

# Survey polls township residents

By MICHAEL SOLLY  
Collegian Staff Writer  
Residents of Harris Township want to maintain the rural character of their community, according to a survey of citizen opinion.

The poll, conducted in February by more than 400 students of a Biological Science 3 class, was taken in response to a Harris Township Planning Commission desire to gauge local opinions and needs more accurately.

"We contacted an amazing 58.4 per cent of the potentially available population," said Franklin S. Adams, assistant professor of biology. "This figure is almost unheard-of in large-scale surveys."

"We were unbelievably lucky," he said. "The three weekends of the survey were the three best weekends of the winter."

Adams attributed the success of the survey to the large number of pollsters — three busloads of students transported to Harris Township on the first three Saturdays in February. Seven hundred and sixty-eight of almost 1,000 families in the township were contacted, with 448 valid interviews recorded. Only 82 families refused to participate, according to the survey's summary report, released in April.

The survey teams, composed of one male and one female student, interviewed three to five families for about one hour each.

The survey was broken into rural, urban and central parts. The Central portion concentrated on Boalsburg, the township's only town, with a population of about 1,100.

After the survey, a special data compilation team, also composed of BI Sci 3 students, organized the results into a computer program which

counted the responses and divided them into percentages. This was done after each of the three polls and once again to achieve final totals.

Conclusions reached from the survey were generalized in the summary report.

"The residents value the rural nature of their community and appear resistant to urbanization," the report says. "In addition, the residents generally oppose industrialization, favoring only limited commercial development. And they take pride in the agricultural aspects of Harris Township, such as the preservation of farmlands."

"In general, economic growth and development are not primary concerns of the residents — they show more concern with maintaining the status quo."

The report notes an enthusiasm toward improved outdoor recreational facilities and a great respect on the parts of the residents toward the ecology of the township, especially the Tussey and Nittany Mountain areas. The residents said these areas should be protected with zoning ordinances if necessary.

They support most kinds of pollution control but reserve the right of small-scale pollution, such as picnic and leaf fires, the report says.

Other conclusions reached were:

—Ninety-six per cent of the population surveyed found single family units more acceptable than multiple family dwelling units.

—The residents displayed a considerable dislike for mobile home parks and low-income housing, although this view was not as strong in the rural areas.

—The majority favored

minimum lot sizes for single-unit housing. The most popular figure was one-fourth to one-half acre.

—Food markets, restaurants, a riding stable, laundromats and general stores headed the list of most favorable types of commercial development.

—Only two types of outdoor advertising were deemed acceptable: roadside information plazas and on-site signs. Other types of outdoor advertising which may be classified as distracting to the natural environment were not favored.

—Eighty-four per cent of central residents said they feel municipal parking should be provided.

—Among the types of industry offered, most people found light industry to be tolerable. But heavy and medium industries, were found to be entirely unacceptable.

—Volunteer fire protection service was deemed extremely satisfactory.

—Ambulance and hospital

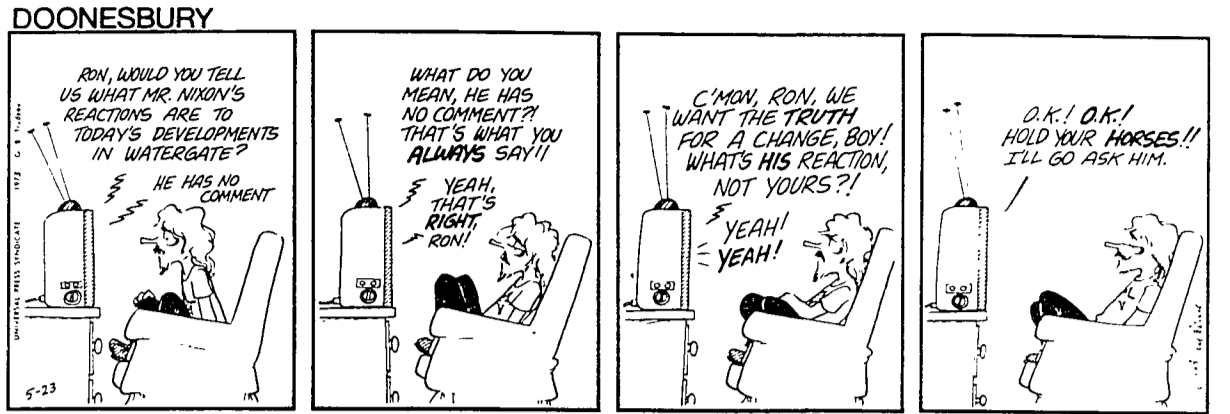
services were felt to be satisfactory.

—A majority did not feel street lighting was adequate and expressed a definite desire for improvement.

—Speed limits in general were considered to be satisfactory.

—Only 51.8 per cent of those surveyed said they feel the township supervisors should initiate public waste disposal accommodations. Of those favoring this service 78.4 per cent favored establishing a public recycling system.

—The historical character of the Boalsburg area was valued by a majority of the respondents, but only 58 per cent favored the establishment of a historical society. When questioned about their willingness to contribute money or property to a historical society, the figure dropped to 53 per cent. Sixty-seven per cent indicated a willingness to contribute time, labor or money to a beautification project in Harris Township.



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