

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 24, 2023

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Mark L. Bellamy, Jr., County Administrator 

**SUBJECT:** Overview of FlashVote and Its Benefits for York County

We greatly appreciate your continued interest and support of the new FlashVote initiative, which enables both County staff and the Board to engage with and hear directly from York County citizens. To provide a clearer understanding of its value, we would like to outline the benefits and structure of this effective tool.

### **Overview of FlashVote:**

FlashVote is a statistically valid survey tool designed to gather feedback from a representative sample of York County residents. It helps to inform elected officials on how the average citizen feels about specific topics. However, it is important to emphasize that FlashVote should not dictate decisions but rather serve as one of several inputs to guide decision-making. In addition to the “will of the people” that FlashVote captures, decision-makers should also weigh expert opinions (typically provided by County staff), feedback from highly affected groups (such as those who participate in public hearings), and their own judgment as elected officials. Without this tool, officials may inadvertently base decisions on the perspectives of those they interact with regularly, which may not accurately reflect the views of the broader population.

### **Value of Broad Participation:**

The accuracy of FlashVote’s results improves as more residents participate. For example, in the recent "Home Businesses" survey, 253 responses yielded a 6% margin of error. If 657 residents participate in future surveys, we can achieve a margin of error as low as 1%. This would represent feedback from hundreds of citizens who might not typically engage with York County government in other forums.

### **Benefits for Citizens:**

FlashVote not only aids government decision-making but also offers a convenient way for citizens to share their input on important issues. Many residents prefer government to function efficiently without requiring significant personal involvement, such as attending board meetings or writing emails. FlashVote allows residents to contribute meaningful input in just a few minutes, several times a year, without disrupting their daily routines. Additionally, the survey process ensures anonymity, as neither County staff nor Supervisors have access to individual survey responses.

**Transparency and Trust:**

A key feature of FlashVote is its commitment to full transparency. Survey results are shared simultaneously with the public, County staff, and Supervisors. There are no private or detailed reports for internal use—what the public sees is exactly what County staff receives. This commitment to transparency is particularly important in today’s climate, where public trust in any form of government is low.

**Data Insights:**

FlashVote surveys, though brief, can yield a wealth of valuable insights. For instance, the Home Businesses survey could have led to tailored recommendations for HOA versus non-HOA residents, or highlighted areas where public education is needed. If a survey indicated that younger citizens were unaware of a specific County service, staff could focus social media efforts on educating that demographic, whereas older residents might respond better to newsletters or mailers.

**Survey Schedule and Balance of Topics:**

To prevent survey fatigue, FlashVote limits the County to one survey per month. The tentative schedule for upcoming surveys includes: Recycling (October), Public Safety (November), Library Services (December), and Public Engagement (January). As you can see, the calendar fills up quickly with a mix of high-interest topics like recycling and routine service assessments such as public safety satisfaction. A balance will need to be maintained to address both hot-topic issues and regular service evaluations.

Thank you for your support as we continue to leverage FlashVote to engage our citizens in this meaningful way.