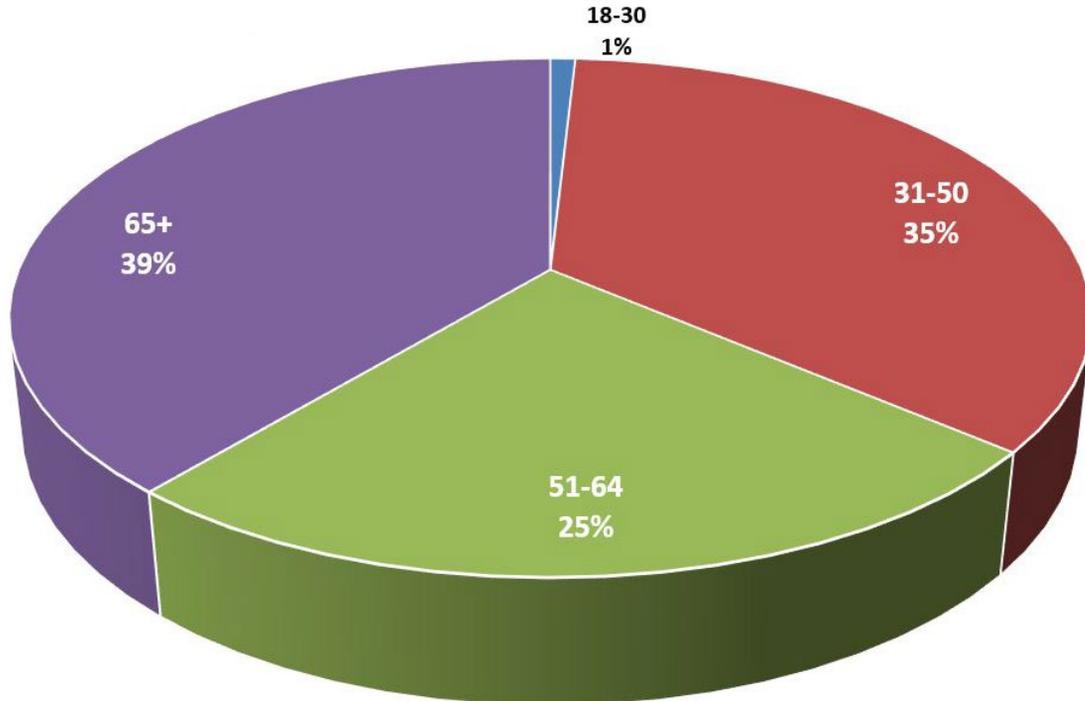
Respondent Profile

Which of the Following Represents You?



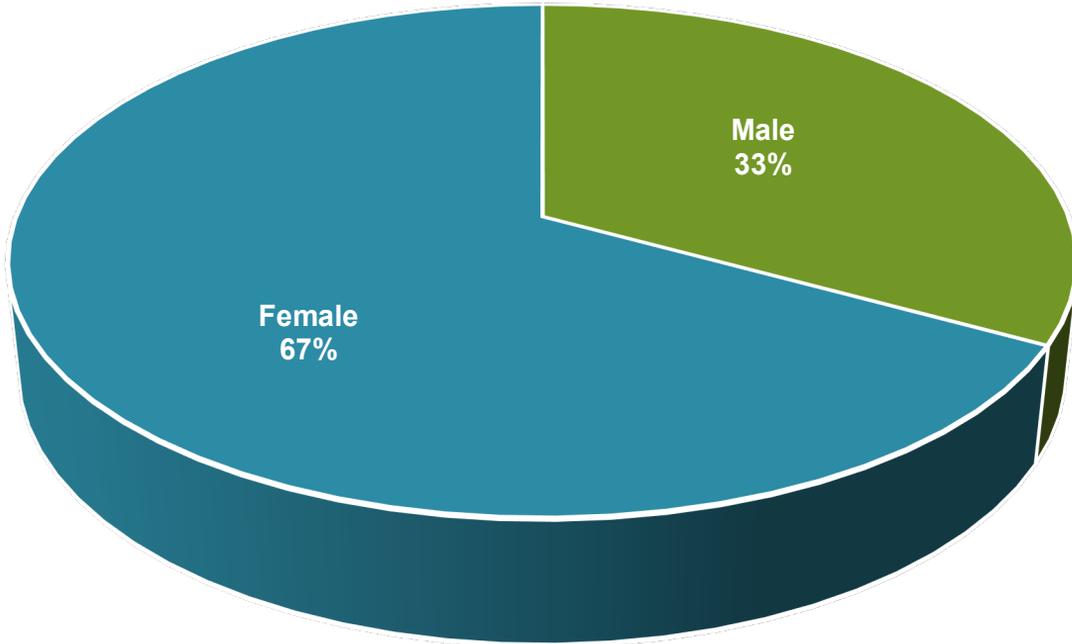
Respondent Profile

What is Your Age Range?



Respondent Profile

What is Your Gender?



Community Identity

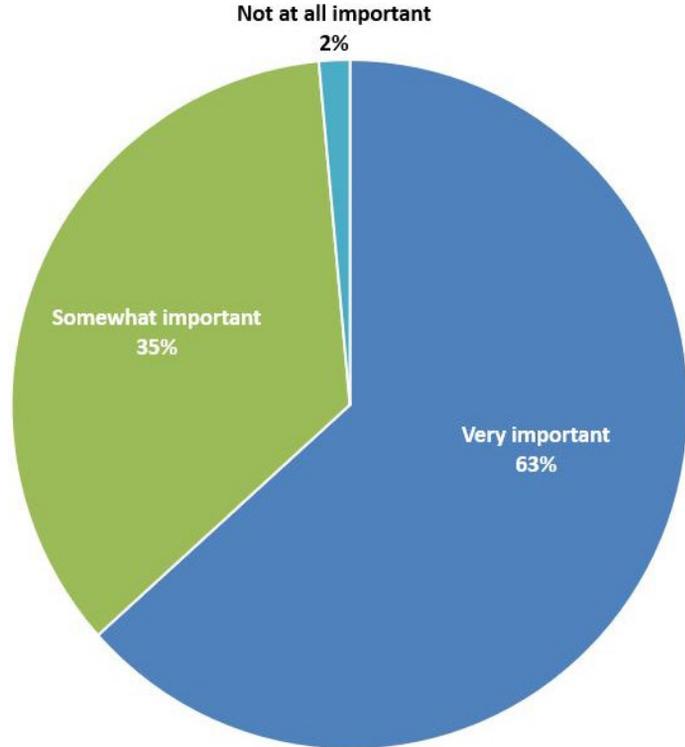
- A significant number of respondents identify more with another geographic entity or municipality than with Lower Gwynedd Township itself.
- **31 percent chose Lower Gwynedd** as the location with which they most identify.
- Another **36.2%** said they most strongly identify with **one of the four villages** within the Township.
- More than one in five respondents, **23%, identify most with Ambler or North Wales** This phenomenon is likely tied to mailing address.

Community Identity

Lower Gwynedd Residents Care About Their Township...

How Important is it for You to Know What is Going on Within Lower Gwynedd Township?

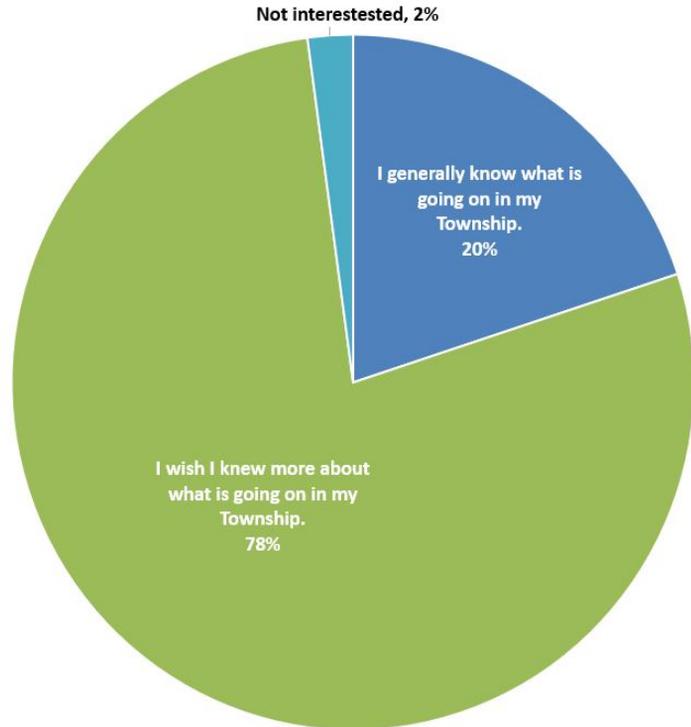
Nearly 100% of respondents say knowing what's going on in the Township is very or somewhat important to them.



Community Identity

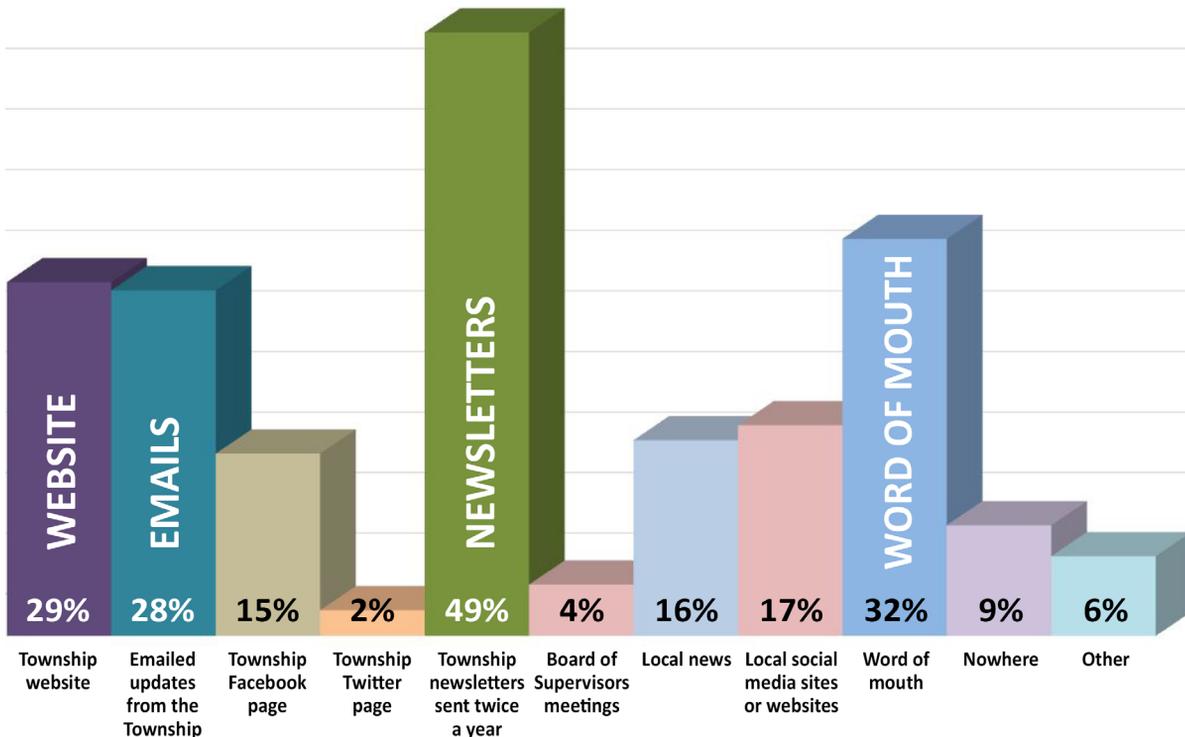
In Fact, They Wish They Knew More.

**How Aware are You of
Lower Gwynedd Township
News and Initiatives?**



Source of Township Information

Where Do You Receive the Majority of Information About the Township's News or Activities?



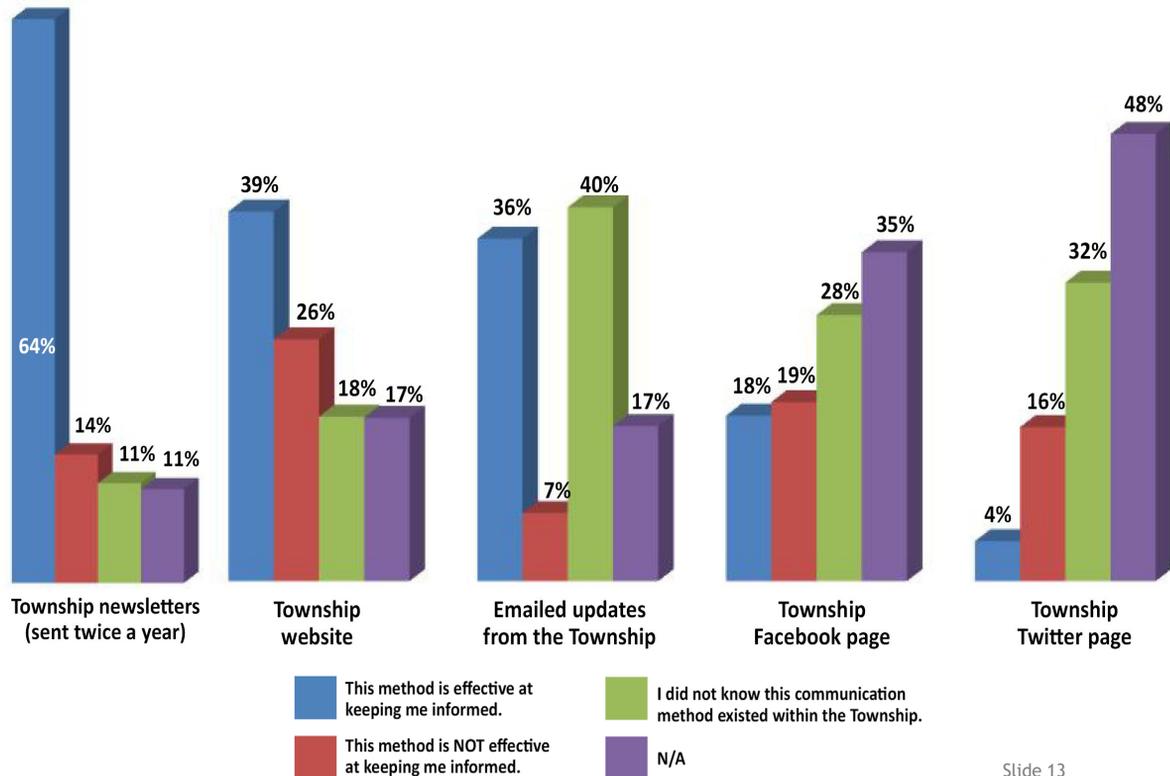
Source of Township Information

The data on newsletter readership is impressive, and later in this survey you will see just how much respondents depend on your newsletter.

Of primary concern, however, is that more respondents depend on “word of mouth” for their information than they do your website or email updates. We will explore that in greater detail later.

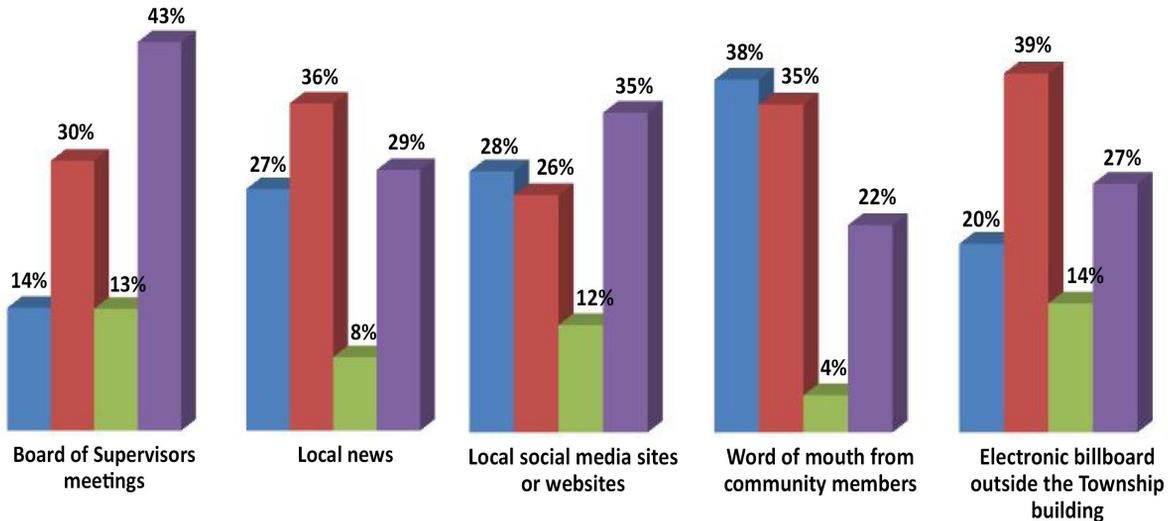
Effectiveness of Communication Methods

Please Rate the Effectiveness of Each Communication Method in Keeping You Informed.



Effectiveness of Communication Methods

Please Rate the Effectiveness of Each Communication Method in Keeping You Informed.



 This method is effective at keeping me informed.

 This method is NOT effective at keeping me informed.

 I did not know this communication method existed within the Township.

 N/A

Effectiveness of Communication Methods

The Lower Gwynedd Report newsletter received the highest marks for effectiveness – **64%**

The website (**39%**) and email updates (**36%**) should have ranked much higher in communication effectiveness, based on similar surveys we have conducted.

The bigger concerns, however are these three issues:

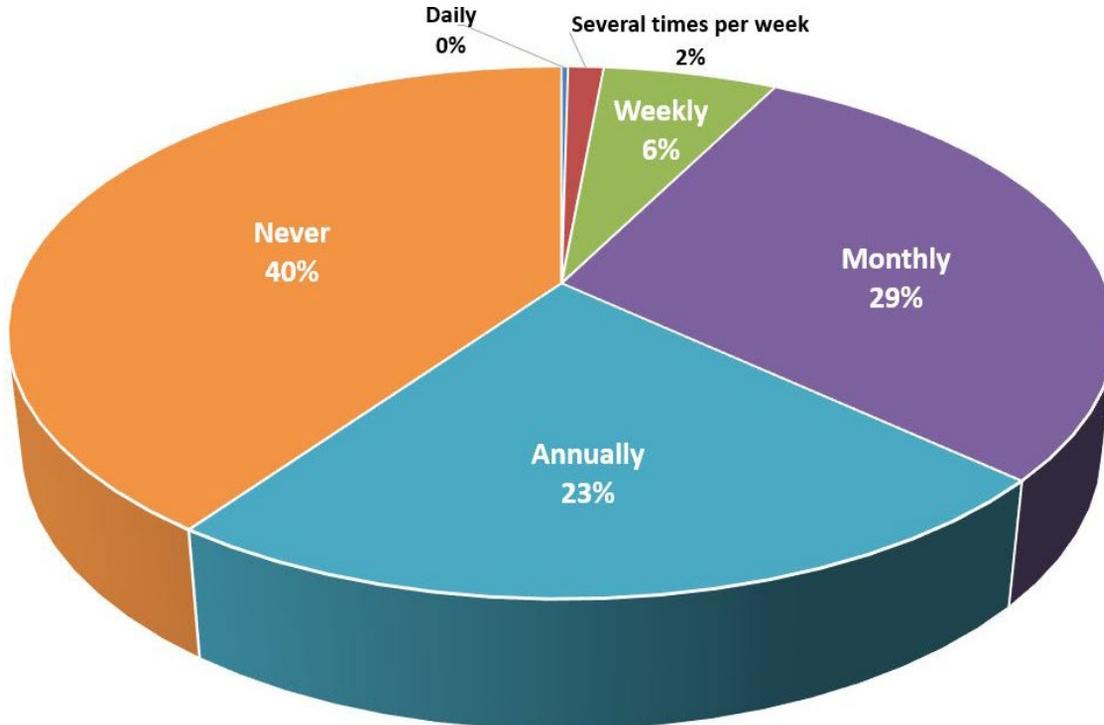
- **78%** of respondents wish they knew more about what was going on in the township.
- **40%** of respondents were unaware the emailed updates exist.
- **38%** of respondents feel that **getting information from neighbors is an effective communication method**, thus leaving the Township vulnerable to gossip and misinformation.

Other Township communication tools also suffer from a lack of awareness:

- **32%** were unaware you are on Twitter.
- **28%** were unaware you are on Facebook, yet the majority of respondents use Facebook as their preferred social media site.

A Deeper Dive: The Township Website

How often Do You Visit the Township Website?



A Deeper Dive: The Township Website

What Are Your Reasons for Visiting the Website? (open-ended)

Nearly **90%** percent of those who answered this open-ended question said they use the website to find information. This includes information about:

- **Trash, recycling, electronics recycling or leaf pickup schedules** (**20%** of those responding to this question).
- **Activities or events**, such as concerts, discount tickets, summer camp. (**15%**)
- **Zoning, development or construction projects.**
Includes both respondents who want updates on proposed and ongoing developments and zoning and planning decisions and those who want to look up information, seemingly for their own projects. (**9%**)
- **Meeting** schedules, agendas, or minutes (**4%**).
- **Trails and parks** (**4%**).

A Deeper Dive: The Township Website

What Are Your Reasons for Visiting the Website? (open-ended)

“ Info. About recycling (Christmas tree, batteries), medication disposal, and building codes.

To see what's going on

Looking for info on trails or on trash recycling

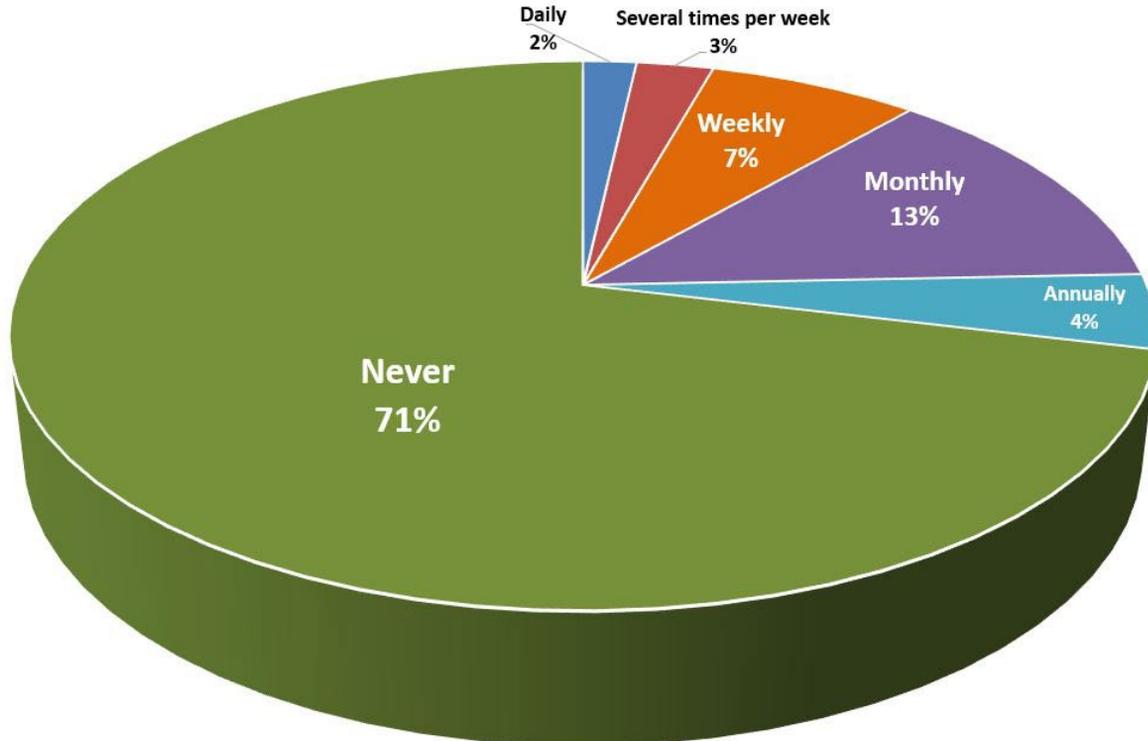
Supervisors meeting minutes, zoning minutes, general information.

When I tried the website, it was not informative!
Case in point was the transition to the new trash hauler.

”

Township Social Media

How often do you browse Township social media sites?



Media Usage Trends

Which Area Newspapers or Social Media Pages Do You Get Local Information from? (open ended)

Media:

Patch
Ambler Gazette
Around Ambler
Philadelphia Inquirer

Social Media:

Facebook most common response by far.
Twitter
Nextdoor
Instagram

Township Social Media

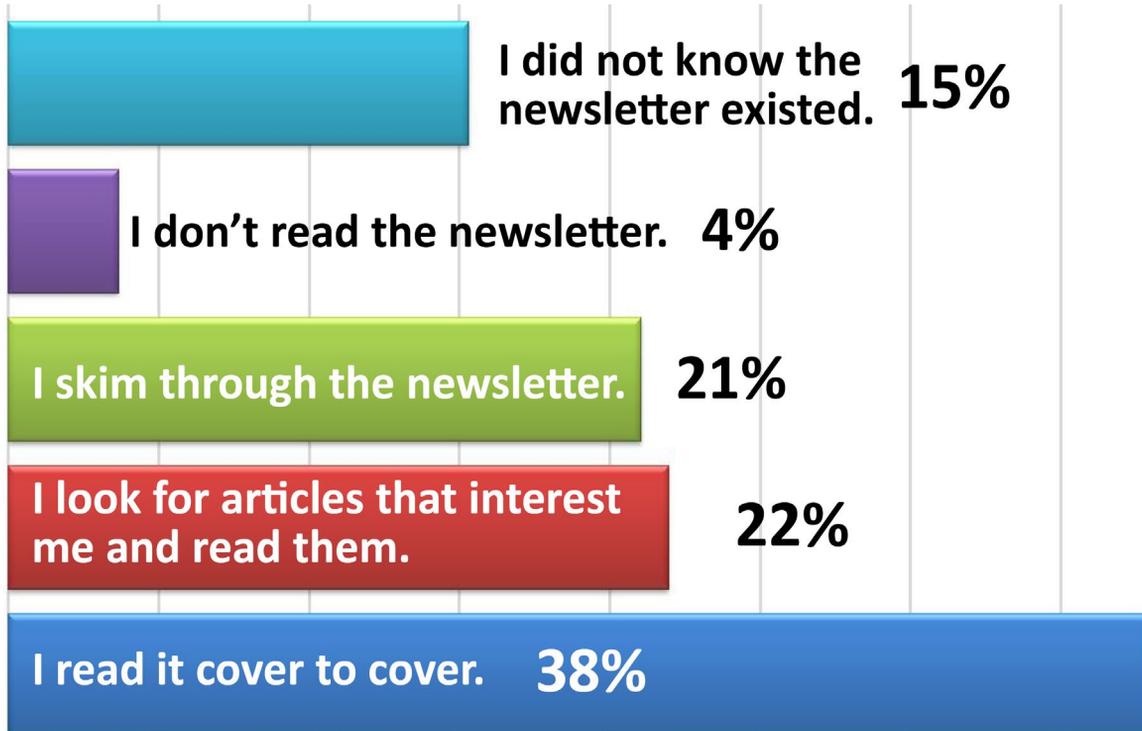
- Only a limited number of Lower Gwynedd Township respondents consider Township social media to be effective in providing news and information
 - **18%** Facebook
 - **4%** Twitter
- A significant number of survey respondents did not know you have social media accounts (**28%** Facebook, **32%** Twitter), though they are heavy Facebook users.
- Responses to open ended questions strongly suggest more people would look to your social media accounts if they were used to provide more information.

“ They need an active Facebook presence with historical information, local resident profiles, calendar events/sign ups, Supervisor meeting summaries/minutes/links to live meetings

Using social media channels consistently and replying to people in a timely fashion when they have a question. ”

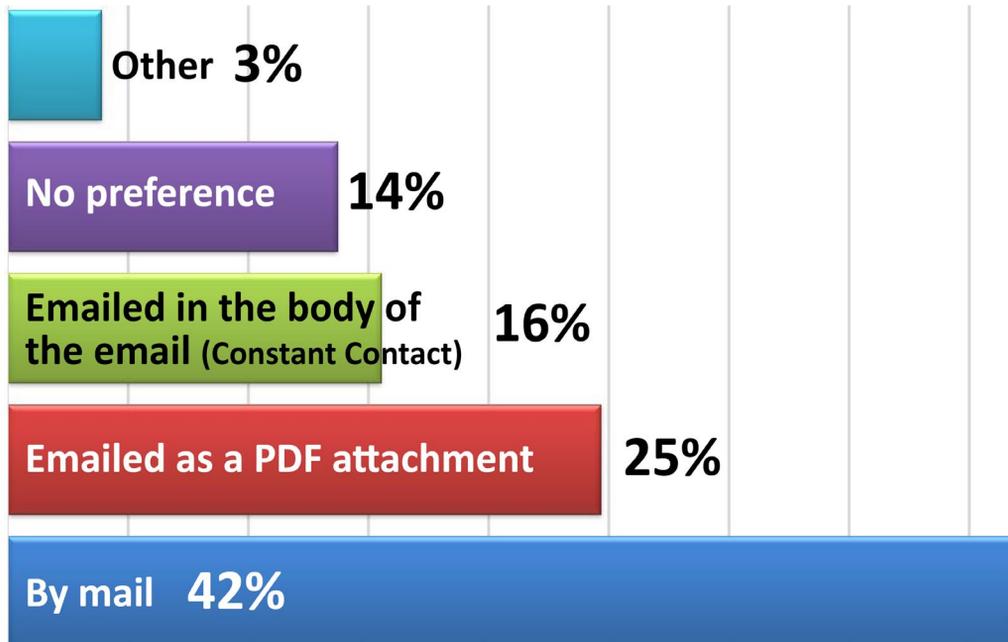
A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

Which Phrase Below Best Describes How You Read the Township's Newsletter?



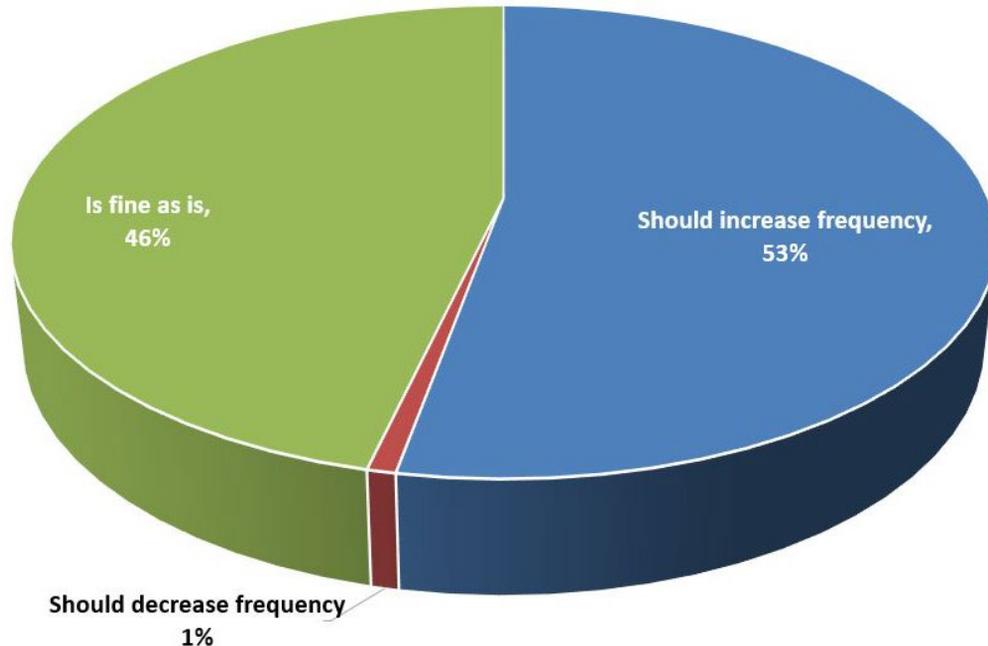
A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

What Would Be Your Preferred Way To Receive the Township Newsletter?



A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

How Do You Feel About the Frequency of the Township Newsletter?



A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

According to this survey, The Lower Gwynedd Report is valued by those who receive it. In fact, **53%** feel you should increase its frequency.

About **60%** of those responding to this question said they either read the newsletter cover to cover or read the articles that interest them.

This data is impressive and it speaks to the importance of this particular communication method.

Your readership is split on preferred delivery method, with **42%** wanting it by mail and **41%** requesting it in an electronic format.

Given the importance of this publication to your residents, it would be our recommendation that both approaches be implemented for the first year, and that frequency of this publication be increased to quarterly.

A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

How can we make the Township newsletter more useful to you? (Open-Ended)

- Increase frequency: **34%**
- Add timely information/news: **21%**
(include the request for event listings and this jumps to **26%**)
- Distribute it electronically: **12%**

Note the relationship between the top change requests:

- Many people said the newsletter is outdated by the time it reaches them and increasing frequency would help with that.
- A request for more timely information and news can be much more easily and consistently fulfilled if the newsletter is issued more frequently.
- Many who wanted more frequent distribution also wanted that distribution to be digital. And some suggested keeping two print editions but adding additional newsletters between them that are electronic only.

A Deeper Dive: The Lower Gwynedd Report

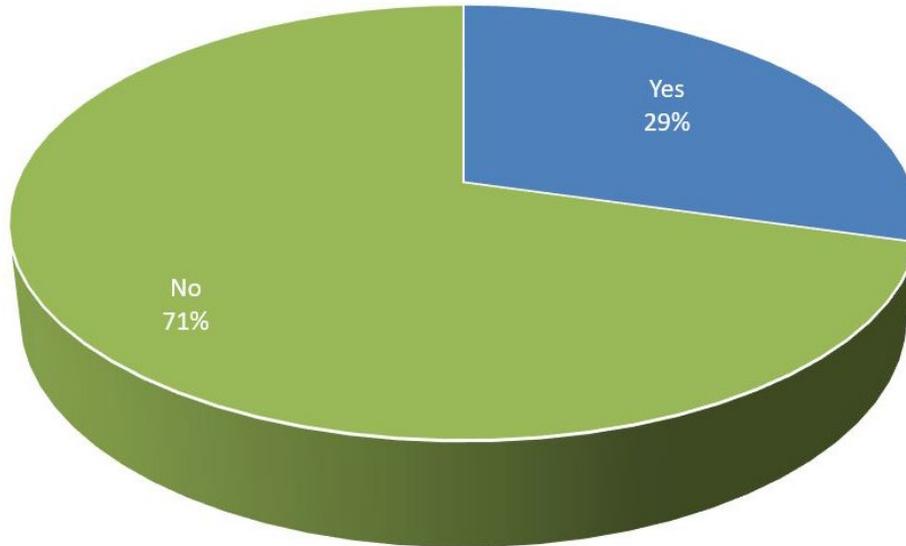
“ Mail it to us. Presently we pick it up at Foulkeways community center, when and if we notice it.

Provide updates on advisory boards and committees.

Increase frequency. The format is very good. ”

Township Email Trends

Are You Currently Receiving Emails from the Township?

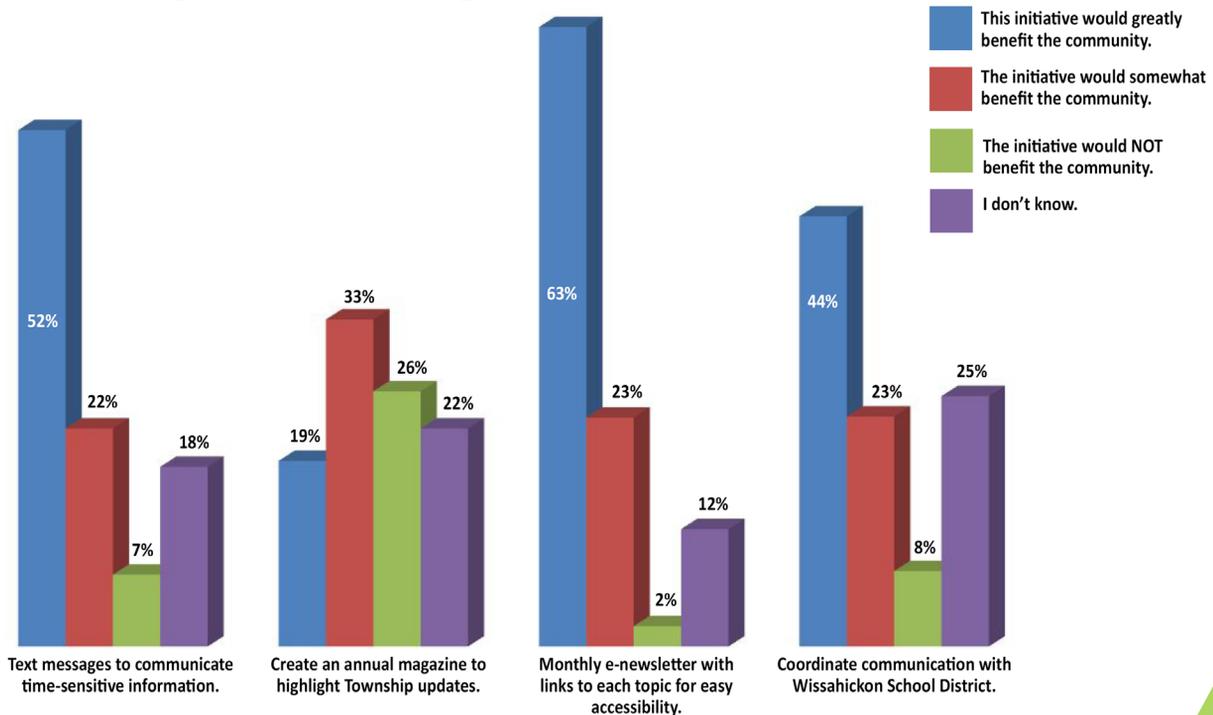


More than **70%** of respondents are **NOT** receiving Township emails.

Here's the GOOD NEWS: More than 380 people provided their email addresses so they can be added to the list!

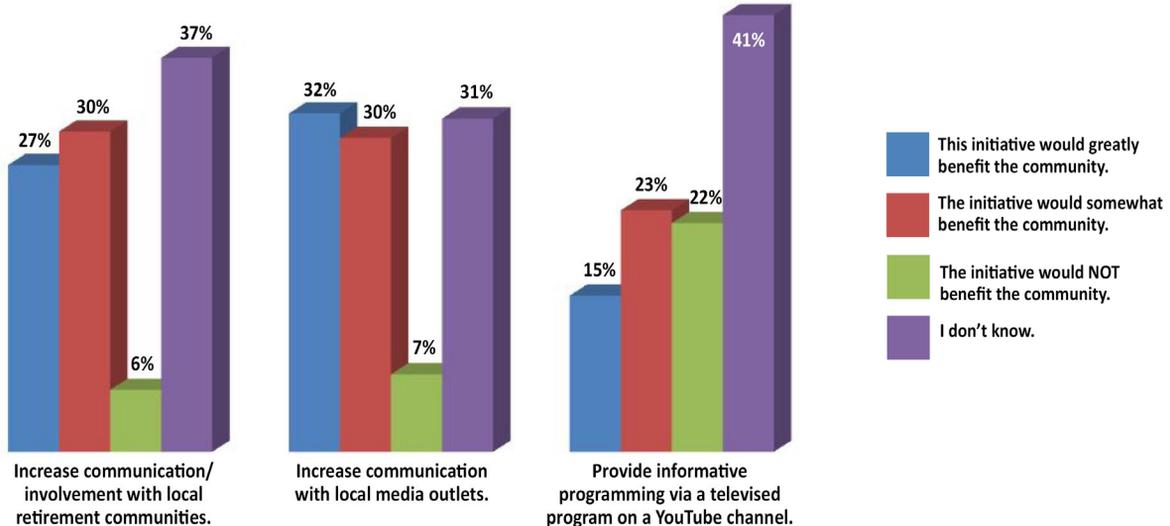
Ranking New Communication Initiatives

Considering the List Below, How Beneficial Would Each Initiative Be in Keeping the Community Updated About Lower Gwynedd Township?



Ranking New Options

Considering the List Below, How Beneficial Would Each Initiative Be in Keeping the Community Updated About Lower Gwynedd Township?



New Option Preferences

Initiatives that Respondents feel would be beneficial:

- **86%** want a monthly newsletter.
- **74%** want you to text time-sensitive information.
- **67%** want you to coordinate communication with the school district.
- **62%** want to see more township information in local press.
- **57%** want you more involved with local retirement community.

Ranking New Options

What other communication initiatives would you suggest? (open ended)

- **35%** suggested the use of email and/or texts, or, less frequently, phone calls to relay urgent information such as road closures or emergencies.
- **18%** asked for more frequent use of social media to relay Township information.
- **25%** asked for more news and information.
- **6%** of respondents asked for more direct communication with 55+ communities, including visits/meetings held at the communities or providing recordings of meetings to the communities.

Respondent Suggestions

“ Do like Whitpain does use social media to inform public of things as in road closures and when they reopen etc something Lower Gwynedd does not do which it should

We need more updates on social media from the township.

I DO think that text messages for time sensitive issues or reminders for upcoming events would be highly effective.

More timely updates e.g. for waste removal service updates, construction, CV19 updates...text msgs ”

Respondent Suggestions

“ I wouldn't mind text notifications. For example, "Don't forget to tune in to this evening's board meeting", you can follow by clicking _____ link. That would be a great reminder.

Text when snow plow activities expected in neighborhoods before, during & after a storm

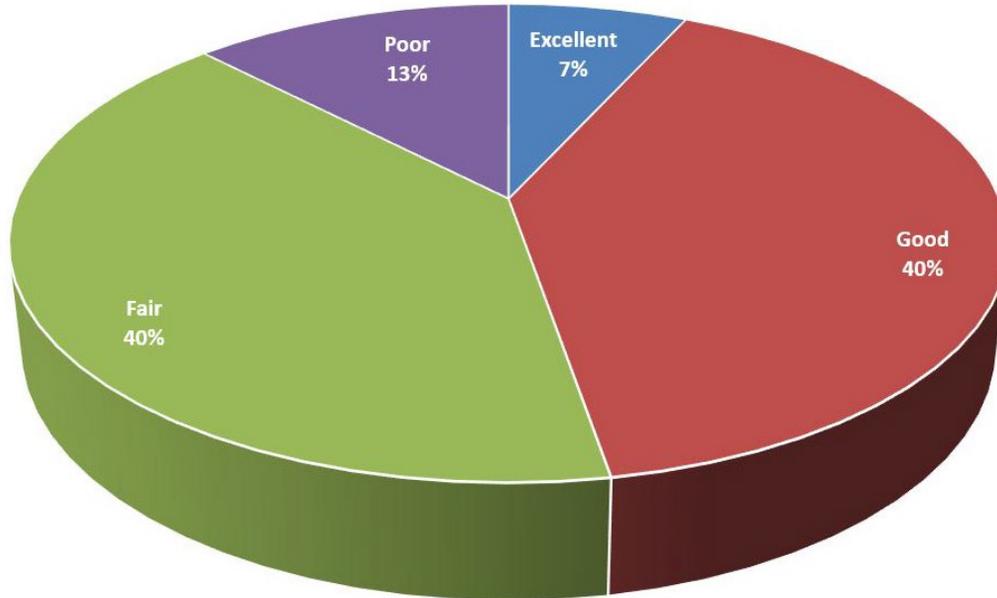
Improve the emails. Typically it tells you to go to a link, half the time it doesn't work or the message is cut off. You shouldn't have to click on a link, just provide the information in the email. Or make sure the link takes you to a user friendly place. Tend to be last minute also in terms of notification - i.e. a Board meeting is tonight or tomorrow.

Post news/updates in more places.

”

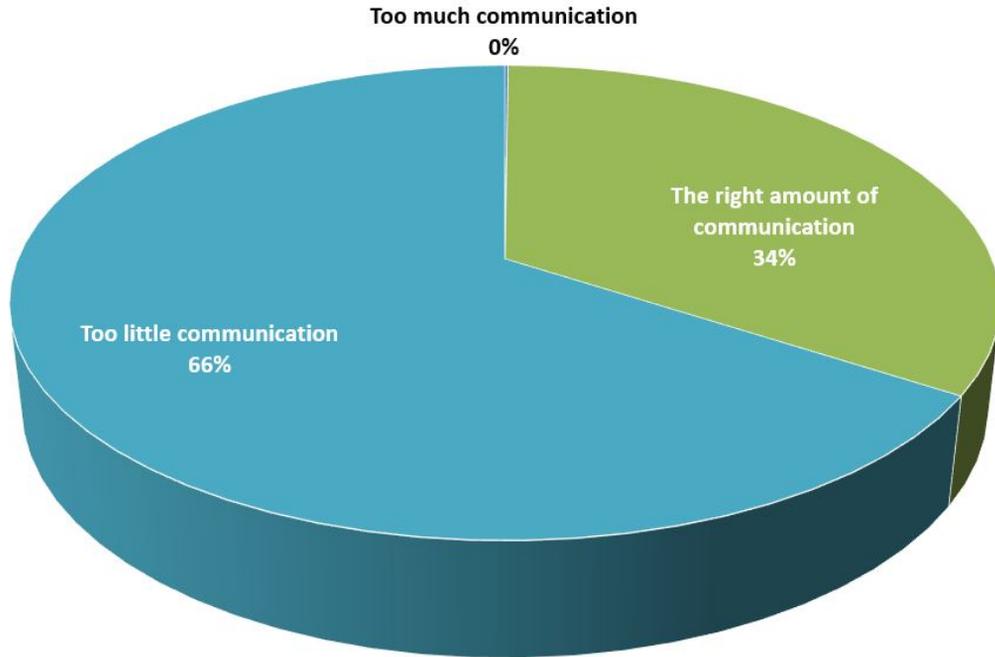
Communication QUALITY

How Would You Rate the Overall Quality of Communication You Receive from the Township?



Communication QUANTITY

How Would You Rate the Quantity of Communication You Receive from the Township?



Key Points & Recommendations: Team #1

Community Members Seek More Communication from You

Survey respondents want to know more about Lower Gwynedd Township, especially projects and proposals that could impact them. They want to know how and when to make their voices heard on such issues.

Respondents want to take full advantage of Township activities and events and they want to learn more about the people, places, and businesses in their community.

Most want more digital and electronic communications. Respondents especially want the Township to communicate time sensitive, urgent, or other important communications by digital means: sending texts or emails, and posting to the Township's social media pages and website.

AN INVITATION TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS LIVING IN PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP
PLEASE JOIN US FOR...

**Reaching Out
Planning Ahead**

**A Collaborative Meeting
to Discuss the Capital Needs
of Plymouth Township**

Monday, May 21, 2018 Plymouth Fire Company No. 1
at 3 pm and 7 pm 1323 Colwell Lane
Conshohocken, PA 19428

Wednesday, May 23, 2018 Greater Plymouth Community Center
at 3 pm and 7 pm 2910 Jolly Road
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462

The invitation features a central graphic with two speech bubbles (one yellow, one green) and a blue speech bubble containing the text 'Reaching Out Planning Ahead'. The graphic is surrounded by six small photographs: a meeting room with a presentation screen, a person in a uniform, a person at a computer, a person at a desk, a large room with yellow chairs, and a modern building interior.

Key Points & Recommendations

Engaging the Senior Adult Population

- Periodically send Township representatives to talk to residents about subjects relevant to them.
- Investigate a better delivery model for the newsletters that go to independent/assisted living communities. Some responses indicate a large pile is brought to the community rather than put in individual mailboxes. Can newsletters be placed in individual mail boxes? If not, can an announcement be made that the newsletter is available?



Key Points & Recommendations

Improving the Newsletter

- Capitalize on the preference for electronic communication
 - Solicit more email addresses.
 - Emailing the newsletter saves money and eliminates dependence on the post office. It's also “greener.”
- A significant portion of your audience still prefers a printed newsletter, so you should not eliminate print entirely.
 - Recognize the mail is slower than it used to be and add more “cushion” to your production deadline.
 - Consider whether other communication methods are more appropriate for some timely items and communicate important and/or timely items by multiple means.
- Publish more frequently.
- Include more “newsy” items about proposed projects and developments and upcoming meetings and events.
- Tell more Township stories! Respondents said they want to learn more about local businesses, volunteer opportunities, and service providers, such as firefighters and police officers.



Key Points & Recommendations

Better Utilizing Communications Partners

- 36% of those responding said local news does not do a good job of keeping them informed about the Township. Partly, this is due to staffing changes in local media. Yet, the survey indicates they read local media outlets still.
 - The reduction in local news reporters means the Township must more frequently provide press releases and other information to the news media rather than rely on time-strapped reporters to discover stories on their own.
 - This also underscores the importance of maximizing direct means of communication (emails, text, social media, newsletters, website.)
- Utilize Patch
 - If press releases aren't picked up, post to Patch as a community contributor
- Let your friends give you a hand in delivering your message.
 - The Wissahickon School District is very receptive about posting and distributing your information.
 - Seek similar relationships with other community organizations, including churches, synagogues, senior residential communities, etc.



May 21 & May 23 Meetings Invite Public Input in Plymouth Township

The Township is asking residents to weigh in on the future of the Township's capital needs, including needed municipal building renovations

By Leza Raffel, Community Contributor | Apr 30, 2018

Plymouth Township officials are calling on residents to weigh in on the future of the Township's capital needs, including much needed renovations to the municipal building.

For nearly half a century, the building has been the central hub for Township services and law enforcement. In the early days, 60 people worked in the 27,500 square foot building. Today the building, composed of one floor and a partial basement, houses nearly 100 employees, including police officers on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Yet the building is in desperate need of renovation to ensure safety and compliance with environmental and accessibility standards.

The most fiscally responsible options for funding these renovations will be evaluated carefully, with the idea of selling the Township's sewer system being one possible option. No decisions will be made, however, without community input and careful deliberation.

That's why members of the Plymouth Township Council are inviting residents to join them for a series of informational sessions titled "Reaching Out, Planning Ahead: A Collaborative Meeting to Discuss the Capital Needs of Plymouth Township."

The meetings are scheduled for Monday, May 21 at the Plymouth Fire Company, 1323 Cobwell Lane, Conshohocken, PA 19428 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and again Wednesday, May 23 at the Greater Plymouth Community Center, 2910 Jolly Road, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Topics will include:

- The Township municipal building's current conditions, including a cost prohibitive electric heating and cooling system, flooding problems and numerous space limitations



Key Points & Recommendations

Send More Email and Texts

- Respondents said they would like the Township to utilize email and text.
- A significant segment did not realize email communication is already an option. Make it a communications priority to publicize this option and collect the email addresses and cell phone numbers of every resident who wants to receive communication this way.
- Utilize email and text to communicate urgent or timely matters: Downed wires or an accident, for example.
- Some respondents said they would also like to receive reminders of Township meetings by email or text.



**A Virtual Public Meeting
On Financing Our Future**
JAN 27TH, 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Virtual Public Meeting to Discuss
"Stormwater Matters in Cheltenham: Financing Our Future"
January 27, 7PM - 9 PM

Cheltenham Township is committed to supporting and protecting our residents, businesses and property by reducing flooding, improving water quality and managing stormwater drainage systems. Stormwater management makes for healthy streams and rivers and performs a critical role in the health and safety of the Township.

On Wednesday, January 27, 2021, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Cheltenham Township will hold a virtual public meeting to review and discuss the Cheltenham Township Stormwater Remediation Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan. Arcadis, a Pennsylvania state experienced environmental consultant retained by the Township will lead this initial public meeting and future related meetings over the next several months. This project is being overseen by our Stormwater Advisory Committee, which consists of Township staff, Commissioners, and an informed group of volunteer residents and nonresidential property owners who have expressed an interest in this topic.

Increasingly frequent severe weather events, heightened Federal and State regulations on water quality and aging and inadequate stormwater conveyance systems have contributed to skyrocketing stormwater costs and devastating impacts for the Township and its property owners. Through this project, the Board of Commissioners is prioritizing improved stormwater management and reducing water pollution. This study will help the Township understand the cost of meeting stormwater management goals and requirements over the next decade. The process has the potential to calculate the short-term, intermediate and long-term costs, determine the various funding sources, and introduce a comprehensive set of solutions to this long-standing concern.

One likely recommendation the Board of Commissioners will consider is the implementation of an annual fee assessed to all properties – usually based on the amount of impervious coverage. This solution has two distinct

On Wednesday, January 27, 2021, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., Cheltenham Township will hold a [Virtual Public Meeting](#) to review and discuss the Cheltenham Township Stormwater Remediation Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan.

Key Points & Recommendations

The Website

- Many of the features that residents said they wanted your website to have – a news section, for example - already exist. This points to the need for an updated and better organized page with a more user-friendly design.
- Before undergoing a redesign, consider hosting a focus group to determine the problem areas of the current website and the preferred content and features of a new website.
- Consider your website the repository of all Township information. Once you post something here, it is easy to send a link across social media or to a reporter.
- Consider adding a “window” to your most used social media site on your homepage. This will add fresh content frequently and will also allow people who don’t have, say, Facebook, to see what you post.



Key Points & Recommendations

Social Media

- Use social media more frequently to communicate Township news. The more you post, the more stakeholders will learn to depend on your posts.
- Don't forget the fun stuff! Share photos of events, pretty scenes around the Township, residents' good news, etc.
- Include links to your social media pages in as many places as possible.



Communication Plan Essentials: Based on Data and Our Professional Assessment: Team #2

Lack of awareness and dependency on neighbors as information sources keep residents in the dark. Our biggest concerns are that **78%** indicated they wish they knew more about what is going on in the Township, while “word of mouth from neighbors” ranked as one of the top three ways people received information about the majority of township activities. This lack of awareness paired with reliance on neighborhood banter makes the Township very vulnerable to myths, rumors and misperceptions. The Township has the power to issue information and updates and it is essential that it do so more frequently.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Publish More Newsletters

1

Your newsletter is read by **78%** of survey respondents, with the highest percent reading it “cover-to-cover.” The majority also cite it as your most effective method for keeping them informed. The majority of respondents feel its frequency should be increased and **83%** indicated that a monthly e-newsletter would be a beneficial way to keep the township residents updated.

RECOMMENDATION

Issue the newsletter monthly via email, quarterly via traditional mail.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Text and/or Email Urgent Information

2

Getting timely information to respondents has been problematic. Prior to the survey, the Township only had 500 email addresses for people, which explains why **47%** of respondents either did not know the Township sent out email or did not believe they were effective. Interestingly, **74%** indicated they would like to receive time-sensitive information via text. This mirrors a model that many PA school districts have in place – with stakeholders receive an email and text when schools are closed or there is a weather emergency.

RECOMMENDATION

Explore a text service option. Add a line requesting email and cell phone information on future real estate bills and the envelope that accompanies them.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Increase Media Coverage

3

Given the middle age+ demographics of your area, it is not surprising that respondents still turn to local newspapers for information and use Facebook, the most established of the social media platforms. Drafting press releases for distribution to local press and posting on area social media sites as well as the Township's own social media site is a guaranteed way of controlling content and increasing public awareness. Based on our assessment, with the exception of posting Township news on your own township social media sites, this form of targeted news distribution is not occurring.

RECOMMENDATION

Press releases are a guaranteed way of controlling content. Therefore, any relevant township news needs to be developed into a press release and distributed the managing editors of the Ambler Gazette and Around Ambler. The Township must also get into the habit of posting these releases on Patch. Since Patch will automatically generate a newslink, that link can then be shared on social media.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Share Content to Grow Followers

4 With 28% and 48% of respondents not knowing the Township has a Facebook and Twitter page respectively, the key to growing social media followers is by sharing your social media contact on other social media sites by connecting with them. To grow participation in the survey, for example, we shared the press release and survey link on a variety of local pages including Wissahickon School District, Lower Gwynedd Living Network, Blue Bell Gwynedd Moms and other pages. This ensured that news of the survey got out.

RECOMMENDATION

The Township needs a proactive social media strategy that expands its outreach by garnering followers from pages that are read by residents. Our approach has been organic, but companies focusing on growing followers can provide targeted paid strategies as well.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Make Essential Website Changes

5

While your website is attractive and seems to contain important information, data indicates that it is underutilized by stakeholders. A careful assessment of the website provides some clear reasons that this could be the case:

- The most essential news and information are too far down toward the bottom of the homepage for people to know they are there.
- Important messages in the masthead transition too slowly for people to realize there are more coming and that they need to wait for them to appear.
- Social media posts mention important materials on the website but provide no direct links to get to them, leaving the burden of finding things to citizens.
([Lower Gwynedd Township | Facebook](#))

RECOMMENDATION

We propose that we meet with your website designer to implement a series of small changes that could improve the usefulness of your existing website.

Key Issues and Recommended Next Steps

Engage Your Senior Citizens

Adults in senior living facilities made up **17%** of the respondent pool. Their feedback brought to our attention several ways to keep these individuals connected to township news.

6

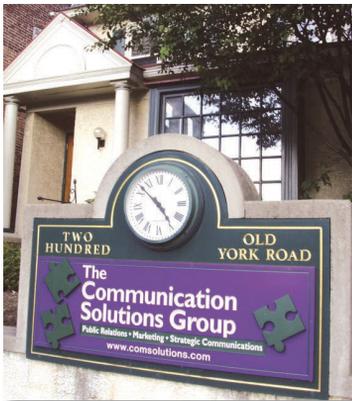
- First and foremost, it appears that Township newsletters are not being inserted in individual mailboxes. Instead, they are left in stacks in the mailroom. It is doubtful that seniors whose mail is being collected for them are even receiving these publications.
- It appears that these residents miss the days when the Township made regular appearances to speak to their groups on township topics. This could be due to COVID, or perhaps it was assumed that these presentations were not of interest to residents. But, based on feedback, they very much were.

RECOMMENDATION

The Township should hold a zoom call with the programming director or general manager of each of the senior living facilities. Data highlights from this survey should be shared and a plan should be proposed for resuming presentations and identifying a solution for newsletter distribution.

QUESTIONS?

Communication Solutions Group
would be happy to assist you with
any of these “Next Step” items.



**The
Communication
Solutions Group**

200 Old York Road
Jenkintown, PA 19046
(215) 884.6499

www.comsolutions.com