



MOORE INFORMATION

OPINION RESEARCH • STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

February 17, 2010

TO: Bruce Bender, City of Missoula
FROM: Nicole Kennedy
RE: City of Missoula Voter Survey Results

This memo contains results of a Moore Information, Inc. telephone survey conducted among likely voters in the City of Missoula. A total of 402 interviews were conducted February 3-6, 2010, including 5% of interviews conducted among cell phone users. The potential sampling error is plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence level.

Overview

Today, a wide majority of Missoula voters describe themselves as "very" or "fairly" willing to pay additional taxes/fees to maintain funding of the following city services:

- ✓ Fire emergency services (81% willing)
- ✓ Police services (77%)
- ✓ Street repair and maintenance (76%)
- ✓ Maintenance of city parks and trails (67%)

The survey also tested three potential property tax increases to fund city services. Three-in-five or more voters support each measure tested. For example,

- ✓ A potential measure that would cost \$10 per year for the owner of a \$250,000 home to fund existing street maintenance services is favored by a 64-32% margin. Another 4% are undecided.
- ✓ By a 63-32% margin, city voters favor increasing property taxes by \$20 per year for the owner of a \$250,000 home to maintain current fire and police services. Another 5% are undecided.
- ✓ By a 60-36% margin, city voters favor increasing property taxes by \$5 per year for the owner of a \$250,000 home to maintain existing parks maintenance services. The remaining 4% are undecided.

Generally speaking, funding measures that garner 60% support in initial polling are considered viable. Though passage of these measures is no sure thing, each appears to have potential to pass on Election Day with a strong communications and outreach effort.

Finally, a police facilities measure generates widespread opposition today. Just 33% would vote for and 60% against a 20-year bond, costing the average homeowner \$40 per year, to pay for construction of a new city police headquarters to replace current department headquarters.

More details follow.

Maintaining City Services

The survey explored voters' willingness to pay additional taxes/fees to *maintain* funding of four city services. As the following table illustrates, wide majorities of city voters describe themselves as "willing" to pay additional taxes/fees to maintain funding of fire emergency services, police services, street repair and maintenance services and maintenance and improvements of city parks and trails.

Willingness to Pay for Maintaining City Services

"The City of Missoula is in the process of prioritizing projects and determining necessary funding levels. The cost of providing city services and programs increases every year. To maintain current city services and programs, the city would need to increase taxes and/or fees.

Here are a few of the services and programs provided by the city. After hearing each, please tell me how willing you would be to pay additional taxes and/or fees to maintain these services and programs, very willing, fairly willing, not too willing or not willing at all."

	Very willing	Fairly willing	TOTAL willing	TOTAL not too/not willing at all
Fire emergency services	58%	23%	81%	19%
Police services	51%	26%	77%	22%
Street repair and maintenance, including street cleaning and snow removal	46%	30%	76%	24%
Maintenance and improvements of city parks and trails	33%	34%	67%	32%

When asked which of these four services should have highest priority for additional funding, or if some other service not mentioned should have priority, police services (28%) and fire emergency services (27%) top the list, followed by street repair and maintenance (17%), maintenance and improvements of city parks and trails (14%) and education/schools (2%). Nothing else was mentioned by more than 1% of voters and 6% had no opinion.

Potential Property Tax Increases: Maintaining City Services

The survey also explored voter support of three potential property tax increases to fund maintenance of current city services. Six-in-ten or more voters favored each measure tested.

Reactions to each measure tested follow:

- By a 64-32% margin, city voters currently favor increasing property taxes by \$10 per year to ***maintain existing street maintenance services***. The remaining 4% are undecided. Majorities of voters in all key subgroups favor paying \$10/year based on a house value of \$250,000, to maintain existing street maintenance services.

- By a 63-32% margin, city voters favor increasing property taxes by \$20 per year to ***maintain current fire and police services***. Another 5% are undecided. More than three-in-five voters in most areas of the city support a \$20/year measure to fund maintenance of fire and police services. The exception is in the southern part of Missoula, where sentiment on this issue is statistically divided today (50% for/42% against).
- By a 60-36% margin, city voters favor increasing property taxes by \$5 per year to ***maintain existing parks maintenance services***. The remaining 4% are undecided. Majorities of voters in all key subgroups favor paying \$5/year to pay for parks maintenance services. Support is most widespread among residents in the northeastern part of the city and among voters age 18-44.

Generally speaking, funding measures that garner 60% support in initial polling are considered viable. Though passage of these measures is not a sure thing, each currently has potential to pass on Election Day with a strong communications and outreach effort.

Police Facility Bond Measure

Voters are widely opposed to a 20-year bond measure, costing approximately \$40 per year for a \$250,000 home, to pay for construction of a new City police headquarters to replace the current department quarters. While 33% are in favor, fully 60% are opposed, and the remaining 7% are undecided. Opposition to a police facility bond measure is widespread among all key voter subgroups today.