



## 2023 CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
From: Michelle Leise, Community Engagement Facilitator  
Meeting Date: July 10, 2023  
Agenda Item Number: 10.J.

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**Title** – Motion to Approve a Contract with the Morris Leatherman Company to Conduct the 2023 Red Wing Scientific Community Survey and Provide Results.

**Purpose** – The purpose of this item is for Council to review the attached contract with the Morris Leatherman Company and consider approval so City staff and Council can begin to finalize the scientific community survey and have it conducted with the public in September.

**Recommended Action**: Approve the contract with the Morris Leatherman Company to Conduct the 2023 Red Wing Scientific Community Survey and Provide Results.

### **Attachments**

- 1) Contract with the Morris Leatherman Company

### **Alignment with 2019 Strategic Plan**

- Strategy #62: Continue to find ways for the public to give input into the decisions that affect them.

### **Background**

The City Council has expressed an interest in conducting a scientific community survey this year to assist in upcoming strategic planning, and if timely, the 2024 budget. Red Wing last conducted scientific community surveys in 2005, 2013, and 2017. These past three surveys have all been conducted by the Morris Leatherman Company from Minneapolis, and the City has been very pleased with its work. This year, as in the past, Red Wing would be working directly with Peter Leatherman, who has decades of experience in this field.

At the Council's June 26, 2023, meeting, Council members voted unanimously to work with the Morris Leatherman Company (MLC) over another option – Polco/National Research Center – for a few reasons:

- MLC can guarantee demographic results that equal or are extremely close to the percentages of Red Wing's overall population;

- MLC has a trusted track record with Red Wing;
- MLC can supply comparisons to how our community answered the same questions in the past;
- MLC can share how Red Wing compares to other Minnesota cities with similar demographics on specific questions that Red Wing and MLC agree upon;
- MLC's method draws out answers from residents that are more detailed and in-depth and often provide reasons why someone feels a certain way.

The Morris Leatherman Company uses the phone method, calling a random sample of landlines and cell phone numbers and ensuring all demographic groups and geographic wards are represented. While fewer surveys utilize the phone method today, Peter Leatherman, who has conducted the last three surveys for Red Wing, uses this method because he believes it is the most representative and accurate.

Interviewers call the representative sample of phone numbers many times (sometimes as many as 20 times) and leave messages so respondents can call back and either answer the survey right away or schedule a future time. Using the call method, the interviewers make sure that each demographic group is accurately represented by its percentage in the Red Wing population (age, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic area, rent/own, etc.).

MLC uses a random, scientific sample of residents and provides a statistically significant result with a margin of error of plus or minus 5% of the entire population 95% of the time, which means getting responses from roughly 400 people. (These were the same parameters for the other survey company that was considered, as well.)

When the City publicizes the survey throughout the community, we will share this phone number so residents will hopefully be looking for it on their phones. No mailers specifically from MLC are sent. The City, however, will publicize the survey in multiple ways, including an insert with the utility bill, on social media, the newspaper and radio, our online newsletter (City Beat), and at events like River City Days and Night to Unite. Not everyone will be randomly chosen for the survey, but it will be helpful to publicize it so residents know this is a trusted project (not a scam) and that by completing it, they will be helping their community.

Working with Morris Leatherman means the survey can be tailored to Red Wing. The survey will be similar to the survey Red Wing used in 2017. However, staff will take Council feedback and ideas, and questions can be added or deleted. For example, a few questions that were timely in 2017 (like police body cameras and graffiti on He Mni Can-Barn Bluff) will be deleted.

The survey that was conducted in 2017, and the results, were published in the Council packet of the June 26, 2023, meeting. More information on MLC is at [morris-leatherman.com/](http://morris-leatherman.com/).



### **Discussion – Next Steps**

City Council will be able to review drafts of the survey questions in July and August. The goal is for Council to finalize and approve the survey questions at the August 28 meeting at the latest.

MLC will use an aggressive timeline to conduct the survey with residents in September and get results to City Council in early October.

**Financial Plan and Impact** – The cost for the Morris Leatherman Company survey services will not exceed \$28,000. The funds will come from internal labor costs that have been saved this year due to staffing shortages across the city organization.

**Recommended Action** - Approve the contract with the Morris Leatherman Company to conduct the 2023 Red Wing Scientific Community Survey and Provide Results.

### **Alternatives** –

- Approve the contract as written.
- Approve the contract with modifications made by the Council.
- Table the contract and request more information.
- Deny the contract and give staff direction on next steps.