

5.1  
April 29, 2004

City Council  
Sacramento, CA

Honorable Members in Session:

**SUBJECT: RENEWAL OF LIBRARY ASSESSMENT**

**LOCATION AND COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide (All Districts)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This report recommends that the City Council discuss the options for renewal of the existing library assessment, including date of election, rate and apportionment methodology, COLA, sunset, low income rebate, maintenance of effort and expenditure plan, and provide direction to staff.

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Anne Marie Gold, Library Director 264-2770

**FOR COUNCIL MEETING OF:** May 11, 2004

**SUMMARY:**

In 1996, the Council formed an assessment district for enhanced library services and the voters approved a \$22 per parcel assessment for ten years. Today assessment district revenues provide 30% of the overall funding for library services in the City. In order to continue to provide the enhanced library services, the voters must renew the funding source by June 30, 2007. The Sacramento Public Library Authority Board has discussed renewal of the tax at its recent meetings. They asked that the City Council hold a workshop to consider the options for placing a measure on the ballot to renew the tax. In order to place the measure on the ballot for a November 2004 election, the Council would have to approve an ordinance and resolution doing so no later than July 13, 2004.

**COMMITTEE/COMMISSION ACTION:**

None

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**EXISTING ASSESSMENT**

In July 1996, the Sacramento City Council formed Additional Library Services Assessment District 96-02 to include all parcels within the City. In November 1996, the

Council placed before the voters a measure to levy a special assessment in the newly formed district. As an assessment, it only required a simple majority for passage. The levy included the following terms:

1. \$22 per single family residential parcel, with equivalent factors for other parcel types
2. Annual CPI escalator not to exceed 3% annually or more than \$7 during the life of the assessment
3. Ten year sunset
4. Low income rebate
5. Assessment revenues could not be used to replace City General Fund revenues
  - If the budgeted City general fund contribution to the Library is reduced below the FY1996-97 level of \$6,300,000, the library assessment could not be levied
  - If the City General Fund reduction is no more than the same proportion of reduction for non-safety departments, the assessment may be levied
6. Part of the City General Fund contribution may be set aside for construction or lease and operation of libraries in South Natomas and Valley Hi.

The use of the funds was as follows:

1. Increase open hours of operations at all branches
2. Increase materials budget for all branches and bookmobile
3. Purchase specialized materials to benefit the branches to be housed at the Central Library
4. Provide funding for computer equipment, network connections and subscription databases for all branches

Voters in the City of Sacramento approved Measure P with 62.6% of the vote.

#### **ASSESSMENT DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION**

The assessment was first levied in FY 1997/98 and services were provided with assessment district funds starting in February 1998. The assessment has continued to be levied, with an annual CPI increase, for the past seven years. In FY 2003/04, the assessment was \$25.84 per parcel, which is budgeted to generate \$3,721,636. For FY 2004/05, the assessment is proposed at \$25.94 per parcel, generating \$3,843,346. Attachment A contains a chart detailing assessment district revenues since 1998.

#### **SERVICE IMPACT**

- **Extended Branch Hours**

Extended branch hours funded by the assessment range from 6 – 11 hours per week, based on the FY 03/04 level of City General Fund support. All operating costs/open hours at the McClatchy and Valley Hi-North Laguna branches are totally funded by the assessment.

<b>Branch</b>	<b>Open Hours without Assessment</b>	<b>Open Hours with Assessment</b>
Belle Cooleage	31	43
Colonial Heights	29	41
Del Paso Heights	23	34
Martin Luther King, Jr.	34	45
McClatchy	13	21
McKinley	21	35
North Sacramento/Hagginwood	27	34
South Natomas	29	41
Valley Hi/North Laguna	0	34

There are currently 26 FTE positions (34 employees) whose positions are funded by the assessment.

- **Library Materials**

Enhanced materials budgets are also funded by the assessment, generally increasing funding available by 50%.

- **Additional Library Service Support Costs**

The assessment also provides funds for computers and online resources, as well as its allocated share of shared cost activities, such as technical services, IT, facilities, community relations, and administrative functions such as finance and human resources.

- **Assessment District Costs**

Costs to maintain the district, including an annual report and charges to collect the funds, are charged against the assessment.

In FY03/04, assessment district revenues represent approximately 30% of all resources available to fund library services in the City. Since the majority of all assessment district revenues are used to fund services in the branches, they represent a higher percentage of all resources available to fund branch services.

## **TAX RENEWAL**

### **VOTER POLL**

The Library Authority contracted to conduct a poll to determine public opinion on a number of issues related to libraries, including support for the renewal of the existing assessment for library services in the City and/or support for a new tax for library services in the County. J. Moore Methods conducted the poll in the first half of January 2004. Attachment E is the report on the poll.

The chart below outlines the increasing levels of voter support from the poll. Overall there is an 81% level of support in the City of Sacramento for renewing the existing assessment. When presented with key elements of a proposed extension of the existing

tax for libraries within the City of Sacramento, voters appear willing to approve under almost any circumstance.

		Entire County	City of Sacramento
	Poll Question		
Question 3a1	Local tax increase - list of services - improving public library services	55%	63%
Question 4a	Would you support or oppose a local tax measure to provide funding for local public library services	50%	54%
Question 5	After information on City of Sacramento existing tax - Knowing this, would you be willing to pay a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services?	71%	80%
Question 6	After testing services and programs - If most of these services and programs were included in the expenditure plan, would you support or oppose a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services?	78%	86%
Question 8	<b>After pro and con arguments - Having heard these arguments, would you support or oppose a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services?</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>81%</b>

The key findings of the poll relating to the City assessment were:

1. Voters are very satisfied with how library services are provided.
2. When looking at competing priorities for spending existing tax dollars, libraries rank 9<sup>th</sup> out of 11 priorities.
3. When looking at potential competing priorities for supporting new tax dollars, libraries ranked 11th out of 15.
4. The top priorities for enhanced services to be funded by a tax were:
  - a. Providing special children's activities such as summer reading programs and story time
  - b. Providing homework and after-school programs
  - c. Providing programs to teach adults to read
  - d. Purchasing new books and other print materials
  - e. Providing programs and materials for teens
  - f. Increasing library open hours
  - g. Providing online access to library resources and services from home, school or work
5. Support for the tax would fall at about the \$25 level.
6. By a 57% to 41% margin, voters reject any annual CPI COLA increase.
7. Voters support a 10-year limit on the tax.

**COST OF ELECTION**

As estimated by the County Registrar of Voters, the estimated cost to hold an election in November 2004 only for voters in the City of Sacramento is \$99,670. If the measure were successful, the cost of the election could be charged against the new tax; however, if the election were not successful, the City of Sacramento would be responsible for the cost.

**TAXING VEHICLE**

The current assessment can be collected and services provided for another three years, through the end of FY 2006/07 (June 30, 2007). Under the terms of Proposition 218, assessments can no longer be used to fund library services. Therefore, a special tax measure requiring a 2/3 vote for passage is the only vehicle that can be used to continue the existing funding.

**Staff Recommendation:** A special tax, requiring a 2/3 voter approval, should be used to renew the existing library assessment.

**POTENTIAL ELECTION DATES – 2004 VS. 2006**

The current assessment expires in June 2007. Authority Counsel Diane Balter has researched the requirements for placing special taxes on a ballot. Proposition 218 only requires that general taxes be placed on a ballot where members of a local government agency are running for office. There is no such restriction for a special tax. Therefore, a special tax measure for the library could be placed on the ballot for the elections of:

- November 2004 (Presidential general election)
- March 2006 (Gubernatorial primary election)
- November 2006 (Gubernatorial general election)

**2004 VS. 2006 VOTER IMPACT**

In the Townsend, Raimundo, Besler & Usher voter poll, information on voter frequency was cross tabulated with willingness to support enhanced funding for the library. Voters who vote in all elections, e.g. (2006) were somewhat less likely to support a library tax than voters who only vote in some elections, e.g. (2004). Therefore, the likelihood of success for a library ballot measure is higher in 2004, than in 2006.

<b>VOTING FREQUENCY (COUNTYWIDE)</b>		
	<b>ALL (2006)</b>	<b>MOST (2004)</b>
Question 3A: Local tax increase - list of services - improving public library services	56%	53%
Question 4A: Would you support or oppose a local tax measure to provide funding for local public library services	48%	52%
Question 5: After information on City of Sacramento existing tax - Knowing this would you be willing to pay a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services	67%	74%

<b>VOTING FREQUENCY (COUNTYWIDE)</b>		
Question 6: After testing services and programs - If most of these services and programs were included in the expenditure plan, would you support or oppose a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services?	73%	82%
<b>Question 8: After pro and con arguments – Having heard these arguments, would you support or oppose a parcel tax of \$25 per year to provide and improve public library services?</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>79%</b>

**OTHER MEASURES ON NOVEMBER 2004 BALLOT**

The November 2004 ballot may have a number of other potential state and local measures on it that could compete with the library assessment renewal. Locally, the measure most likely to have an impact on a library measure would be the renewal of the half-cent transportation sales tax. There is concern that placing both measures on the ballot could cause competition, causing one or both to fail.

**OTHER BUDGET IMPACTS**

There is a potential unknown impact of any negative State budget actions on the City. If the City were to suffer a significant revenue loss to the State through ERAF, VLF or other revenue shift, the City’s General Fund contribution to the Library might be reduced, causing a reduction in services. It would then raise the issue of whether the City were prepared to support the library ballot measure in the face of potentially other competing priorities, as well as whether voters would support a measure just at the point that their library services were being reduced.

**Staff Recommendation:** The special tax election should be held in November 2004.

**RATE AND APPORTIONMENT METHODOLOGY**

The FY 03/04 assessment is at \$25.84 per benefit unit. Assuming a modest CPI increase range of 0.5% - 1% through the remaining years of the assessment would increase the per parcel rate to \$26.50 - \$26.75.

**Staff Recommendation:** The renewal tax rate should be set within the range of \$26.50 - \$26.75, depending on the April 2004 CPI numbers, with the exact rate to be determined at the time of ordinance approval.

Under the current assessment, all parcels, including both residential and commercial/industrial, with the exception of parcels with utility, common area, public agency or agricultural use, are assessed. Attachment C provides information on the current apportionment methodology.

**Staff Recommendation:** The current apportionment methodology should be used for the tax renewal.

**COLA**

The current assessment has a CPI COLA included in it. The COLA cannot exceed 3% annually, or a \$7 increase per benefit unit for the period of the assessment.

If there were a COLA with similar provisions as the existing one (cannot exceed 3% annually, or an \$8 increase per benefit unit for the period of the assessment) and the new special tax were set at \$26.50 per single-family residential parcel, the chart below shows the potential dollar amount increases.

**ESTIMATED COLA INCREASE**

<b>Year</b>		<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>
1	FY 07/08	\$ 26.50	\$ 26.50
2	FY 08/09	\$ 27.03	\$ 27.30
3	FY 09/10	\$ 27.57	\$ 28.11
4	FY 10/11	\$ 28.12	\$ 28.96
5	FY 11/12	\$ 28.68	\$ 29.83
6	FY 12/13	\$ 29.26	\$ 30.72
7	FY 12/14	\$ 29.84	\$ 31.64
8	FY 14/15	\$ 30.44	\$ 32.59
9	FY 15/16	\$ 31.05	\$ 33.57
10	FY 16/17	\$ 31.67	\$ 34.58

The voter poll indicates significant voter concern with a COLA for the tax renewal. However, without a mechanism to increase the tax to keep up with increasing costs of the services provided by the tax revenues, it would be extremely difficult to maintain the levels of service promised to voters over the period of the tax. Given the strong overall level of support for the tax, a CPI COLA should be considered for the tax renewal.

**Staff Recommendation:** The tax renewal should include a CPI COLA not to exceed 3% annually, or \$8 over the life of the tax.

**SUNSET**

The current assessment has a 10-year sunset. The voter poll indicated a 2/3 preference for a 10 year sunset for the renewal.

**Staff Recommendation:** The tax renewal should have a 10-year sunset.

**LOW INCOME REBATE**

The current assessment includes a rebate for low income property owners if:

- The property was owner occupied
- The property was the owner’s principal residence
- The gross household income is 80% or less of the area median income

Low income households are defined as households with incomes 80% or less of the Sacramento County area median income as published annually by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Department.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the tax renewal include the same low income rebate provision.

#### **MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT**

The current assessment has a maintenance of effort provision for the City General Fund contribution to the Sacramento Public Library Authority in order for the assessment to be collected. The requirement is that, for the period of the assessment, the City General Fund contribution would not be reduced below \$6,300,000, with one exception. That exception is that, if the reduction is no more than the same proportion of reduction that is imposed on the City's net general fund budget for non-safety departments (which are all operating departments except police and fire) in any year during the ten-year period of the assessment, then the assessment may nonetheless be collected.

In order to insure that the renewal tax revenues supplement, but do not supplant, City General Fund revenues, a maintenance of effort provision is necessary.

**Staff Recommendation:** A maintenance of effort provision similar to the one in the existing assessment be included in the tax renewal, with the base General Fund contribution increased to \$7,635,600.

#### **EXPENDITURE PLAN**

The current assessment provides funds for services for extended branch hours, library materials including books and non print materials, children's services, technology including computers and online resources, as well as the support services necessary to provide these public services, and administrative costs for the tax. No assessment funds are used to support operations at the Central Library. The assessment also included the ability for part of the City General Fund contribution to be set aside for construction or lease and operation of libraries in South Natomas and Valley Hi; therefore, assessment district revenues are used to support a portion of operational costs at the South Natomas Library, as well as all operational and lease costs for the Valley Hi-North Laguna Library.

Assuming a similar level of revenue with the tax renewal, the expenditure plan would only be able to continue the current levels of service, not enhance them. If any additional or new services were to be added to the expenditure plan, commensurate changes or reductions in current services would need to be included.

The expenditure plan for the tax renewal is also predicated on a consistent base level of City General Fund monies, as outlined in the Maintenance of Effort provision noted above. If the City's base level of General Fund contribution is not maintained, including annual increases necessary to keep up with increasing operational costs, the potential exists that even with the special tax revenues available, levels of service might degrade.

Attachment B is an expenditure plan for the special tax.

**TIMELINE**

In order to place a measure on the November 2004 ballot, action would need to be taken on the following timeline in order to meet the statutory deadlines of the Registrar of Voters.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
Council holds workshop to consider renewal of existing library assessment and new tax	May 11, 2004
Council passes for publication special tax ordinance and continues it to June 22 (Consent Calendar)	June 15, 2004
Council enacts special tax ordinance and adopts resolution placing special tax measure on November 2004 ballot	June 22, 2004

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Currently the library assessment provides approximately 30% of the overall funds available for library services in the City of Sacramento. If the assessment were not renewed, those services funded by the assessment would have to be reduced or eliminated if other supplemental funding sources were not identified.

The cost to hold an election for the special tax is estimated at \$99,670. If the election were not successful, the City of Sacramento would be responsible for paying the cost.

Because the proposed taxing methodology is a special tax and not an assessment, an engineer's report is not required to impose the tax, nor is an annual engineer's report required to set the rate.

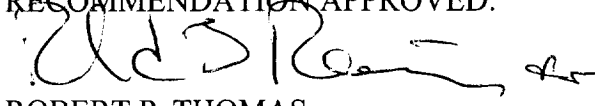
**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

None

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:**

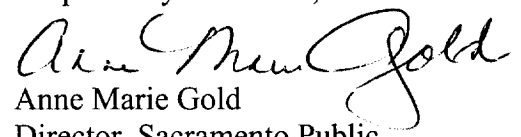
The City Council approved the formation of the assessment district in 1996 and has imposed the special assessment in every year since. Only the Council has the authority to place a measure in front of the voters of the City requesting approval of a special tax to maintain the services provided by the current assessment district funds.

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:



ROBERT P. THOMAS  
City Manager

Respectfully submitted,



Anne Marie Gold  
Director, Sacramento Public  
Library Authority

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

	Page Number
Staff Report	1-10
Attachment A: Assessment District Revenues	11
Attachment B: Special Tax Expenditure Plan	12
Attachment C: Special Tax Apportionment Methodology	13-14
Attachment D: Special Tax Decision Points	15-16
Attachment E: Voter Poll	17-26

ATTACHMENT A

CITY OF SACRAMENTO ASSESSMENT DISTRICT #96-02 ASSESSMENT

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Maximum Assessment Rate With 3% Increase/Yr.</b>	<b>Actual Assessment Rate Engineer's Report</b>	<b>Per Assessment Percentage Rate +/-</b>	<b>Actual Revenue Audit</b>	<b>Per Revenue Percentage +/-</b>
1997-98	\$22.00	<b>\$22.00</b>			
1998-99	\$22.66	<b>\$22.66</b>	3.00%	<b>\$3,046,289</b>	
1999-00	\$23.34	<b>\$23.34</b>	3.00%	<b>\$3,098,049</b>	1.7%
2000-01	\$24.04	<b>\$24.04</b>	3.00%	<b>\$3,268,499</b>	5.50%
2001-02	\$24.76	<b>\$24.76</b>	3.00%	<b>\$3,193,465</b>	-2.30%
2002-03	\$25.50	<b>\$25.28</b>	2.10%	<b>\$3,605,823</b>	12.91%
2003-04	\$26.27	<b>\$25.84</b>	2.22%	<b>\$3,668,081</b>	1.73%
2004-05	\$27.06	<b>\$25.94</b>	0.39%		
2005-06					
2006-07					

**TAX RENEWAL EXPENDITURE PLAN**

1. Enhance open hours per week at all current branches by a minimum of 25% over the base number of hours, including support costs to provide such services; enhance open hours per week at any new or expanded facilities.

**EXAMPLE:**

<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>Base Hours Per Week (FY 03/04)</b>	<b>Enhanced Hours Per Week (FY 03/04)</b>	<b># Of Hours Increased</b>
Belle Coolegge	31	43	12
Colonial Heights	29	41	12
Del Paso Heights	23	34	11
McClatchy	13	21	8
McKinley	21	35	14
Martin Luther King	34	45	11
North Sacramento/Hagginwood	27	34	7
South Natomas	29	41	12
Valley Hi/North Laguna	0	343	34

2. Increase library materials (books, magazines, CD's, DVD's, online databases, etc.) purchased by a minimum of 50% over base materials budget for all current and new or expanded branches, including support costs to provide such materials; provide supplemental funds for purposes such as the bookmobile and centralized materials housed at Central Library that benefit branches.
3. Enhance technology, self-service and online access, including but not limited to computers, network connections, online resources, etc., at all current and new or renovated branches, including support costs to provide such technology.
4. Provide enhanced services to children and teens by trained staff, including support costs to provide such services, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Enhanced materials (books, magazines, non-print materials)
  - b. Age appropriate programs
  - c. After school home work help programs
  - d. Designated spaces for children and teens
5. Low income rebate program rebate and administrative costs
6. Administrative costs to implement and administer special tax.

**ATTACHMENT C**

**LIBRARY TAX PROPOSED APPORTIONMENT METHODOLOGY**

<b>PARCEL USE</b>	<b>BASIC UNIT</b>	<b>RATE</b>	<b>TAX PER PARCEL AT \$26.50</b>
<b>RESIDENTIAL</b>			
Single family	1 dwelling unit	1	\$26.50 per single family dwelling
Multi-family	1 dwelling unit	.75 per unit for each unit, units 1-4	\$19.88 per unit, units 1-4
	1 dwelling unit	.50 per unit for each unit, units 5-15	\$13.25 per unit, units 5-15
	1 dwelling unit	.25 per unit for each unit, units over 15	\$6.75 per unit, units over 15
Condominiums	1 dwelling unit	.75 per condo	\$19.88 per condo
Mobile homes	1 dwelling unit	.50 per mobile home	\$13.25 per mobile home
<b>NON-RESIDENTIAL</b>			
<b><u>Institutional (INS)</u></b> (Boarding, Rooming & Retirement Homes, Private Schools)	1 acre	4.50 per acre for each acre, for acres 1-5	\$119.25 per acre
		1.50 per acre for each acre over 5	\$39.75 per acre
<b><u>Professional (PRO)</u></b> (Medical and Dental offices, Veterinary clinics, Office Churches (CHR), Hospitals, Day Nursery)	1 acre	3.00 per acre for each acre, for acres 1-5	\$79.50 per acre
		.75 per acre for acres over 5	\$19.88 per acre
<b><u>Commercial/Light Industrial</u></b> (Misc. Commercial, Stores & Store Combos, Department and Discount Retail, Shopping Centers, Radio & TV Studios, Restaurants & Hotels/Motels, Banks, Bed & Breakfast)	1 acre	1.50 per acre for each acre, for acres 1-5	\$39.75 per acre
		.375 per acre for acres over 5	\$9.94 per acre, for acres over 5

<b>PARCEL USE</b>	<b>BASIC UNIT</b>	<b>RATE</b>	<b>TAX PER PARCEL AT \$26.50</b>
<b>Heavy Industrial/Recreational (IND)</b> Car Washes, Commercial Garages & Service Stations, Automobile Dealerships, Nurseries, Warehousing & Heavy Industrial, Terminals, Trucking & Distribution, Sports Courts, Fields or Stadiums, Theaters, Bowling Alleys & Skating Rinks, Private Clubs	1 acre	1.50 per acre for each acre, for acres 1-5	\$39.75 per acre, for acres 1-5
		.375 per acre for acres over 5	\$9.94 per acre, for acres over 5
<b>MISCELLANEOUS/VACANT (VAC)</b>			
Miscellaneous vacant, radio or TV transmitter, parking lots and garages, mining operations, marinas, golf courses, cemeteries and mortuaries	1 acre	1.50 per acre, maximum of 5 acres per parcel	\$39.75 per acre, maximum of 5 acres per parcel
<b>EXEMPT (EXE)</b>			
Common area, agriculture, utilities, public agencies		\$0	\$0

**ATTACHMENT D**

**PROPOSED LIBRARY SPECIAL TAX**

	<b>Current Assessment</b>	<b>Tax Recommendation</b>	<b>Renewal</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Election Date</b>		November 2, 2004		Option for March 2006 or November 2006
<b>Tax Vehicle</b>	Assessment	Special Tax		Requires 2/3 voter approval
<b>Rate</b>	Initial - \$22 FY 03/04 \$25.84	\$26.50-\$26.75		Rate to be established when Council adopts ordinance
<b>Apportionment</b>		Same as current assessment		Includes residential, commercial and industrial parcels
<b>COLA</b>	Maximum 3% annually, tied to CPI; maximum increase \$7 over life of assessment	Maximum 3% annually, tied to CPI; maximum increase \$8 over life of assessment		\$1 difference in maximum increase
<b>Sunset</b>	10 years	Same as current assessment		
<b>Low Income Rebate</b>	The current assessment includes a rebate for low income property owners if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The property was owner occupied</li> <li>• The property was the owner's principal residence</li> <li>• The gross household income is 80% or less of the area median income</li> </ul>	Same as current assessment		
<b>Maintenance of Effort</b>	City General Fund contribution not be reduced below \$6,300,000, with	Same except that base City General Fund contribution increased to		Need to increase base contribution to current year contribution.

	<b>Current Assessment</b>	<b>Tax Recommendation</b>	<b>Renewal Notes</b>
	<p>one exception. That exception is that if the reduction is no more than the same proportion of reduction that is imposed on the City's net general fund budget for non-safety departments (which are all operating departments except police and fire) in any year during the ten-year period of the assessment, then the assessment may nonetheless.</p>	<p>\$7,635,500.</p>	
<p><b>Expenditure Plan</b></p>	<p>Provides funds for enhanced hours, materials budget, and technology.</p>	<p>Provides funds for enhanced hours, materials budget, technology, as well as children's and teen services.</p>	



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Anne Marie Gold  
Sacramento Public Library

**FROM:** Jeff Raimundo  
Townsend Raimundo Besler & Usher

**DATE:** February 4, 2004

**RE:** Library Poll Analysis

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Here is our analysis of major findings in the poll conducted for the Sacramento Public Library.

J. Moore Methods conducted a poll in January 2004 to determine public opinion on a number of issues related to libraries, the extension of the current parcel tax for libraries in the City of Sacramento and voter receptivity to imposition of a parcel tax for libraries in other areas of Sacramento County. The sample of 600 interviewees was drawn from the County Registrar of Voters and reflects likely November voters. The poll was conducted by telephone and has a margin of error of + or - 4.2 percentage points.

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Among other things, the goals of this survey were to determine the following:

- How the public ranks library services against other tax-supported local services
- The level of support for a possible extension of the city's parcel tax for libraries and for a possible new tax for libraries in the county
- Potential elements of a library program financed by a parcel tax
- Arguments that sway voters pro or con
- The public's view of library services overall

## Summary Conclusion

Libraries remain a favored amenity throughout Sacramento County, but when measured against other government services, they fall below a significant number of competing funding priorities in the estimation of taxpayers. Still, when presented with key elements of a proposed extension of a parcel tax for libraries within the City of Sacramento and imposition of a new tax for libraries in the county, **voters are willing to provide the two-thirds support needed.**

Whether that level of support can be sustained in the face of significant uncertainty surrounding other government funding pressures remains unclear, particularly in view of an unusually wide swing in voter sentiment revealed by the survey. Sacramento city voters appear likely to approve extension of the existing parcel tax under almost any circumstance. However, the inconsistent response of voters outside the City of Sacramento leaves the picture unclear.

After the March Primary Election but before the County Board of Supervisors must put a November library measure on the ballot in July, it is critical that we do another poll to reassess and pinpoint voter attitudes.

## Support for Libraries

Asked to prioritize local government services, 63 percent of voters rate libraries a "high priority" but give even greater support to other government services:

1.	Providing fire and paramedic services	94% (high priority)
2.	Spending tax dollars efficiently	92
3.	Improving public schools	86
4.	Keeping taxes at affordable levels	84
5.	Reducing traffic congestion	84
6.	Maintaining streets and roads	81
7.	Managing growth and development	75
8.	Providing better job opportunities	70
9.	<b><u>Providing public library services</u></b>	<b>63</b>
10.	Providing affordable housing	61
11.	Redeveloping downtown	40

Within the City of Sacramento, “providing affordable housing” jumps ahead of “providing public library services,” in that ranking.

A potential weakness in voter support for new library taxes is revealed by the “dissatisfaction index” reflected in the poll. This is a measure of the difference between voter priorities and how satisfied they are with a particular service or issue. The higher the negative number, the higher the dissatisfaction and, thus, the voters’ likely willingness to support new funding. Low negative and positive numbers suggest that voters are satisfied and unlikely to want to take significant steps to change things.

Virtually throughout the county, voters are most concerned about “spending tax dollars efficiently,” public schools and traffic congestion. Libraries fall far down the list in both the City of Sacramento and the rest of the county, as well as in the combined ranking:

1.	Spending tax dollars efficiently	-73
2.	Improving public schools	-64
3.	Reducing traffic congestion	-61
4.	Keeping taxes at affordable levels	-42
5.	Managing growth and development	-40
6.	Maintaining streets and roads	-35
7.	Providing better job opportunities	-31
8.	Providing affordable housing	-27
9.	Providing fire and paramedic services	-13
10.	<b><u>Providing public library services</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
11.	Redeveloping downtown	15

The final question presented to measure initial voter support for libraries was a hypothetical suggestion that elected officials may place a measure on the ballot asking voters if they wish to increase their local taxes to pay to enhance community services. Asked if they would respond favorably or unfavorably to a series of 15 priorities, **55 percent of voters said they would respond favorably to increasing taxes to pay for improved library services** – 11<sup>th</sup> out of 15 and well short of the two-thirds needed for passage of tax measures under law.

With a number of potential tax-related ballot measures facing voters in the March Primary Election and this November, this ranking suggests support for taxes for libraries would fall if voters are forced to choose among competing priorities.

1.	Providing fire and rescue services	80%
2.	Providing funding for child protective services	77
3.	Providing ambulance and paramedic services	76
4.	Improving public schools	74
5.	Maintaining and improving local streets and roads	74
6.	Increasing police and sheriff patrols	70
7.	Implementing crime prevention programs	69
8.	Increasing local water supply reliability	61
9.	Housing and social programs for low-income and elderly persons	61
10.	Health care for low-income and elderly persons	61
<b>11.</b>	<b><u>Improving public library services</u></b>	<b><u>55</u></b>
12.	Purchasing parkland and open space	45
13.	Providing cultural arts and entertainment	39
14.	Providing funding for American River Parkway improvements	36
15.	Sharing in the cost of building a sports stadium for a major Sacramento sport team	13

## Reaction to a Library Tax

Initially, voters were asked simply whether they would support or oppose a local tax measure to provide funding for local public library services. Their reaction was split, **50 percent YES, 44 percent NO**. Even in the City of Sacramento, which strongly supports its library system, the initial reaction was **54 percent YES, 37 percent NO**, again significantly short of the two-thirds needed for passage.

However, when the tax-support issue was described in greater detail, support in both in the City of Sacramento and in other areas increased sharply.

Voters were told the City of Sacramento already has a \$25 annual parcel assessment to support library services through 2006. Respondents were told "Library officials are considering placing a measure on the ballot next year that would extend this library tax for 10 more years and expand the tax to include all of Sacramento County. Knowing this, would you be willing to pay a parcel tax of \$25 a year to provide and improve public library services?"

Armed with the additional information, **overall voter support rose to 71 percent, opposition dropped to 27 percent** – an unusually wide shift in attitude. Support in the City of Sacramento went to 80 percent. Unincorporated area and Folsom voters now gave 68 percent support and Citrus Heights voters provided 72 percent support. Only in Rancho Cordova (60 percent) and Elk Grove (53 percent) did support fall below two-thirds. In addition strong support (44 percent) was more than double the strong opposition (19 percent), another significant indicator of potential voter approval.

## Support for Specific Library Services

Respondents were presented with a series of library programs and services that could be provided by funds from a library tax. They were asked to give a high, medium or low priority to each of 21 specific services. Their choices dramatically reflected commitment to programs for children, teens and seniors and for basic demands for more books and hours of operation. Ranked according to the percent giving "high priority" were:

1.	Providing special children's activities such as summer reading programs and story time	66%
2.	Providing homework and after-school programs	64
3.	Providing programs to teach adults to read	59
4.	Purchasing new books and other print materials	56
5.	Providing programs and materials for teens	55
6.	Increasing the hours your library is open	53
7.	Providing online access to library resources and services from home, school or work	51
8.	Providing information for seniors regarding retirement, health care and finances	48
9.	Constructing new libraries in under-served areas	44
10.	Expanding and renovating existing libraries	37
11.	Providing computers and online services	36
12.	Providing a technology center where librarians help people find Internet information	35
13.	Providing high-speed internet access	34
14.	Purchasing audio books and videos	31
15.	Supporting book clubs	31
16.	Providing better access to libraries for community meetings and programs	30
17.	Providing materials that reflect your community's cultural diversity	25
18.	Providing books and programs in different languages	20
19.	Providing cultural events such as concerts and poetry readings	18
20.	Providing cafes and lounges to make libraries better places to read and relax	13
21.	Delivering books, videos, DVDs and other requested material to your home or office	11

Asked their view if those services were included in an expenditure plan, **79 percent countywide said they would support, 20 percent said they would oppose a measure to impose a \$25 annual parcel tax for libraries.** Strong support climbed to 51 percent (from 44 percent earlier in the poll), strong opposition dropped to 13 percent (from 19 percent earlier).

*These numbers strongly suggest that if a library measure is placed on the ballot, it would have its best chance for passage if it includes a specific expenditure plan itemizing the services to be provided.*

### Pro and Con Arguments

Voters were presented a series of arguments that might be used for and against a measure should it ever be placed on the ballot. Those arguments had little impact on voter sentiments for the library parcel tax, suggesting again that voters will base their judgments on what specific services or programs they believe will be financed by a tax measure.

#### Support After "Pro" Arguments

76% YES  
23 NO

#### Support After "Con" Arguments

75% YES  
23 NO

### Support for Potential Levels of Taxation

Respondents were asked at two points in the poll to indicate which level of tax support they would be willing to support – \$15 a year, \$20, \$25 or \$30. The first presentation was early on, before any explanation of a possible tax measure. The second question on potential levels of taxation came after potential arguments for and against the measure.

	First Time Asked	Second Time Asked
\$15 -	69%	77%
\$20 -	54	68
\$25 -	46	65
\$30 -	40	43

Support was four percentage points higher in the City of Sacramento on all measures. It was similarly higher in Folsom and Citrus Heights. These figures suggest that voter support for a library assessment would fall at about \$20 in the county and about \$25 in the Cities of Sacramento, Citrus Heights and Folsom.

By a two-to one margin, voters reject both the notion of annual increases in the library tax to keep pace with inflation and an alternative one-eighth-cent sales tax increase instead of a parcel tax.

Additionally, voters prefer a 10 year limit on the tax measure (66 per cent), with support falling for a 20-year term (52 percent) and 30 years (51 percent). While all sunset provisions get a majority, voters reject (66 percent oppose, 31 percent support) any suggestion of a permanent library tax.

### **Library Usage**

The survey also probed voters' use of the library:

- 76 percent said they or a member of their household has a library card.
- 15 percent said they or a member of their household had used the library in the past week.
- 22 percent said they or a member of their household had used the library in the past month.
- 34 percent said they or a member of their household had used the library in the past year.
- 25 percent said they or other household members access the library from work or home over the internet.
- 89 percent said Internet access at the library should be filtered to prevent children from going to certain Web sites.
- 70 percent said Internet access at the library should be filtered to prevent adults from going to certain Web sites.

Voters were asked to specify what they or household members use the libraries for. The findings:

1.	To conduct research for personal information	55
2.	To check out books for pleasure reading	53
3.	To use resources for homework and after-school programs	38
4.	To relax and read	30
5.	To conduct research for career development	27
6.	To attend a program or meeting	24
7.	To conduct research for business	23
8.	To participate in children's reading programs	23
9.	To read magazines or newspapers	21
10.	To check out videotapes, CDs, DVDs or audio books	20
11.	To use the Internet	16
12.	To research family genealogy or history	15

They also were asked what kind of job library officials and staff do. The responses are ranked here according to the percent who say the library does a "good job":

1.	Providing friendly service and staff to help you find what you're looking for	63
2.	Maintaining comfortable and inviting facilities	49
3.	Providing magazines and newspapers	41
4.	Maintaining hours that meet your needs	39
5.	Offering programs and resources for children	36
6.	Providing best-sellers and current releases	30
7.	Providing Internet access	30
8.	Offering programs and resources for seniors	24

Townsend Raimundo Besler & Usher is available to provide any additional detail you wish to review from more than 200 pages of polling data summarized here.