



March 6, 2018

Julie Couch  
Town Manager  
Town of Fairview, Texas

Dear Ms. Couch:

### **Introduction**

In November 2017, an election was held in the Town of Fairview in order for the voters to consider a \$25.5 million bond package to construct several facilities. These facilities were described as follows.

- A new Fire Station #1
- A facility for fire department administration
- A public works office and service yard.
- An emergency operations/community meetings/training facility.

A single proposition was placed on the ballot for all four initiatives – for or against. The single proposition failed 524 (29.64%) for, and 1,244 (70.36%) against.

Following the election, the Town Council and staff determined a course to understand why the vote turned out the way it did. A Community Resource Group (CRG) consisting of over 50 citizens from throughout the Town was identified and appointed to provide feedback.

In January 2018, I was engaged to assist the Town in the early part of the process of information gathering and discernment. As a part of my engagement I was tasked with providing feedback to the staff on the development of a survey to be sent through Survey Monkey to each of the members. I was tasked to facilitate two sessions with the CRG, each with approximately one-half the CRG membership. It was felt that feedback and guidance would be freer and easier if the large group was divided into two. The purpose of the sessions was to review the results of the survey with them, gather understanding about their responses and gather information on why the members of the CRG believed the bond issue failed. Each session was facilitated in a consistent manner to solicit feedback from each without expressing any opinions to either group. Finally, I was tasked with preparing a report to the Town Manager, for distribution to the Mayor and Town Council.

This document serves as that report, including recommendations for future activities with and for the CRG, and the Town Council.



## **Survey**

The survey consisted of ten questions. After review by staff and the consultant, it was distributed on-line through Survey Monkey. At the time the survey was distributed, there were 49 members of the CRG. (That number has now gone over 50.) Of the original 49, 47 members responded. This excellent response formed the basis for the two facilitated sessions.

The results of the survey are included in the Power Point presentation used as a guide for discussions. It is attached to this report as Attachment 1. The survey served as a beginning point for the discussion of the group. The survey results indicated general support for some level of improvement for fire station facilities and a more mixed response on the other proposed facilities. The cost of the bond and its impact on the tax rate were the greatest concerns for the respondents. While a lower range of cost and tax impact would be preferred by the respondents, they indicated that more information and a better understanding about the project and cost details was needed before they could determine what they would support. The comments received at the two Community Resource Group sessions, as outlined below, further supported and clarified these results.

## **Community Resource Group Sessions**

As stated earlier, two sessions were held. The first on Tuesday, February 20, 2018. The second on Wednesday, February 21, 2018. The sessions were held in the Town Hall Council Chambers. The same power point presentation was used for both sessions.

Each session resulted in very similar outcomes. The resulting themes were almost identical between the two groups. The themes were categorized around three questions: Why? What's next? How? Although most of the discussion was about "Why", there were comments about What's next and How?

This report represents the combined themes from the two sessions.

## **Comments**

As stated there was a consistency of comments between the two groups. This section is designed to show a general listing of the raw comments from each of the groups. Comments will be grouped into common themes and will be summarized later in the report.



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



February 20, 2018 CRG Session

### Why?

- Needs were bundled – all or nothing approach was unacceptable.
- Didn't not have enough information to understand all the components; needed more details.
- Did not believe the extent of the need; the need was not well explained
- Why is renovation not an option?
- Presentations were not well done; not enough information was provided; seemed like a sales pitch.
- Not good marketing of the need; should have started earlier.
- One proposition was complex to understand.
- Timing was poor – new property valuations had just arrived.
- Too much money – get back to the basics.
- Concern about commitments made by previous councils; lack of trust on the costs and needs; concern about zoning actions made by Council.
- Use of existing facilities was not considered; third floor of town hall; existing metal bays.
- Costs seems high compared to similar projects in other communities.
- Support for fire station but needed more information to understand costs.
- Concerns about east paying for needs in west of town; residential paying for commercial needs.
- Why were site costs so high?
- Costs per square foot were not understood.
- Not clear on how much debt would actually be issued; why not clearly determined.

### What's next?

- Know and understand:
  - Why we have what we have – existing development agreements, land use entitlements and why the town hall exists in its current location, what did the city get for the agreements, what will the city get.
  - What we need first; priorities need to be set.
  - Why existing facilities were allowed to deteriorate and can they be renovated.
  - Components of the project including equipment included in cost.
  - Don't put a dollar amount on the bond until we are sure of what we need.
  - Capital and operational part of the tax rate.
  - Where the town stands financially.
  - If other funds are available such as EDC or TIF funds.
  - If incoming revenue can pay for improvements.
  - What are the line item costs?



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



- Is renovation of current facilities an answer?
- Provide all information on the needs and costs; full transparency.
- Do the math; show the impact on the tax rate, over what period, including the full cost of the bond issuance – principal and interest.
- Is there really a need for “hardening” of facilities?
- Provide information on operational goals and how existing facilities fit in.
- Why aren’t existing facilities being fully utilized?
- Understand what the bond pays for – facilities, furnishings, equipment?
- Take our time – do needed temporary repairs until all questions are answered and the timing is right; don’t rush to the next election
- Need more detail and more information on the projects as proposed.

#### **How?**

- Break proposition into segments.
- Start marketing sooner.
- Have a user-friendly website.
- Let people know the total impact on homeowners.
- Use social media to advantage.
- Schedule informational meetings at more convenient time in the evening.
- Be honest; build trust.

#### **February 21, 2018 CRG Session**

#### **Why?**

- Overall price was too high.
- Price per project seemed excessive.
- Not thoroughly explained in presentations or in town information.
- Support the Fire station, but not sure about the other projects.
- Considerable impact on taxes to pay for this large a bond. What is that impact financially on the taxpayer?
- Not a good distinction of where the money would be spent, and if any left where would that money go?
- Case wasn’t made for all the projects; need was not well explained.
- What is an EOC? Didn’t understand what it was, why the need, and why it couldn’t go in currently empty space at Town Hall.
- Quality of life is dissipating. Becoming too dense a community; concern about zoning decisions; current residents paying for needs of future needs. Why and what can be done about it?
- Not all the package was necessary; far too much in the bond package.



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



- Project needed to be broken up, not all one proposition.
- City taxes are not frozen for those over 65, and values are going up for everyone.
- Did not make a good case for the proposition; the need for each facility was not explained
- General distrust of Council:
  - Were told things over the years that have not come true – i.e. mall income would lower taxes.
  - What does the average household in Fairview pay in taxes – should be getting more value for what is paid.
  - Why was old fire station allowed to deteriorate?
  - Did not seek input from citizens and thus no choices on vote.
  - Smacks of big government– government knows better than the citizens.
  - Concern about zoning decisions and processes.
- Do need a good fire station. Bond proposition was overkill.
- Believe the issue was rushed.

#### **What's next?**

- Need to understand usage and need for current facilities:
  - Is it an option to remodel?
  - Can facility be remodeled for \$500,000 – Huitt-Zollars study?
  - What about use of empty space in Town Hall – third floor?
  - Why tear down what we have? Why not refurbish where possible?
  - What about use of existing metal bays?
- Consider proposition in separate parts – not all or nothing.
- Need to understand:
  - The long-term effect of the debt.
  - Town's ability to fund improvements out of existing revenues
  - A comparison of costs from other cities for similar projects.
- What are options for existing facilities
- Can Town Hall be leased or sold back to developer?
- Need more information: when, why, where and what.
- Council needs to understand what the citizens want and need, rather than what the Council wants; understand what the town needs first and then what the citizens are willing to provide.
- How do other facilities fit into the plan?
  - Fire Station #2 is it not sufficient? If not, why not?
  - What are the plans for growth?
  - Was the Huitt-Zollars study considered for fire station renovation?
- Be willing to slow the process down, providing information for a good decision. Don't rush to the next election date?



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



### How?

- Determine need and then determine cost.
- Communicate better with the citizens.
- Communicate widely, not just with a single group of citizens – one area or one neighborhood.
- Schedule meetings for more convenient time in evening for commuters.
- Market and advertise better; information needs to be succinct and explanatory.
- Information needs to be succinct with links to more detail.
- Social media played a large roll in getting people information:
  - Use social media as well.
  - Provide accurate information.
  - Be clear, concise, accurate.
  - Keep it simple.
- Information needs to be neutral – give us the facts.
- Provide more substantive information.

### Themes

It can be seen that the comments can be grouped into common themes. A summary breakdown of the comments into those themes is provided below.

- **Bond Package Amount/Tax Increase too much**
  - Total bond package amount too much.
  - Total tax increase projected too much.
  - Cost/tax increase not fully justified.
  - Comparable projects in other communities appeared lower in cost.
  - No information on impact on average resident.
  - Timing on election was poor (after property values were released).
  - Concern that current residents will pay the cost for future users.
- **Bond Package Format**
  - Should have been broken into choices.
  - Facilities and issues too complex for a single bond proposition.
  - Priorities were not identified.
  - Appeared to represent “big government,” not Fairview.
- **Good case not made**
  - Did not believe need for facilities was sufficiently explained.
  - Did not understand why existing facilities can’t be more fully utilized first.
  - Did not fully explain the various elements of project and why they are needed.



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



- Full cost was not explained or detailed.
- Distrust of Council – what Council wants v what citizens need and want; accept responsibility for earlier decisions; gain trust first.
- Council needs to understand what town needs; citizens need to understand what is needed; Council needs to understand what citizens are willing to provide.
- **Information and marketing was not sufficient**
  - Too rushed.
  - Started too late.
  - Poor presentations; poor website; did not make good case for projects.
  - Not enough information to make a fully informed decision.
  - Did not utilize all media resources.
  - Received more information from social media than from city.
- **Other Issues Related to Town**
  - Questions about general town funding, town hall and its funding and use, the existing 380 agreement with the Center, and questions about zoning processes and land use also came up during the discussion that the town may want to address as the CRG work is conducted.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In general, all participants applauded the current process the Town Council has implemented with the CRG. They expressed appreciation for the effort by the Council and staff to listen. Members from both sessions indicated this was a good first step; a starting point for further discussion, understanding and decision making.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of these two initial sessions with the CRG, may I be so bold as to make the following recommendations.

- **First Things First – For Council and CRG.**
  - **Be patient with the process and with its timing.** Allow time for the process. Do not rush to the next election date but be certain there is understanding and willingness to move forward when the timing is right.
  - **Be open and transparent in all respects.** Provide information on past and existing development agreements that have shaped the current financial and economic environment of the Town. Help the CRG understand why those agreements were established, understanding both the intent and the results and consequences of those agreements, and understand what the town gained from the agreements that were made.



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



- **Remain engaged.** Anticipating the process will take a while, the CRG should to stay involved, and remain engaged, both through the information gathering process, and if a bond election is called through the election process.
- **Full disclosure on previous bond package, existing facilities and services.**
  - **Provide information on the previous bond package.** Provide an overview for the CRG of long range planning completed by the Town, how it was used in planning the last bond package. Review the reasoning for the plans and costs in the last bond package.
  - **Provide information on current services and facilities.** Provide opportunity for discussion of the current Town Hall space availability, leased space, options for better utilization of the Town Hall building. Additionally, provide opportunity for review of the Huitt-Zollars study of the existing fire station. Provide information on age, condition of fire and public works facilities. Provide information on town operations currently occurring on the existing site.
- **Disclose Financial Impacts of various alternatives.**
  - **Review alternative concepts of utilizing existing facilities, renovation of existing facilities and/or construction of new facilities.** Review alternatives with an eye toward meeting both the short term needs and long term needs of the Town. Are there actions that should be considered to meet short term needs until the Town is financially able to meet long term needs.
- **Tour all facilities.**
  - Armed with information, the CRG can view first-hand the existing facilities – Town Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> floor; public works yard and facility, fire station complexes (both Fire Station #1 and #2).
- **Allow the CRG to examine and comment on the best projects for a subsequent bond package.**
  - After this thorough analysis and examination, the CRG can examine and the Town Council can determine what projects and costs are ripe for a bond issue. Examine the timing for an election.
- **Engagement in the election, if called.**
  - By law, the Town (Council and staff) is restricted from certain activities regarding an election of this type. I recommend that as many members of the CRG as are willing, volunteer for and create a separate group to be engaged in the promotion of the election and its proposition(s). There will be no better group to help others



**Ron Cox Consulting**

Helping Cities  
Manage Better



understand the need and rationale than this group based on the individual and collective knowledge gained from this process.

Thanks to the Town Council and staff for letting me facilitate and be a part of these first sessions with the Community Resource Group.

REC



# COMMUNITY RESOURCE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

---

FEBRUARY 20-21, 2018





# Introductory Comments

## Mayor Pro Tem

### John Adler

3

## CRG PROCESS



January 2018

Creation of CRG

February 2018

CRG – initial focus group  
Feedback

March – April 2018

CRG review of planning, needs, background, existing facilities

April – June 2018

CRG participation in development and review of revised  
planning

June – July 2018

CRG participation in review and determination of future bond  
package

## 4 AGENDA



- Introductory Comments
- Member Introductions and Expectations for the CRG
- Review of Propositions
- Questionnaire Results and Discussion
- Issues and Challenges from Members
- Guidance to Council and staff



# CRG Member

## Introductions and Expectations



# Review of Propositions And Results

# 7 THE BALLOT

---



## TOWN OF FAIRVIEW SPECIAL ELECTION

### PROPOSITION A

November 7, 2017

- Shall the Town Council of the Town of Fairview, Texas, be authorized to issue and sell the bonds of said Town in the aggregate principal amount of \$25,500,000, for the public purpose of constructing, improving and equipping a new municipal government complex containing public safety facilities including fire administrative and fire station facilities, an emergency operations center with training and meeting space, and administrative space for Town municipal departments including administrative and support facilities for public works, with said bonds to be issued in one or more series, to mature serially or otherwise not to exceed 30 years from their date, and bear interest at such rate or rates, not to exceed the limits prescribed by law at the time of issuance, and to be sold at such price or prices, as the Town Council in its discretion shall determine; and shall there be levied and pledged, assessed and collected annually ad valorem taxes on all taxable property in said Town in an amount sufficient to pay the annual interest on said bonds and provide a sinking fund to pay said bonds at maturity?

## 8 THE PROJECT

---



- Fire Station #1
- Fire Administration
- Public Works Office and Service Yard
- Emergency Operations Center(EOC)/Community Meeting/Training Facility

## 9 THE BALLOT

---



### TOWN OF FAIRVIEW SPECIAL ELECTION PROPOSITION A

For ( )

Against ( )

THE ISSUANCE OF \$25,500,000 TAX BONDS  
FOR DESIGNING, CONSTRUCTING AND  
EQUIPPING A NEW MUNICIPAL  
GOVERNMENT COMPLEX.



## 10 THE RESULTS

---



For	524	29.64%
Against	1,244	70.36%

Why?

What Next?

How?



# Questionnaire Results and Discussion

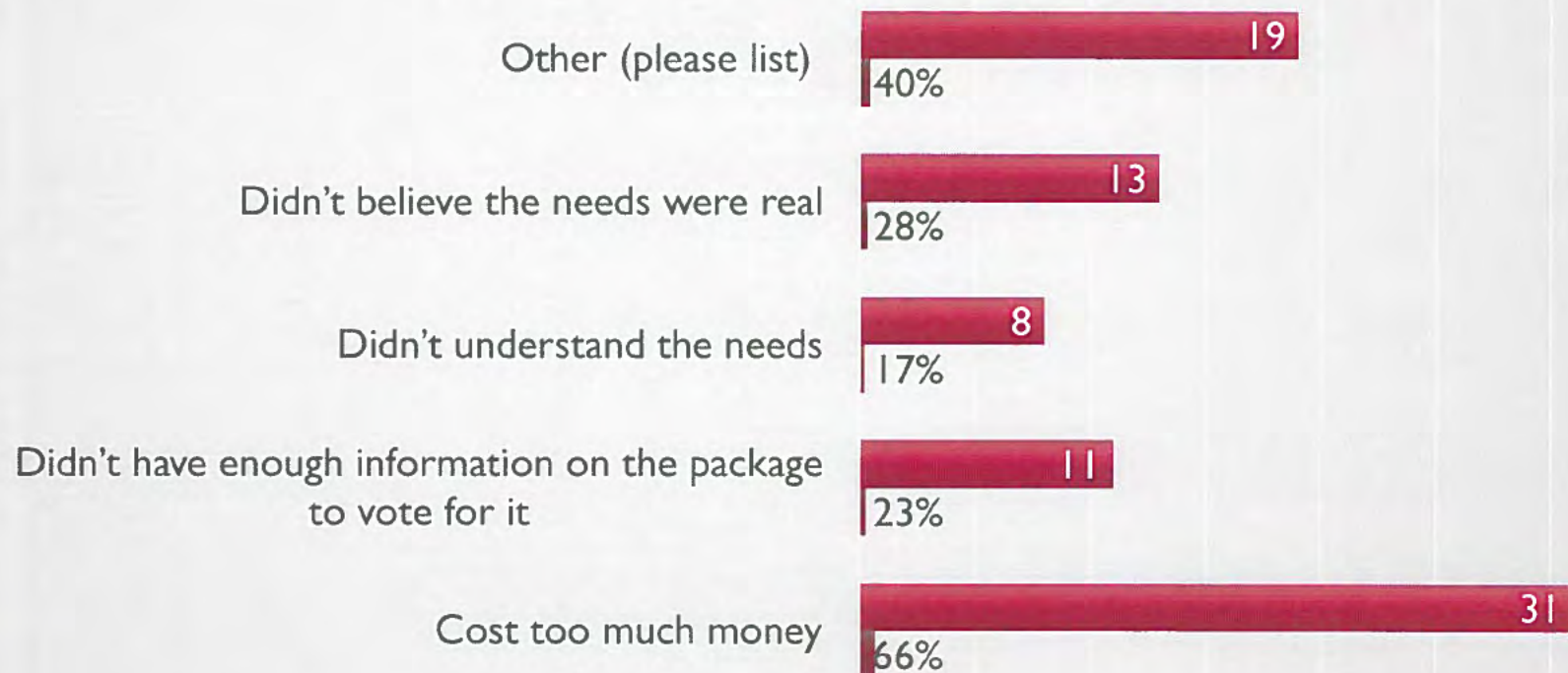


## Community Resource Group Survey

The Town held a bond election in November 2017. The bond package was for a fire station, fire administration, public works facilities, and an emergency operations center that would also serve as a meeting and training room for staff and residents. The cost was a maximum of \$25.5 million and the maximum tax rate increase was estimated at 7.5 cents. The election failed and we are doing our due diligence to identify what the concerns were from our residents related to the bond package.

13

**#1. If you had concerns about the 2017 bond package  
please identify any that applied to you:**





## #1. Other (please list)

Strong enough case not made for all components/Shouldn't have had all facilities as one bond proposition

6

13%

Too much of a tax increase/Didn't consider all alternatives/Not enough citizen input

7

15%

\$25 million was excessive compared to facility costs of other cities/Too large of a project for a Town our size

4

9%

Needed more detailed project and cost information

2

4%

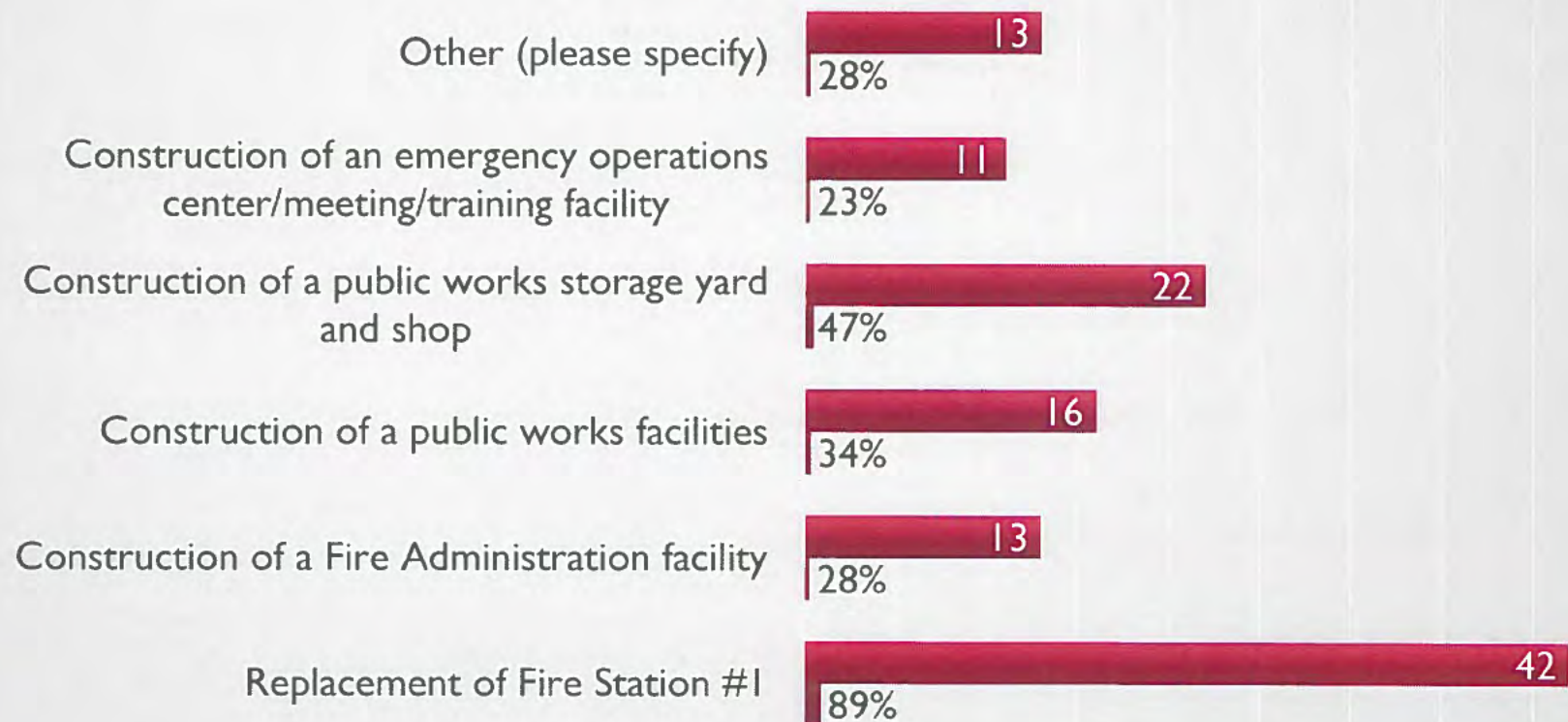
Had no concerns

5

11%

15

**#2. Please identify the elements of the project that you support in concept:**



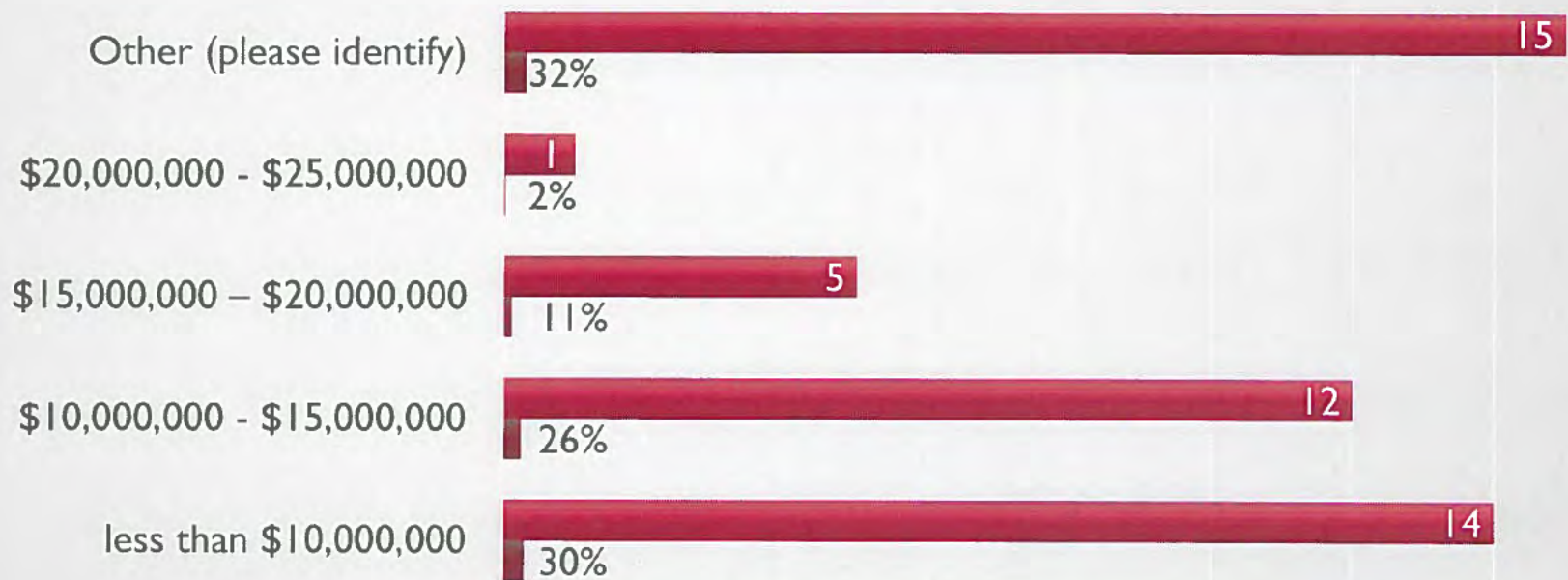


## #2. Other (please specify)

Renovate/Partial Replacement of Fire Station #1/Other Alternatives for Fire Facilities	6	<b>13%</b>
Funds for street paving and trail construction	1	<b>2%</b>
Combine Fire Station #1 and Fire Admin./Scale back Public Works initially/Repurpose buildings for Public Works	2	<b>4%</b>
Find new revenue sources to fund construction of Fire Station #1	1	<b>2%</b>
Need more information to decide what elements to support	3	<b>6%</b>

17

**#3. Please identify the range of cost for the improvements you identified in Question 2 that you believe that the Town should consider for the next bond package:**



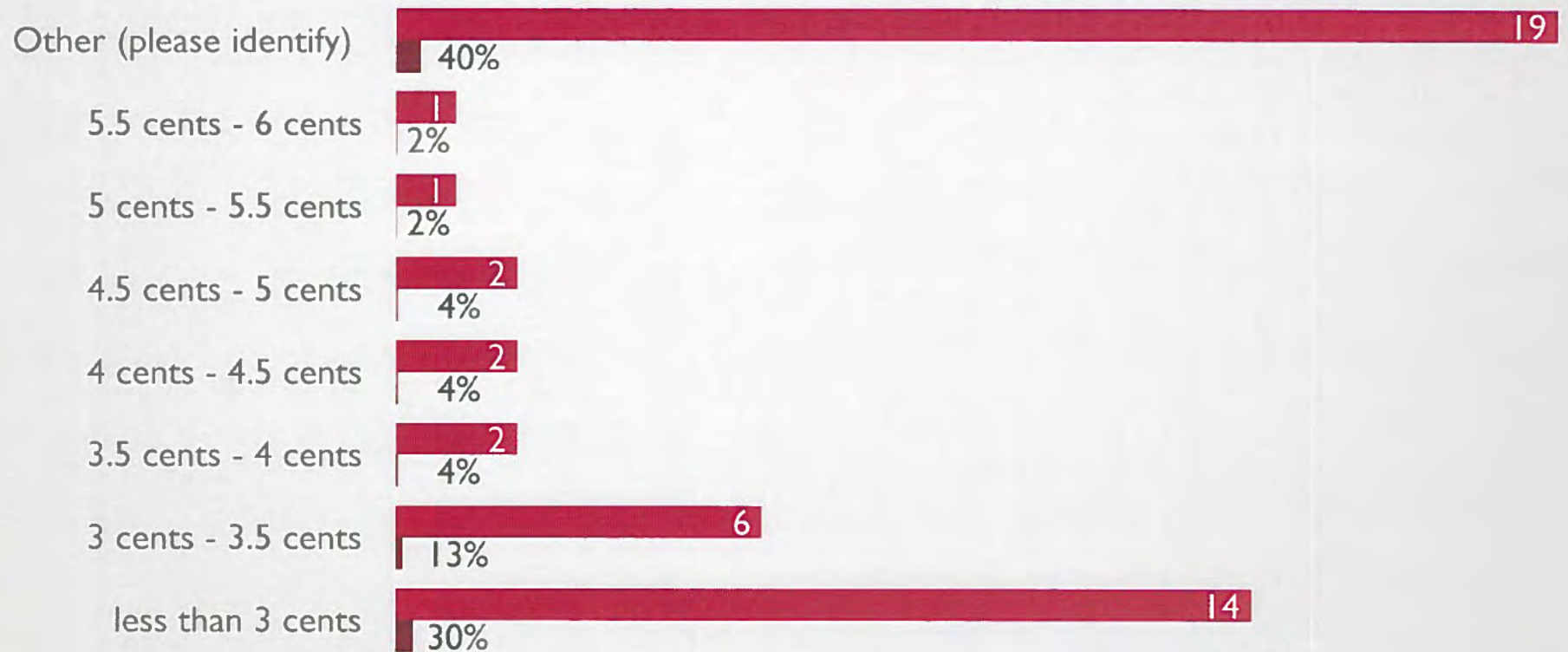


### #3. Other (please identify)

More project information and cost details needed to respond	10	21%
Zero dollars should be considered	1	2%
less than \$12,000,000	2	4%
Find new revenue sources to fund construction	1	2%
Whatever is needed to fund the project	1	2%

19

#4. Please identify the range of a tax rate increase you believe reasonable for the improvements you identified in Question 2 above:





#### #4. Other (please identify)

More project information and cost details needed to respond	9	19%
Zero dollars should be considered	1	2%
2 cents or less	2	4%
Find new revenue sources instead of tax increase/use increase in revenue from increase in home values	5	11%
Whatever is needed to fund the project	2	4%

#5. How did you get your information on the bond election (select all that apply) and what did you think about the quality of the information provided (rate from 1-5 with 5 being the highest quality and thoroughness level)?

	Select if Applicable	(lowest rating) 1	2	3	4	(highest rating) 5
Town mailers	<b>70%</b> 33	<b>12%</b> 4	<b>18%</b> 6	<b>30%</b> 10	<b>30%</b> 10	<b>9%</b> 3
Town meetings	<b>40%</b> 19	<b>16%</b> 3	<b>37%</b> 7	<b>21%</b> 4	<b>16%</b> 3	<b>11%</b> 2
Town monthly magazine	<b>60%</b> 28	<b>0%</b> 0	<b>29%</b> 8	<b>36%</b> 10	<b>25%</b> 7	<b>11%</b> 3
Town website	<b>53%</b> 25	<b>20%</b> 5	<b>28%</b> 7	<b>16%</b> 4	<b>28%</b> 7	<b>8%</b> 2
Social media posts	<b>36%</b> 17	<b>35%</b> 6	<b>41%</b> 7	<b>6%</b> 1	<b>12%</b> 2	<b>6%</b> 1
Word of mouth	<b>66%</b> 31	<b>16%</b> 5	<b>10%</b> 3	<b>35%</b> 11	<b>16%</b> 5	<b>23%</b> 7



#6. Please provide feedback on the information from the sources you listed above to learn about the package:

I felt that the information was sufficient and presented in an organized manner	11	<b>23%</b>
I felt the information left too many unanswered questions	33	<b>70%</b>
I felt the information was vague	8	<b>17%</b>
I felt the information was too much to absorb	2	<b>4%</b>
I felt the information was not correct	8	<b>17%</b>
Other (please list)	11	<b>23%</b>

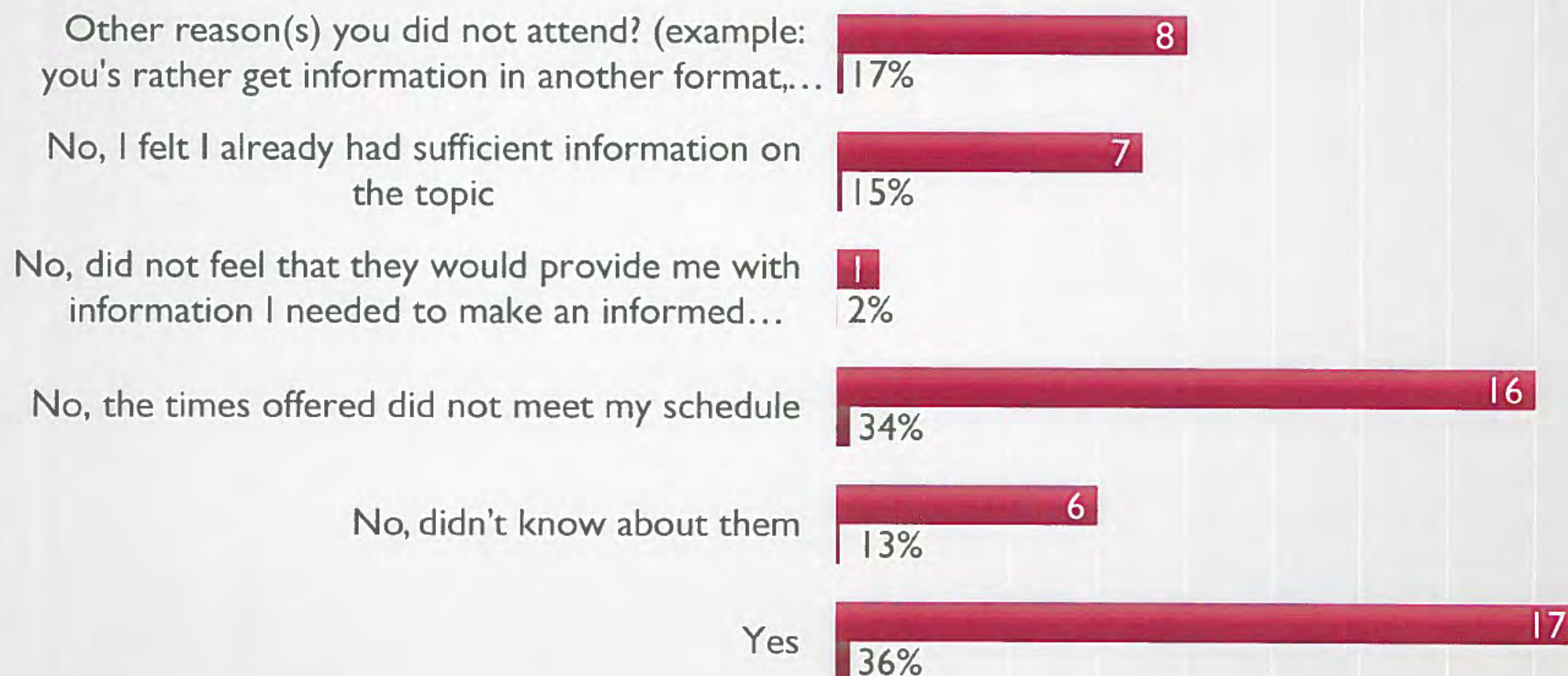


## #6. Other (please list)

Information felt one sided	3	6%
Information lead to further investigating/visiting current facilities	1	2%
Needs being conveyed didn't align with what the community wants	2	4%
Didn't provide adequate information to convey needs	4	9%
Information was sufficient	1	2%

24

**#7. Did you attend one of the Town informational meetings  
on the bond election Yes\_ No \_**





#7. Other reason(s) you did not attend? (example: you'd rather get information in another format, such as...)

Meetings not advertised	1	2%
Council didn't support a past citizen issue/Not enough listening to citizens	3	6%
Wish they would've attended a meeting	1	2%
Out of town/Had other commitments	2	4%
Attended meetings and felt positive about bond package	1	2%



#8. Are there other topics or issues in the Town about which you believe the Town should provide additional information or further explain?

The existing space at town hall	8	17%
Lessening Tax Increases	1	2%
What does buildout look like/How does it impact needs	5	11%
Transparency and Clarity Regarding: Development Agreements/Council Initiatives/Future Facility Costs	14	30%
Future Development of the Town/Rezoning of Properties	5	11%
No	14	30%



#9. Are you subscribed to or use any of the following?	Total that Selected Answer	% that Selected Answer
Town Nixle	19	<b>43%</b>
Town email blasts	20	<b>45%</b>
HOA email blasts	29	<b>66%</b>
Town Website	30	<b>68%</b>



#10. What is the most likely method you would use to communicate with Town staff or council members?

Total that  
Selected  
Answer

% that Selected  
Answer

Email

34

**76%**

Telephone

2

**4%**

In person

5

**11%**

Other (please identify)

4

**9%**



---

# Guidance To Council and Staff

Why?      What Next?      How?

## 30 AGENDA

---



- ✓ Introductory Comments
- ✓ Member Introductions and Expectations for the CRG
- ✓ Review of Propositions
- ✓ Questionnaire Results and Discussion
- ✓ Issues and Challenges from Members
- ✓ Guidance to Council and staff



---

Thank You  
For  
Your Time and Participation