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*Public Opinion Research  
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**TO:** City of Goleta; Santa Barbara County

**FROM:** Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3)

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**SUBJ:** Executive Summary of Survey Results

***Introduction and methodology***

FM3 conducted a voter opinion survey for the City of Goleta and the County of Santa Barbara to ascertain whether sufficient support exists to pass a special parcel tax, in addition to an existing parcel tax passed by voters in 1990 and now in effect, whose funds would be dedicated the sustaining programs and services and making improvements at the Goleta Valley Branch Library.

The survey sample was composed of 400 registered voters whose previous voting history indicated they would be likely voters in the November 2014 election. To facilitate comparisons between voters in Goleta and County Service Area 3, the two jurisdictions where the special parcel tax would apply, 200 respondents were obtained at random in each jurisdiction as the parcel tax measure would have to pass with a two-thirds supermajority in both to take effect. FM3 obtained demographic profiles of the combined and individual study areas, which were used to weight certain key demographics to their proper proportion in the individual jurisdictions and in the overall study area.

The interviews were conducted from April 29 through May 3, 2014. Calls were made to landlines and cell phones, and the survey took the average respondent 21.8 minutes to complete. Identical survey questions were asked in each jurisdiction.

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*Familiarity with the Goleta Library and support for a special parcel tax*

The Goleta Library is a well-known institution in the Goleta area. Three in four likely November voters say they have visited this Library “at least a few times,” and a third to two-fifths self-identify as frequent visitors. There are minor, unimportant variations between Goleta and Service Area 3.

Without prompting from additional information, six in ten voters say the Goleta Library “needs additional funding to provide the type and level of services the public desires.” However, only a third say the Library needs “substantially more” funding while slightly more than a quarter say the Library needs “just a little more” funding. Twenty-one percent (Goleta) and 25 percent (Service Area 3) responded “don’t know” if more funding is needed.

Told next in the survey that the City and County governments might place a measure on the November ballot for a special parcel tax of \$18.08 with annual CPI adjustment to provide additional funding for the Library, voters showed support in the mid-fifty percent range, 56 percent in Goleta and 53 percent in Service Area 3. The “definitely yes” vote was about a third in both jurisdictions.

Support increased to near the 60 percent level when respondents were next told that a new special parcel tax “would help stabilize funding for the long-term” for a list of services and programs which were read to the survey’s respondents. However, when reminded that there is an existing \$22.22 library parcel tax for single family residences, and that a new special parcel tax would bring the library parcel taxes to \$40.30 annually for single family home, support for the new special parcel tax dropped once again to the mid-50 percent level in both Goleta and Service Area 3.

The survey tested support for the special parcel tax at \$13.74 and \$11.01 for single residence properties, but lowering the tax to these levels did not stimulate support anywhere near the two-thirds vote requirement.

Survey respondents were also read a set of arguments of the type and substance that most likely would be used in an election campaign for the new special parcel tax. Asked how they would vote after having heard these positive statements, 65 percent said they would vote yes, a nine percent increase in support measured against the vote taken after hearing about the existing library parcel tax. While the individual arguments are compelling and the movement from 56 to 65 percent is impressive, the “definite yes” portion of the “yes” vote was only 46 percent. In short, the most realistic interpretation of the survey’s results is that a special parcel tax measure would win a majority but fail to achieve the two-thirds vote required for approval of the special parcel tax, even if a local election campaign were perfectly organized, financed and executed.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the demographics of support for and opposition to the special parcel tax suggests that this measure would have a greater chance of success in the 2016 general election when the Presidential and Senatorial contests are likely to increase voter turnout among segments of the electorate that are more supportive of a new library parcel tax.

In summary, younger voters – those under 50 years of age – voters whose income is under \$75,000 annually, Latinos and other voters of color, renters and Democrats are the demographic groups within the voter population who support the special parcel tax in numbers well exceeding the two-thirds threshold for passage of the measure. If the 2016 electorate in Goleta and County Service Area 3 has greater participation from these voter segments – which it will – the chances for gaining a two-thirds vote will improve substantially. A full analysis of the survey sample’s demographics can be found on slides 15 and 16 of the accompanying PowerPoint survey report.

***Goleta Library services and features; arguments for and against the parcel tax measure***

The survey asked respondents to rate the importance of 17 Library features or services using a one to seven, low to high scale. None of the services or features were rated as unimportant, and eight scored 5.5 to 5.9 on this scale, a score indicating a high level of importance. The top three features were “complying with legally required accessibility standards for handicapped persons,” “Having modernized library restrooms that also meet standards required for handicapped persons,” and “sustaining child reading programs including storytelling and pre-school children’s programming.” The scores for all 17 items can be found on slides 19 and 20 of the PowerPoint presentation.

Five arguments favoring passage of the special parcel tax, as well as five arguments against the parcel tax measure, were tested in the survey. In the case of the positive arguments, respondents were asked if hearing the argument would make them more inclined to vote “yes” on the parcel tax measure; for opposition arguments, respondents were asked if hearing an argument made them more inclined to vote “no.” All five arguments in support of the parcel tax measure scored highly. The leading argument said, “The Goleta Library currently provides important education programs and services to support local students. Passing the new parcel tax measure will provide long-term funds to sustain child literacy programs, homework assistance and other student enrichment programs that help children learn.” The opposition arguments were not nearly as persuasive, and the only one that seemed to resonate drew attention to the fact that home owners are already paying a library parcel tax and that cuts should be made rather than ask homeowners to nearly double the money they pay for the Library.

*The 2014 election environment*

A majority of survey respondents in both Goleta and Service Area 3 have a favorable view of the general direction of life in their communities. Nearly three-quarters of Goleta voters and two-thirds of the County Service Area 3 say “things are headed in the right direction.” This is a significant improvement over 2009 when only 46 percent, area wide, had a positive assessment.

When asked to rate public safety services, parks and open space maintenance, street and road maintenance and library services, the 2014 rating were substantially better than 2009. The improved ratings most likely reflect the general improvement in the local and state economies. As regards the Library, 19 percent rated it “excellent” in 2009, and 21 percent said “excellent” in 2014. Fifty percent said “good” in 2009 while 53 percent said “good” in 2014 for an overall positive of 69 percent in 2009 and 74 percent in 2014.