



TROY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Focus Group
July 2020

Troy Public Library Millage

Focus Group Report

Friday, July 17, 2020

I. Executive Summary of Focus Group Intent

The City of Troy conducted three focus groups from July 14-16, 2020, consisting of interested Troy residents, as well as resident members of the City's Financial Ideas Team and the Global Troy Advisory Board; Boys & Girls Club of Troy Board of Directors; and the Troy Women's Association. The goal of the focus groups was to gauge Troy residents' reactions and thoughts regarding the upcoming Library millage election in November 2020.

Through the focus groups, City staff have gathered information to help the Troy City Council make 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 ~~and more~~.

II. Background Information

Assistant City Manager Robert Bruner facilitated a total of three focus group discussions on July 14 (8 participants); July 15 (11 participants); and July 16 (9 participants); for a total of 28 participants across the three groups. The focus group meetings were all conducted virtually, on video conferencing platform *Zoom*.

All participants volunteered of their own free will and were not provided any financial compensation or rewards for their participation in the focus groups. ~~Invitees from~~ Members of the City's Financial Ideas Team; the City's Global Troy Advisory Board; Boys & Girls Club of Troy Board of Directors; and the Troy Women's Association were initially invited via email from Troy Public Library Director Cathy Russ. We expected attendance of 12 per group; however, when we did not reach that level of participation, the invitation was extended to the general public via City of Troy, Troy Public Library, and Troy Parks and Recreation social media pages.

III. Participant Demographics

28 total participants took part in the focus groups.

- 6 Male
- 22 Female

Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generations were represented across all 3 groups.

IV. 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 with 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 where exactly their money is going. They want to know what changes are going to be made if their taxes increase.

V. Focus Group Questions & Answers*

**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 moderators' statements across the three sessions. In no way should these figures be held accountable for absolute accuracy.*

SECTION 1: Programs & Services

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

- Accessible/convenient (85%)
- Community resource/Creates a sense of community (78%)
- Presentable/Safe/Welcoming/Updated building (50%)
- Variety or multitude of services and programs (50%)
- Lots of meeting space (39%)
- Technology is up-to-date (32%)
- Current materials offered (14%)

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

- Inviting/welcoming/friendly/great staff (100%)
- Outdated/old building/not enough rooms (60%)
- Great programming and events; especially for Youth (53%)
- Not open on Fridays (21%)

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

- Renovate/update the building (100%)
- Provide 7 days of service (71%)
- Be current/up-to-date with technology (61%)
- Market what they offer/do well (17%)

SECTION 2: Library Funding

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?

- You get what you pay for/Less is less (100%)
- Surprised/Shocked (39%)
- Disappointed (36%)
- Embarrassed (21%)
- Funding the library below average is competitive disadvantage (18%)
- Increasing taxes would have a low impact on the taxpayer, with such high reward for library users (14%)

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

- Majority of participants would pay \$10 a month to maintain the Troy Public Library's current programs and service level
- COVID job loss/inflation should be considered (11%)

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?

- Majority of participants would pay \$11 a month to increase hours from six days a week to seven and provide improved building maintenance
- Will pay whatever TPL needs/asks for (28%)
- Want to be educated on where the money will go (28%)
- Look for funding from other areas like City of Troy unassigned fund balance, before asking to increase (21%)
- In Focus Group 2: Participants were asked, "If given the choice between having the A) Building be renovated or B) 7 days of service, what would you choose?" 63% said they would like to see the building renovated first, while 0% said they would like to see 7 days of service first.

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?

- Majority of participants would pay \$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
- Would like to see resources/technology upgrade (29%)
- Would pay more if needed (11%)
- We want to know what is going to be renovated/where the money is going (3%)

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

- Future generations need a library to go to/library is part of the community (79%)
- Raises property value/we need to match the city's reputation (75%)
- People need the library now more than ever/we can reallocate personal finances to accommodate this tax raise (61%)
- Voters are experiencing millage fatigue/feel we didn't ask for enough last millage (43%)
- Don't want the library to close (32%)
- Patrons will see a huge difference in the building's appearance/infrastructure (18%)

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

- Who needs a library anymore with the internet? (39%)
- The funding might already be there in the current budget somewhere (28%)
- Everyone is asking for money everywhere you go (21%)
- Loss of job/timing and effects of COVID (12%)
- Don't want my taxes raised (11%)

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

- 20% are in favor of keeping a 5-year millage
- 39% said they would prefer an 8-year millage, over a 5-year millage
- 57% said they would prefer a 10-year millage, over a 5-year millage
- We don't want millage voting fatigue (78%)

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

- I want to know exactly where my money is going to/what changes are going to be made (100%)
- How the library has performed historically/planned projects for the future (14%)
- Millage comparisons to other libraries with similar population numbers (7%)

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

- The library doesn't appeal to them/serve them (18%)
- If TPL closes, we can just go to another library (11%)
- Unemployment due to COVID (7%)
- Who needs a library in this age? (3%)
- Don't want taxes to raise (3%)

SECTION 3: Communication

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

- Email newsletters (71%)
- Print/Troy Today/Newspapers (64%)
- Social media (46%)
- Friends/Neighbors (25%)
- City Council meetings (18%)

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

- Direct mailings/postcards (46%)
- Troy Schools (7%)
- Social media (7%)

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

- Troy Public Library Director, Cathy Russ (32%)
- Neighborhood Associations (18%)
- Teachers (14%)
- Local nonprofits (Friends of the TPL/Troy Historic Village) (7%)
- TPL's Teen Advisory Board (TAB) (7%)

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

- Messaging/communication is key (42%)
- Young voices need to be heard (21%)
- This is a fun way to provide input/become more involved (11%)

VI. Summary of 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 with the Joneses and uphold the Troy prestige.
- Would like to see a longer millage duration of 8-10 years, instead of 5 years.
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