

## Vashon-Maury Island Energy Survey Final Results

Rita Schenck      10 October 2003

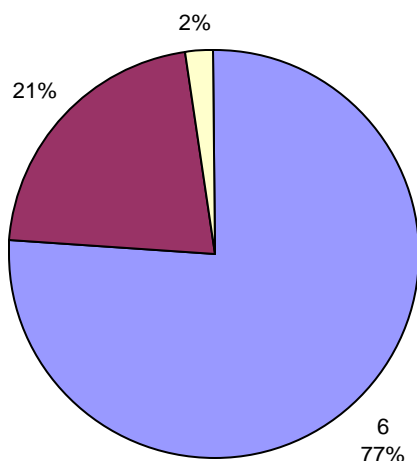
### Executive Summary

A survey of Vashon-Maury Island in the summer of 2003 showed that over 75% of the residents favor moving the island to locally-produced renewable energy, and were willing to pay more to achieve this goal. Islanders supported wind, solar and tidal power and preferred a public utility district to accomplish this goal.

### Background

IERE (the Institute for Environmental Research and Education) defines energy independence as communities producing all their energy from locally produced renewable energy on a net basis (i.e. the community makes as much energy as it uses, but not necessarily at the same time or of the same kind as it uses). IERE has been pursuing taking Vashon-Maury Island to energy independence for some time, and anecdotal evidence indicated that the community supported this work. However, it was important to assure that the community actually did support this effort, and that the community have an opportunity to provide input as to the options for moving forward.

**Should the Island Pursue Energy Independence?**



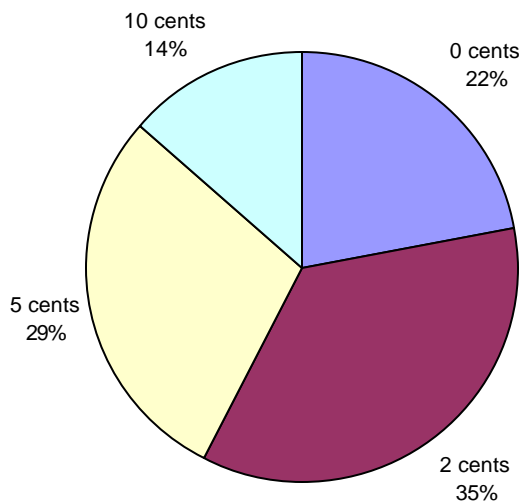
### The Survey - ([view the survey](#))

With a generous grant from the Bullitt Foundation, IERE researched the legal and financial mechanisms to moving the entire island to renewable energy. On July 22, 2003, an energy information sheet and survey was sent to all households and box holders on Vashon Maury Island. A copy of the material is attached to this report. Within four weeks, over 5% of households responded to the survey. Ultimately, 5.8 percent of households responded (261 responses). The purpose of the survey was to determine whether the Vashon-Maury Island community supported the concept of energy independence, and if so how it should be approached.

## Results

The opinion of the island is clear. Over three quarters of the island supported energy independence based on renewable energy produced locally. This is a highly statistically significant result. Islanders also expressed willingness to pay more for renewable energy produced locally. Only 22% of islanders were unwilling to spend more for renewable energy produced locally. A full 14% expressed the willingness to pay 10 cents more per kilowatt-hour. Some of those who did not support energy independence were nevertheless willing to pay more. The standard deviation on these figures is about 3 percentage points.

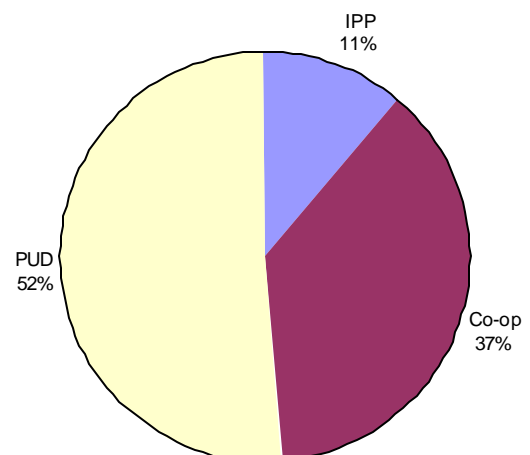
### How much more are you willing to pay for local renewable energy (cents per kilowatt hour)



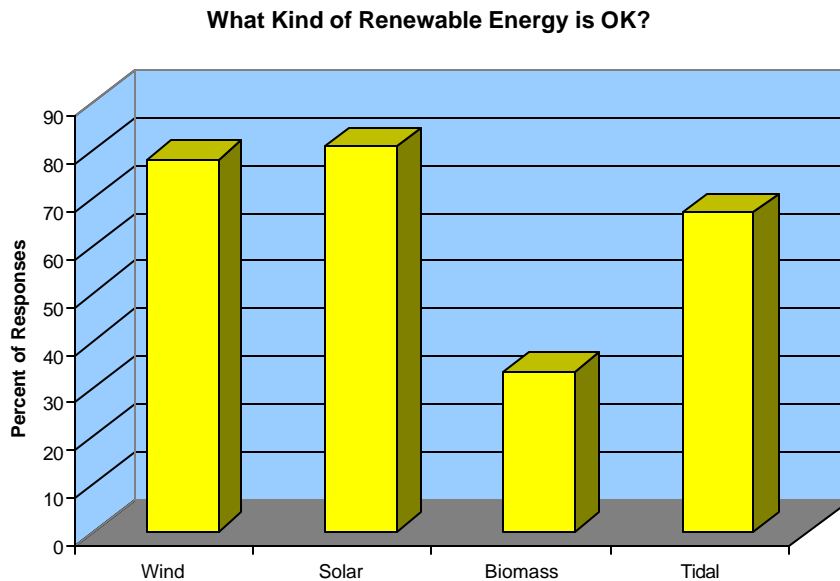
Despite a high apparent willingness to pay, many of the comments of the responses suggested that cost was an important parameter. In particular, the issue of low- and fixed-income families was mentioned by several responders. Nine of those who did not support going to energy independence commented that it was too expensive to do so. Of those supporting energy independence, 14 commented on the need to control costs. Some of those who supported energy independence felt they were unwilling or unable to pay more for electricity. A few provided details of their electric bills, which were in fact quite high, apparently due to living in inefficient, all-electric houses.

Islanders were more divided on their opinion of who should own generation capacity. A Public Utility District was preferred by a majority of 52%. This is a significant margin over the 37% preferring a generation co-op. However, many respondents checked both Co-op and PUD options. Only 11 percent of respondents preferred an IPP (Independent Power Producer). Several commenters suggested that energy generation should be owned by individual homeowners. One responder stated that she already was off the grid and

### Who Should Own Renewable Energy Generation?



owned all her own energy generation capacity.



The respondents were quite enthusiastic about all renewable energy options except biomass. In this case, the respondents expressed a great deal of confusion about this kind of renewable energy. It is clear that the community needs more education about the biomass options. 48% of the respondents asked about this kind of renewable energy in their comments.

There were also several comments about other alternative energy sources: ground-based heat pumps, household hydroelectric and conservation were all suggested.

## Conclusions

The survey confirmed the enthusiasm of the residents of Vashon-Maury Island for renewable energy on island. It also pointed out where people needed more education. The comments were especially useful in pointing out where people were interested or confused. They should drive some of our work into the future.

The comments also showed the high degree of knowledge, interest and caring that characterizes this community. Both those supportive and those opposed to this project made intelligent questions comments and suggestions.

As we promised with our survey, we will continue to work towards an energy independent Vashon Island.