

Report: 2009 Citizen Survey of Brookline Departments and Boards

A Citizen Survey was prepared by the Board of Selectmen in November of 2009. Surveys were printed in *The Brookliner* and available and collected at the Town Hall and post office. The deadline for returning the surveys was December 4, 2009. (See Appendix for the survey.) The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of the survey.

Results of the Survey**How the results were analyzed:**

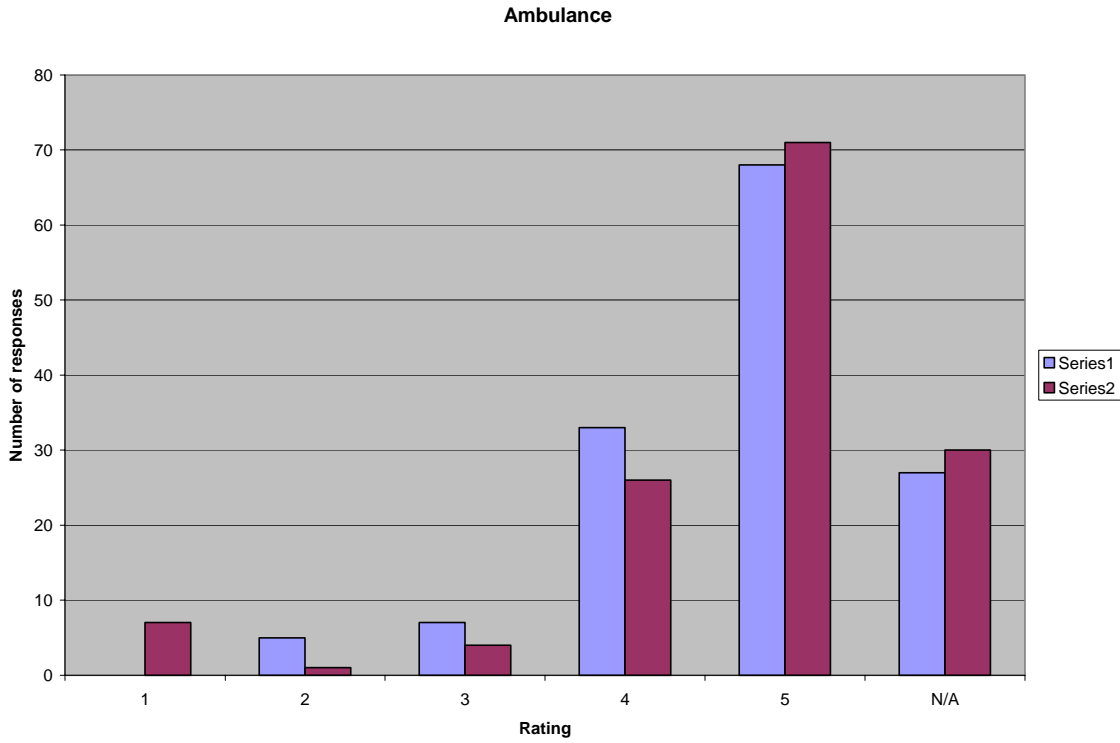
- 147 surveys were collected. All numerical values were tallied for all surveys. All N/A values were also tallied. Some respondents left some blanks—blanks were not counted. In addition, some respondents chose more than one choice—in this case both were tallied.
- All comments were tabulated and where possible matched with a department and when applicable (low rating matching comment)—the rating was listed. Comments were not spelling or grammar corrected. In this case (sic) is used. Comments by a single respondent are together.
- Graphs of each department were prepared with Question 1 and Question 2 separated. An average rating was calculated for each department and each question. (Multiplied the number of responses for each category times the rating added up and divided by the number of total responses. N/A was not counted. (See Appendix B for the unsorted table with all responses tallied.)
 - Question 1: How would you rate the *overall performance* of:
 - Question 2: How would you rate department/board *attitudes* and *behaviors* toward you.
- Ratings were 1= poor, 2= fair, 3= average, 4= good, 5= excellent, and N/A for no experience or no opinion.

Table 1: Average Ratings sorted by highest to lowest on Q1.

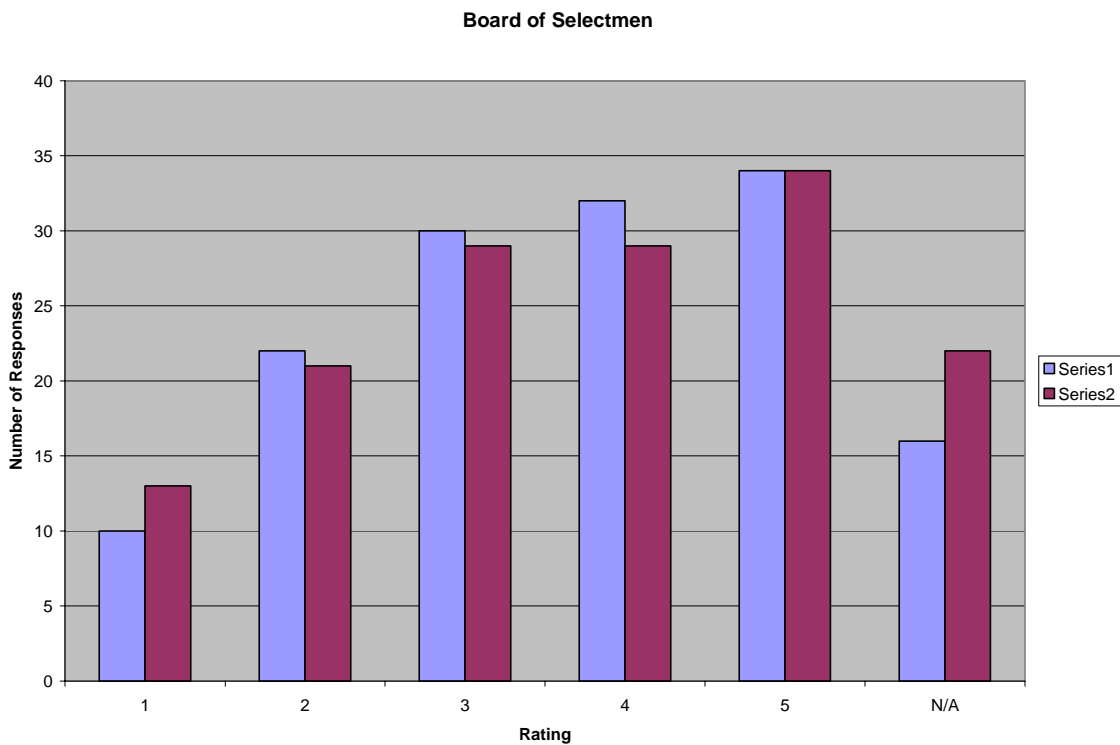
<i>Department or Board</i>	<i>Question 1: Overall Performance</i>		<i>Question 2: Attitudes and Behaviors</i>	
	Rating	Number of Reponses	Rating	Number of Reponses
Ambulance Service	4.45	113	4.40	109
Fire department	4.34	131	4.18	125
Transfer Station	4.04	134	3.97	136
Library	3.93	113	3.98	117
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	3.87	138	3.95	131
Recreation Commission	3.48	121	3.41	106
Road Agent	3.45	131	3.42	123
Board of Selectmen	3.45	128	3.40	126
Conservation Commission	3.15	113	3.05	93
Police	2.87	142	2.93	137
Building Inspector	2.87	109	2.74	98
Planning Board	2.79	103	2.80	93
Zoning Board of Adjustment	2.67	90	2.73	83

Below are the bar graphs for each department—please note N/A responses are given last and series 1 is Q1 and series 2 is Q2.

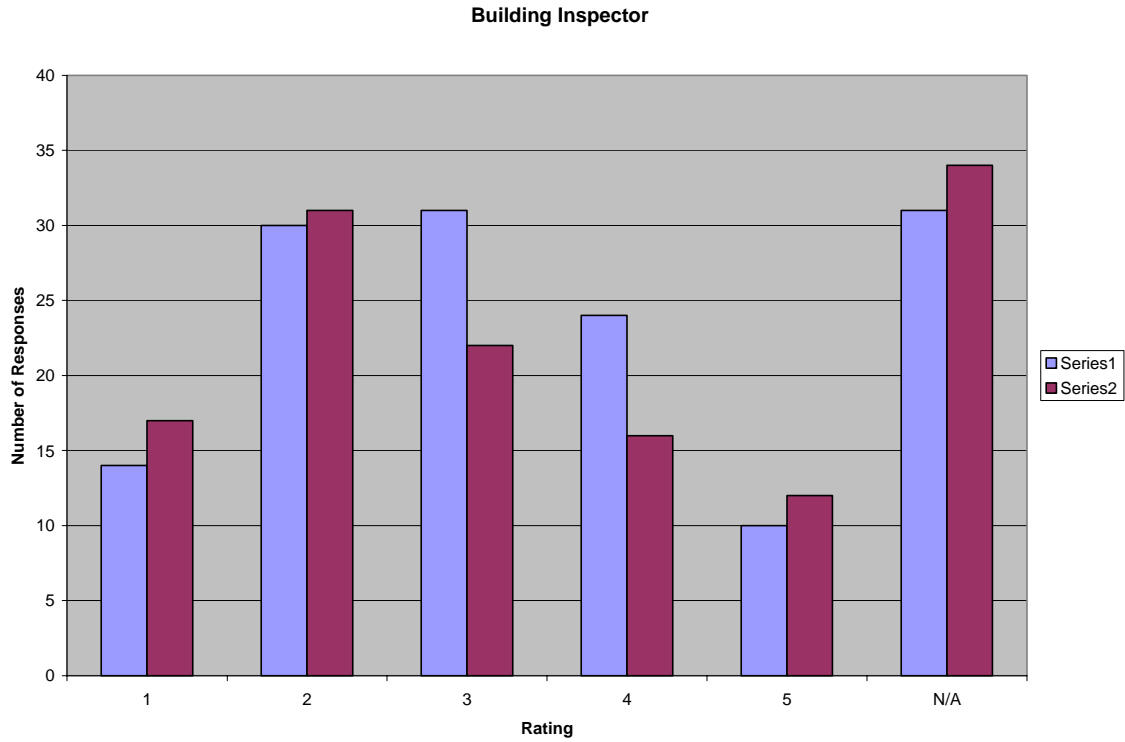
Ambulance Service (Average ratings Q1: 4.45, Q2: 4.40)



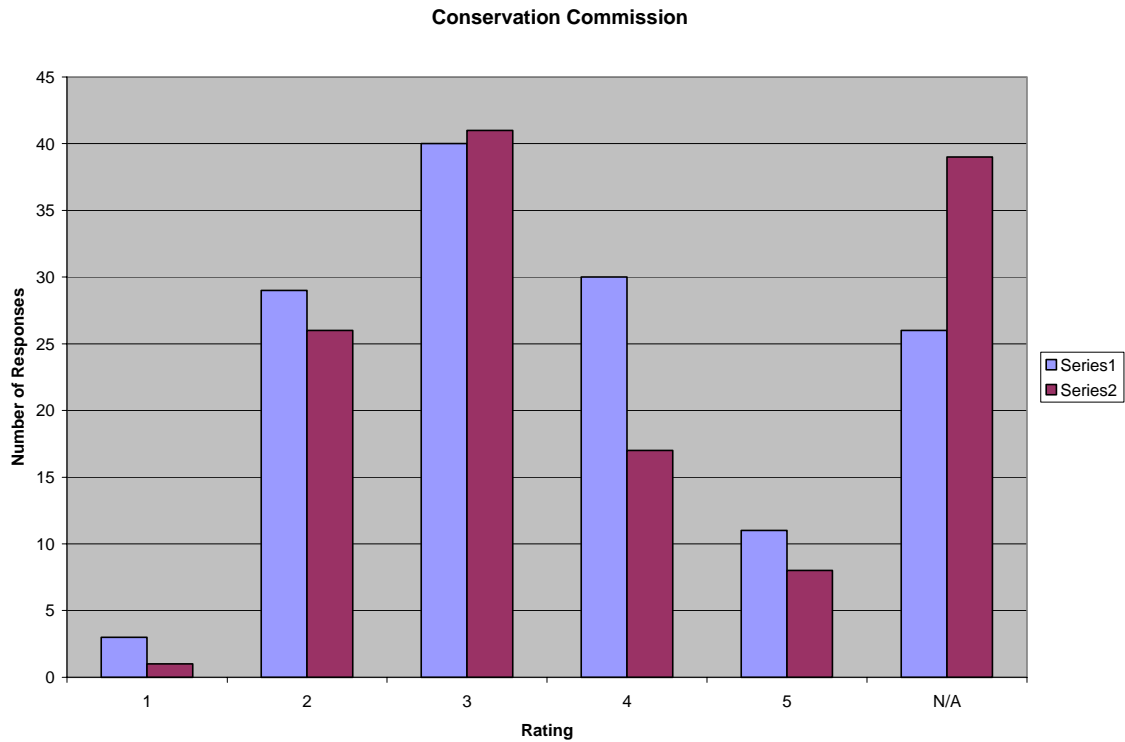
Board of Selectmen (Average ratings Q1: 3.45, Q2: 3.40)



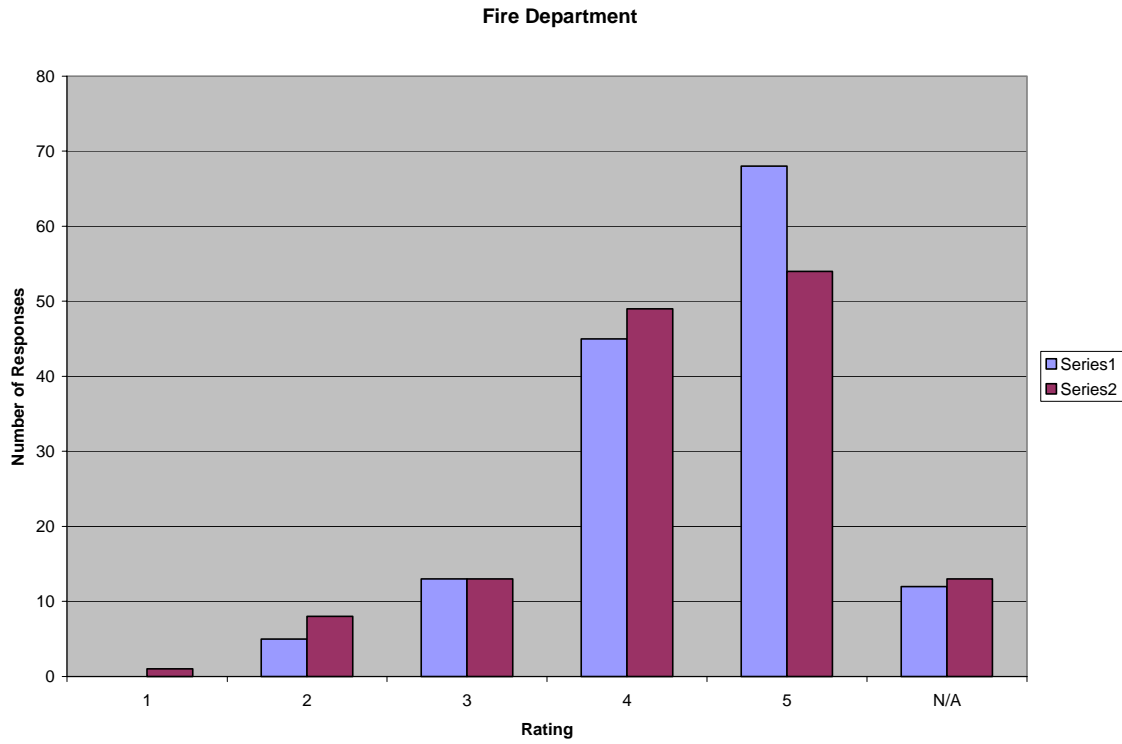
Building Inspector (Average ratings Q1: 2.87, Q2: 2.74)



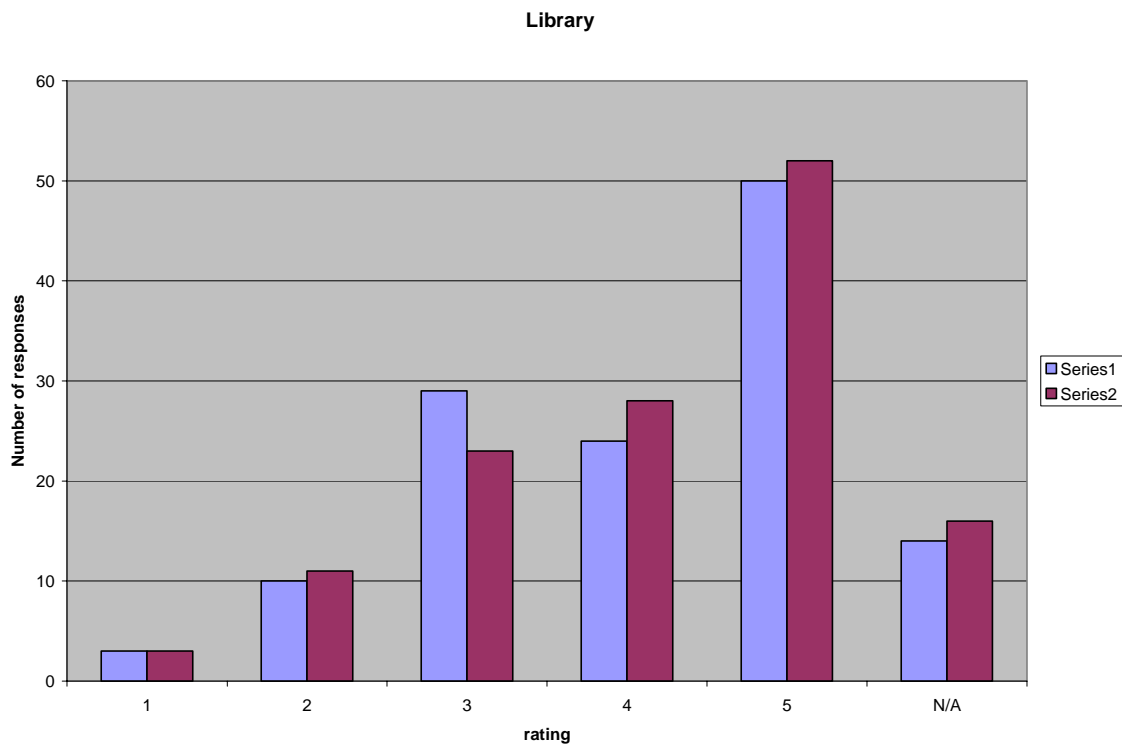
Conservation Commission (Average ratings Q1: 3.15, Q2: 3.05)



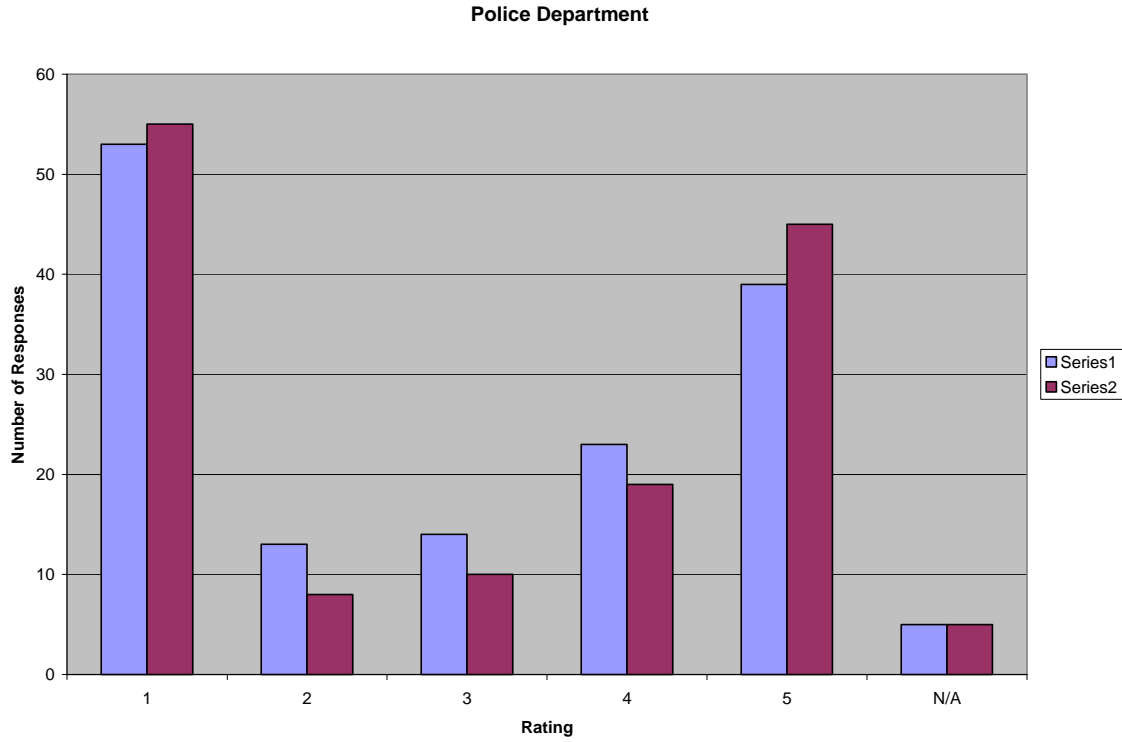
Fire department(Average ratings Q1: 4.34, Q2: 4.18)



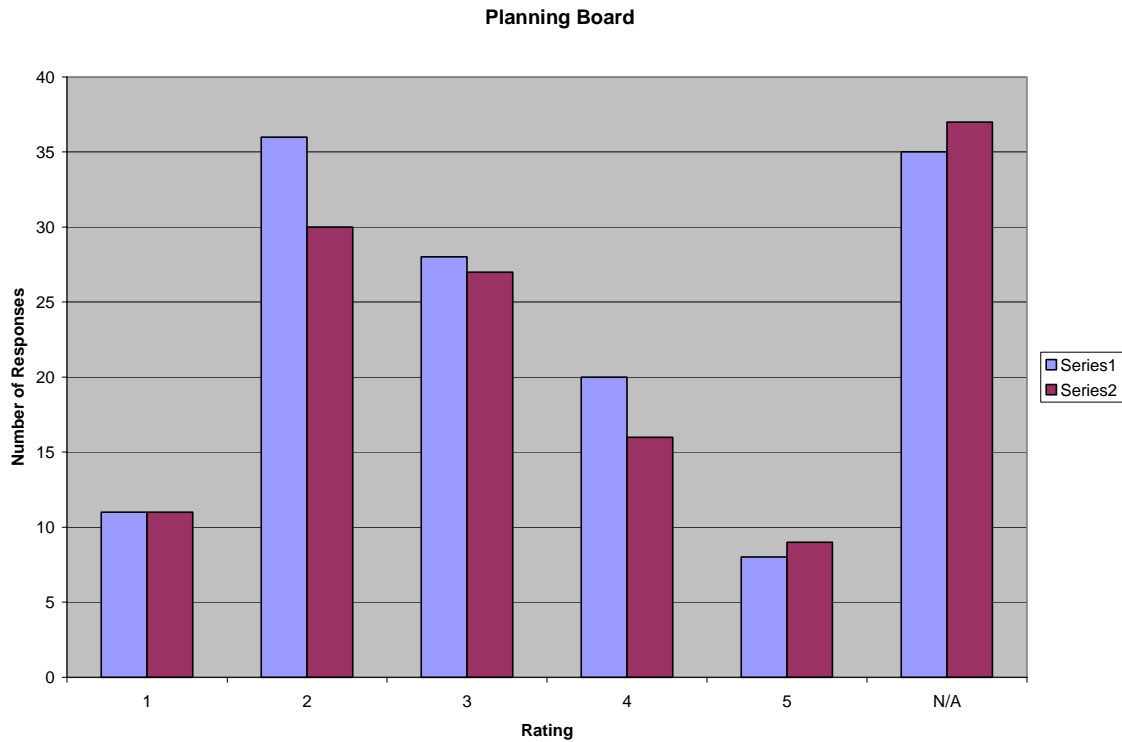
Library (Average ratings Q1: 3.93, Q2: 3.98)



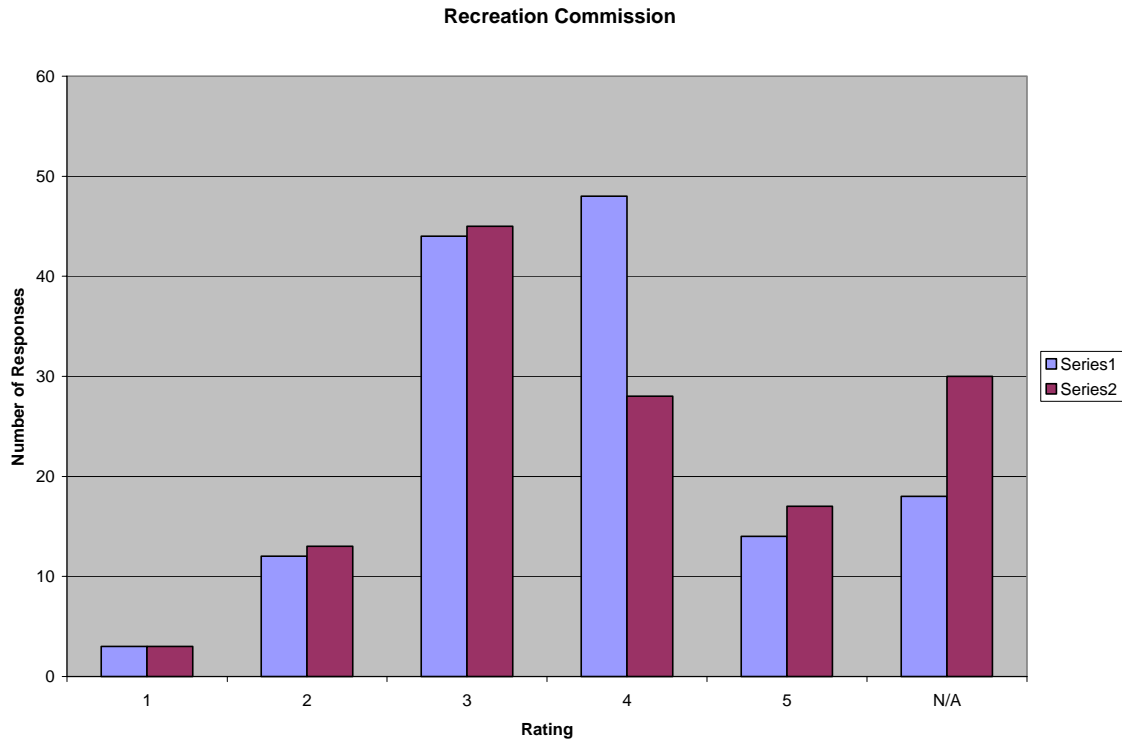
Police (Average ratings Q1: 2.87, Q2: 2.93)



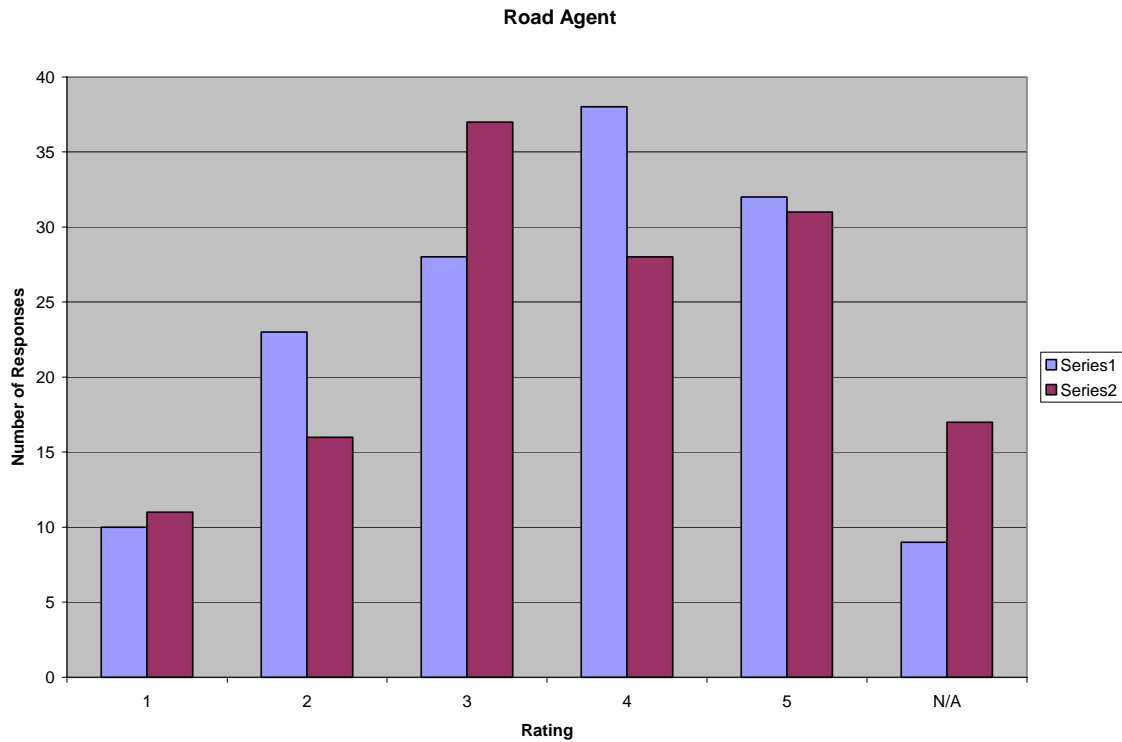
Planning Board (Average ratings Q1: 2.79, Q2: 2.80)



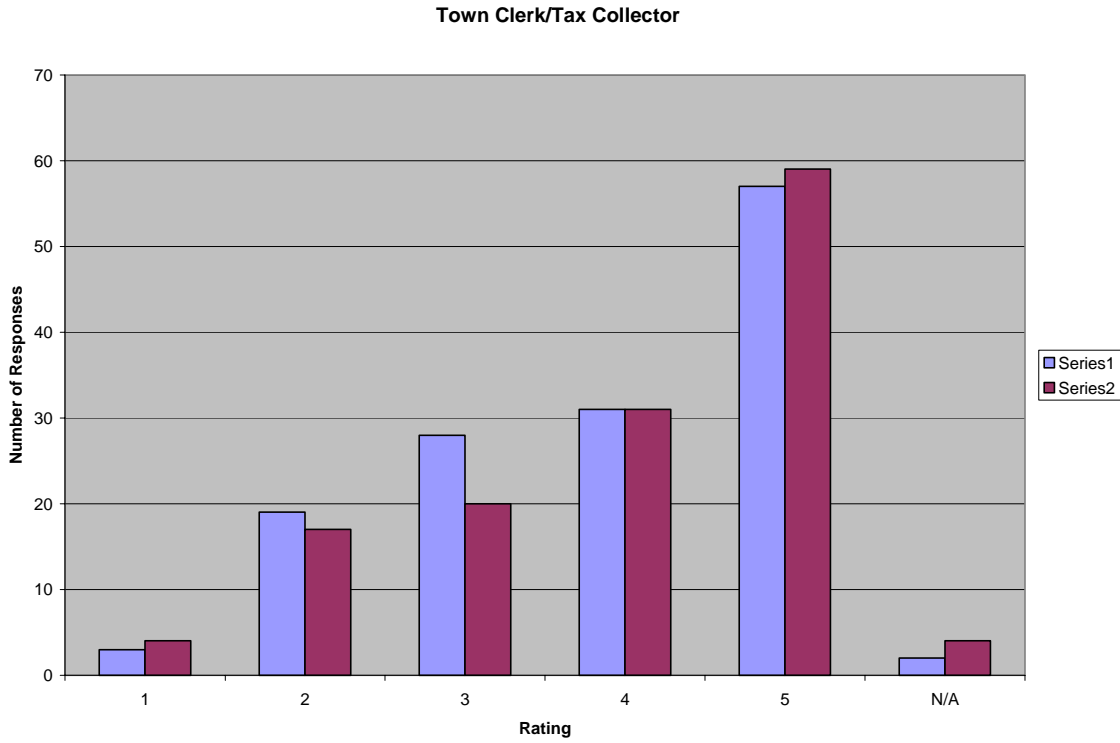
Recreation Commission (Average ratings Q1: 3.48, Q2: 3.41)



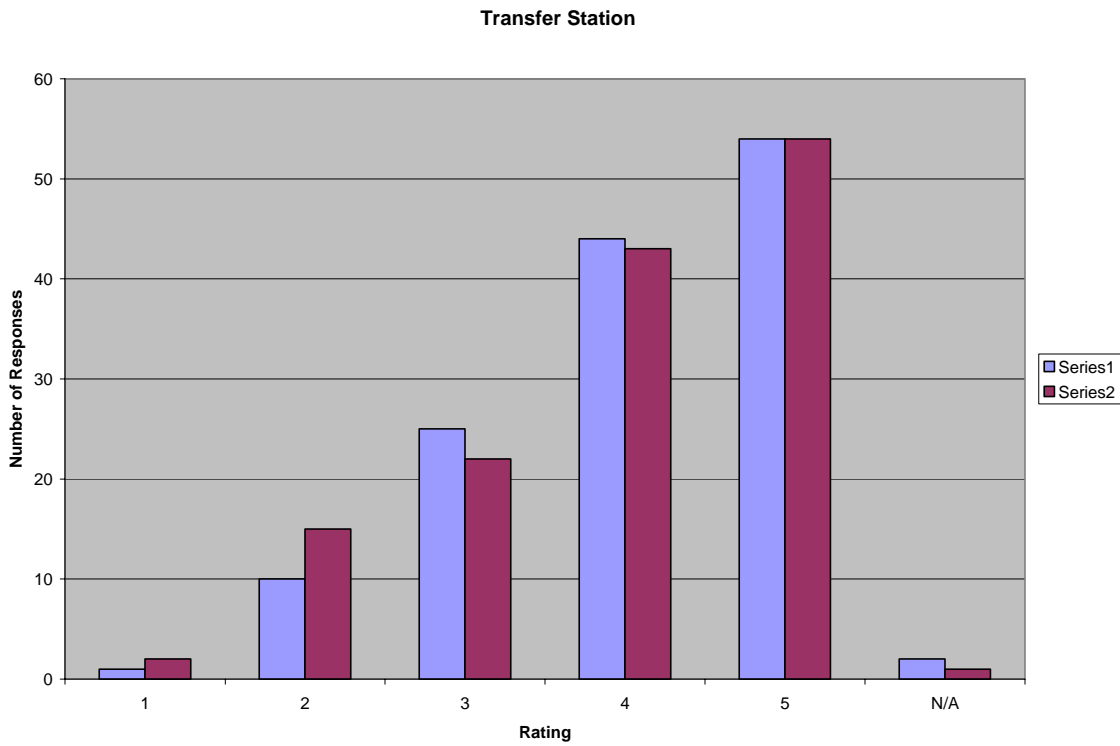
Road Agent (Average ratings Q1: 3.45, Q2: 3.42)



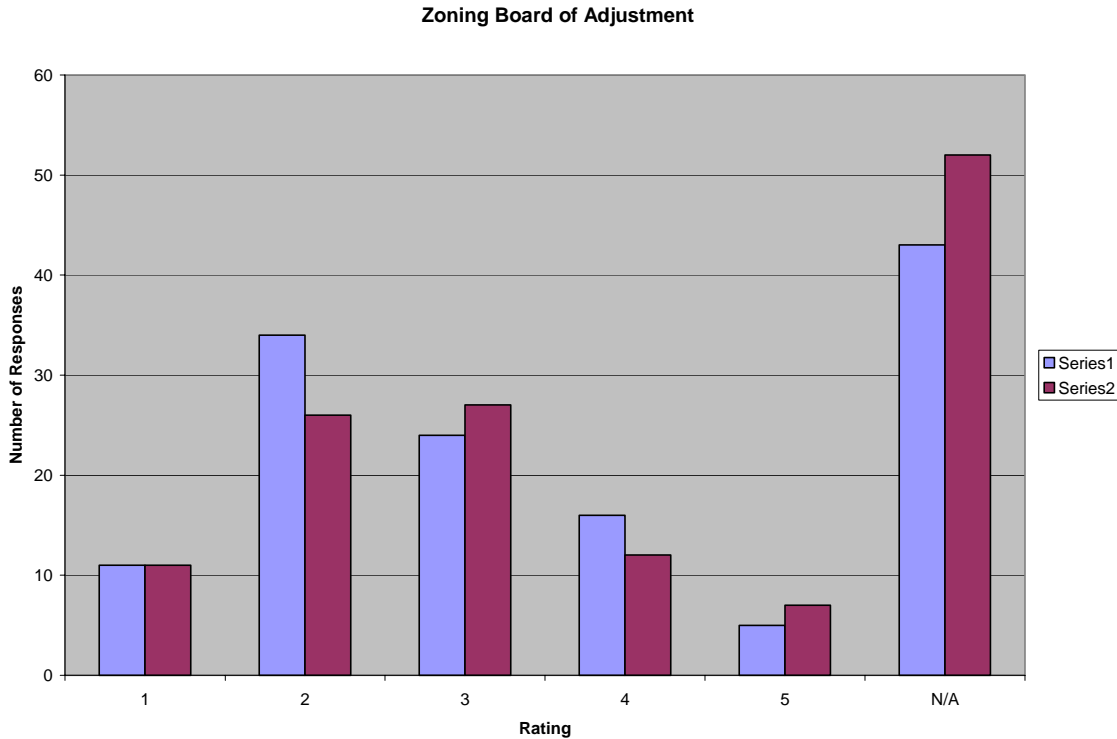
Town Clerk/Tax Collector (Average ratings Q1: 3.87, Q2: 3.95)



Transfer Station (Average ratings Q1: 4.04, Q2: 3.97)



Zoning Board of Adjustment (Average ratings Q1: 2.67, Q2: 2.73)



Comments: Positive comments in *italics*—negative comments/suggestions for improvement in regular text. Comments are grouped by individual respondents.

“For a small town we need to cut back! We cannot afford to pay exhorent (sic) taxes and need to move –been here 20 years.”

(This respondent also had a comment written beside police department rated 1 “with reason”)

“Weekly posting on Town website.”

“Experience personal (sic) would be a help.” (Experienced personnel)

“Be open to other people’s ideas and concerns.” (BOS rated 2)

“I would suggest that the Board of Selectmen watch on TV how Hollis conducts their meetings and how Hollis keeps the meeting audience in mind during the meeting. The physical set up of the board meetings is not conducive to the viewing audience.” BOS rated 2)

“1. Police vehicles should be visible in a number of key locations in town to monitor speeders wi/town i.e, intersection @ 130 and So. Main St.

Aside from the trees being cut back on Rte. 13—I rarely see a police cruiser in town.”(Police rated 1)

2. What is the point of Spanish for preschoolers?? What’s next—teaching Spanish in our public schools?? Why does the Library think it is so important? Why don’t they offer other languages

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other than Spanish? If we have Spanish speaking people living here—they need to become proficient with speaking English—because that is what the majority of the townspeople speak. I resent my taxes being utilized to support Spanish being taught to preschoolers.” (Library rated 1)

“Provide more information to the town on activities decisions that are being made: planned budgets by various committees and departments.” (sic)

“Thanks to all the volunteers and professionals who continuously demonstrate their dedication to Brookline.”

“Treat everyone the same way too much favoritism”

“The town of Brookline has a lot of great volunteers and professionals who do an excellent job serving the residents. Thank you.”

“Every one I have delt with has been very nice.”

“The selectmen obviously hate the police—Be fair to all!” (BOS rated 1)

“1. The assessors office is very difficult to deal with. Can not ‘get to’ the very people you need to talk to about property values, taxes, etc.

2. Maybe some of the ‘regulars’ should allow newcomers to get involved-need new blood.”

(This respondent also had a comment on recreation commission—“Unnecessary” (listed N/A))

“After the Mount Vernon incident we should make sure the police dept has all the tools so ensure our safety.”

“Police should slow down in town.” (Police rated 2)

“My concerns are with the police department and the fact that they are generating charges with little to no proof that the charges are valid. Charges have been brought up that are solely based on one person’s say so w/o further investigation. What also concerns me is the lack of communication between the chief and his officers. I’ve questioned the chief on the status of charges/cases and he has little to no idea of what is going on. What’s even more frustrating is the lack of communication between the arresting officer and the prosecuting officers! The philosophy seems to be let’s charge every one we can with whatever charges we can get away with and we’ll sort it out later. Don’t let the facts get in the way.”

“Fire Chief” (Police dept rated 1)

“What about our school dept.—very poorly run and schools very poorly maintained—we pay too much for what we get!”

“Stop Spending”

“Better with new head librarian” comment near library rated 4

“missed the food @ soccer this fall” comment near rec commission rated 4

“Taxes are too high!” comment near town clerk/tax collector rated N/A

“I would hope to elect/appoint assessors who would not ever hire Avatar again.!”

“Fire and police need to slow down responding to calls.” (Police and Fire rated 2)

“Time for a new police dept” (Police rated 1)

“Proclaim a recognized day for our brave police officers and firemen”

“Need a new road agent.” (BOS and road agent rated 1)

“Transfer station is not run efficiently.” (Transfer station rated 3 on Q1 and 4 on Q2)

“Change police chief.” (Police rated 1)

“Fire Dept-stop buying things.” (Fire dept rated 4)

“All depts. appear to do very good jobs-especially ambulance and fire because of so many volunteers who act as highly paid employees. One question is: How well do the departments work together? It appears they all work in isolation of one another!

When subgroups work in isolation and not as a whole no one knows who is in charge, communications break down i.e: the residents have a less secure feeling.

‘I’ve personally heard much group bashing from other groups’ this is not productive on building a secure town.

Hopefully what comes out of such a survey is: How can the Town Dept. work together and to develop a protocol for this to happen.

1 last thought—Police dept.—question & concern How highly are they paid? For what? Police duty! ... (therefore) If the Town has so many professional officers that we can afford Two on Road/Traffic control ‘watching’ the Tree Management then maybe the Town has Too Many Officers.”

“The chief of police does a great job even though most of the selectmen are openly biased against Chief Goulden. (BOS rated 2)

The Building inspector planning and zoning should not exist. People should be free to lawfully use their property as they see fit. (Planning and zoning rated 1)

The road agent should use salt! (Road agent rated 1)

The new librarian has done a great job with Children’s programs.

Re-zone the town for larger lot sizes-fewer homes fewer school children lower taxes. Realtors and developers off town boards and committees.”

“Accountability—they work for the town and the citizens!” (Police and Town Clerk/Tax collector rated 1)

“Find experienced people or people with knowledge who know what there talking about. We always seem to be paying more money when there’s always another avenue. P.S. cut down the taxes. People need to live Ya know.” (building inspector rated 1—many depts. Rated 2)

“Vote in a new Board of Selectmen.” (BOS rated 2)

“Make it easier to get burn permits. (Fire Dept rated 2)

Selectmen should work for the whole town-not just their neighborhood. Find a way to attract businesses to town to help with the tax rate.” (BOS rated 2)

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“Hire more police officers to keep Brookline safe. Also I feel need for a new police station so we may step into the 21st century w/ the rest of NH.” (BOS rate 1, Police rated 5)

“I bet this wont even be read because selectmen only do what benefits them” (BOS rated 1)

“Cops are horrible in this town.” (Police rated 1)

“It appears that the Selectmen play favoritism-it is obvious they could care less of the police dept.-they need a station! (BOS rated 1)

Town roads are awful in winter!!” (Road agent rated 1)

Comment on police dept rated 1 “very” poor

“Why do our police officers need to act as flagmen and crossing guards? It seems that money could be saved by hiring flagmen and crossing guards at a far reduced cost to what we currently pay our police officers. Thank you.” (Police rated 5—BOS no rating—left blank)

“Change 4/5 of board.” (BOS rated 4, Planning board rated 5, zoning rated 5)

“Use flagmen instead of Brookline Police on traffic control. Nine times out of ten the police are not even looking at the traffic—they should be embarrassed. The chief of police seems to be an exception—he has been watching the traffic every time I have gone by him. Again for the police: spend 80% less time checking for speeders on route 13 and instead spend 80% more time on the Brookline Town roads.” (Police rated 2)

“Although the fire department is very effective for our town, the leadership uses their authority in ways that appear biased and non-uniform particularly with regard to the schools.

Tad Putney’s efforts appear very self-serving.” (Fire rated 3, BOS rated 3)

“The library needs more \$ for books and staff and a larger building.

The conservation Comm- should stop asking for \$ to buy up land.” (Cons. Comm.. rated 1)

“The majority of the selectmen are so openly biased against the police department because they are friends and family members with criminals and lowlives (sic) in town. (BOS rated 1)

Road agent does horrible job year round. Some signs have been defaced or missing for months or even years and nothing is done. Sand is useless on steep roads. The so-called mixture Jerry uses is dangerous. Certain areas of town –Old Milford, Parts of Mountain and other steep roads needs some salting in winter for safety. (Road agent rated 2)

Police, fire, ambulance and library should be commended for doing so much with so little.

Planning and Zoning—stop cluster zoning with small lots. Too many houses, too many children, raises taxes on schools too quickly. This is not Nashua, Hudson or Milford. Keep Brookline Rural! Keep realtors off committees. It is a conflict of interest! (Planning and Zoning both rated 2)

“I think the main concern of most people today is finances. Every department should be looking at ways to lower costs. Many people have lost jobs, benefits, salaries, etc. The police dept. are always asking for new vehicles. Well people are thinking ‘I can’t afford a new vehicle’ Why should the police dept. have new ones. Think of ways to save not spend. We are getting taxed right out of our homes. (Police rated 2)

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And, even though you don't ask the school would be a good place to start trying to save. Most people are not getting raises these days but the school gets everything. Something has to stop somewhere or our town will be in trouble."

"Either have a DPW or put road agent work out for bidding—How long will Brookline continue to be taken over the coals by the Farwell Company!!! We've had enough! And learn how to plow snow! We get nothing for taxes we pay in this town." (Road agent rated 1, BOS rated 2)

"Stop speeders on my road." (Police rated 1)

"I think we need to slow down the spending in this town (Ex. Un-needed amount of lights on police cars) waste of money. The town is pushing out the working class. (Police rated 1, BOS rated 2 on Q1, rated 1 on Q2)

"Transfer station—get rid of bees at recycling area." (Transfer station rated 1)

"Town services have been excellent as noted above."

"We moved to Brookline 3 years ago—no complaints." (gave name and address)

"Police and Fire departments need to realize we don't have to have every toy available to them." (Police rated 2, Fire rated 4)

"I'd replace the police chief—immediately! He has no idea what so ever what it takes to be a small town Police chief. Someone should give him reruns of the 'Andy Griffith Show'! I bet he has never attended a function for which he didn't get paid!!! Make it an elected position. The incident with the store owner is incomprehensible! No one was reprimanded?? If not, why? They should have been fired! Disciplined at the minimum. Entrapment! I do like the fact that there are 3 officers in the force from town—at least I get to see them off duty at events. (Police rated 0)

"The recreation commission needs to work harder on their communication skills with taxpayers, especially at the Max Cohen Grove. The members I have spoken with were rude and not helpful at all." (Rec. comm. Rated 1)

"For me, the ice storm last December showed a lack of a disaster plan among the emergency groups (and probably the selectmen and most importantly, a lack of communications among them. That's my 2 cents." (No ratings for any dept.)

"Open communication between boards and services and open communication with public. Team building needed. Informative weekly updated website needed."

"Who polices the police? Lack trust and leadership. We deserve better." (Police rated 1)

"Give all boards a small annual stipend to encourage people to run for positions and to show appreciation to those who do volunteer their time to the town. (Right now, only certain depts. get a stipend—should be all or none.)"

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“There is a lot of conflict of interest in town. Real estate agents shouldn’t be assessors for a town. And road agents shouldn’t be independent contractors to use our “brooklines” equipment for own use.” (Road Agent rated 3)

“I would insist on better communication between department heads. I would expect a better sense of community from the selectmen as a group. The board tends to micromanage, especially the PD, on occasion.” (BOS rated 4)

“Library—some more hours would be nice (after school) (Library rated 2, 4)
Police Dept- There are too (many officer) for this size town. (Police rated 2,1)
Planning board-We need more commercial business. (Planning board rated 1, 3)
Road agent—We don’t need (two police) for tree cutting, flag men are fine. (Road agent rated 2, 3)
Transfer station—open one more day would be nice.” (Transfer station rated 2)

“Police-need chief elected in town/replace with elected chief—more experience—poor management. Like officers from Brookline. More community policing/involvement in community. Handling of ‘gun sale’ at BVS was poor. Officers involved should be disciplined.” (Police rated 1)

“BPD—More public nuisance than Public servant. Dept. was community based and proactive have become knee-jerk and over reactive. Should enforce speed limits on main streets with tickets not 6 warnings/day. (Police rated 2)
Selectmen need to exercise more oversight of Dept. Exp. i.e, chapel cost \$300 K M&I \$10K, income \$600. (Selectmen rated 2)
Why does a new safety complex cost \$6000/yr in M&I?”

“The conservation comm. should focus on saving land that is in danger of building not land where no permits could ever be given, due to water ect. (sic) (cons. Comm.. rated 3)
We need a police station long over due.
We feel police and Fire are very good and should be honored.
The library and town clerk are friendly and professional.
We are also very pleased w/selectmen (all)” (Name and address given)

“Police care more about the arrest &/or the officer than the public. Too many charges & no convictions this means arrest first then investigate. (Police rated 1)
Planning board thinks about the builders over the public, especially if they like the plans under review. If they don’t like the plans, personally you have to jump through hoops. (Planning rated 2)
Cons. Commission cares more about the env. than the public.” (Cons comm.. rated 3)

“Have the police help youth and teenagers look for jobs, recreation, instead of arresting them. A \$10,000 grant at the HS for stopping underage drinking should be used for youth development, jobs teen rec.
What is there for young adult rec. besides the church basketball hoop? Do not act like a “police state” because of recent events!” (Police rated 2)

“You need to make the collection development of the library readily available to residents. Also please increase funding so that if needed the library staff can get books from other state libraries. My request for certain books were rejected repeatedly because the librarian refused to purchase

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them, and will not get them on interlibrary loan for me. Very poor service for the astronomical taxes that we pay.” (Library rated 1)

“This past Spring my XX (age removed age to make anonymous) daughter was stopped by a Brookline Police Office for going 32 mph in a 30 mph zone. The officer proceeded to lecture my daughter on reckless speeding, questioning the contents of two packages in the back seat and very rude comments on her dress. In her words, she ‘felt bullied’ and “frightened” (by a POLICE OFFICER) and was clearly bothered by this incident for many days. This officer’s roadside manners continue to impact my daughter to this day.

Later this summer I was invited to a neighborhood house party. It did not take long for the conversation to turn to the Police Dept. I was dumbfounded listening to my neighbors (sic) experiences. While some seemed not as bad as my daughters (sic), most were difficult to believe. However, it was very obvious that many have little, if any, trust or confidence with our police and that I can relate to.

We find Brookline has many wonderful reasons to continue living here but troubled when you don’t feel safe from the local police. This has prompted us to put our home up for sale and look at surrounding towns to live. (Police rated 1)

Appendix A:

2009 Citizen Survey of Brookline Departments and Boards

The Board of Selectmen is collecting feedback on selected town departments and boards. Please assist us by completing this survey by **December 4th** and dropping it off at the Town Hall or Post Office or mailing it to the Selectmen at P.O. 360, Brookline, NH.

1.) How would you rate the *overall performance* of: (please circle one rating per line)

	Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	No Opinion/ Experience
Ambulance Service	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Board of Selectmen	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Building Inspector	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Conservation Commission	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Fire Department	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Library	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Police Department	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Planning Board	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recreation Commission	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Road Agent	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Transfer Station	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Zoning Board of Adjustment	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

2.) How would you rate department/board *attitudes* and *behaviors* toward you:

	Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	No Opinion/ Experience
Ambulance Service	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Board of Selectmen	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Building Inspector	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Conservation Commission	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Fire Department	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Library	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Police Department	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Planning Board	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Recreation Commission	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Road Agent	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Transfer Station	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Zoning Board of Adjustment	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

3.) If you could change things about any of the above departments/boards, what change(s) would you make? Please write on the back if more space is needed for your comments:

Thank you for completing the survey. Please return it as noted above so we can have your input.

Appendix B: Non sorted ratings with totals

<i>Department or board</i>	<i>Average rating Q1 Overall performance</i>	<i>Average rating Q2 Attitudes and Behaviors</i>
Ambulance Service	4.45 (503*/113**)	4.40 (480/109)
Board of Selectmen	3.45 (442/128)	3.40 (428/126)
Building Inspector	2.87 (313/109)	2.74 (269/98)
Conservation Commission	3.15 (356/113)	3.05 (284/93)
Fire department	4.34 (569/131)	4.18 (522/125)
Library	3.93 (456/113)	3.98 (466/117)
Police	2.87 (408/142)	2.93 (402/137)
Planning Board	2.79 (287/103)	2.80 (261/93)
Recreation Commission	3.48 (421/121)	3.41 (361/106)
Road Agent	3.45 (452/131)	3.42 (421/123)
Town Clerk/Tax Collector	3.87 (534/138)	3.95 (517/131)
Transfer Station	4.04 (542/134)	3.97 (540/136)
Zoning Board of Adjustment	2.67 (240/90)	2.73 (227/83)

* Number of responses for each category times the rating added up and divided by the **number of total responses. N/A was not counted