

# TROY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Millage Focus Group Report  
July 2020



# AGENDA

- Intent of Focus Groups
- Background Information
- Participant Demographics
- Key Findings
- Focus Group Questions & Answers
  - Section 1: Programs & Services
  - Section 2: Library Funding
  - Section 3: Communication
- Summary of Key Findings
- Q&A





# INTENT OF FOCUS GROUP

- The City of Troy conducted 3 focus groups from July 14-16, 2020.
- The goal was to gauge Troy residents' reactions & thoughts regarding possible changes to the Library's rate millage, in anticipation of the November election.
- City staff gathered this information to assist Troy City Council in making educated decisions regarding the most appropriate millage rate and duration.
- We also learned valuable information about how to best engage the community on this issue.

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Assistant City Manager Robert Bruner facilitated the focus group discussions.
- The focus groups were all conducted virtually on Zoom.
- All participants volunteered of their own free will and were not provided financial compensation or rewards for their participation.
- Invitees included members of:
  - *The City's Financial Ideas Team*
  - *The City's Global Troy Advisory Board*
  - *Boys & Girls Club of Troy Board of Directors*
  - *The Troy Women's Association*

# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

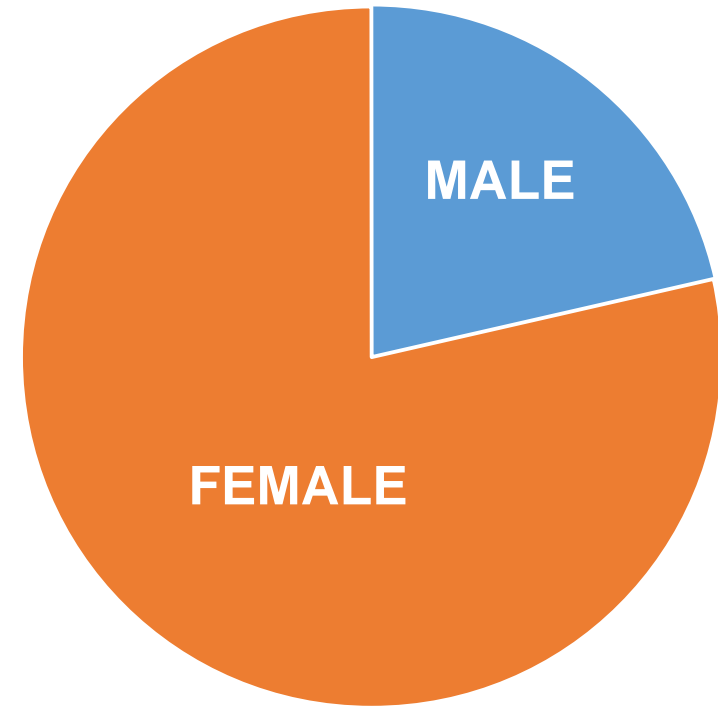
Focus Group 1: 8 participants  
Focus Group 2: 11 participants  
Focus Group 3: 9 participants

28 total participants took part in the focus groups.

Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generations were represented in the groups.

Gender Breakout:

- 6 Male
- 22 Female



# KEY FINDINGS

The majority of the focus group participants share the following beliefs:

- Not pleased with the Library's **physical building's current state** (aesthetically) and would like to see it **renovated**.
- **Will pay more in their taxes** to have **the best library** in metro Detroit. They want to keep up the Joneses and **uphold the Troy prestige**.
- Would like to see a **longer millage duration of 8-10 years**; instead of 5 years.
- If the millage rate rises, they want to know exactly where their money is going. They want to know what changes are going to be made if their taxes increase.

# FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- The questions asked in the focus groups were broken down into the following 3 sections. Participants were given relevant background information, prior to certain questions:
  - Section 1: **Programs & Services**
  - Section 2: **Library Funding**
  - Section 3: **Communication**
- We'll now go through the results question-by-question, reviewing top and common answers.

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SECTION 1 RESULTS:

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Troy Public Library Focus Group

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Q1: Think about an ideal library. What words come to mind to describe that library?

- 1) Accessible/Convenient
- 2) Community resource/Creates a sense of community
- 3) Presentable/Safe/Welcoming/Updated building
- 4) Variety or multitude of services and programs
- 5) Lots of meeting space
- 6) Technology is up-to-date
- 7) Current materials offered

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Q2: Now think about the Troy Public Library. What words come to mind to describe the Troy Public Library?

- 1) Inviting/Welcoming/Friendly/Great staff
- 2) Outdated/Old building/Not enough rooms
- 3) Great programming and events; especially for Youth
- 4) Not open on Fridays

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Q3: What are the most important things the Troy Public Library should do to be more like the ideal library?

- 1) Renovate/Update the building
- 2) Provide 7 days of service
- 3) Be current/Up-to-date with technology
- 4) Market what they offer/do well



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# SECTION 2 RESULTS:

# **LIBRARY FUNDING**

Troy Public Library Focus Group

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# LIBRARY FUNDING

- A dedicated millage pays for operating and maintaining the Troy Public Library.
- Voters approved a dedicated library millage for five years in 2011 and again in 2015.
- The current library millage expires in 2021.
- In other words, your 2020 summer tax bill is the last time you will pay the dedicated library millage unless voters approve a new one.

# LIBRARY FUNDING

- The City will be asking voters to consider a new dedicated library millage proposal on the November 2020 ballot.
- The Library will close in 2021 if the millage proposal fails so the City wants to understand the level of support residents are comfortable providing.
- The current library millage does not cover the full cost of operating and maintaining the Library so the millage rate must increase to prevent future service reductions.
- Our questions today will focus on the millage rate and duration so the City can devise a millage proposal that is likely to pass.
- Before I ask the first question, I am going to provide some information regarding similar libraries in Oakland County.



# LIBRARY FUNDING

- Michigan's public libraries are divided into 6 class sizes based on population served.
- Oakland County has 35 public libraries including eight Class 5 Libraries (serve 26,000-49,999) and nine Class 6 Libraries (serve 50,000+) for a total of 17 Class 5 and 6 Libraries.
- The Troy Public Library is a Class 6 Library.
- In 2019, the average residential taxpayer in the Oakland County communities served by Class 5 and 6 Libraries paid about \$11 per month for library services.
- The average residential Troy taxpayer paid about \$7 per month for library services.

Q4: What is your reaction to learning the average residential Troy taxpayer paid 33% less than the average for Class 5 and 6 Libraries in Oakland County?

- 1) You get what you pay for/  
Less is less
- 2) Surprised/Shocked
- 3) Disappointed
- 4) Embarrassed
- 5) Funding the Library below  
average is competitive  
disadvantage
- 6) Increasing taxes would have a  
low impact on the taxpayer, with  
high reward for Library users

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Q5: How would you feel about paying \$10 a month to maintain the Troy Public Library's current programs and service levels?

- 1) Majority of participants would pay \$10 a month to maintain the Troy Public Library's current programs and service levels
- 2) COVID job loss/inflation should be considered



Q6: How would you feel about paying \$11 a month to increase hours from six days a week to seven and provide improved building maintenance?

- 1) Majority of participants would pay \$11 a month to increase hours from six days a week to seven and provide improved building maintenance
- 2) Will pay whatever TPL needs or asks for
- 3) Want to be educated on where the money will go
- 4) Look for funding from other areas like City of Troy's unassigned Fund Balance, before asking to increase

Q7: How would you feel about paying \$12 a month to increase hours from six days a week to seven, renovate areas within the Library to better meet community needs, and reduce the Library's vulnerability to future service reductions when costs increase and/or revenues decrease?

- 1) Majority of participants would pay \$12 a month to increase hours from six days a week to seven....revenues decrease
- 2) Would like to see resources/technology upgrade
- 3) Would pay more if needed
- 4) We want to know what is going to be renovated/where the money is going

Q8: What are the best arguments in support of these library funding options (\$10, \$11, or \$12 a month)?

- 1) Future generations need a library to go to/library is part of the community
- 2) Raises property value/We need to match the city's reputation
- 3) People need the library now more than ever/We can reallocate personal finances to accommodate this tax raise
- 4) Voters are experiencing millage fatigue/Feel we didn't ask for enough last millage
- 5) Don't want the library to close
- 6) Patrons will see a huge difference in the building's appearance and/or infrastructure

## Q9: What are the best arguments in opposition to these library funding options?

- 1) Who needs a library anymore with the internet?
- 2) The funding might already be there in the current budget somewhere
- 3) Everyone is asking for money everywhere you go
- 4) Loss of job/Timing and effects of COVID
- 5) Don't want my taxes raised



# LIBRARY FUNDING

- Oakland County voters have approved terms ranging from four years to twenty years.
- Ten years is common.
- Five years is short compared to others.

Vote Date	Library Name	Term (Years)
8/7/12	Brandon Township	perpetuity
8/5/14	Walled Lake City Library	10.0
8/5/14	Clarkston	8.0
8/5/14	White Lake	8.0
8/5/14	Baldwin Public	6.0
11/4/14	Addison Township	10.0
11/4/14	Bloomfield Township Public	10.0
8/2/16	Ferndale Area District Library	10.0
8/2/16	Hazel Park District Library	10.0
8/2/16	Pontiac Public Library	10.0
8/2/16	Wixom Public Library	10.0
8/2/16	Commerce Township Community Library	6.0
8/2/16	Holly Township Library	5.0
5/2/17	Lyon Township Public Library	10.0
8/7/18	Highland Township Public Library	10.0
8/7/18	White Lake Township Library	8.0

Q10: How important is the millage duration to you when deciding to vote yes or no on a new dedicated library millage?

- 1) 20%\* are in favor of keeping a 5-year millage
- 2) 39%\* said they would prefer an 8-year millage, over a 5-year millage
- 3) 57%\* said they would prefer a 10-year millage, over a 5-year millage

*\*All data was gathered from notes taken from session observers. The percentages are intended to relay the general popularity of participants' and/or focus group moderator's statements across the three sessions. In no way should these figures be held accountable for absolute accuracy.*

## Q11: What would you need to know in order to support a new dedicated library millage?

- 1) I want to know exactly where my money is going/What changes are going to be made
- 2) How the library has performed historically/Planned projects for the future
- 3) Millage comparisons to other libraries with similar population numbers



## Q12: What would cause you to oppose a new dedicated library millage?

- 1) The library doesn't appeal to them/Serve them
- 2) If TPL closes, we can just go to another library
- 3) Unemployment due to COVID
- 4) Who needs a library in this age?
- 5) Don't want taxes to raise

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SECTION 3 RESULTS:

# COMMUNICATION

Troy Public Library Focus Group

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Q13: How do you currently receive most of your information about the City?

- 1) Email Newsletters
- 2) Print/Troy Today/Newspapers
- 3) Social Media
- 4) Friends/Neighbors
- 5) City Council Meetings

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Q14: What would be a better way for the City to share information with you about financial and budget issues?

- 1) Direct Mailings/Postcards
- 2) Troy Schools
- 3) Social Media



Q15: Are there individual community members or organizations you consider key communicators or opinion leaders?

- 1) TPL Director Cathy Russ
- 2) Neighborhood Associations
- 3) Teachers
- 4) Local Nonprofits (Friends of the TPL/Troy Historic Village)
- 5) TPL's Teen Advisory Board (TAB)

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Q16: Any additional thoughts that you would like to share before we close?

- 1) Messaging/Communication is key
- 2) Young voices need to be heard
- 3) This is a fun way to provide input/Become more involved

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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Q&A