

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
Minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting of June 23, 1994
Results of the Public Opinion Survey

Present: Breen, Chignell, Kroot, Yarish
Absent: Zaharoff

Mayor Chignell announced that no action was taken during closed session.

Brian Godbe of Godbe Communications said this public opinion research project was designed to provide the Town of San Anselmo with information about voter attitudes and perceptions of a community infrastructure bond measure. The study was conducted by telephone with a random sample of registered voters within the town. A total of 400 registered voters were interviewed, and a margin of error for a sample this size is four to six percent.

Respondents were first asked what they consider the most important problem facing the town today. 18% said public maintenance was the number one problem. Mr. Godbe indicated that most surveys of this type show crime to be a high priority, while in San Anselmo it rated quite low.

Respondents were then asked to rank a specific list of community problems. Maintaining the quality of education and fire service ranked most important. At the next level was maintaining police services, repairing streets and preserving open space. The third level included maintaining park facilities, completing storm drain work, reducing crime, and renovating the Library. Reducing local taxes ranked in last place, along with traffic, downtown revitalization, improving parking and expanding recreation facilities.

When asked to rate the job performance of town government, three-quarters of the respondents believe the town is doing an excellent or good job. Mr. Godbe said this is a very positive rating, but not the highest he has seen.

Respondents were then asked directly about the infrastructure bond measure. A total of 66% said they would support a measure. Mr. Godbe said this is a good place from which to start a campaign. It is important to have support from seniors (those over age 60) in the 60% area, as they are the most conservative group. The poll results showed 60-64% senior support. Residents in the northern portion of San Anselmo were slightly more supportive than those in the southern portion. Based on household income, all groupings were in the two-thirds support range.

Respondents were then asked about the amount of tax they felt they could bear. Godbe said San Anselmo's tax threshold is approximately \$95. This is the point where there is no gain or loss in support for the bond measure based on the cost to the average homeowner.

When presented with a number of arguments in support of a ballot measure, support from respondents increased by 4%. Having more information at hand changed the results positively.

Other unrelated questions were included in the survey, concluding that 56% of the people support the ban on overnight parking, 52% are support of the design review process, a front fence ordinance is opposed by 54%, and there is strong support (72%) for the purchase of Bald Hill open space.

Mr. Godbe concluded that San Anselmo should have a solid chance of obtaining a two-thirds majority for a tax measure, provided the cost does not exceed \$95 per year and the measure is detailed, including rationale for the improvements, and should be held in June or November of an even-numbered year, to yield the best results.

Responding to questions from council, Mr. Godbe said that a 4 - 6% accuracy rate is standard for surveys of this type. A bigger sample would lower the figures. Typically, the "don't knows" break down like the remainder of the responses, if they vote. A drop in

support from the 40-49 age category is fairly typical, when people are not at their peak in earning power, but are at the peak of their expenses. The 60 - 64 age group is the most conservative, as they are on the verge of retirement and not certain of future finances. There would have to be an informational campaign conducted or the measure will lose.

The public hearing was opened.

Herman Kramer asked why there are so many positive items on the second ballot test, rather than negative. He asked why the questions were not more specific. Mr. Godbe said that from experience these are typically the most effective arguments.

Edith Stump, 13 Calumet, asked why questions on education are included since the town has nothing to do with education. Mr. Godbe replied that you get an artificial response if you include only Town issues. In order to put the information in a proper perspective, it is necessary to include a variety of issues.

Judith Hodgens, 245 Los Angeles, asked about differentiation between parks and open space. Support was high for open space, but appears much lower for parks. People see the two items quite differently.

Bill de Bisschop, 91 Elm, asked what would be the total cost of the \$10 million bond issue. Town Administrator Pollard responded that that question will be addressed at the next meeting.

Kathy Sanders, 310 Redwood Road, asked if the ballot measure could be tailored to the survey results. The answer was yes.

Sarah Nome, 77 Alder, said that in a bond issue, 70% of the money raised goes to interest. You have to collect \$40 million to raise \$10. She feels this is an incredible amount of money considering how the value of property has increased. Since Proposition 13, she says 85% of properties have resold and are assessed at higher values.

Stephany Kramer, 15 Belle Avenue, said that she would like to encourage the council to be more emphatic about being resistant to Sacramento taking more money away. She feels a little honest rebellion is needed against the state. She would like the council to invite assembly candidates here and let them know how we feel.

The public hearing was closed.

It was the consensus of council that the results of the survey show that San Anselmo residents care about the town and are willing to spend money to care for the community. The results put us on a good footing to craft a measure that meets the needs of the residents. It was decided to appoint a subcommittee to look into the matter, with councilmembers Kroot and Breen serving. The council will meet on July 7 to discuss the measure. The subcommittee will convene prior to the July 7 special meeting.

Jo Julin, Planning Commission, said that after the "Who Spends My Property Tax" workshop, she looked into how much of our property taxes have been reallocated to the schools through ERAF (Education Relief Augmentation Fund). San Anselmo taxpayers have a total commitment of \$1.3 million to ERAF, with \$457,000 taken from Town coffers. She prepared a composite map that shows all the government agencies that are at work in San Anselmo.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Debbie Stutsman