

September 23, 2026

Vernon Area Public Library District Ethics Commissioner

c/o Vernon Area Public Library District

300 Olde Half Day Road

Lincolnshire, Illinois 60069

Additional Recipients

Lake County State's Attorney

Illinois Attorney General

Dear Ethics Commissioner:

Re: Formal Ethics Complaint and Request for Investigation Concerning Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Voter Surveying, Message Testing, and Use of Public Resources

Main Complainant

Brian Costin, Deputy State Director

Americans for Prosperity

bcostin@afphq.org | 847-513-4326

Additional Complainants

Gilbert L. Adams, Lincolnshire, Illinois

Sue Baker, Lincolnshire, Illinois

Pat Tamney, Lincolnshire, Illinois

Robert Spielman, Lincolnshire, Illinois

John Fox, Bannockburn, Illinois

Rick Scardino, Long Grove, Illinois

I. Introduction

We submit this ethics complaint and Freedom of Information Act request seeking an investigation into whether the Vernon Area Public Library District, its trustees, officers, employees, agents, and/or district-paid consultants engaged in prohibited political activity, election interference, misuse of public resources, unlawful data practices, or official misconduct in connection with referendum-related polling and survey activity.

The District did not conduct an ordinary satisfaction survey. Its contractor studied a scientifically selected sample of 433 registered and recent general-election voters who were likely to vote in November 2026. The sample came from county voter databases and was weighted by community, age, gender, and partisan primary-voting history. The survey tested proposed ballot language, measured support and opposition, evaluated eight arguments described as reasons to support the referendum, evaluated seven reasons to oppose it, identified the most effective messages, measured movement after exposure to those messages, and produced cross-tabulations showing which voter groups were most supportive, opposed, or persuadable.

The results answered the precise political questions that the statutory definition of prohibited political activity places off limits when performed on compensated time or with public resources: what voters are likely to do, which messages change support, which demographic and partisan groups are most receptive,

and whether the proposed amount is politically viable. The District's own April 16 website post confirmed that the survey was limited to registered voters, used unique PINs, tested possible ballot wording, and sought feedback on the referendum's pros and cons. The contractor's report later showed that 57 percent initially supported the proposed question and that support fell to 51 percent after respondents heard competing arguments.

The post-notice timeline is especially serious. On May 19, 2026, I sent President Marc Fenton, the trustees, and Executive Director Anne Rasmussen a cease-and-desist demand that quoted the polling and voter-survey prohibitions. The survey nevertheless continued through May 26. On June 10, Rasmussen sent the topline results to trustees and scheduled a Committee of the Whole discussion with the pollster. In July, the contractor delivered a detailed report and sent a final voter-survey invoice that Rasmussen routed to accounts payable. On August 4, the Board voted to place the same \$39.5 million bond question on the November ballot.

The record therefore supports immediate investigation of who authorized the poll, who selected its questions and audience, what public funds were spent, what voter and patron data were used, what advice counsel provided, who received the full results, whether any campaign committee or referendum advocate obtained the intelligence, how the results affected the August 4 vote, and whether the District's current website and other communications remain neutral factual information or cross into publicly funded persuasion.

Respondents and Jurisdiction

The potential respondents include President Marc Fenton; trustees Jonathan Passman, George Goldstein, Gayathri Kalyanaraman, Violeta Flemenbaum, Nathan Libbey, and Samira Qureshi; Executive Director Anne Rasmussen; communications, finance, information-technology, and administrative staff; aQity Research and Insights Inc.; and any attorney, consultant, contractor, vendor, or agent who authorized, designed, funded, conducted, analyzed, presented, distributed, or used the challenged activity. Naming a person here is not a finding of individual liability. The investigation must determine each person's knowledge, role, intent, and use of public time or resources.

The State Officials and Employees Ethics Act requires each local governmental entity to adopt an ordinance or resolution regulating officers and employees in a manner no less restrictive than Section 5-15 and Article 10. For Article 70, an officer includes an elected or appointed official whether compensated or not, and an employee includes a contractual employee. The District therefore cannot avoid review because trustees are unpaid or because the polling work was assigned to a private contractor.

II. Applicable Law

Local Government Ethics Requirements

Section 70-5 of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act requires each governmental entity to adopt an ordinance or resolution regulating the political activities of its officers and employees in a manner no less restrictive than Section 5-15. 5 ILCS 430/70-5. The District must identify the exact ordinance, resolution, policy, enforcement mechanism, ethics officer, and complaint procedure that satisfy this mandate.

Section 5-15 prohibits intentional prohibited political activity during compensated time and intentional use of public property, resources, or employee services for prohibited political activity. 5 ILCS 430/5-15. The Act's definition of prohibited political activity includes, among other conduct:

- Planning, conducting, or participating in a public opinion poll for or against any referendum question.

- Surveying or gathering information from potential or actual voters to determine probable vote outcome for or against any referendum question.
- Preparing a document or report regarding anything of value intended as a campaign contribution.
- Preparing, distributing, or mailing campaign material for or against a referendum question.
- Soliciting votes, campaigning, or managing or working on a campaign for or against a referendum question.

The prohibitions are specific. A public body may ask residents what services they use or what facilities they need. The legal issue here is the District's decision to select registered likely voters, test actual ballot wording, measure support and opposition, test pro and anti messaging, identify partisan and demographic response differences, and calculate movement in probable vote outcome.

Election Code Restrictions on Public Funds

The Election Code provides that no public funds may be used to urge an elector to vote for or against a candidate or proposition or be appropriated for political or campaign purposes. It preserves the use of public funds to disseminate factual information about a proposition. 10 ILCS 5/9-25.1. A first violation is a Class B misdemeanor and a second or subsequent violation is a Class A misdemeanor. The distinction between factual information and advocacy requires review of the complete communication, context, timing, selection of facts, and use of taxpayer-funded research.

Library Records Confidentiality

The Library Records Confidentiality Act treats library registration and circulation records as confidential, and generally bars making information in those records available to the public, subject to narrow exceptions. It allows reasonable statistical reports only when no individual is identified. 75 ILCS 70/1. The present record proves that survey invitations used unique PINs and that the contractor sampled voter databases. It does not establish whether patron registration, circulation, cardholder, program-use, email, or other protected library records were disclosed or matched. That factual question requires investigation, preservation, and an audit of all data transfers and lookup tables.

Official Misconduct Referral

Illinois law separately addresses official misconduct by a public officer or employee acting in an official capacity, including knowingly performing an act forbidden by law, intentionally or recklessly failing to perform a mandatory duty, or acting beyond lawful authority with the required intent. 720 ILCS 5/33-3. This complaint does not claim that the current record alone proves the required criminal intent. The May 19 notice and the continued collection, analysis, payment, and use of the polling evidence justify referral to authorities able to compel evidence and make that determination.

III. Factual Basis for Complaint

The District Authorized a Scientific Voter Survey

On April 16, 2026, the District published a post titled Community Survey Underway. It told registered voters that they might receive an email or postcard from aQity Research, confirmed that the survey was library-authorized, and said participation was important. The post stated that the Board was considering a \$39.5 million bond request. It also disclosed that every invitation had a unique PIN, that the survey tested wording that might appear on the ballot, and that feedback on the referendum's pros and cons would be used to understand priorities. The post asked recipients to help shape the future of the library. Exhibit A.

An April 18 Daily Herald report described the survey as a random sample of voters intended to help officials determine whether to proceed with the referendum. Its headline called the survey a means to

determine referendum feasibility. Exhibit B. That description is consistent with the District's own website and the contractor's later methodology report.

The Poll Used Voter Files and Partisan Voting History

The contractor's report states that the survey covered 433 registered and recent general-election voters within District boundaries who were likely to vote in the November 2026 election. Only persons who had voted in specified recent elections were randomly sampled from county databases, and only respondents reporting that they were likely to vote were retained. Data collection ran from April 20 through May 26. The final sample was weighted to align with the District electorate by geography, age, gender, and partisan voting behavior, including selection of Republican or Democratic primary ballots. Exhibit O at 3.

The report did not merely rely on voting history to obtain a representative resident sample. It repeatedly compared support, opposition, message effectiveness, and movement by Democratic primary voters, Republican primary voters, non-primary voters, community, age, gender, library usage, and likelihood of voting. Those cross-tabulations created political intelligence about the electorate and identifiable voter segments.

The Questionnaire Tested Ballot Language and Persuasion Messages

The survey performed each of the following functions:

- Presented proposed ballot language authorizing \$39.5 million in bonds and asked whether the respondent would support or oppose it.
- Tested eight pro-referendum statements and asked respondents to rate each as a reason to support the referendum.
- Asked respondents to identify the single strongest reason to support the referendum.
- Tested seven anti-referendum statements and asked respondents to rate each as a reason to oppose the referendum.
- Asked respondents to identify the strongest reason to oppose the referendum.
- Repeated the support-or-oppose question after the message tests to measure movement in probable vote outcome.
- Ranked proposed improvements to identify a politically acceptable scope.
- Produced cross-tabulations by partisan primary history and other voter characteristics.

The contractor described the supportive statements as pro-referendum statements and the opposing statements as anti-referendum statements. Its report identified the most convincing messages for each side and which voter groups responded most favorably. Exhibit O at 8-10, 29-49, and 50-54.

Illustrative Comparison to Candidate Polling

For example, assume an incumbent officeholder is deciding whether to seek reelection. The incumbent uses public funds to survey likely voters, first asking whether they would vote to reelect the incumbent. The survey then tests particular positive and negative arguments and asks the vote question again. The results tell the incumbent whether to run, which accomplishments or themes increase support, which criticisms cause support to fall, which voters are persuadable, and how to conduct the campaign. If the statutory elements were met, that would be readily recognized as taxpayer-funded campaign research, not a neutral inquiry into public sentiment.

Calling that candidate poll “community engagement” or “issue research” would not change the function or value of the work. It would provide campaign intelligence that a candidate would ordinarily purchase with campaign funds. The District’s referendum survey followed the same research architecture: it measured the initial vote, tested specific arguments for and against the proposition, measured the vote

again, identified which messages moved support, and analyzed the voter groups most receptive to each argument. Investigators should evaluate what the survey did and the campaign value of its work product, not merely the label placed on it.

The Poll Ranked Referendum Messages by Effectiveness

The poll produced more than a general measure of public sentiment. It ranked the precise arguments available to a referendum campaign and quantified how voters received each one. The contractor's summary table is reproduced below as Embedded Exhibit O-1.

Vernon Area Public Library		DRAFT		Summary: Key Findings	
Pro-Referendum Statements		% Excellent/Good Reason to Support	Anti-Referendum Statements	% Excellent/Good Reason to Oppose	
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).		52%	Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.	69%	
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live/protects and improves our property values.		51%	If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	68%	
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.		50%	With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	66%	
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.		49%	\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	63%	
Improvements include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.		48%	I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	46%	
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.		44%	I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	35%	
Improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.		44%	My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	29%	
Improvements include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.		44%			



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Embedded Exhibit O-1A. aQity Research ranked eight pro-referendum and seven anti-referendum messages by voter-rated effectiveness. Source: Exhibit O at 9.

The leading pro-referendum message was additional space for library programs and public meetings, rated an excellent or good reason to support by 52 percent. The property-values and desirable-community message received 51 percent; expanded children's spaces received 50 percent; the makerspace received 49 percent; and entrance, parking, and drop-off safety received 48 percent. The remaining pro-referendum messages each received 44 percent.

The four leading anti-referendum messages tested substantially higher. The statement that property taxes are already too high received 69 percent; the statement identifying the annual increase as \$32.74 per \$100,000 of home value and its effect on fixed-income residents received 68 percent; the inflation, interest-rate, and economic-uncertainty message received 66 percent; and the statement that \$39.5 million was too much and the plan should be scaled back received 63 percent. Exhibit O at 9 and 40-45.

The Poll Identified Which Messages Moved Which Voters

The report went further by connecting messages to changes in probable vote and to specific voter segments. Its voter-shift analysis is reproduced below.

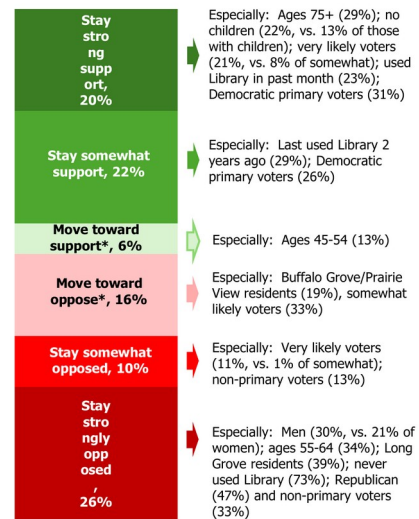
Most voters stayed with their initial position after reading the statements (very few change their mind).

- Overall, 6% shifted toward support/away from opposition (including 13% of those aged 45-54). The top pro-referendum statements cited by this relatively small group (n=25) are:
- **51%:** *This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.*
 - **17%:** *Having an excellent public library offering a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live and protects/improves property values.*
 - **15%:** *The improvements include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer/safer handicapped parking, and safer drop-off and pick-up area.*
- Nearly three times as many (16%) went the other way, moving toward opposition. The top anti-statements for this group (n=71) are clearly:
- **34%:** *Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.*
 - **25%:** *\$39.5 million is too much; the Library should scale back its plans, focus on most needed improvements, and come back with a lower, more affordable amount.*
 - **20%:** *If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.*



* Shifts include those moving toward the opposite response post-statements, or a different degree of support or opposition. For example, those moving from "strong support" pre-statement to "somewhat support" post-statement are included in the "move toward oppose" group.

Shifts in Pre-/Post-Statement Vote Questions



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Embedded Exhibit O-1B. The report identified the messages associated with movement toward support or opposition and the voter groups concentrated in each category. Source: Exhibit O at 53.

Among the 6 percent who moved toward support, 51 percent cited the first-request-since-1990 and crowded-building message, 17 percent cited the desirable-community and property-values message, and 15 percent cited entrance and parking safety. Among the 16 percent who moved toward opposition, 34 percent cited property taxes already being too high, 25 percent cited the \$39.5 million amount and a need to scale back, and 20 percent cited the stated tax impact on fixed-income residents. Exhibit O at 53.

The same analysis identified where those voters could be found. Movement toward support was especially concentrated among voters ages 45 to 54. Movement toward opposition was especially concentrated among Buffalo Grove and Prairie View residents and somewhat-likely voters. Strong opposition was associated with men, voters ages 55 to 64, Long Grove residents, people who had never used the Library, Republican primary voters, and non-primary voters. Strong support was associated with voters ages 75 and older, voters without children, very-likely voters, recent Library users, and Democratic primary voters. Exhibit O at 53.

These findings provide actionable campaign intelligence. They tell a referendum campaign which positive themes to lead with, which opposition arguments threaten support, which price and tax-impact facts are most damaging, where support is soft, which project elements are most saleable, and which geographic, demographic, partisan, and library-use groups are most receptive or resistant. A campaign could use the results to select messages, tailor mail and digital content, prepare rebuttals, target audiences, allocate resources, and decide whether to reduce the amount requested.

The District called the survey library-authorized, the director distributed the results to trustees, and the final voter-survey invoice was routed to accounts payable. The resulting work product is the type of political research a referendum campaign would otherwise have to purchase. The present record does not establish that the intelligence was transferred to an outside campaign or prove how each recipient used it. It does establish a substantial basis to investigate whether taxpayers financed campaign research or a thing of value intended for referendum advocacy. Exhibits A, J, O, O-1, and P.

The Poll Measured Probable Outcome and Voter Movement

Before the message tests, 57 percent of respondents supported the proposed ballot question and 43 percent opposed it. After respondents considered the pro and anti-statements, support fell to 51 percent and opposition rose to 49 percent. The report stated that 16 percent moved toward opposition while 6 percent moved toward support. It then identified the messages associated with those shifts and the voter groups in which movement was concentrated. Exhibits K and O.

The report also identified soft supporters, strong supporters, strong opponents, the relative effectiveness of each message, and the partisan and demographic groups most receptive to the arguments. That is direct evidence that the work was designed to determine probable vote outcome and message effectiveness, not simply to inventory facility needs.

The District Continued After Formal Notice

On May 19, I sent the Board and director a detailed cease-and-desist demand. It quoted the statutory definitions covering public opinion polls for or against a referendum, and voter surveys used to determine the probable outcome. It demanded that the District stop the survey, message testing, ballot-language testing, expenditure of public funds. Exhibit C.

The records show continued activity after that notice:

Date	Event	Evidence
May 19	Cease-and-desist demand delivered to the president, trustees, and director.	Exhibit C
May 26	Contractor's reported final day of voter-survey data collection.	Exhibits K and O
June 10	Director sent topline results to trustees and sought a meeting with the pollster.	Exhibits J and K
June 26	Director forwarded the draft survey-results report.	Exhibit N
July 10	Contractor sent the final voter-survey invoice; director routed it to accounts payable.	Exhibit P
July 24	Detailed report analyzed message effectiveness and voter segments.	Exhibit O
August 4	Board voted to place the same \$39.5 million question on the November ballot.	Exhibits S and U

The sequence raises questions beyond the initial decision to authorize a poll. Investigators must determine who decided to continue the survey after notice, who authorized additional analysis and payment, what legal advice was obtained, whether trustees used the results when voting on August 4, and whether anyone sought to conceal, minimize, or recharacterize the work after being warned.

The District Used Official Communications Before and After Ballot Placement

Before the Board acted, the District's website, fact sheets, presentations, feedback forms, and direct responses described the proposed project, tax impacts, benefits, and anticipated November timing. The website said the library was committed to exceptional stewardship, described proposed changes as

essential, emphasized that the request was the first in more than three decades, provided monthly tax-impact figures, and presented project benefits under official District branding. Exhibits D through I, L, M, and Q.

After the August 4 vote, the District announced that the question would appear on the November ballot and continued a dedicated Library Building Plan page. The current page states that public money is never used to advocate for a specific outcome, while presenting the claimed need, project benefits, cost, monthly tax impact, and the official ballot language. Exhibits S and T. Public entities may disseminate factual information, but investigators must evaluate the content, selection, timing, tone, omissions, and coordination of all communications as a whole, especially because the District possessed detailed message-effectiveness research.

IV. Alleged Violations

Count I: Prohibited Political Activity Through Public Opinion Polling

Potential responsible parties:

The trustees and employees who authorized or supervised the survey; Executive Director Anne Rasmussen; aQity Research; and any consultant, attorney, or agent who planned, conducted, reviewed, or used it.

Statutory violation language:

The definition of prohibited political activity includes planning, conducting, or participating in a public opinion poll for or against a referendum question. The District's local ethics rules must be no less restrictive than 5 ILCS 430/5-15.

Evidence supporting this count:

The District authorized a scientific poll of registered likely voters concerning the same \$39.5 million bond question later placed on the ballot. The poll measured initial support, opposition, message effectiveness, and post-message support. Exhibits A, K, and O.

Requested finding or investigation:

Determine who planned, authorized, funded, conducted, reviewed, and used the poll; whether those actions occurred during compensated time or with District resources; and whether each responsible person violated the District's ethics policy.

Count II: Surveying or Gathering Voter Information to Determine Probable Referendum Outcome

Potential responsible parties:

The same persons and entities identified in Count One, including anyone who selected the voter sample, supplied data, built weighting targets, analyzed cross-tabs, or used the outcome projections.

Statutory violation language:

Prohibited political activity includes surveying or gathering information from potential or actual voters to determine probable vote outcome for or against a referendum question.

Evidence supporting this count:

The survey selected registered recent voters likely to participate in November, used county voter databases, weighted partisan primary history, asked how respondents would vote, and measured how messages changed the result from 57 percent support to 51 percent. The report then identified voter segments and movement. Exhibit O at 3-10 and 50-54.

Requested finding or investigation:

Find that the record establishes a substantial basis for this count and determine each actor's participation and intent.

Count III: Use of Compensated Time and Public Resources for Prohibited Political Activity**Potential responsible parties:**

Board officers, supervisors, employees, finance staff, communications staff, and contractual employees or vendors who used District funds, email, websites, staff time, accounts-payable systems, meeting time, or other resources for the poll and resulting strategy.

Statutory violation language:

The required local ethics restrictions must bar intentional prohibited political activity on compensated time and intentional use of public property, resources, or employee services for prohibited political activity.

Evidence supporting this count:

The District publicly called the survey library authorized. The director transmitted results using District email, arranged Board discussion with the pollster, and routed the final bill to accounts payable. District websites and staff communications promoted participation and disseminated referendum information. Exhibits A, J, P, S, and T.

Requested finding or investigation:

Audit all expenditures, purchase approvals, time records, emails, meetings, website work, invoices, and consultant services. Determine whether public resources supported conduct charged in Counts One and Two.

Count IV: Use of Public Funds for Campaign Purposes or Referendum Advocacy**Potential responsible parties:**

Any person who authorized payment for polling, message testing, persuasion analysis, voter targeting, or communications intended to increase support for the proposition.

Statutory violation language:

10 ILCS 5/9-25.1 prohibits public funds from being used to urge electors for or against a proposition or being appropriated for political or campaign purposes, while allowing factual information.

Evidence supporting this count:

The survey evaluated the strongest reasons to support the referendum, the messages that moved voters, and the proposal's political viability. It ranked specific messages, identified the arguments associated with voter movement, and segmented the findings by geography, age, gender, partisan primary history, voting likelihood, and Library usage. The District later used official resources to present project benefits and tax-impact framing to voters. The current record does not establish the intent of every communication, but it requires review of whether public funds purchased campaign intelligence or persuasive material rather than neutral factual information. Exhibits O and O-1.

Requested finding or investigation:

Review the full contract, scope, invoice, work product, instructions, drafts, communications, and distribution list. Refer any supported Election Code violation to the Lake County State's Attorney.

Count V: Preparation or Distribution of Campaign Material and Referendum Campaigning

Potential responsible parties:

District communications staff, website administrators, trustees, employees, vendors, designers, printers, mail vendors, and consultants who prepared or distributed referendum-related content.

Statutory violation language:

The prohibited-activity definition includes preparing or distributing campaign material, soliciting votes, campaigning, and managing or working on a campaign for or against a referendum question.

Evidence supporting this count:

The District used its website, fact sheets, presentations, direct responses, tax calculator, email systems, and public statements before and after ballot placement. Some materials contain potentially persuasive framing, including claims of exceptional stewardship, statements that changes are essential, emphasis on a first funding request in more than three decades, monthly tax figures, and benefit-focused descriptions. Exhibits D-I, L-M, Q, S, and T.

Requested finding or investigation:

Examine each communication as a whole and determine whether it remained objective and factual or was prepared, selected, timed, or targeted to advance passage using insights from the poll.

Count VI: Preparation or Transfer of a Thing of Value for a Referendum Campaign

Potential responsible parties:

Any officer, employee, contractor, or agent who prepared or transferred polling results, message rankings, crosstabs, targeting information, reports, presentations, or strategic recommendations for use by a referendum committee or outside advocate.

Statutory violation language:

The definition of prohibited political activity includes preparing a document or report regarding anything of value intended as a campaign contribution.

Evidence supporting this count:

The polling report contains information a referendum campaign would otherwise have to purchase: the strongest pro and anti-messages, the arguments associated with movement, soft and strong support, partisan and geographic crosstabs, political viability, and voter movement. Embedded Exhibit O-1 shows the report's message rankings and the voters most receptive to those messages. The present record does not prove that the report was intended for or transferred to an outside campaign. It creates a duty to determine who received it and for what purpose.

Requested finding or investigation:

Identify every recipient, download, forward, presentation, oral briefing, data export, and communication with any political committee, foundation, friends' group, vendor, advocate, donor, or other outside person.

Count VII: Voter and Patron Data Confidentiality

Potential responsible parties:

Any person who selected or transferred voter, resident, household, patron, registration, circulation, library-card, email, phone, or service-use information and anyone who created or retained unique-PIN lookup tables.

Statutory violation language:

75 ILCS 70/1 protects registration and circulation information and permits statistical reporting only

without individual identification. Other District privacy policies, contractual duties, and data-security requirements may also apply.

Evidence supporting this count:

The District confirmed unique PINs for each invitation. The survey used county voter databases and collected library-usage information. The FOIA response states that responsive records concerning data sources and identifiers had been produced in response to an earlier request, but the supplied record does not conclusively show whether protected patron data were used. Exhibits A and R.

Requested finding or investigation:

Conduct a forensic data audit. Identify every source dataset, field, match key, unique identifier, vendor subprocessor, retention period, and disclosure. Determine whether any protected patron record was made available without lawful authority.

Count VIII: Post-Notice Conduct and Possible Official Misconduct

Potential responsible parties:

Any officer or employee who, after receiving the May 19 notice, knowingly directed continued polling, receipt or use of results, payment, concealment, destruction, or use of unlawful campaign intelligence.

Statutory violation language:

720 ILCS 5/33-3 applies only if the statutory elements and required mental state are proved. The Board should not make criminal findings but must preserve and refer evidence when facts support review.

Evidence supporting this count:

Survey data collection continued after May 19; the director sent the results to trustees; a detailed report was produced; the final invoice was processed; and the Board placed the question on the ballot. The notice quoted the relevant restrictions and demanded an immediate stop. Exhibits C, J, K, N-P, S, and U.

Requested finding or investigation:

Refer the matter to the Lake County State's Attorney and Illinois Attorney General for independent review of intent, authority, mandatory duties, and any criminal or civil remedy.

V. FOIA Request and Document Preservation Demand

Pursuant to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140/1 et seq., I request that the Vernon Area Public Library District produce all public records from January 1, 2025, through the date of production relating to the proposed November 2026 bond referendum, aQity Research, polling, voter surveys, community engagement, message testing, tax-impact testing, ballot language, project scope, voter or patron data, and referendum communications.

This request includes records created, sent, received, modified, reviewed, approved, or maintained by the District, its trustees, officers, employees, agents, attorneys, consultants, vendors, and contractors. It includes public-business records maintained on personal devices, private accounts, text-message systems, cloud storage, survey platforms, or other third-party systems.

Requested Records

1. Contracts, procurement, and payment records

All proposals, bids, scopes of work, contracts, amendments, purchase orders, invoices, payment records, check records, budget coding, purchasing approvals, and Board approvals involving aQity Research or any referendum-related consultant, pollster, data vendor, communications firm, architect, bond professional, mail vendor, public-affairs firm, or law firm.

2. Communications with aQity Research

All emails, texts, letters, meeting invitations, notes, memoranda, attachments, and other communications between aQity Research and any trustee, officer, employee, attorney, consultant, vendor, or agent of the District.

3. Survey instruments and methodology

Every draft and final questionnaire, script, invitation, postcard, email, landing page, ballot-language test, pro-referendum statement, anti-referendum statement, methodology memorandum, sample plan, weighting plan, quota, disposition report, and fieldwork record.

4. Voter, resident, household, and patron data

All voter files, county voter databases, partisan-primary history, household files, property records, patron registration or circulation data, email and telephone lists, append files, match tables, unique-PIN tables, lookup keys, data dictionaries, transfer logs, data-use agreements, security reviews, retention instructions, and deletion records.

5. Results and analysis

All topline, cross-tabulations, dashboards, raw response data, open-ended responses, respondent-level files, presentations, drafts, reports, analyses, recommendations, recordings, notes, and oral or written briefings concerning support, opposition, probable outcome, message effectiveness, voter movement, project priorities, tax tolerance, or voter segments.

6. Referendum strategy and decision records

All records showing how polling or survey results affected the \$39.5 million amount, project scope, tax impact, timing, ballot language, the August 4 ballot-placement decision, communications strategy, public statements, or any decision to proceed, delay, revise, or abandon a referendum.

7. Public communications and drafts

All drafts and final versions of referendum-related website pages, fact sheets, FAQs, tax calculators, presentations, videos, mailers, postcards, newsletters, emails, social-media posts, press materials, speeches, talking points, graphics, and scripts, including metadata and approval history.

8. Board and administrative records

All Board packets, agendas, minutes, recordings, presentations, memoranda, executive updates, committee records, calendars, meeting notes, and communications concerning the building plan, survey, referendum, polling results, legal compliance, or public communications.

9. Staff time and public resources

All records showing staff assignments, compensated time, overtime, meeting participation, use of District email, websites, equipment, software, facilities, printing, postage, mailing systems, accounts-payable systems, or other public resources for the activities addressed in this complaint.

10. Coordination and distribution

All communications with any political committee, friends' group, foundation, advocacy organization, union, campaign, donor, contractor, architect, bond professional, community group, or other outside person concerning the referendum or the receipt, use, discussion, or distribution of polling results or message-testing intelligence.

11. Legal, ethics, insurance, and compliance records

All non-privileged legal or ethics analyses, compliance reviews, training records, conflict disclosures, risk assessments, insurance notices, internal complaints, investigative records, and guidance concerning polling, public resources, Election Code compliance, local ethics requirements, patron confidentiality, FOIA, records retention, or official misconduct.

12. Retention and search records

All preservation notices, litigation holds, deletion suspensions, custodians searched, systems searched, search terms, collection logs, export logs, audit logs, and records explaining any missing, withheld, deleted, destroyed, or unavailable responsive material.

Search Terms

Please search, at minimum, the following terms: aQity; aQity Research; referendum; bond; \$39.5 million; \$39,500,000; poll; polling; survey; public opinion; registered voters; likely voters; voter file; voter history; Republican primary; Democratic primary; probable vote; support; oppose; message testing; persuasion; pro-referendum; anti-referendum; tax impact; ballot language; cross-tabs; topline; raw data; unique PIN; patron; library card; community engagement; campaign; political activity; and cease and desist.

Custodians to Search

Please search the records of all trustees serving during the requested period; President Marc Fenton; Executive Director Anne Rasmussen; the Board secretary; finance, communications, information-technology, facilities, and accounts-payable personnel; legal counsel; and every employee, consultant, or vendor who communicated with aQity Research or worked on the building plan, survey, or referendum.

Format of Production

Please produce responsive records electronically in native format where available, with attachments and metadata preserved. Please produce spreadsheets and data files in their original formats rather than flattened PDFs. Identify the legal basis for each withholding or redaction.

Request for Waiver of Fees

I request a waiver of copying, search, and production fees because disclosure is in the public interest and is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations, referendum spending, use of public resources, and compliance with election and ethics laws. This request is not primarily commercial.

Request for Rolling Production

Please produce available records on a rolling basis rather than delaying production until every search and review is complete.

Investigative Questions

The investigation should answer at least the following questions:

1. Who first proposed polling registered voters, and who approved aQity Research, the scope of work, survey instrument, sample, budget, and payment?
2. What was the total amount obligated and paid, from which account, and under what purchasing authority and Board action?
3. Who drafted, edited, or approved the ballot language and each pro-referendum and anti-referendum message?
4. Why were registered likely voters selected instead of residents or patrons, and why were past Republican and Democratic primary ballots used in weighting and analysis?
5. What voter-file, commercial, patron, taxpayer, household, email, phone, and library datasets were obtained, matched, appended, or transferred?

6. What did each unique PIN identify, and can any response be connected to a person, household, voter record, or patron record?
7. Who received the topline, full report, raw data, crosstabs, open-ended answers, presentations, recommendations, and respondent-level records?
8. Did any political committee, friends' group, foundation, contractor, advocate, donor, architect, bond professional, or other outside person receive or use the results?
9. What actions followed the May 19 notice, what advice was sought, and who decided to continue collection, analysis, payment, and use?
10. What role did the polling results play in selecting \$39.5 million, determining project scope, drafting ballot language, preparing communications, or the August 4 vote?
11. Were referendum communications tested against the poll's message rankings or targeted to voter segments identified in the report?
12. Did any officer, employee, or contractual employee perform prohibited political activity during compensated time or with District resources?
13. Does the District have a compliant ethics ordinance, annual training program, designated enforcement body, complaint procedure, recusal rules, and records of training?
14. Were relevant decisions made in compliance with purchasing rules, the Open Meetings Act, record-retention duties, and Board policies?

Preservation Demand

The District and every recipient of this complaint must preserve all records potentially relevant to the allegations. This includes contracts, proposals, invoices, payment records, purchase approvals, survey drafts, questionnaires, scripts, invitations, postcards, mailing lists, voter files, patron records, PIN tables, URLs, QR codes, lookup tables, raw data, metadata, cross-tabs, open-ended responses, reports, presentations, recommendations, meeting notes, calendars, emails, text messages, collaboration platforms, website revisions, social-media drafts, analytics, legal advice, Board packets, personal-device communications concerning public business, and communications with any campaign committee, advocate, foundation, friends group, bond professional, architect, vendor, or consultant. Preservation should include deleted records, version history, audit logs, backups, and vendor-held copies.

VI. Requested Relief

1. Acknowledge this complaint in writing and identify the ordinance, policy, ethics officer, commission, or other body with jurisdiction.
2. Preserve all paper and electronic evidence, including personal-device and personal-account records used for public business, vendor systems, raw data, audit logs, deleted items, and backups.
3. Retain independent outside counsel or an investigator who did not advise on, approve, defend, or participate in the referendum, polling, FOIA response, or challenged communications.
4. Require every trustee, employee, attorney, or vendor with a conflict or prior involvement to recuse from deciding the complaint or directing the investigation.
5. Suspend any further taxpayer-funded polling, message testing, voter targeting, persuasion research, or use or transfer of the existing results while the complaint is pending.
6. Secure the raw data and respondent identifiers and prevent access or disclosure except as necessary for a lawful independent investigation.

7. Determine whether the August 4 ballot decision relied on prohibited polling and obtain immediate independent advice on any corrective action legally available before the election.
8. Review all live and planned referendum communications for objective factual neutrality and stop any material that urges, campaigns, targets, or uses poll-tested persuasion.
9. Refer supported Election Code and official-misconduct issues to Lake County State's Attorney Eric F. Rinehart and request review by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, including guidance on the local-government application of the prohibited-political-activity provisions.
10. Issue written findings identifying the evidence reviewed, witnesses interviewed, persons responsible, policy provisions applied, conclusions reached, corrective action ordered, and referrals made.
11. Present the findings and proposed corrective action at an open Board meeting, subject only to lawful confidentiality requirements.
12. Do not permit the District to dismiss the complaint solely on the ground that it may police itself, that the polling occurred before formal ballot placement, or that the survey tested arguments on both sides. Those are legal positions that should be reviewed by independent authorities, not treated as exceptions written into the statute.

VII. Conclusion

The District's records establish a substantial factual basis for an independent ethics investigation. The survey was aimed at registered likely voters, used voter history, tested ballot language and persuasion arguments, measured probable outcome, identified voter segments, and was followed by a Board decision to place the same \$39.5 million question on the ballot. The District continued to collect, analyze, pay for, and use the work after receiving detailed notice of the legal restrictions.

Local governments cannot create an exception to the State Ethics Act by labeling referendum polling community engagement or by testing both supportive and opposing messages. The Board should not ask the officials and attorneys involved in the challenged conduct to judge their own work. It should order a genuinely independent investigation and request review by the Lake County State's Attorney and Illinois Attorney General. Failure to investigate this documented conduct would undermine the District's own claim that public money is never used to influence an election outcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Costin

Deputy State Director
Americans for Prosperity - Illinois

bcostin@afphq.org

847-513-4326

cc: Vernon Area Public Library District Board of Trustees; Executive Director Anne Rasmussen; Illinois State Board of Elections; Illinois Attorney General, Public Integrity Bureau; Lake County State's Attorney

Enclosures: Exhibits A through U, including Embedded Exhibit O-1

Exhibit Index

Exhibit	Description	Public link
A	Community Survey Underway, District website, April 16, 2026	Open source
B	Daily Herald, Critical decision point Vernon Area Public Library District to survey voters to determine referendum feasibility, April 18, 2026	Open source
C	Cease and Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer Funded Referendum Polling Message Testing and Voter Identifiable Survey Data, May 19, 2026	Attached record
D	Website BuildingProject archive, May 19, 2026	Attached record
E	2026 Building Plan Quick Facts, May 19, 2026	Attached record
F	Referendum 2026 feedback form communication, May 25, 2026	Attached record
G	District email responding to November referendum question, May 27, 2026	Attached record
H	Website BuildingProject archive, June 4, 2026	Attached record
I	District fact sheet, June 5, 2026	Attached record
J	Executive Director email to trustees transmitting topline results, June 10, 2026	Attached record
K	aQity Research Initial Takeaways from VAPLD Survey, June 10, 2026	Attached record
L	Website BuildingProject archive, June 11, 2026	Attached record
M	Potential Plan Slideshow, June 18, 2026	Attached record
N	Executive Director forwarded draft survey results, June 26, 2026	Attached record
O	aQity Research Survey Results for Vernon Area Public Library District draft, July 2026	Attached record
O-1	Embedded excerpts from aQity Research Survey Results showing message effectiveness and voter-shift intelligence, report pages 9 and 53	Attached record
P	Final voter survey invoice and accounts payable email, July 10, 2026	Attached record
Q	Website BuildingProject complete archive, July 24, 2026	Attached record
R	District FOIA response to Brian Costin, August 7, 2026	Attached record
S	District announcement Board Votes to Add Referendum Question to Fall Ballot, August 5, 2026	Open source
T	Current District Library Building Plan page	Open source
U	Daily Herald, Vernon Area Public Library expansion plan headed to ballot, August 6, 2026	Open source

Legal Authorities and Public Sources

1. [State Officials and Employees Ethics Act definitions and prohibited political activity, 5 ILCS 430/1-5](#)
2. [Prohibited political activities, 5 ILCS 430/5-15](#)
3. [Adoption by governmental entities, 5 ILCS 430/70-5](#)
4. [Election interference, 10 ILCS 5/9-25.1](#)
5. [Library Records Confidentiality Act, 75 ILCS 70/1](#)

6. [Official misconduct, 720 ILCS 5/33-3](#)
7. [Vernon Area Public Library District Board of Trustees](#)
8. [Lake County State's Attorney directory](#)
9. [Office of the Illinois Attorney General](#)

Supporting Records

Consolidated exhibit volume

This volume consolidates every source file supplied with the complaint. Open-source webpages and statutes cited in the complaint remain accessible through the complaint's embedded hyperlinks.

Exhibit C	Cease-and-Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data — May 19, 2026	6 pages
Exhibit C-1	Presentation Supporting the Cease-and-Desist Demand	7 pages
Exhibit D	Building Project Website Archive — May 19, 2026	10 pages
Exhibit E	2026 Building Plan Quick Facts — May 19, 2026	3 pages
Exhibit F	Referendum 2026 Feedback Form Communication — May 25, 2026	1 page
Exhibit G	District Email Responding to November Referendum Question — May 27-28, 2026	1 page
Exhibit H	Building Project Website Archive — June 4, 2026	10 pages
Exhibit I	District Fact Sheet — June 5, 2026	2 pages
Exhibit J	Executive Director Email Transmitting Topline Survey Results — June 10, 2026	1 page
Exhibit K	aQity Research Initial Takeaways from VAPLD Survey — June 10, 2026	3 pages
Exhibit L	Building Project Website Archive — June 11, 2026	10 pages
Exhibit M	Potential Plan Slideshow — June 18, 2026	13 pages
Exhibit N	Executive Director Email Forwarding Draft Survey Results — June 26, 2026	1 page
Exhibit O	aQity Research Survey Results for Vernon Area Public Library District — Draft	63 pages
Exhibit P	Final Voter Survey Invoice and Accounts-Payable Email — July 10, 2026	2 pages
Exhibit Q	Building Project Website Complete Archive — July 24, 2026	17 pages
Exhibit R	District FOIA Response to Brian Costin — August 7, 2026	4 pages

Exhibit C

Cease-and-Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data — May 19, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Cease and Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data

From Brian Costin <BCostin@afphq.org>

Date Tue 5/19/2026 3:33 PM

To foia@VAPLD.info <foia@VAPLD.info>; director@vapld.info <director@vapld.info>

Cc nlibbey@vapld.info <nlibbey@vapld.info>; ggoldstein@vapld.info <ggoldstein@vapld.info>; marc.fenton@vapld.info <marc.fenton@vapld.info>; jonathan.passman@vapld.info <jonathan.passman@vapld.info>; gayathri.kalyanaraman@vapld.info <gayathri.kalyanaraman@vapld.info>; bisabel@vapld.info <bisabel@vapld.info>; ben.isabel@vapld.info <ben.isabel@vapld.info>; violeta.flemenbaum@vapld.info <violeta.flemenbaum@vapld.info>; george.goldstein@vapld.info <george.goldstein@vapld.info>; nathan.libbey@vapld.info <nathan.libbey@vapld.info>; vflemenbaum@vapld.info <vflemenbaum@vapld.info>; gkalyanaraman@vapld.info <gkalyanaraman@vapld.info>; jpassman@vapld.info <jpassman@vapld.info>; mfenton@vapld.info <mfenton@vapld.info>

Re: Cease and Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data

Dear President Fenton, Members of the Board of Trustees, and Director Rasmussen:

I write to demand that the Vernon Area Public Library District immediately cease and desist from using public funds, public resources, public staff time, contractors, vendors, communications platforms, voter data, or any other Library District resources to conduct polling, voter research, message testing, ballot-language testing, or campaign-style research related to a potential referendum.

Per a Daily Herald article dated April 18, 2026 entitled "['Critical decision point': Vernon Area Public Library District to survey voters to determine referendum feasibility](#)", The Library District has publicly acknowledged that registered voters in the Vernon Area Public Library District may receive an email or postcard from aQity Research and that the Library authorized the survey. The Library further instructed residents "If you are a **registered voter** in the Vernon Area Public Library District, you may soon receive an email or postcard from aQity Research. We want to confirm: Yes, this is a legitimate, library-authorized survey, and your participation is important."

Public reporting states that a random sample of voters will be surveyed to help officials determine whether to proceed with a **\$39.5 million referendum question**, that voters will be contacted by email and postal mail by **aQity Research and Insights Inc.**, and that the survey results will be presented to the Library Board and play a decisive role in determining the scope of any ballot request.

The legal concern is heightened because the survey reportedly does far more than ask neutral facility-planning questions. The survey includes message testing on arguments **in support of and in opposition to** the referendum, tests the **scope, size, and potential dollar amount** of the referendum, and uses or collects **personally identifiable voter information** through unique passwords or access codes sent to voters.

That type of activity is not ordinary public engagement. It is the functional equivalent of campaign research. Testing pro-referendum and anti-referendum arguments, measuring which messages move voters, identifying support and opposition levels, testing the size and scope of a proposed tax increase, and tying responses to identifiable voters or voter-file data are the types of political intelligence normally used to decide whether to place a measure on the ballot, how much money to ask for, what arguments to use, which voters to persuade, and how to structure a referendum campaign.

The Library District's use of postcards or survey invitations containing a unique password, access code, QR code, individualized URL, or similar respondent identifier further demonstrates that this is not anonymous community feedback. A unique password on a mailed survey can allow the vendor to connect a particular household, voter, mailing address, voter-file record, resident record, taxpayer record, patron record, or library-card-linked record to the individual's responses. If the survey also tests arguments for and against the referendum, measures support or opposition, tests the dollar amount or scope of the proposal, or evaluates probable vote outcome, then the Library District is not merely asking residents for feedback. It is using taxpayer resources to conduct voter-identifiable referendum research.

Separately, the [Library Records Confidentiality Act](#) makes library registration and circulation records confidential. The Library may not disclose patron-identifying registration or circulation information to a polling vendor, campaign consultant, or other third party unless authorized by law. Any use of unique passwords, identifiers, patron lists, circulation records, registration records, library-card-linked information, or patron-linked data to identify or track voter or patron survey responses should be immediately preserved, disclosed to the Board, and reviewed for compliance with 75 ILCS 70/1.

Illinois law requires local governmental entities to adopt ethics rules regulating political activity "in a manner no less restrictive" than Section 5-15 of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act and Article 10 of that Act.

Section 5-15 of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act prohibits public employees from intentionally performing prohibited political activity during compensated time and prohibits the misappropriation of public property or resources for prohibited political activity.

The Act's definition of "prohibited political activity" expressly includes referendum polling, voter surveys, and gathering information from voters to determine probable vote outcome.

The relevant [statutory passage](#) provides:

"Prohibited political activity" includes:

- (3)** Soliciting, planning the solicitation of, or preparing any document or report regarding any thing of value intended as a campaign contribution.
- (4)** Planning, conducting, or participating in a public opinion poll in connection with a campaign for elective office or on behalf of a political organization for political purposes or for or against any referendum question.
- (5)** Surveying or gathering information from potential or actual voters in an election to determine probable vote outcome in connection with a campaign for elective office or on behalf of a political organization for political purposes or for or against any referendum question.

The Library District's conduct appears to implicate item **(3)** first. If the Library District uses taxpayer funds to generate polling data, message-testing results, voter-targeting information, respondent-level data, cross-tabs, toplines, reports, presentations, analyses, or strategic recommendations that could be transmitted to, relied upon by, or used for the benefit of a future referendum committee or interested pro-referendum parties, those materials may constitute a thing of value intended as a campaign contribution.

Asking registered voters what messaging would cause them to support or oppose the referendum is intended to help interested parties determine which arguments are most persuasive, which opposition arguments are most damaging, which voter groups are movable, which proposal size is politically viable, and what strategy would be most likely to produce a successful referendum campaign. The survey does not have to expressly say "vote yes" to create value for a campaign. Campaign intelligence showing how to win a referendum is itself valuable information that a campaign committee would otherwise have to raise money to purchase.

The polling data, message-testing results, cross-tabs, voter-identifiable response data, and recommendations generated from this survey may therefore constitute a thing of value intended to benefit a future referendum

campaign. If the Library District, aQity Research, or any person acting on their behalf prepares a document, report, presentation, analysis, or dataset showing which messages are most likely to increase support, which arguments reduce opposition, which dollar amount is most viable, or which voters are most persuadable, that information could alert a potential campaign committee or interested pro-referendum parties to the messaging, targeting, and strategy most likely to produce a successful referendum campaign. That is precisely why item **(3)** is relevant: it prohibits soliciting, planning the solicitation of, or preparing any document or report regarding anything of value intended as a campaign contribution.

The Library District's conduct also appears to fall squarely within items **(4)** and **(5)**. The survey is not merely a general satisfaction survey or a neutral planning exercise. It is directed to registered voters, concerns a potential bond referendum, tests arguments in support of and opposition to the referendum, tests the size and scope of a potential ballot question, and appears to use unique passwords or identifiers capable of linking survey responses to individual voters or households.

The fact that the survey may test both supportive and opposing arguments does not cure the problem. Testing both sides is precisely how campaign consultants identify which messages persuade voters, which arguments are most damaging, which proposal is most politically viable, and which voters or households are most likely to support or oppose a referendum.

Public bodies may provide neutral factual information to the public. They may not use taxpayer resources to perform campaign research, test referendum viability, poll voters on a tax increase, gather probable vote-outcome information, or develop a referendum campaign strategy.

Penalties and Legal Consequences

Violations of prohibited political activity restrictions carry serious consequences. Under the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, prohibited political activity violations may constitute a **Class A misdemeanor**, subject to criminal penalties.

Each separate act may create a separate potential violation. Multiple counts may be implicated if public officials, employees, contractors, or agents separately planned, authorized, funded, conducted, transmitted, received, reviewed, or used referendum polling, message-testing results, voter-identifiable data, reports, presentations, cross-tabs, or recommendations. Multiple counts may also be implicated if separate prohibited acts occurred under different statutory categories, including preparing a report regarding a thing of value intended as a campaign contribution, conducting a public opinion poll for or against a referendum question, and surveying or gathering information from voters to determine probable vote outcome.

In addition, Illinois' official misconduct statute provides that a public officer or employee commits official misconduct when, in an official capacity, he or she intentionally or recklessly fails to perform a mandatory duty required by law, knowingly performs an act he or she knows is forbidden by law, performs an act in excess of lawful authority with intent to obtain a personal advantage for himself or another, or knowingly accepts an unauthorized fee or reward. A violation of the official misconduct statute results in forfeiture of office or employment and is a **Class 3 felony**. A Class 3 felony in Illinois is generally punishable by a term of imprisonment of **2 to 5 years**, plus any applicable fines, costs, restitution, probation, or other penalties authorized by law.

Multiple counts of official misconduct may also be implicated if separate official acts were knowingly performed in violation of law or in excess of lawful authority, including approval of public spending, execution or continuation of a vendor contract, disclosure or use of protected data, receipt or use of referendum campaign intelligence, or direction to transmit survey results after notice of potential illegality.

A felony conviction related to public service may also carry pension consequences. Under Illinois pension-forfeiture principles, the key inquiry is whether the felony relates to, arises out of, or is connected with the person's public service. Therefore, if a public official or employee were convicted of a service-related felony, including official misconduct tied to official duties, pension forfeiture may be implicated, subject to the applicable pension article and the facts of the conviction.

Accordingly, I demand that the Vernon Area Public Library District immediately comply with the following cease-and-desist demands and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Cease-and-Desist Demands

1. Cease all taxpayer-funded polling, voter surveying, message testing, ballot-language testing, and referendum feasibility research related to the proposed bond referendum.
2. Immediately halt any survey instrument or research project that tests arguments in support of or opposition to the proposed referendum.
3. Immediately halt any survey instrument or research project that tests the size, scope, dollar amount, timing, ballot language, or political viability of the proposed referendum.
4. Direct aQity Research and Insights Inc. and any other vendor, consultant, employee, or agent to suspend all work related to this survey or any substantially similar referendum-related polling.
5. Direct aQity Research and Insights Inc. not to transmit, deliver, summarize, present, or otherwise provide any survey results, topline, cross-tabs, memoranda, presentations, conclusions, recommendations, voter-level data, household-level data, respondent-level data, patron-level data, library-card-linked data, circulation-linked data, registration-linked data, or personally identifiable information to the Library District, its Board, staff, consultants, attorneys, or agents.
6. Direct aQity Research and any other contractor not to provide the Library District with any voter-level data, respondent-level data, patron-level data, personally identifiable information, voter-file matches, patron-list matches, library-card-linked matches, modeled support scores, persuasion scores, opposition scores, cross-tabs, or message-testing results.
7. Refrain from using, transferring, sharing, or relying upon any voter-level or respondent-level information obtained through the survey for any referendum-related decision, communication, campaign, or ballot-measure activity.
8. Refrain from using any results of the survey to determine whether to place a referendum on the ballot, how to word the referendum, how to message the referendum, or how to campaign for or against the referendum.
9. Place this matter on the agenda for the next Board meeting for public discussion, corrective action, and consideration of whether a violation of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act has occurred, whether official misconduct may have occurred, whether any contract with aQity Research should be suspended, terminated, or referred for legal review, and whether the matter should be referred to the appropriate ethics officer, ethics commission, State's Attorney, Attorney General, or other enforcement authority.
10. Provide written confirmation within five business days that the Library District has ceased the challenged activity, instructed aQity Research not to transmit survey results, and will not use taxpayer-funded voter polling, message testing, ballot-language testing, or voter-identifiable referendum research in connection with any proposed ballot question.

Preservation Demand

Please preserve all records related to this matter, including contracts, invoices, scopes of work, emails, survey instruments, scripts, draft survey questions, ballot-language tests, topline, cross-tabs, raw data, respondent data, voter-file data, resident lists, taxpayer lists, patron lists, library registration records, circulation records, library-card-linked information, unique-password tables, access-code tables, QR-code tables, personalized URL tables, household-ID tables, respondent-ID tables, tracking-code tables, data dictionaries, memoranda, reports, presentations, communications with Board members, communications with consultants or vendors, and all voter-level, household-level, respondent-level, patron-level, and library-card-linked records and metadata, including

respondent identifiers, mailing addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, demographic fields, turnout history, support/opposition scores, message responses, and any appended data.

Freedom of Information Act Request

This section is a request for public records under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140/1 et seq. Please produce the following records in electronic format, where available. This request includes records in the possession, custody, or control of the Library District, including records held by officers, employees, Board members, attorneys, consultants, contractors, vendors, or agents acting on behalf of the Library District.

1. **Vendor, contract, and payment records.** All vendor contracts, agreements, scopes of work, purchase orders, invoices, payment records, procurement records, board approvals, and legal review records related to aQity Research, the voter survey, referendum polling, message testing, ballot-language testing, voter research, patron research, or referendum feasibility research.
2. **Survey instruments and results.** The full survey instrument, draft survey questions, final survey questions, scripts, email invitations, postcards, website landing pages, ballot-language tests, materials shown to respondents, topline, cross-tabs, raw data, reports, memoranda, presentations, recommendations, and any oral or written summaries of survey results.
3. **Lists and data provided to the vendor.** All records identifying what voter, resident, taxpayer, household, mailing, patron, registration, circulation, library-card, or other lists or datasets were provided, made available, matched, appended, or disclosed to aQity Research or any other contractor, consultant, vendor, attorney, or agent.
4. **Unique passwords and tracking identifiers.** All records explaining, assigning, matching, or using unique passwords, access codes, QR codes, personalized URLs, household IDs, respondent IDs, voter-file IDs, patron IDs, library-card-linked IDs, tracking codes, lookup tables, data dictionaries, matching logic, metadata, or other individualized identifiers used in connection with the survey.
5. **Communications about referendum strategy and targeting.** All communications, including emails, text messages, memoranda, meeting notes, calendar invitations, presentations, and attachments, between or among Library Board members, Library staff, aQity Research, attorneys, consultants, vendors, campaign-related persons, or agents concerning referendum language, message testing, voter targeting, voter data, patron data, persuasion, likely voters, opposition arguments, support arguments, turnout, referendum amount, referendum scope, probable vote outcome, or referendum strategy.
6. **Ethics, confidentiality, privacy, and complaint-process records.** The Library District's ethics ordinance, ethics resolution, prohibited political activity policy, employee ethics handbook provisions, ethics officer or ethics commissioner information, ethics complaint process, complaint forms, complaint procedures, confidentiality policies, privacy policies, patron-data policies, Library Records Confidentiality Act policies, records-retention policies, and any rules implementing the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, the Library Records Confidentiality Act, or any local ethics complaint process.

If any portion of this request is denied, please cite the specific exemption claimed and release all reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If records are withheld in whole or in part, please provide a detailed factual basis for each withholding.

Please treat this FOIA request as a request made in the public interest and waive any fees, because the requested records concern the use of public resources, public funds, public contractors, and voter-identifiable data in connection with a potential tax increase referendum.

Please also treat this letter as a formal request for information necessary to submit any applicable ethics complaint to the proper Library District ethics officer, ethics commission, ethics commissioner, designated complaint recipient, or other responsible enforcement authority.

Please treat this letter as a formal demand to preserve evidence and cease any conduct that may violate Illinois law or the Library District's ethics obligations. Failure to comply may result in complaints to the appropriate oversight authorities, including but not limited to the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Bureau, the Lake County State's Attorney, the Illinois State Board of Elections, and any applicable local ethics officer, ethics commission, inspector general, or pension authority.

Sincerely,

Brian Costin

Deputy State Director

Americans for Prosperity – Illinois

bcostin@afphq.org

847-513-4326

Please forward this correspondence to each member of the Vernon Area Public Library District Board of Trustees, the Library District's FOIA Officer, ethics officer, ethics commission or ethics commissioner, and any attorney or official responsible for reviewing prohibited political activity, official misconduct, patron confidentiality, or referendum-related compliance.

Exhibit C-1

Presentation Supporting the Cease-and-Desist Demand

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Converted from the supplied PowerPoint record.

Daily Herald: survey framed as referendum feasibility research



News

'Critical decision point': Vernon Area Public Library District to survey voters to determine referendum feasibility



PUBLIC REPORT

The article says the Library District planned to survey voters to determine referendum feasibility.

KEY CONCERN

A voter survey designed to test feasibility can produce campaign intelligence before a referendum is placed on the ballot.

QUESTIONS RAISED

Who paid for it? Who received the results? Were voter-identifiable records used, matched, or shared?

Library notice: registered voters were directed into the survey

Vernon Area
Public Library

Borrow Research Services Events &

Community Survey Underway

4/16/2026



Did you receive a survey in your inbox? We want to hear from you!

If you are a registered voter in the Vernon Area Public Library District, you may soon receive an email or postcard from **aQity Research**. We want to confirm: **Yes, this is a legitimate, library-authorized survey**, and your participation is important.

Why am I being contacted? The Library Board is considering a \$39.5 million

NOTICE LANGUAGE

"If you are a registered voter... you may soon receive an email or postcard from aQity Research."

LIBRARY AUTHORIZATION

The notice explicitly told recipients the survey was legitimate and library-authorized.

WHY IT MATTERS

When a public body directs registered voters into referendum-feasibility research, neutrality and use of public resources become central issues.

PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Selected items most relevant to referendum polling and advocacy

- 4** Planning, conducting or participating in a public opinion poll in connection with a campaign, political organization, or for or against any referendum question.
- 5** Surveying or gathering information from potential or actual voters to determine probable vote outcome in connection with a campaign, political organization, or for or against any referendum question.
- 11** Distributing, preparing for distribution, or mailing campaign literature, campaign signs, or other campaign material on behalf of a candidate or for or against any referendum question.
- 12** Campaigning for any elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- 13** Managing or working on a campaign for elective office or for or against any referendum question.

These items directly cover referendum polling, voter-outcome research, campaign literature, campaigning, and campaign work.

Cease-and-desist demand: stop taxpayer-funded referendum research



Outlook

Cease and Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data

From Brian Costin <BCostin@afphq.org>

Date Tue 5/19/2026 3:33 PM

To foia@VAPLD.info <foia@VAPLD.info>; director@vapld.info <director@vapld.info>

Cc nlibbey@vapld.info <nlibbey@vapld.info>; ggoldstein@vapld.info <ggoldstein@vapld.info>; marc.fenton@vapld.info <marc.fenton@vapld.info>; jonathan.passman@vapld.info <jonathan.passman@vapld.info>; gayathri.kalyanaraman@vapld.info <gayathri.kalyanaraman@vapld.info>; bisabel@vapld.info <bisabel@vapld.info>; ben.isabel@vapld.info <ben.isabel@vapld.info>; violeta.flemenbaum@vapld.info <violeta.flemenbaum@vapld.info>; george.goldstein@vapld.info <george.goldstein@vapld.info>; nathan.libbey@vapld.info <nathan.libbey@vapld.info>; vflemenbaum@vapld.info <vflemenbaum@vapld.info>; gkalyanaraman@vapld.info <gkalyanaraman@vapld.info>; jpssman@vapld.info <jpssman@vapld.info>; mfenton@vapld.info <mfenton@vapld.info>

Re: Cease and Desist Demand Regarding Taxpayer-Funded Referendum Polling, Message Testing, and Voter-Identifiable Survey Data

Dear President Fenton, Members of the Board of Trustees, and Director Rasmussen:

I write to demand that the Vernon Area Public Library District immediately cease and desist from using public funds, public resources, public staff time, contractors, vendors, communications platforms, voter data, or any other Library District resources to conduct polling, voter research, message testing, ballot-language testing, or campaign-style research related to a potential referendum.

Per a Daily Herald article dated April 18, 2026 entitled "[Critical decision point: Vernon Area Public Library District to survey voters to determine referendum feasibility](#)", The Library District has publicly acknowledged that registered voters in the Vernon Area Public Library District may receive an email or postcard from aQity Research and that the Library authorized the survey. The Library further instructed residents "If you are a **registered voter** in the Vernon Area Public Library District, you may soon receive an email or postcard from aQity Research. We want to confirm: Yes, this is a legitimate, library-authorized survey, and your participation is important."

Public reporting states that a random sample of voters will be surveyed to help officials determine whether to proceed with a **\$39.5 million referendum question**, that voters will be contacted by email and postal mail by **aQity Research and Insights Inc.**, and that the survey results will be presented to the Library Board and play a decisive role in determining the scope of any ballot request.

The legal concern is heightened because the survey reportedly does far more than ask neutral facility-planning questions. The survey includes message testing on arguments **in support of and in opposition** to the referendum, tests the **scope, size, and potential dollar amount** of the referendum, and uses or collects **personally identifiable voter information** through unique passwords or access codes sent to voters.

That type of activity is not ordinary public engagement. It is the functional equivalent of campaign research. Testing pro-referendum and anti-referendum arguments, measuring which messages move voters, identifying support and opposition levels, testing the size and scope of a proposed tax increase, and tying responses to identifiable voters or voter-file data are the types of political intelligence normally used to decide whether to place a measure on the ballot, how much money to ask for, what arguments to use, which voters to persuade, and how to structure a referendum campaign.

DEMAND

Stop using public funds, staff time, vendors, voter data, or government communications for referendum campaign-style research.

SPECIFIC CONCERN

The survey tested arguments in support of and opposition to the referendum, plus the scope, size, and potential dollar amount.

DATA CONCERN

Unique passwords, access codes, or individualized links can connect particular voters or households to survey responses.

The survey measured whether arguments moved referendum support

Vernon Area Public Library

DRAFT

Summary: Key Findings

At the time of the survey:

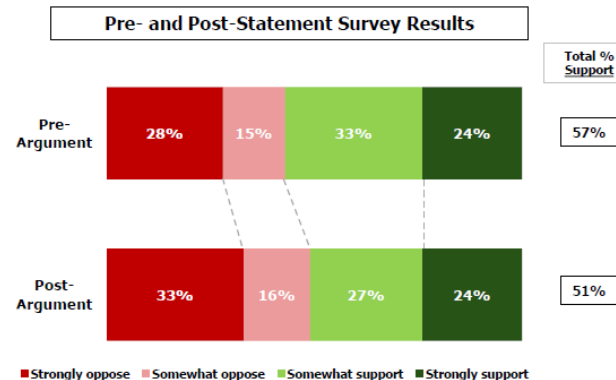
- Likely voters who are familiar with Vernon Area Public Library hold it in very high regard overall. Nearly nine in ten (87%) have a favorable opinion, including 57% who hold it in the highest regard (scores of 9+ on a 0-10 scale). Only 3% have a negative opinion overall. [< pg. 13 >](#)
- Its average 0-10 esteem rating is a very strong 8.3, and all voter segments have a favorable opinion overall (with no group averaging lower than a very positive 7.1 average score). Even non-users of the Library like it (giving an average rating of 7.7). [< pg. 13 >](#)
- About one in five (22%) report hearing or reading about a potential VAPLD referendum prior to the survey, mostly from recent Library visitors recalling information from the Library itself.

When testing a sample ballot question for a potential bond referendum, a majority initially support the question (57%). After hearing statements for both sides, support drops to 51%.

Shall the Vernon Area Public Library District, Lake County, Illinois, expand, renovate, repair and equip its facilities, including constructing a secure and accessible central entrance; establishing a community makerspace; expanding spaces for library programs and community group use; improving spaces for early childhood and teens; constructing individual study and collaborative workspaces and issue its bonds to the amount of \$39,500,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?

Initially, roughly equal numbers are "strong" opponents or "strong" supporters (28% and 24%, respectively). After learning more from both sets of statements, "strong" opposition increases to 33%, while "strong" support holds at 24%.

- Note that initial support tends to be relatively soft (more "not strong" supporters), while most of the opposition is "strong".



INITIAL BALLOT TEST

57% total support before statements.

AFTER ARGUMENTS

Support fell to 51% after respondents heard pro- and anti-referendum statements.

CAMPAIGN VALUE

The results identify which messages increase support, which reduce it, and how voters respond.

The report ranked the strongest pro- and anti-referendum messages

Vernon Area Public Library

DRAFT

Summary: Key Findings

Pro-Referendum Statements	% Excellent/Good Reason to Support	Anti-Referendum Statements	% Excellent/Good Reason to Oppose
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).	52%	Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.	69%
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live/protects and improves our property values.	51%	If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	68%
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.	50%	With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	66%
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.	49%	\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	63%
Improvements include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.	48%	I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	46%
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.	44%	I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	35%
Improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.	44%	My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	29%
Improvements include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.	44%		



9

Concern: taxpayer-funded message testing can create a roadmap for referendum campaign strategy.

Exhibit D

Building Project Website Archive — May 19, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.



Reimagining Our Library: A Space for Every Story

From a humble classroom to the current building, Vernon Area Public Library District spaces and buildings have evolved over our first half-century of service. As we look to the future, now is the time to reimagine space on our campus.

For more than two years, planning has been underway to evolve the library buildings and grounds, to provide desirable and sustainable public spaces for you to meet, study, collaborate, create, and play. We are excited to now share the Schematic Design for your consideration.

[REVIEW THE PLAN](#)



rendering of new centralized entrance.



Key features of the renovation include:

- **Dedicated Makerspace:** Hands-on STEM learning and creative tools.
- **10 Study Rooms:** Addressing skyrocketing demand for quiet workspace.
- **150-person Community Room:** A versatile space for large programs and public use.
- **Enhanced Children's Area:** A purpose-built room for our popular storytimes.
- **New HVAC, Lower Bills:** Modernizing the 30-year-old heating and cooling systems to lower energy consumption and improve air quality.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Including a more central entrance closer to parking.

Why is this project needed?

This project is the next step in the library's half-century journey of serving our community. While our current facility has served us well since 1993, both our population and the ways we use library resources have evolved beyond the building's original design.

Since the current building opened, we have seen a 30% increase in residents, our collections have grown by 63%, and attendance at our programs has more than doubled. The current facility was intended to meet community needs for 20 years; it is now more than 30 years old and demand regularly exceeds our capacity:

- **Space Shortages:** General seating is often unavailable during afternoons and evenings. Study rooms are in such high demand that use must be limited exclusively to cardholders.
- **Program Overflow:** Our beloved storytimes outgrew their dedicated room years ago and now occupy the main meeting room three mornings a week. Because our rooms are constantly full, we have been forced to stop offering space for community groups, recitals, and other local uses.
- **Evolving Expectations:** In 1993, a computerized catalog was a major innovation. Today, patrons expect purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Critical building systems, including the 33-year-old HVAC system, are at the end of their life. Additionally, parts of the campus predate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and require modernizing to ensure equal access for all residents.

After two years of community input, we have a proposed design that addresses these challenges. The plan adds 22,000 square feet of public space — resourcefully and sustainably achieving half of that by bringing the unused annex building back into code and connecting it to the main building.

Financial Stewardship

The library is committed to being exceptional stewards of your tax dollars. We have not requested funds for capital improvements since 1990.

Through careful long-term planning, the library expects to cover approximately 25% of the total project cost (\$13.5 million) through the library’s savings, existing budget, and federal incentives.

To fund the remainder, the library board is considering a \$39.5 million referendum on the November ballot to issue 20-year general obligation bonds. For a home worth \$500,000, the estimated tax impact over the life of these bonds is approximately \$164 per year — about \$13.64 per month.

Estimated Tax Impact Calculator

Fair Market Value of Home

\$500,000

For purposes of this property tax impact estimator, use the fair market value from your property tax bill. Visit Lake County Property Tax Inquiry to locate this information.

Exemptions

Select applicable exemptions to more accurately estimate the tax impact for your situation.

- ☒ General Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Senior Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Returning Veteran's Exemption
- ☐ Disability (HEPD)

Equalized Assessed Value \$166,667

This value is used to determine property tax impact. EAV is ⅓ of Fair Market Value.

Property Tax Exemptions \$-8,000

Net Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) \$158,667

Annual Tax Impact
\$155.85

Annual impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Monthly Tax Impact
\$12.99

Monthly impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Property taxes are based on your home's value as determined by the assessor. You can visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information for your home.

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why do we need a building project? The library is in nice shape! —

Simply put, we have outgrown our current space. Our main building was constructed in 1993 and designed to meet the community's needs for 20 years. It is now over 30 years old, and daily use far exceeds what it was originally built to handle.

The way our community uses the library has fundamentally shifted. Beyond traditional library use and checkouts, modern libraries are expected to provide purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection.

Our neighboring libraries are able to offer their patrons a makerspace for hands-on learning and creation, ample spaces for both group collaboration and individual focus, and an expanded youth space for imaginative play and exploration — things we simply do not have the room to provide.

Our goal is to ensure that Vernon Area Public Library continues to meet the evolving needs of our community. Over the past several years, we have conducted extensive community research and conceptual planning to identify gaps in our current facilities. This plan addresses critical updates, structural needs, and expanded services that our current space cannot accommodate.

How much has library usage grown since the current building opened? +

What specific space shortages is the library currently facing? +

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change? +

Didn't the library just do a renovation recently? +

About Finances and the Ballot

How much will this increase my property tax bill?	+
Is any of this money going toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What happens if the building plan does not pass?	+
When will this be on the ballot?	+
What will the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Online Feedback

What do you think? Do the plans successfully address the priorities that the public has identified? Is there anything we missed? What do you like best? What is most important to you?

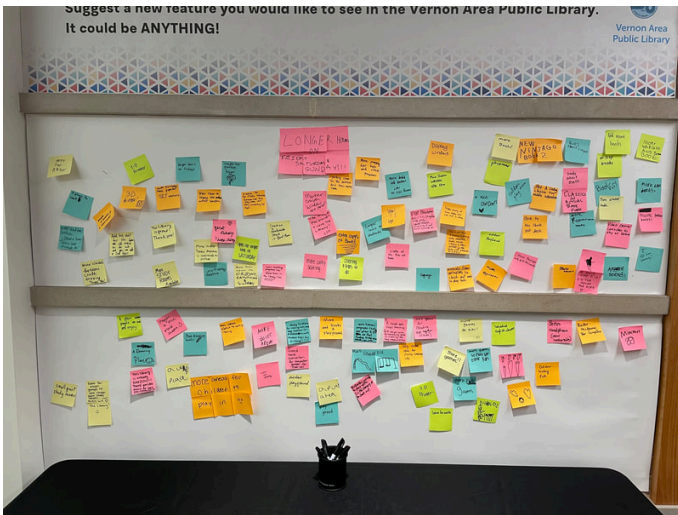
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Past Feedback Events

A look at previous public and staff feedback sessions.













Stay Informed

Updates will be posted to this webpage as they are available. To receive email with news and to potentially be invited to small-group feedback sessions, sign up using the link below.

[SIGN UP FOR UPDATES](#)

Location

Vernon Area Public Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069

[View Map](#)

847-634-3650

Exhibit E

2026 Building Plan Quick Facts — May 19, 2026

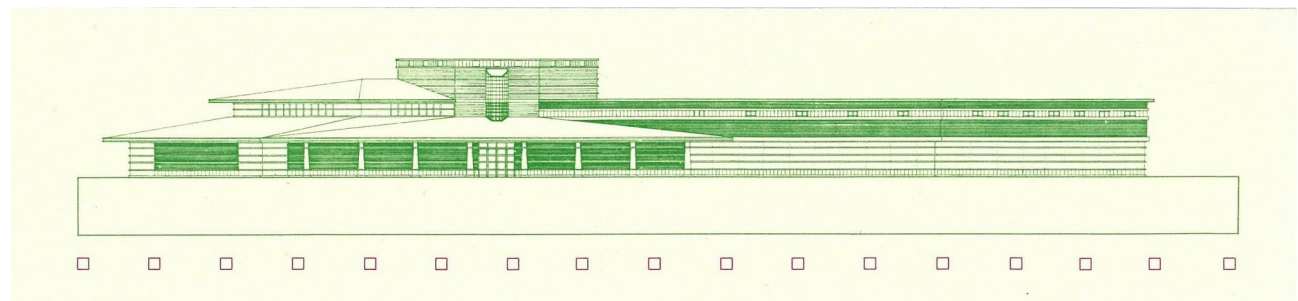
The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

2026 Building Plan Quick Facts

Why? We've outgrown the 1993 specs

The main building was designed to accommodate the needs of the community for 20 years. It is now more than 30 years old. Current use exceeds its intended use.

LIBRARY GROWTH IN PAST 31 YEARS	1994	2025
30 percent more residents	33,923	44,002
63 percent more books & print materials	109,839	178,358
More than double # of program attendees	21,482	44,529
Circulation (<i>print + digital</i>)	482,806	813,549



1993 architectural rendering

Why? We are unable to meet current demand

- **General Seating** - no seating is available most afternoons and evenings
- **Outside Community Groups** - We are no longer able to offer space to community groups or piano recitals because the rooms are already full.
- **Youth Program Room** - attendance at most library storytimes far exceeds the capacity of the Youth Program Room; storytimes take place in the main meeting room
- **Study Rooms** - we now must limit study room use to cardholders only, as demand far exceeds capacity. This is especially tough on children who attend school near the library but live outside our taxing district.
- **Quiet Reading Room** - often filled to capacity
- **Changing consumer expectations** - patrons desire makerspaces and remote workers require different spaces and infrastructure

Why? To meet the needs of new generations

The way the community uses the public library has fundamentally shifted since the main building opened in 1993. Modern libraries must accommodate not only traditional book lending but also demand for high-speed internet access and digital resources. Furthermore, patrons now expect collaborative workspaces and hands-on learning environments like makerspaces, which require specialized infrastructure and flexible layouts not present in the current aging facility.

Didn't you just do a renovation?

2021 - Drive up window

- Added a drive-up window
 - Was part of the larger building plan
 - Expedited it in order to preserve access during the uncertain times of COVID
- No new public spaces were added (some materials processing and staff space was added)
- Did not address Annex

2012-2013 - Refresh

- Updated lighting from incandescent fixtures (has already paid for itself)
- Updated furniture
- Rearranged some interior walls
- Did not add any square footage
- Did not address Annex

What will change? Optimizing the Library Campus

The improvement plan makes the most of existing resources by integrating two existing buildings into one structure. Upgrading and reimagining the library Annex building and grounds creates a modern, welcoming space and adds a makerspace, flexible program areas, and new community meeting rooms. The design will significantly increase general seating and study capacity. It will also add a purpose-built, adequately sized Youth Program Room for children's activities. These changes are essential for serving all patrons.

What will it cost?

Total Project Cost	\$53,000,000
<i>Library Contribution, Federal Incentives, Grants and Donations</i>	<i>-\$13,500,000</i>
Referendum Bonds	\$39,500,000

How much will it increase my tax bill?

	Median Home Value	Per year	Per month
Buffalo Grove	\$430,000	\$141	\$12
Lincolnshire	\$677,700	\$222	\$18
Long Grove	\$804,600	\$263	\$22
Vernon Hills	\$412,300	\$135	\$11
Riverwoods	\$800,700	\$262	\$22

- Tax impact: roughly \$33 a year (or \$2.73 a month) for every \$100,000 in home value
- There is an interactive calculator at VAPLD.info/BuildingProject
- The library has not approached the community for capital improvement funds since the early 1990's
- With library's savings, an upgrade to a 33-year-old HVAC system is part of a near-term plan
- Energy-efficient, sustainable systems would pay for themselves over time while improving the library's environmental footprint



Proposed addition and renovation

Exhibit F

Referendum 2026 Feedback Form Communication — May 25, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

FW: (Referendum 2026) Are there new comments in the feedback form?

1 message

Stephen Territo <sterrito91@outlook.com>
To: "sterrito@vapld.info" <sterrito@vapld.info>

Wed, Jul 29, 2026 at 9:34 AM

From: Basecamp (Vernon Area Public Library) <notifications@3.basecamp.com>**Sent:** Monday, May 25, 2026 8:01 AM**To:** csavage@vapld.info**Subject:** (Referendum 2026) Are there new comments in the feedback form?

Are there new comments in the feedback form?

Please take a minute to answer this question. You can either reply to this email or click the button below to answer in Basecamp.

Write up an answer

Unsubscribe • Change your notification settings

Get easier, faster access to Basecamp when it's on your phone. Grab an app!



2543f76f9fa768d65514cbe0

Exhibit G

District Email Responding to November Referendum Question — May 27-28, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Private patron name, email address, salutation, signature, and identifying Gmail thread URL have been redacted. The substantive questions and District response are preserved.



Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>

November referendum

2 messages

[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
To: [REDACTED]

Wed, May 27, 2026 at 7:46 AM

Hi Anne,

If the referendum in November passes, will the tax increase be permanent? Or will the increase only apply to a limited number of budget cycles?

Are there any plans to expand ESL programming?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>

Thu, May 28, 2026 at 6:49 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your interest in the Vernon Area Public Library's building plan.

If the Board decides to move forward with a referendum in November and it passes, it would authorize a temporary tax increase for a maximum of 20 years (not a permanent tax).

The proposed building plan would create multiple large and mid-sized rooms available for programming, and along with that, opportunities to expand our partnerships and to offer more programming. ESL class expansion is a priority, but this will depend on community demand at the time.

Thanks again for reaching out with your questions.

Sincerely,
Anne

[Quoted text hidden]

Exhibit H

Building Project Website Archive — June 4, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.



Reimagining Our Library: A Space for Every Story

From a humble classroom to the current building, Vernon Area Public Library District spaces and buildings have evolved over our first half-century of service. As we look to the future, now is the time to reimagine space on our campus.

For more than two years, planning has been underway to evolve the library buildings and grounds, to provide desirable and sustainable public spaces for you to meet, study, collaborate, create, and play. We are excited to now share the Schematic Design for your consideration.



Rendering of new centralized entrance.



Key features of the renovation include:

- **Dedicated Makerspace:** Hands-on STEM learning and creative tools.

- **10 Study Rooms:** Addressing rising demand for quiet workspace.
- **150-person Community Room:** A versatile space for large programs and public use.
- **Enhanced Children's Area:** A purpose-built room for our popular storytimes.
- **New HVAC, Lower Bills:** Modernizing the 30-year-old heating and cooling systems to lower energy consumption and preserve air quality.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Including a more central entrance closer to parking.

Why is this project needed?

This project is the next step in the library's half-century journey of serving our community. While our current facility has served us well since 1993, both our population and the ways we use library resources have evolved beyond the building's original design.

Since the current building opened, we have seen a 30% increase in residents, our collections have grown by 63%, and attendance at our programs has more than doubled. The current facility was intended to meet community needs for 20 years; it is now more than 30 years old and demand regularly exceeds our capacity:

- **Space Shortages:** General seating is often unavailable during afternoons and evenings. Study rooms are in such high demand that use must be limited exclusively to cardholders.
- **Program Overflow:** Our beloved storytimes outgrew their dedicated room years ago and now occupy the main meeting room three mornings of most weeks. With rooms in use for library programs, we had to stop offering space for community groups, recitals, and other local uses.
- **Evolving Expectations:** In 1993, a computerized catalog was a major innovation. Today, patrons expect purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Critical building systems, including the 33-year-old HVAC system, are at the end of their life. Additionally, parts of the campus predate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and require modernizing to ensure equal access for all residents.

After two years of community input, we have a proposed design that addresses these challenges. The plan adds 22,000 square feet of public space — achieving half of that by bringing the unused annex building back into code and connecting it to the main building.

Financial Stewardship

The library is committed to being exceptional stewards of your tax dollars. We have not requested funds for capital improvements since 1990.

Through careful long-term planning, the library expects to cover approximately 25% of the total project cost (\$13.5 million) through the library’s savings, existing budget, and federal incentives.

To fund the remainder, the library board is considering a \$39.5 million referendum on the November ballot to issue 20-year general obligation bonds. For a home worth \$500,000, the estimated tax impact over the life of these bonds is approximately \$164 per year — about \$13.64 per month.

Estimated Tax Impact Calculator

Fair Market Value of Home

\$500,000

For purposes of this property tax impact estimator, use the fair market value from your property tax bill. Visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information.

Exemptions

Select applicable exemptions to more accurately estimate the tax impact for your situation.

- ☒ General Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Senior Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Returning Veteran's Exemption
- ☐ Disability (HEPD)

Equalized Assessed Value \$166,667

This value is used to determine property tax impact. EAV is 1/3 of Fair Market Value.

Property Tax Exemptions \$-8,000

Net Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) \$158,667

Annual Tax Impact

\$155.85

Annual impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Monthly Tax Impact

\$12.99

Monthly impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Property taxes are based on your home's value as determined by the assessor. You can visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information for your home.

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	—
Simply put, we have outgrown our current space. Our main building was constructed in 1993 and designed to meet the community's needs for 20 years. It is now over 30 years old, and daily use far exceeds what it was originally built to handle. The way our community uses the library has fundamentally shifted. Beyond traditional library use and checkouts, modern libraries are expected to provide purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection. Our neighboring libraries are able to offer their patrons a makerspace for hands-on learning and creation, ample spaces for both group collaboration and individual focus, and an expanded youth space for imaginative play and exploration — things we do not have in our current footprint. Our goal is to ensure that Vernon Area Public Library continues to meet the evolving needs of our community. Over the past several years, we have conducted community research and conceptual planning to identify gaps in our current facilities. This plan addresses these identified needs.	
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
--	---

Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if voters do not pass it?	+
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Online Feedback

What do you think? Do the plans successfully address the priorities that the public has identified? Is there anything we missed? What do you like best? What is most important to you?

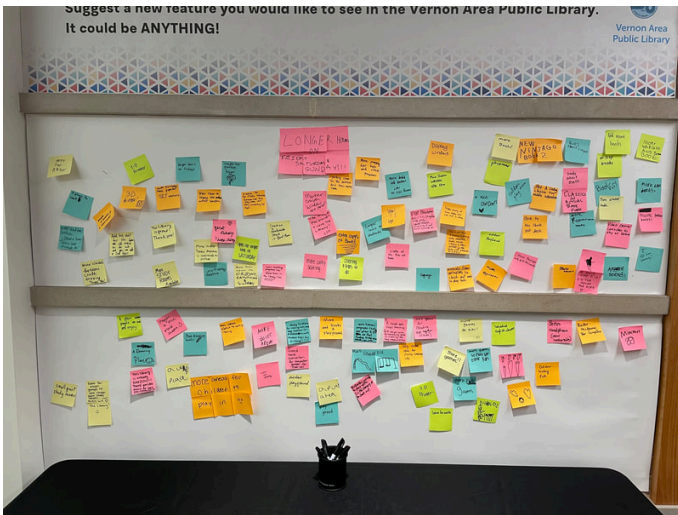
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Past Feedback Events

A look at previous public and staff feedback sessions.













Stay Informed

Updates will be posted to this webpage as they are available. To receive email with news and to potentially be invited to small-group feedback sessions, sign up using the link below.

[SIGN UP FOR UPDATES](#)

Location

Vernon Area Public Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069

[View Map](#)

847-634-3650

Exhibit I

District Fact Sheet — June 5, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Fact Sheet

Information about proposed improvements to the library building and grounds.



The library has been examining a potential building project for the past several years, including a comprehensive needs assessment and multiple rounds of community input. Using that information, we partnered with architects to develop a draft plan that addresses the identified needs, which include additional spaces for private study and group collaboration, a more accessible entrance, a public makerspace, and additional space for library programs and events.

FAST FACTS

30+

years since the last request
for building funds

30%

more residents since the
current building opened

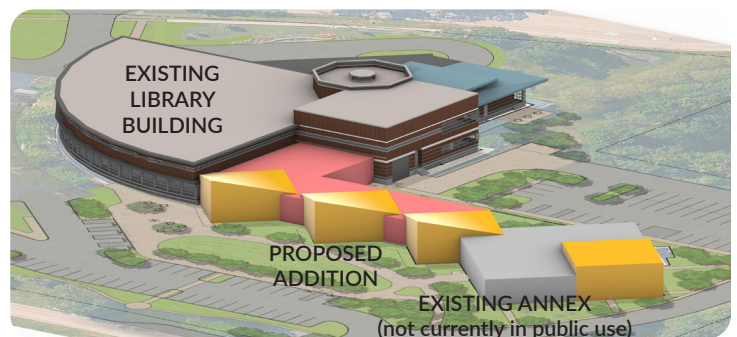
>2X

program attendance has
more than doubled

63%

more books and print
materials

The proposed design would add nearly 22,000 square feet to the current library — achieving approximately half of that by bringing the Annex building back into service, with the new addition connecting it to the main building.



Proposed Features

Dedicated Makerspace

A public makerspace for hands-on STEM learning, creative tools and workshops.

More Study Rooms

The draft design adds 10 rooms to address demand for quiet workspace that exceeds current capacity.

Expanded Children's Department

With age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.

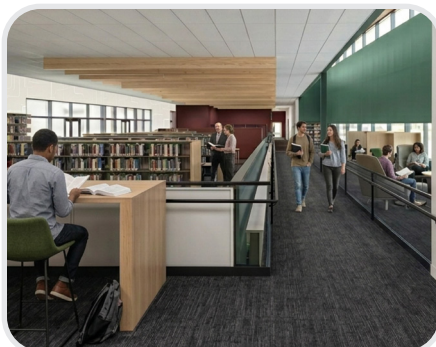


Community Use Space

With spaces in frequent use for library programs, we stopped offering room rentals for scouts, piano recitals, and community organizations. Additional spaces would enable us to offer rooms for community group use again.

Improved Access & Walkability

The proposed plan locates the entrance more centrally and closer to parking, and adds a nature trail with interpretive areas, an outdoor event lawn, and a community garden.



Student Collaboration Zone

Areas designed for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after-school and evening hours.

New HVAC, Lower Bills

Modernizing the 30-year-old heating and cooling systems would lower energy consumption.

Timeline

Spring–Summer 2024

Community workshops & surveys

Spring 2025

Scope & budget refined with board

Fall 2025

Community design feedback sessions

April 2026

Proposed Design delivered

Spring 2026

Community survey

Summer–Fall 2026

Information outreach

November 2026

Possible Ballot Referendum

About a Potential Referendum

The library board is considering a \$39.5M referendum for the November ballot.

For a \$500,000 home, the estimated tax impact would be approximately \$164/year – about \$13.64/month.

The library expected to cover approximately 25% of the total cost (\$13.5M) using its capital fund, federal rebates, grants, and other available funding.

Learn More

Visit [VAPLD.info/BuildingProject](https://vapld.info/BuildingProject) for updates.



Exhibit J

Executive Director Email Transmitting Topline Survey Results — June 10, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

From: Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2026 2:15 PM
To: Trustees
Subject: topline survey results
Attachments: aQity topline results 2026-06-10.pdf

Dear Trustees,

From Jeff regarding the survey results:

Initial support for the referendum is relatively strong (57% in Q8), but after hearing the arguments to both sides the levels of support/opposition are about even (51% to 49% opposed in Q14).

The scope cost of the proposed improvements and the impact on a homeowner appear to be the biggest reasons/drivers that decrease support, as well as poor timing given current inflation/interest rates (Q13).

This report will be included in the board packet along with a memo from Jeff that summarizes the results more fully. I wanted you to have this information as soon as possible.

An in-depth analysis of the numbers will occur right after the July 4th weekend. Please fill out this Doodle Poll with your availability to meet the week of July 6th in a Committee of the Whole to discuss these results with Jeff:

<https://doodle.com/group-poll/participate/bWK32r4b>

Anne

Anne Rasmussen *she / her*
Library Director
Vernon Area Public Library District
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069
224-543-1448

Exhibit K

aQity Research Initial Takeaways from VAPLD Survey — June 10, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

TO: *Anne Rasmussen*

FROM: *Jeff Andreasen*

DATE: *June 10, 2026*

RE: *Initial Takeaways from VAPLD Survey*

The topline summary report includes overall results from a sample of n=433 registered and likely voters who live within the District. The respondent sample was weighted to reflect the overall distribution of likely voters by region, age, gender, and past voting behavior (including ballots cast in Republican and Democratic primaries). These surveys were completed between April 20th and May 26th, 2026.

Key Initial Insights

- Before hearing about a potential VAPLD referendum, residents have a very favorable opinion of the Library (Question #4).
 - All but 4% are familiar enough with the Library to offer an opinion.
 - The vast majority (87%) have a favorable opinion of the Library, giving ratings of 6 or higher on a 0-10 scale). This includes a majority (57%) who hold the Library in highest regard (scores of 9+).
 - The average rating is 8.3 – very positive overall.
- After reading the ballot wording for a potential VAPLD referendum, 57% initially voice support for the request, vs. 43% opposed (Q#8).

Shall the Vernon Area Public Library District, Lake County, Illinois, expand, renovate, repair and equip its facilities, including constructing a secure and accessible central entrance; establishing a community makerspace; expanding spaces for library programs and community group use; improving spaces for early childhood and teens; constructing individual study and collaborative workspaces and issue its bonds to the amount of \$39,500,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?

- The margin of strong supporters vs. strong opponents is relatively equal (24% and 28%, respectively).

- From a series of pro-referendum arguments (Q#10 series), about half of all respondents rate each statement an “excellent” or “good” reason to support the referendum (44% to 52%). The strongest arguments in favor of the referendum (Q#11) are:
- 25%: ***This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.***
 - 22%: ***Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.***
 - 11%: ***The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).***
 - 9%: ***The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.***

Note that 21% said “none” of these are good reasons to support, most likely coming from the strongest opponents.

- A series of anti-referendum arguments was also tested (Q#12), and many of these resonated with a larger majority of voters than any of the pro-referendum statements. The strongest of these anti- reasons (Q#13) are:
- 26%: ***Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.***
 - 21%: ***\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.***
 - 18%: ***If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home’s value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.***
 - 15%: ***With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.***

Note that only 6% said “none” of these are good reasons to be opposed, indicating that even most supporters were able to select one.

- After reading and considering the arguments for both sides (in varied order), the overall level of support drops to 51%, with 49% opposed (Q#14) – a statistical tie.
- Among the proposed major improvements (Q#15), those deemed most important or highest priorities are:
 - 26%: Moving the entrance for easier access and more parking
 - 18%: Additional space for library programs and public use
 - 12%: Expanded and designated space for pre-teens and teens during evenings/afternoons
 - 11%: Expanded and designated space for toddlers/preschools/elementary grade children

Again, 20% feel that none of these are priorities (consistent with earlier responses most likely from the strongest opponents).

Next steps will include a full analysis of the survey data, including open-ended reasons for support and opposition, provided in a full report and executive summary. This will be presented at a future meeting.

Exhibit L

Building Project Website Archive — June 11, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Reimagining Our Library: A Space for Every Story

From a humble classroom to the current building, Vernon Area Public Library District spaces and buildings have evolved over our first half-century of service. As we look to the future, now is the time to reimagine space on our campus.

For more than two years, planning has been underway to evolve the library buildings and grounds, to provide updated and sustainable public spaces for you to meet, study, collaborate, create, and play. We are excited to now share the Schematic Design for your consideration.



Key features of the proposed renovation include:

- **Dedicated Makerspace:** Hands-on STEM learning and creative tools.

- **10 Study Rooms:** Addressing rising demand for quiet workspace.
- **150-person Community Room:** A versatile space for large programs and public use.
- **Enhanced Children's Area:** A purpose-built room for storytimes.
- **New HVAC, Lower Bills:** Modernizing the 30-year-old heating and cooling systems to lower energy consumption and preserve air quality.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Including a more central entrance closer to parking.

Why is this project needed?

While our current facility has served us well since 1993, both our population and the ways we use library resources have evolved beyond the building's original design.

Since the current building opened, we have seen a 30% increase in residents, our collections have grown by 63%, and attendance at our programs has more than doubled. The current facility was intended to meet community needs for 20 years; it is now more than 30 years old and demand regularly exceeds our capacity:

- **Space Shortages:** General seating is often limited during afternoons and evenings. Study rooms are in such high demand that use must be limited exclusively to cardholders.
- **Program Overflow:** Our storytimes outgrew their dedicated room years ago and now occupy the main meeting room three mornings of most weeks. With rooms in use for library programs, we had to stop offering space for community groups, recitals, and other local uses.
- **Evolving Expectations:** In 1993, a computerized catalog was a major innovation. Today, patrons expect purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Several building systems, including the 33-year-old HVAC system, are at the end of their life. Additionally, parts of the campus require modernizing to ensure equal access for all residents.

After two years of community input, we have a proposed design that addresses these challenges. The plan suggests adding 22,000 square feet of public space — achieving half of that by bringing the unused annex building back into code and connecting it to the main building.

Financial Stewardship

The library has not requested funds for capital improvements since 1990.

The library expects to cover approximately 25% of the total project cost (\$13.5 million) through the library's savings, existing budget, and federal incentives.

To fund the remainder, the library board is considering placing a referendum question on the November ballot to issue 20-year general obligation bonds totaling \$39.5 million. For a home worth \$500,000, the estimated tax impact over the life of these bonds is approximately \$164 per year — about \$13.64 per month.

Estimated Tax Impact Calculator

Fair Market Value of Home

\$500,000

For purposes of this property tax impact estimator, use the fair market value from your property tax bill. Visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information.

Equalized Assessed Value \$166,667

This value is used to determine property tax impact. EAV is 1/3 of Fair Market Value.

Property Tax Exemptions \$-8,000

Exemptions

Select applicable exemptions to more accurately estimate the tax impact for your situation.

- ☒ General Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Senior Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Returning Veteran's Exemption
- ☐ Disability (HEPD)

Net Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) \$158,667

Annual Tax Impact
\$155.85

Annual impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Monthly Tax Impact
\$12.99

Monthly impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Property taxes are based on your home's value as determined by the assessor. You can visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information for your home.

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass?	+
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Online Feedback

What do you think? Do the plans successfully address the priorities that the public has identified? Is there anything we missed? What do you like best? What is most important to you?

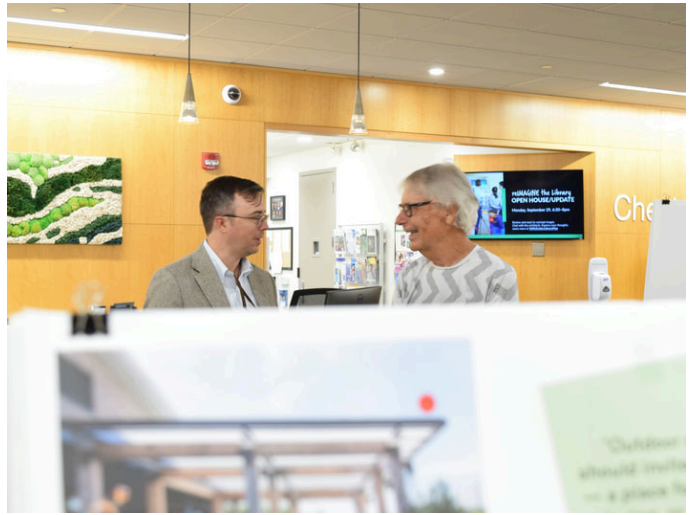
Past Feedback Events

A look at previous public and staff feedback sessions.









Stay Informed

Updates will be posted to this webpage as they are available. To receive email with news and to potentially be invited to small-group feedback sessions, sign up using the link below.

[SIGN UP FOR UPDATES](#)

Location

Vernon Area Public Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069

[View Map](#)

847-634-3650

Exhibit M

Potential Plan Slideshow — June 18, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.



Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



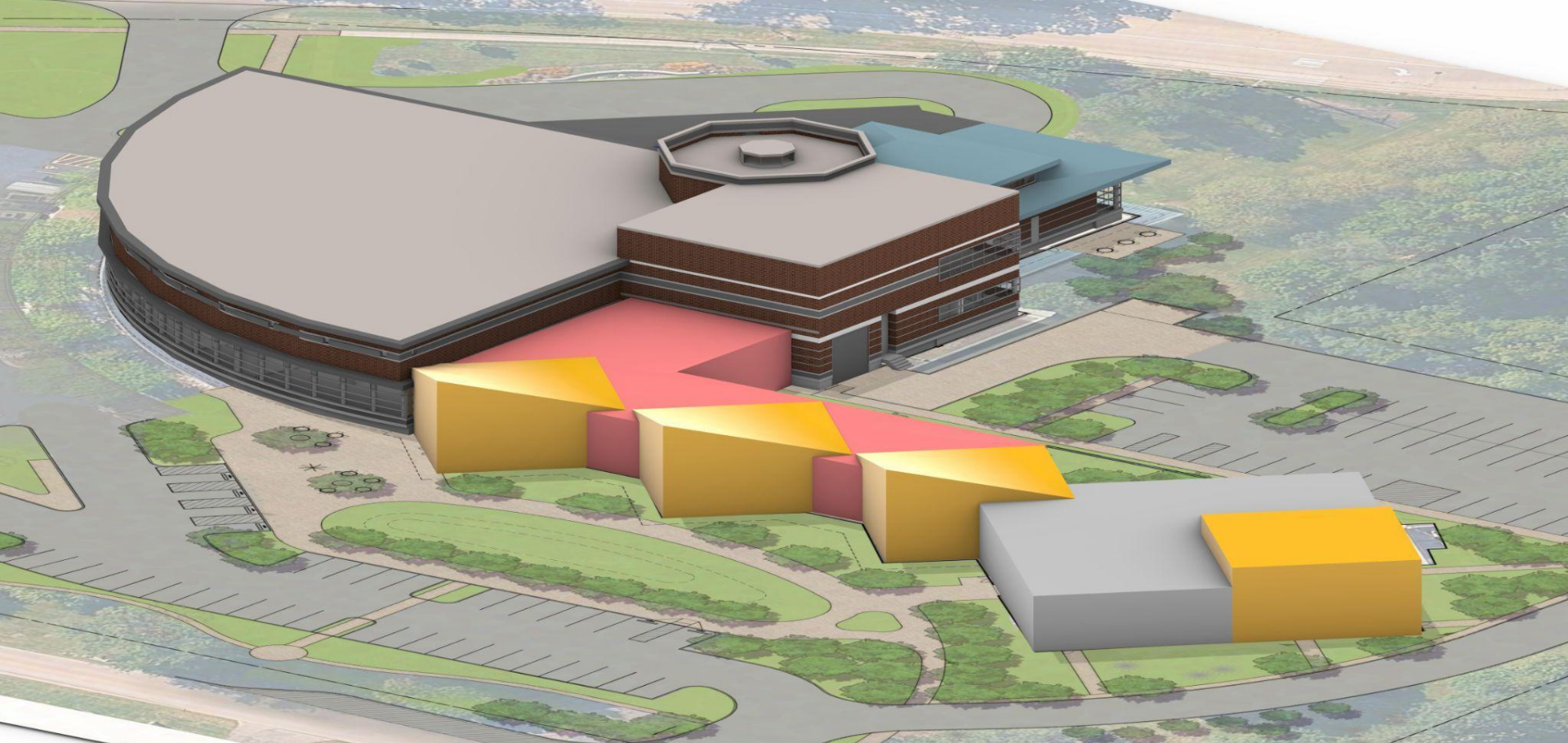
Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



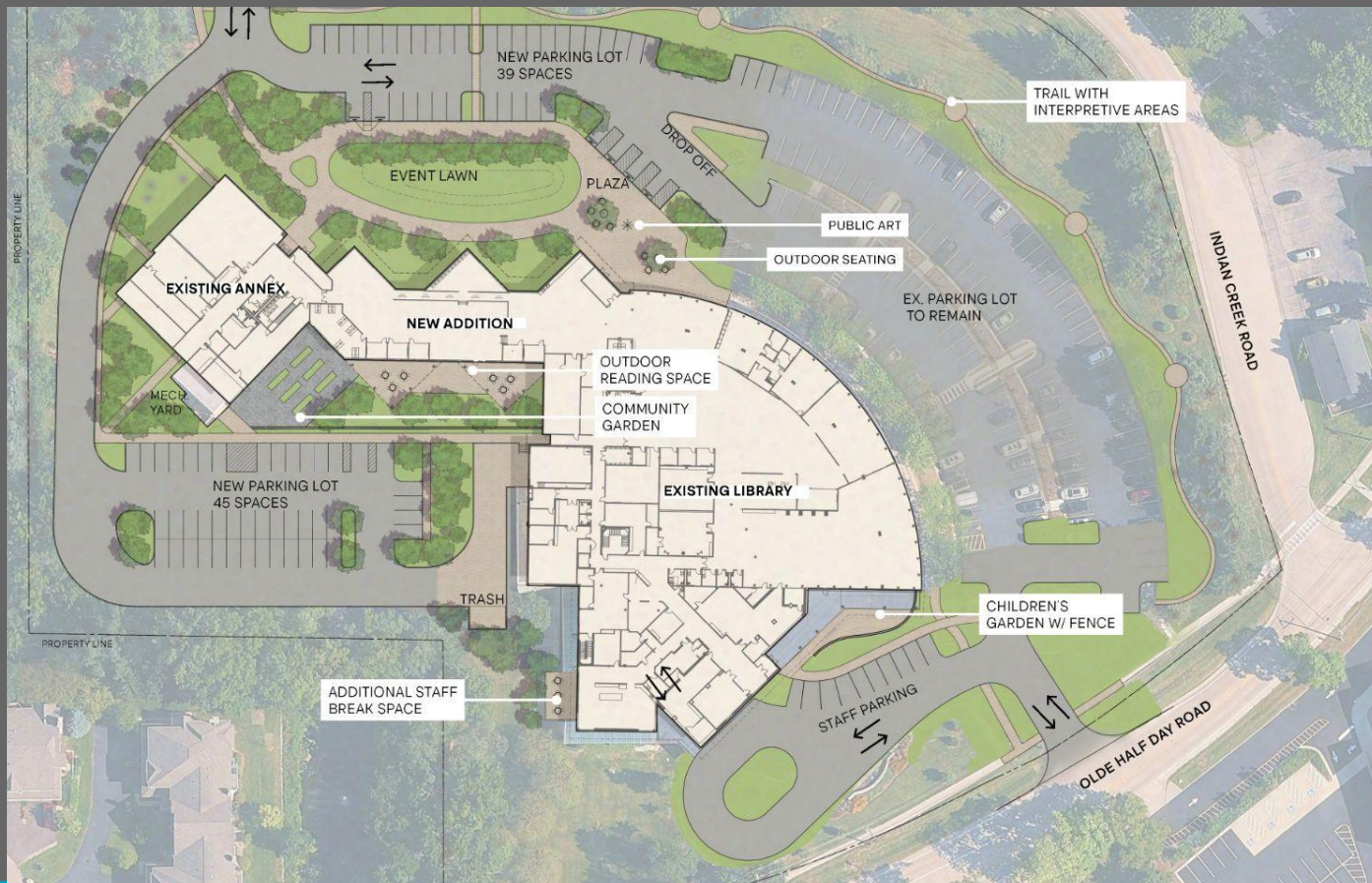
Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**



Potential Building Project

Vernon Area
Public Library



Potential Building Project

Vernon Area
Public Library



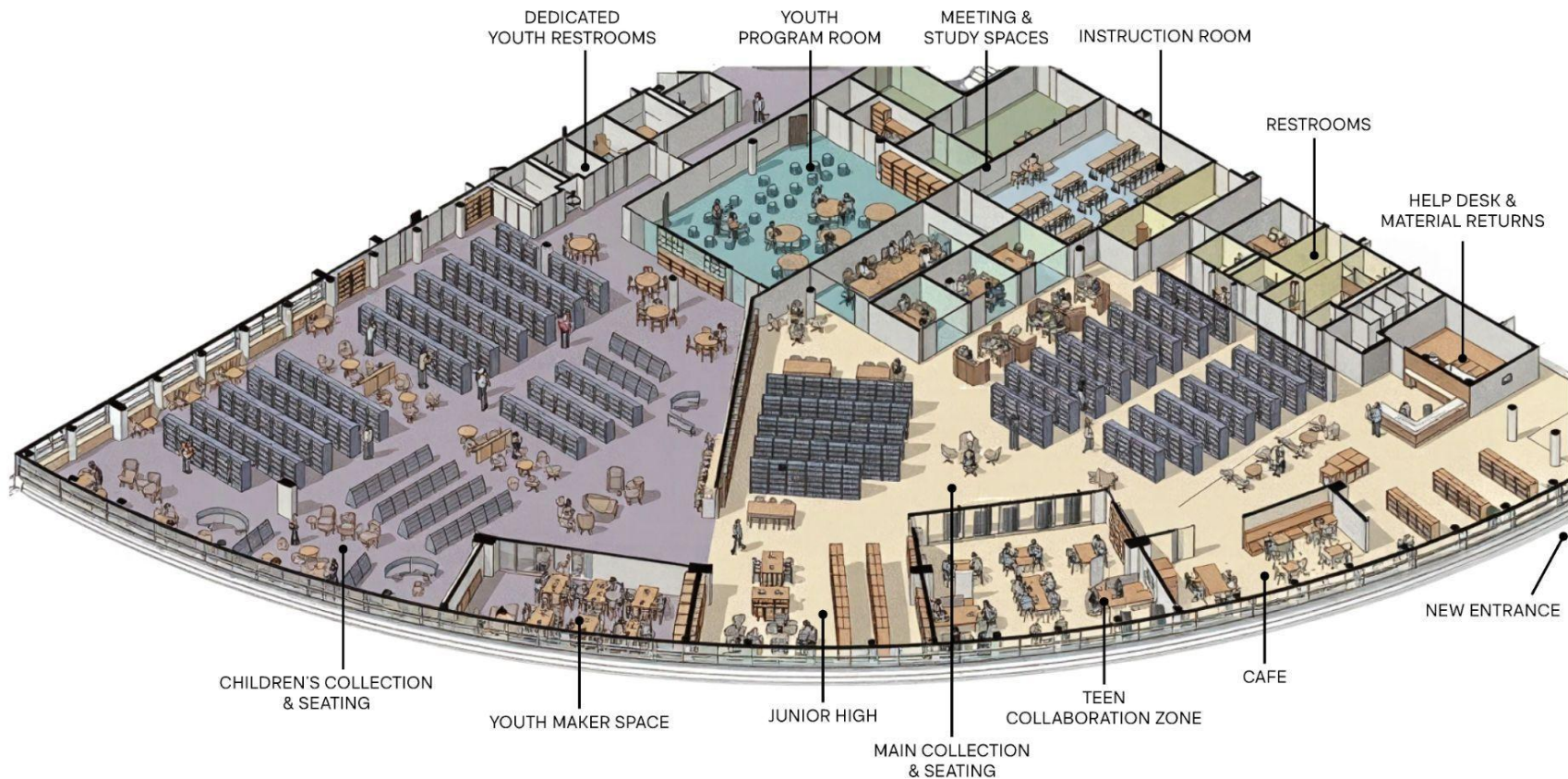
Potential Building Project

Vernon Area
Public Library



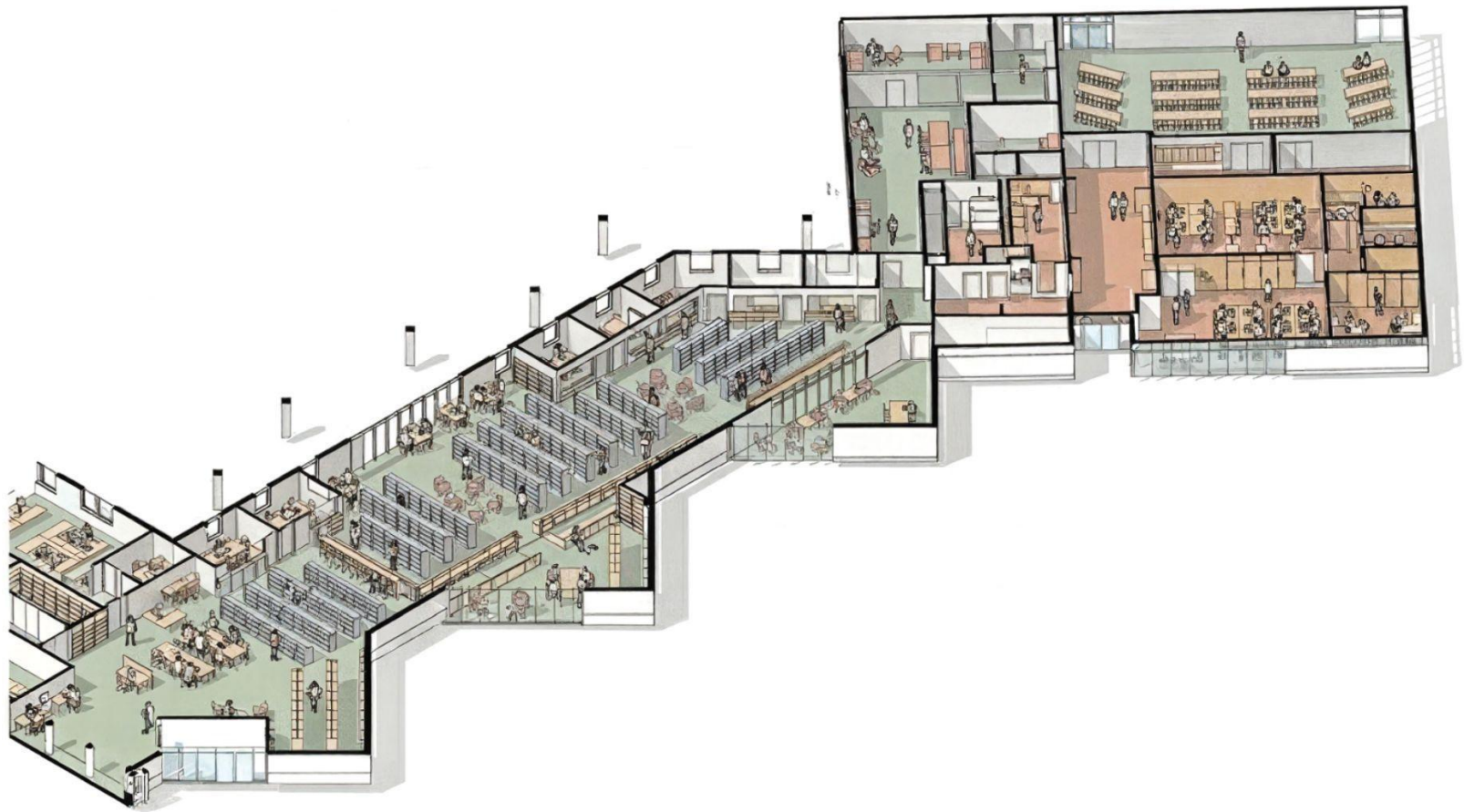
Potential Building Project

Vernon Area
Public Library



Potential Building Project

Vernon Area
Public Library



Potential Building Project

**Vernon Area
Public Library**

Exhibit N

Executive Director Email Forwarding Draft Survey Results — June 26, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Fwd: draft of survey results

1 message

Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>

Fri, Jun 26, 2026 at 4:11 PM

To: Catherine Savage <csavage@vapld.info>, Janice Kellman <jkellman@vapld.info>, Stephen Territo <sterrito@vapld.info>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Anne Rasmussen** <arasmussen@vapld.info>

Date: Fri, Jun 26, 2026 at 4:10 PM

Subject: draft of survey results

To: Trustees <trustees@vapld.info>

Dear Trustees,

Jeff just shared this report with me and I wanted to pass it on to you prior to the weekend. Any revisions or fine-tuning to this report will be provided in the board packet distributed next week in preparation for Thursday's Committee of the Whole meeting and discussion.

Sincerely,
Anne

Anne Rasmussen *she / her***Library Director****Vernon Area Public Library District**

300 Olde Half Day Road

Lincolnshire, IL 60069

224-543-1448

PLEASE NOTE: Pursuant to Illinois State Law, e-mail communication to and from this address may be subject to public disclosure.

**2026 VAPLD Survey Results - DRAFT 062626.pptx**

1857K

Exhibit O

aQity Research Survey Results for Vernon Area Public Library District — Draft

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Includes the polling-results pages reproduced in the complaint body.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE VERNON AREA PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

JUNE 2026

aQity Research & Insights

Evanston, IL

SECTIONS	PAGE
Survey Methods	<u>3</u>
Sample Demographics	<u>4</u>
Executive Summary: Key Findings	<u>6</u>
Detailed Findings:	
I. Opinion of Vernon Area Public Library and Awareness of Possible Referendum	<u>12</u>
II. Pre-Statement Potential Referendum Vote	<u>18</u>
III. Pro-Referenda Statements	<u>29</u>
IV. Anti-Referenda Statements	<u>39</u>
V. Post-Statement potential Referendum Vote and Top Priorities	<u>50</u>
Appendix	<u>55</u>
Survey questionnaire/Topline report	<u>56</u>

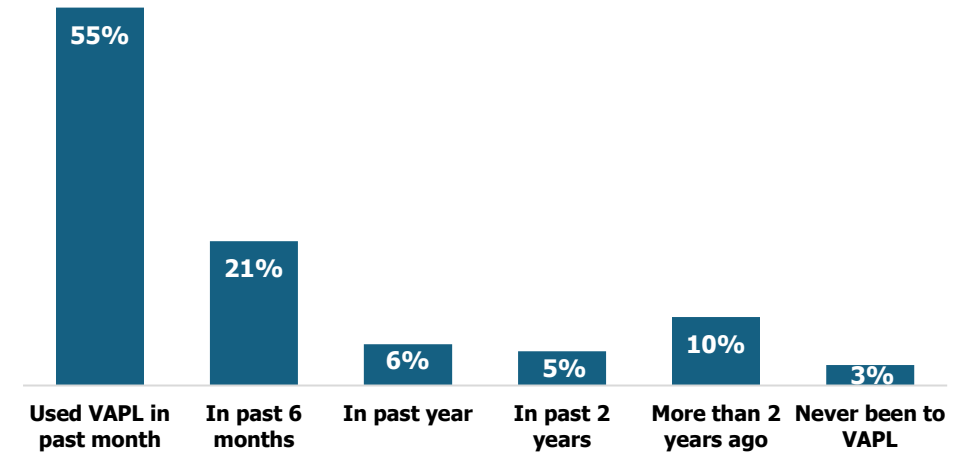
- This report is based on a survey of n=433 registered and recent general election voters within the Vernon Area Public Library District service boundaries who are likely to vote in the November 2026 general election.
 - Only those who voted in at least one of the two most recent mid-term general elections (2022, 2018) and/or in the March 2024 primary election were randomly sampled from the most recent county databases. Only those who report that they are very or somewhat likely to vote in the upcoming November election were included.
 - Dates of data collection were April 20 through May 26, 2026. The final sample size exceeded our original target of at least n=400 respondents.
- The respondent sample of n=433 voters was compared to the Lake County voter database for VAPLD precincts and was weighted to align with regional distributions by community, age, gender, and partisan voting behavior (those selecting Republican or Democratic ballots in recent primary elections).
- Assuming no sample bias, the maximum margin of error for a sample of n=433 respondents is +/- 4.7% (at the 95% confidence level)¹.

NOTE: Some percentages in the report may not total 100% due to rounding.

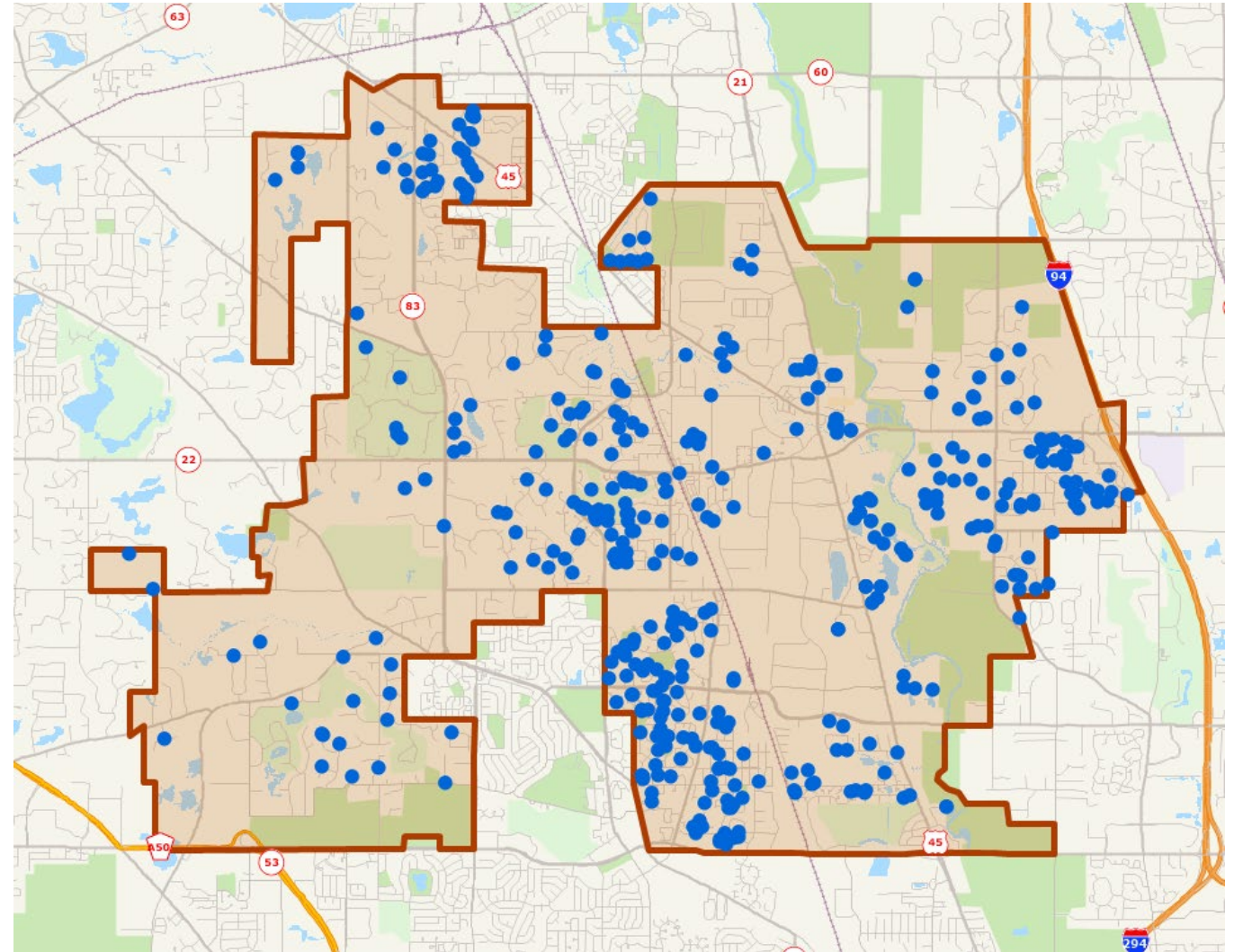
Length of residence	
Less than 5 years	14%
5-9 yrs.	20%
10-19 yrs.	21%
20-29 yrs.	20%
30+ yrs.	24
(average/mean)	(18.4)
Age*	
Under age 45	24%
45-54	18%
55-64	17%
65-74	23%
75+	18%
(average/mean)	(57.7)
Gender*	
Male	46%
Female	52%
Prefer to self-describe	2%

Household Composition	
Live alone	20%
Two HH members	39%
Three	17%
Four or more	25%
Race (multiple response)	
White	84%
Asian	13%
Other/Multi	8%
Past voting *	
Non-primary voters	48%
Republican primary voters	12%
Democratic primary voters	38%
Split/both primaries	1%

Self-Reported Most Recent Usage/Visit to VAPL



REGION*	
Buffalo Grove/Prairie View	38%
Deerfield/Riverwoods	7%
Lincolnshire/Lake Forest	27%
Long Grove	18%
Vernon Hills	10%



Executive Summary: Key Findings

At the time of the survey:

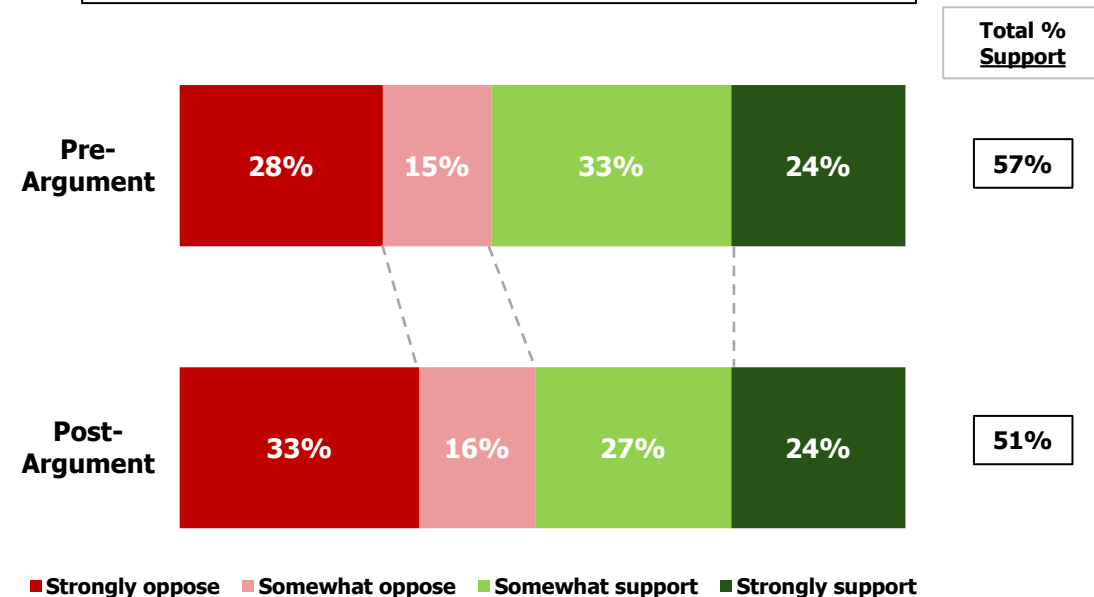
- Likely voters who are familiar with Vernon Area Public Library hold it in very high regard overall. Nearly nine in ten (87%) have a favorable opinion, including 57% who hold it in the highest regard (scores of 9+ on a 0-10 scale). Only 3% have a negative opinion overall. [< pg. 13 >](#)
- Its average 0-10 esteem rating is a very strong 8.3, and all voter segments have a favorable opinion overall (with no group averaging lower than a very positive 7.1 average score). Even non-users of the Library like it (giving an average rating of 7.7). [< pg. 13 >](#)
- About one in five (22%) report hearing or reading about a potential VAPLD referendum prior to the survey, mostly from recent Library visitors recalling information from the Library itself.

When testing a sample ballot question for a potential bond referendum, a majority initially support the question (57%).
After hearing statements for both sides, support drops to 51%.

Shall the Vernon Area Public Library District, Lake County, Illinois, expand, renovate, repair and equip its facilities, including constructing a secure and accessible central entrance; establishing a community makerspace; expanding spaces for library programs and community group use; improving spaces for early childhood and teens; constructing individual study and collaborative workspaces and issue its bonds to the amount of \$39,500,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?

Initially, roughly equal numbers are “strong” opponents or “strong” supporters (28% and 24%, respectively). After learning more from both sets of statements, “strong” opposition increases to 33%, while “strong” support holds at 24%.

- Note that initial support tends to be relatively soft (more “not strong” supporters), while most of the opposition is “strong”.

Pre- and Post-Statement Survey Results

In general, support tends to be highest among women, older voters (especially ages 75+), more frequent Library users/visitors, and voters in Lincolnshire/Lake Forest. Democratic primary voters are also among the most supportive.

[< pp. 20, 54 >](#)

Lower support tends to come from men (evenly divided, as likely to support as oppose), more middle-aged voters 55-64, infrequent and non-Library patrons, and Long Grove residents. Opposition also tends to come from Republican and non-primary voters.

In terms of the eight pro- and seven anti- statements tested (see next page), many of the opposition reasons resonate more strongly than the support statements.

[< pp. 30-34, 45-49 >](#)

- The pro-referendum statements generally spell out the specific proposed improvements and the reason(s) for these updates and desired outcomes. Even so, at most only about half of all voters feel any of these statements are excellent or good reasons to vote in favor.
 - These are most effective among those who had already voiced initial support for a potential referendum. No more than 16% of initial opponents feel any of these are good reasons to vote in favor.
 - Additional space for library programs and public events, the value that an excellent library brings to quality of life and property values in the community, expanded space specifically for younger children, and improving the entrance and safer accessibility are among the top pro- reasons.
- By comparison, many of the anti-statements are much stronger as reasons to be opposed, with roughly two thirds agreeing that:
 - Property taxes are already too high (and they oppose any additional taxes);
 - The annual tax bump of \$32.74 per \$100K in home value is too much;
 - Now is not a good time to raise taxes or borrow money given rising inflation, interest rates, and economic uncertainty;
 - \$39.5M seems too much and the Library should scale back to focus on the top priorities (and a lower amount).

These four statements resonate with virtually all opponents (88%+) and roughly half of initial supporters feel they are effective.

Pro-Referendum Statements	% Excellent/Good Reason to Support	Anti-Referendum Statements	% Excellent/Good Reason to Oppose
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).	52%	Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.	69%
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live/protects and improves our property values.	51%	If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	68%
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.	50%	With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	66%
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.	49%	\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	63%
Improvements include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.	48%	I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	46%
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.\	44%	I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	35%
Improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.	44%	My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	29%
Improvements include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.	44%		

The weakest anti-statements are:

- There is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library that should be cut first before asking for a tax increase: Only 35% feel this is an effective reason to be opposed, meaning 65% don't feel this way – again, reflecting the highly favorable opinions that residents have about the Library.
- Since my household does not use the Library, we would not benefit from these improvements: Even fewer (29%) think this is a good reason to be opposed, reinforcing perceptions that having a strong public library is a great local asset contributing to overall quality of life, protecting/strengthening property values, and attracting residents – benefiting both Library users and non-users.

[< pp. 42, 47 >](#)**The pro-reasons deemed most convincing among the 6% of voters moving toward support (after the statements) are:**[< pg. 53 >](#)

- This is the VAPLD's first referendum since 1990, and since the building was built, the population has grown and the 30+ year-old building is often crowded/noisy (a weaker statement in general but gains some traction among those shifting toward support).
- An excellent public library makes the area a more desirable place to live and protects/improves property values.
- Proposed improvements include relocating the entrance and closer/safer handicapped parking and pick-up/drop-off areas.

The most effective anti-statements cited by the 16% who move toward opposition are:

- Property taxes are too high currently and I oppose any additional increase.
- \$39.5 million is too much, and the Library should focus on the biggest needs and a lower/more affordable request.
- \$32.74 per \$100K in home value is not affordable to many.

From a list of proposed improvements, those deemed as top priorities include:[< pg. 54 >](#)

- Moving the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, more/safer disabled parking and a safer drop-off/pick-up area;
- More space for library programs that is also for public use (for meetings, events);
- Expanded and designated space(s) for both younger children (elementary school age and under) and pre-teens/teens (marginal support).

A public makerspace generates less interest (least important to opponents of a potential referendum), as do individual/small group study rooms.

In summary:

- District voters hold the Vernon Area Public Library in very high regard. It is highly used, valued, and trusted with little sense of waste or unnecessary spending.
- However, the size of the potential referendum cost/scope is deemed considerable and residents at this time are not convinced of the need for the improvements nor the ultimate benefits.
 - There is a sense from many that the current facility is adequate, and/or many of the proposed enhancements are nice-to-haves, not need-to-haves.
- Ultimately voters will need to decide whether the Library will issue bonds for the proposed project.

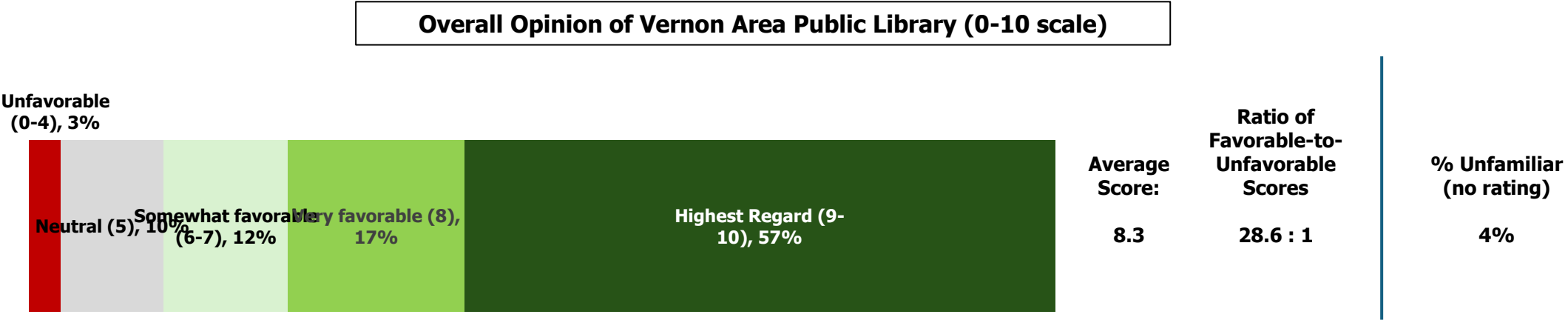
I. Opinions of VAPLD and Potential Referendum Awareness

Overall, the Vernon Area Public Library is well known, and highly regarded.

- All but 4% of registered/likely voters (more engaged residents) are familiar enough with the Library to offer an overall opinion, and the vast majority (87%) hold in it in favorable esteem (scores of 6+ on a 0-10 scale). This includes a majority (57%) who hold it in the highest regard (scores of 9+).
- By comparison, only 3% have a negative opinion, and the remaining 10% are neutral (not strong feelings either way, probably less familiar in general).

The Library’s average esteem rating is a very positive 8.3.

- Highest ratings (most favorable tend to come from the oldest voters (8.7 from ages 75+), residents in Lincolnshire/Lake Forest (8.7), those who visited in the Library in the prior month (8.7), and Democratic primary voters (8.8).
- Conversely, lower than average ratings – **but still very favorable (7.1 or higher on average)** – come from those under age 45 (8.0), Deerfield/Riverwoods residents (7.8), residents who last visited in the Library 2 years ago (7.1) or more (7.2) and/or never (7.7), and Republican primary voters (7.7).

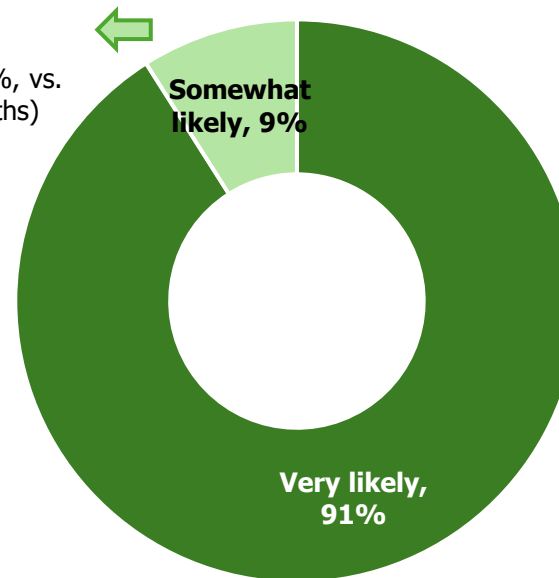


Virtually all respondents (91%) said that they are very likely to vote in the upcoming November election. This includes at least 83% of all subgroups, with the most likely voters being men, older/long-term local residents, recent Library visitors, and those in Buffalo Grove/Prairie View.

Likelihood to Vote in November 2026 General Election

Especially:

- Women (12%)
- Vernon Hills residents (17%)
- Used VAPLD in the past month (11%, vs. only 5% of users in the past 6 months)
- Non-voters in primaries (17%)



Especially:

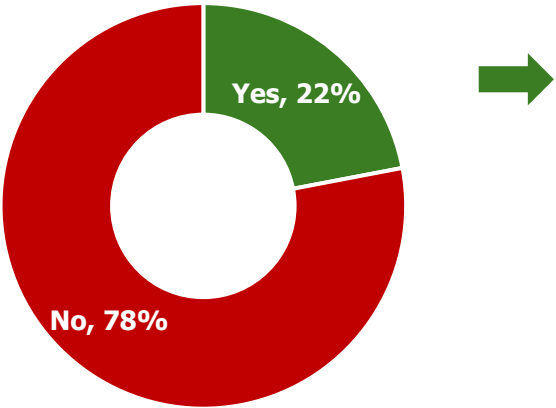
- Men (94%)
- Ages 65+ (97%)
- Lived in VAPLD 30+ yrs. (95%)
- Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (94%)
- Used VAPLD in the past 6 months (95%)
- Primary voters (98%)

At the time of the survey, roughly one-in-five voters (22%) report hearing or reading something about a potential VAPLD referendum on the November ballot.

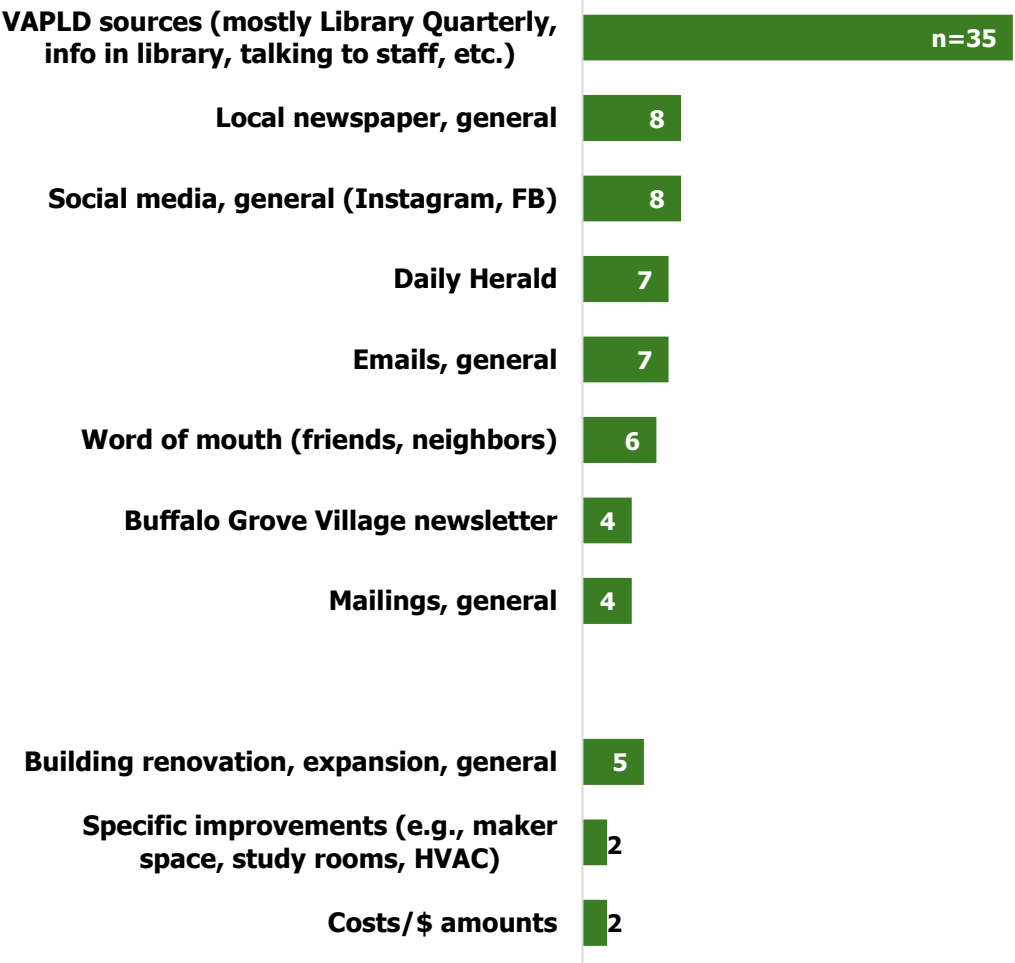
- Awareness is highest among residents who lived in the area 20+ yrs. (25%), Buffalo Grove/Prairie View households (29%), and VAPLD visitors in the past month (25%).

By far, VAPLD channels are cited as the top source for this information, with several other sources (mostly news outlets, social media posts, word of mouth, etc.) also cited. Relatively few offered recall of any proposed improvements.

Seen/Heard Prior Information About Potential VAPLD Referendum?



What have you seen/heard? (top multiple open-ended responses, base n=81 responding)



Q5. Prior to this survey, have you heard or read anything about a potential referendum for the Vernon Area Public Library?
Q6. (IF YES): From what source(s) have you heard or seen information about a potential Library referendum, and what did it say? Please be specific.

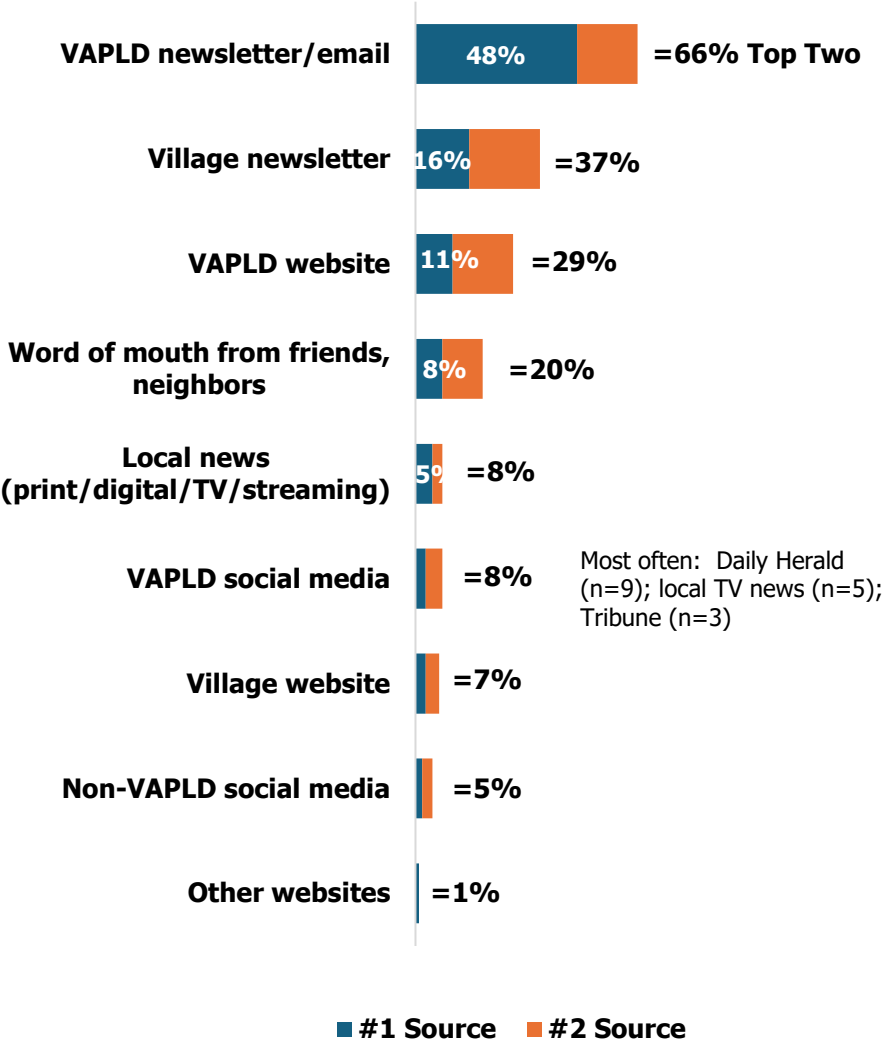
When seeking information about the Library (or local issues in general), the VAPLD newsletter is by far the top source, followed by newsletters from residents’ respective villages.

Three out of ten voters (29%) also get information from the VAPLD website, followed closely by word of mouth from personal connections (20%).

The remaining sources are mentioned far less often.

➤ Note that women are more likely to rely on VAPLD sources than men (see next page).

Top Sources for Library and Local Information



Significant Differences: Top Two Sources for Library/Local Information

	Overall Response	Most Likely to Cite as Top 2 Sources
VAPLD newsletter/emails	66%	- Women (70%, vs. 62% of men) - Vernon Hills (76%) and Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (71%)
Village newsletter	37%	- Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (44%) - Somewhat likely voters (55%, vs. 35% of very likely voters) - Never used VAPL (76%)
VAPLD website	29%	Women (33%, vs. 24% of men)
Word of mouth	20%	- Men (24%, vs. 17% of women) - Lincolnshire/Lake Forest residents (24%) - Very likely to vote in November (22%, vs. 8% of somewhat likely voters)
Local news	8%	Ages 55-64 (12%), 75+ (17%)
VAPLD social media	8%	Women (13%, vs. 3% of men)
Village website	7%	- Men (10%, vs. 5% of women) - Never used VAPL (26%)
Other non-VAPLD social media	5%	- Long Grove residents (10%) - Last Library visit 2+ years ago (16%)

II. Pre-Statement Referenda Vote

As reported, most voters (78%) were not aware of a potential VAPLD referendum at the time of the survey, meaning the question below was their first introduction to what the District is considering.

- Based on the potential ballot wording tested, just over half (57%) voice support for this potential referendum, much of which is “soft” (33% “somewhat support”, vs. 24% “strongly support”).
- Note that most of the opposition is “strong” (28%, vs. 15% “somewhat oppose”). The number of “strong” opponents is slightly higher than “strong” supporters.

As shown on the next page, a majority (51%+) of most subgroups give initial support for a potential referendum, with the highest levels coming from older voters (especially ages 75+), those somewhat likely to vote in November, recent Library users/visitors, and those in the Lincolnshire/Lake Forest region.

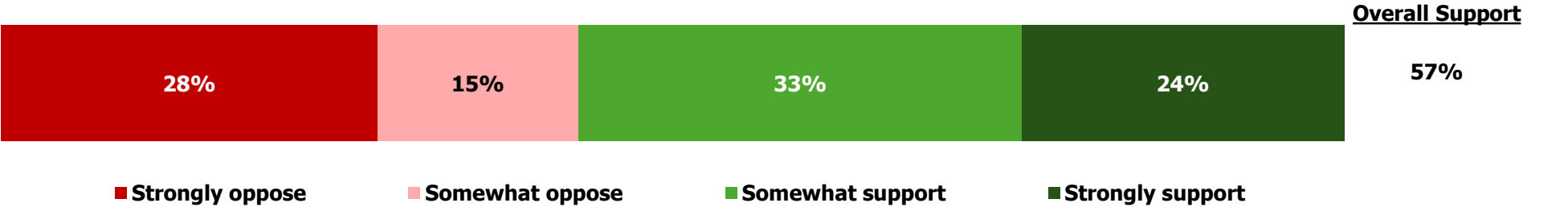
Opposition is more likely to come from middle-aged voters (55-64), less frequent Library users/non-users, and Long Grove residents.

Pre-Statement Vote Question

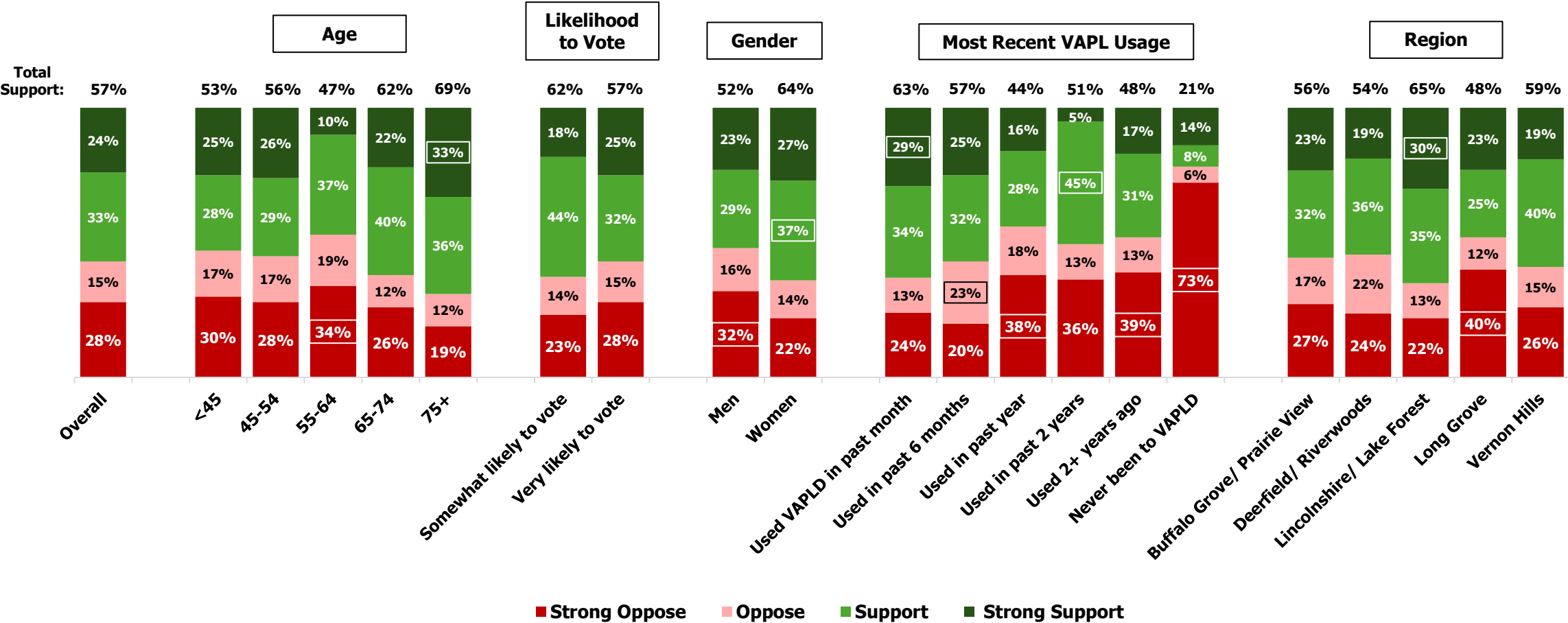
Q8. The Vernon Area Public Library is considering a voter referendum on the November ballot to issue bonds in order to pay for needed expansion and improvements to the existing building. The proposed referendum question is expected to read as follows:

Shall the Vernon Area Public Library District, Lake County, Illinois, expand, renovate, repair and equip its facilities, including constructing a secure and accessible central entrance; establishing a community makerspace; expanding spaces for library programs and community group use; improving spaces for early childhood and teens; constructing individual study and collaborative workspaces and issue its bonds to the amount of \$39,500,000 for the purpose of paying the costs thereof?

If the November election were tomorrow and this question were on the ballot, would you oppose or support this referendum?



Pre-Statement Vote by Key Segments



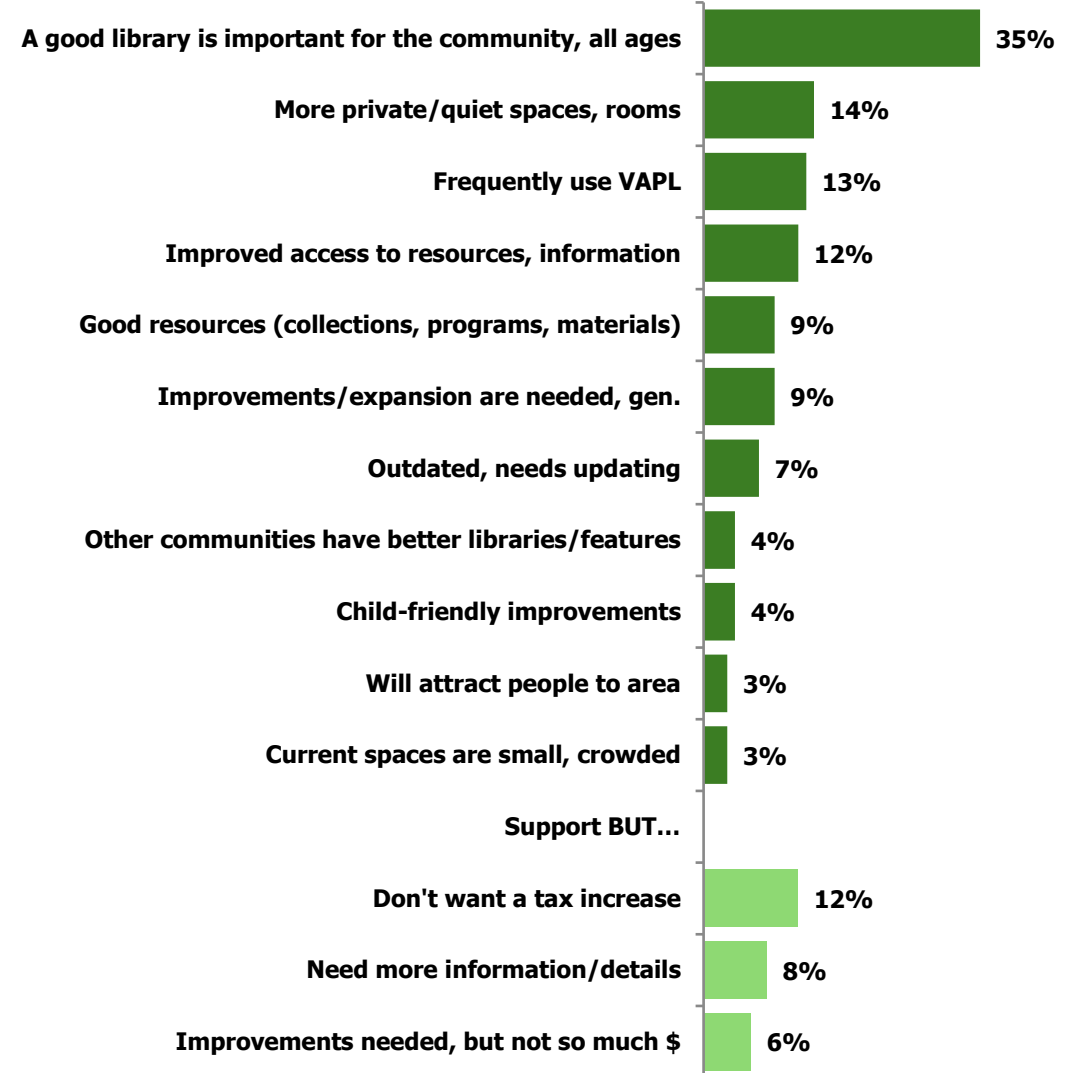
In response to an open-ended question, those voicing support for the proposed referendum most often give general comments about the importance or value of having a strong library (good for the community, frequent usage of the library, good resources and access).

Fewer call out specific proposed improvements or new amenities as reasons for their support (most often more private and quiet spaces, with general improvements and needed updates a distant second).

Note that a number of these respondents voice conditional support, with many resistant to a tax increase and/or needing more information that explains the need or benefit of these improvements and/or scope of work.

Examples of these verbatim responses are on the next few pages.

Top Reasons for Supporting a Potential Referendum (multiple open-ended responses)



"The library is an incredible asset to the community and if investment in it is necessary to maintain the library, that is assuredly worth it."

"Library is an important public good. Let's keep the cost low so public can truly all benefit."

"Libraries are essential to our community, particularly in these tumultuous times. We must protect and support our library as a bastion of freedom."

"Libraries are one of the lynchpins of a democratic society. VAL has been a leader in the neighborhood and the county. I want it to keep growing and improving."

"I think libraries are so important for all ages in our society. I am a constant user of the facility and appreciate it being so close to where I live. It's pretty much 'free' entertainment for so many things - books, media, special programs. It's really a waste if people don't take advantage of it. The burden of the additional costs are my only concern."

"I like our library and would love for it to be a usable space to enrich the lives of young students in the future. Especially for the young students of our district."

"I believe that a public library should be one of the cornerstones of any community. Access to information, a gathering space, a social meeting spot, a place to be exposed to learn new ideas, technologies, and skills, a safe space for youth, a support system for all ages."

"Because the Vernon Area Library is an integral and important asset to the community. It promotes literacy, learning, and community involvement, among its other uses/purposes."

"There needs to be more small group (2 - 4 people) private study rooms. The general section of the library in the evenings is loud and chaotic."

"Every other library has meeting rooms for [their] community use except Vernon Library. I wish Vernon Library also has this facility."

"Always liked library services, especially when my kids were in HS. We don't use services as often but like the study area for students."

"Definitely need more space, especially quiet reading space for adult use."

"I would support because I use and value the VAPL regularly for books. I also attend info events at the library. I believe it is a good source of community in our area. I would want to understand more specifics of the project and corresponding costs to ensure I fully support the plan as is."

"I am a frequent user (2x/week). I appreciate all the library's community service activities."

"We use the library frequently and agree with most of the suggested proposals, especially improving the main entrance."

"I usually support any referendum that relates to education and this item falls in that category for me."

"[I] Believe in the library as an educational organization."

"So that we have access to unlimited knowledge."

"Public libraries are a vital part of free access education to multiple generations. They provide some of the most robust options for community engagement, independent learning, and a host of other resources."

"One of Buffalo Grove's best resources."

"It is important for community members to have access to expanded state of the art resources available through VAPLD."

"I am elderly and I appreciate the classes and programs that are offered in my own 'back yard'."

"We need these resources within communities and to help welcome more people into the wonderful establishment that is the library."

"The library definitely needs a better entrance from the parking lot."

"Improvement[s] are needed to continue providing a good service."

"I think the library could benefit from upgrades (more meeting space, more study rooms, makerspace) that other area libraries offer."

"Libraries need to be updated once in a while, depending on their age and structure."

"Changing times. Library greatly needs updates to stay current with other libraries."

"We love the library the way it is but recognize it may need some upgrades."

"We definitely need to update our facilities. It's outdated. Indian Trails has a much nicer facility with a wonderful makers space and private study rooms. Though I no longer have young children, it's needed in our community."

"Relative to other libraries in the Chicago suburbs, some supports such as a makerspace have been missing from our library."

"I understand the value of a library to families and individuals, and I believe Vernon Area lacks when compared with neighboring districts. These funds could help bridge that gap."

"We use the library frequently and can see how improvements could be worthwhile. Some of the young childhood areas get a bit stale after a while and could benefit with improvements and added variety."

"I would love for more space dedicated to children as my toddler loves the library!"

"Would want more spaces for young kids to enjoy."

"Population in our area keeps growing and I often feel crowded in the library."

"I support expanding the library and making it more accessible and useable for the community. Our library is on the small side for a community of our size, and I would like to see the library expand in both size and public offerings."

"I understand that the library requires funds to maintain services; however, the taxes in Lake County are too high. I wish that this wasn't the case. My wife and I are retired and the taxes in Lake County keep going up. I would need a better explanation as to why these funds are necessary."

"While all the suggested improvements all sound worthwhile, the price tag is unsupportable in the current economy. People are already struggling. Real estate taxes would become unaffordable. Can the improvements be broken into phases?"

"I would like to see these improvements; however, our family is having financial hardship with the state of the economy."

"I love the idea of more resources, activities and materials available to the community, but I hesitate since I do not know if it would greatly increase my own personal costs. I am disabled and unable to work so finances are an issue for me."

"I want a better library, but how much will this increase my taxes? You just made some improvements on the library. And we just had a referendum in D102. And we are going to have the county tax too. So much going on!"

"Library has done a fantastic job. Need to know what improvements we are talking about. Necessity issue as I'm on fixed income."

"Somewhat (supportive) at this point since I do not know the financial impact yet to individuals. I support improvements that support bringing the community together, support our youth activities & learning and look forward to knowing more about the plan."

"I'm all for making better community and learning spaces... but the front entrance was JUST completed and there was major construction a few years ago? I would like to know more about current fund balances and more detailed plans."

"I don't know if I would support it because I don't know what the tax increase would be per household. The overall price tag tells me little; what will it cost me as a homeowner?"

"Some of the proposed work seems needed while others are not a high priority for me. The price tag of about 40M is high. There are more vital needs."

"I think the library is fine the way it is, but if professionals think it needs expansion, they know better than I do."

"Sounds like good stuff, but there was a recent renovation there just a few years ago. The cost mentioned is quite large, and people in this area are already upset about their property taxes. If this can be done with minor impact to property taxes, that would be preferred."

Similarly, those opposed to the sample ballot wording were asked in an open-ended format why they would vote “no”.

Virtually all of the opposition reasons center around two themes:

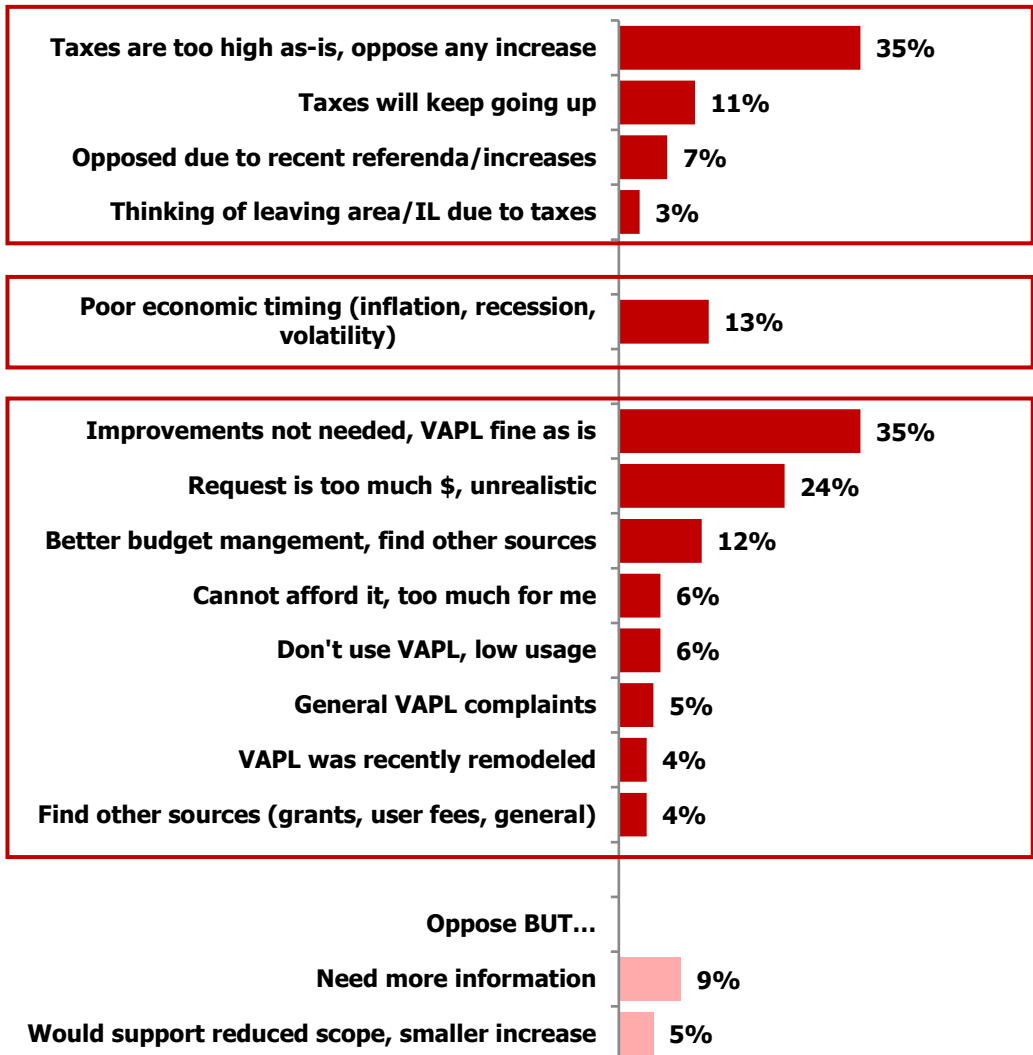
- Property taxes are already too high, and opponents do not want to see an additional increase.
- Opinions that the proposed improvements are not needed or too large in scope/cost, especially among those less likely to use the Library (no direct benefit).

Note that another 13% volunteer that now is not a good time to seek a tax increase/borrow given current levels of inflation, interest rates, or general economic uncertainty.

A few opponents indicate that they might support if they had more information, or if the overall cost/tax impact were lower.

The next few pages provide some examples of these comments.

Top Reasons for Opposing a Potential Referendum (multiple open-ended responses)



"Taxes are too high already and everything is costing more. Can't afford it because I recently retired. Will campaign against future tax increases."

"Taxes are already too high. People are struggling - don't raise the cost of living further. Live within your means as a family would do."

"Our taxes are some of the highest in the country and I do not want 40 million dollars going to a place that is not utilized much by people anymore."

"Local property taxes for my home just went up by >10% this past year. Inflation has been awful, and with US treasury yield hitting the 5s, it is increasingly likely that it will continue to rise. AI is bound to have a negative impact on employment and opportunities in the near term, especially while people adjust to the changes it brings. I'm sure there are plenty more factors that would weigh against such a referendum, growth in the public sector is simply not in the public interest at this point. If the library wants to do some of these projects, I encourage seeking private investment or fund-drives vs. further burdening taxpayers."

"Taxes are already too high, and I am satisfied with the library's offerings. These all seem to be 'nice to have' improvements and not 'must have' improvements. I would be a strong NO vote."

"In my opinion Lake County residents pay too much in taxes. My property taxes are already unaffordable. I restrict buying food for my family because of this. The library is fine and very resourceful as is. No need to tax residents further."

"We already have a high-class facility, and our taxes are already the highest in the area. NO NEW TAXES."

"Every couple of years, our taxes continue to increase, and many people are moving out of Buffalo Grove because of the high tax burden. With that in mind, the amount being proposed for this library project is absolutely absurd... At a time when residents are already struggling with rising taxes and expenses, this project feels excessive and unnecessary. We are absolutely against this proposal and ask that you reconsider the scale and cost of this project. Please take into account the concerns of the residents who are directly affected by these financial decisions."

"Potential increase in taxes."

"We are already taxed heavily for the inefficiencies in school districts, libraries and the other taxing bodies. The library is good; we don't want to pay more. Please cut costs and fund expansion from that."

"Buffalo Grove, specifically D102, passed a referendum recently that increased property taxes on our home by \$400/month, which is absolutely insane, uncalled for, and proof that Buffalo Grove's public officials and appointed leaders are not managing finances effectively. It is wrong to continue to ask Buffalo Grove residents to pay more in taxes for improvements or work that is not necessary, needed or wanted."

"Taxes are way too high already. Don't want to be taxed out of my home."

"The tax burden on the residents in this area is still very high. Before any local entity asks for taxes, they should consider the fact that families are being pushed out of the area because of the increasing cost of supporting the local government that often runs very inefficiently."

"We should wait considering the current economy. Prices need to come down for housing, groceries, utilities, prices at the pump, etc. It would be considered poor form, even 'cruel' to increase the cost of living for anyone currently. We need to live in a way that reflects and respects our needs instead of wants. There should be no unnecessary spending at this time."

"In our current economic times, you want to spend a total of 50 million dollars on expanding the library. Not only is it extremely poor timing, but we taxpayers, are being overtaxed. Do you think we are made of money? And how long is this tax to be in place? These unnecessary taxing actions are driving us away from living here. And more specifically, you want to spend all this money to, among other things, 10 Study Rooms and 150-person Community Room. Don't we have those things in the library and other area buildings already? The library is not a study workspace replacement. The library is not a community room. Keep your focus on being a library."

"Current library is sufficient for my needs, and my tax bill is already getting too expensive."

"The library is very well equipped, and I believe the money is a waste of taxpayers dollars."

"Library currently feels like it is right sized to meet the needs of its citizens."

"100% oppose. The library is beautiful as it is. It does not need any upgrades."

"EVERYTHING about the current library is more than adequate and serves the community well. This would be an unnecessary use of resources."

"39 million; it's too much of our taxpayer's money! You need to get that from other government sources."

"Our grandchildren use the library. \$39 million sounds pretty excessive! Why would I vote for that without knowing the details? How long has it been since the last renovation? How long will this last? How much will it increase my taxes?"

"I oppose this referendum. I think the Vernon Area Public Library already has a lot of space to run programming and to have people study. I think the facilities are already top-notch."

"\$39 million is a lot for improvements. How much is that per household? I've used the library once in the last 5 years. How many people use it? Perhaps better to invest in materials and online services? I was previously surprised the old community meeting room was no longer available."

"Too much money to add to an already nice library."

"Please use the money that goes towards pension plan for this purpose. You can't keep begging for more money while funding pensions while we don't have a pension plan for our own self."

"Most people access information electronically. This is not a necessary project and a waste of taxpayers' money."

"I can barely afford my taxes now."

"I don't nor have I ever used the Library. Most of the Gen Z's that I know rarely use a Library. Close to 40 million dollars seems to be an excessive amount of money."

"Not of direct benefit to me or my family."

"Libraries are under utilized. Our taxes are high enough and should not be raised anymore. All government agencies need to tighten their belts."

"The library already wastes enough money on non-core mission (P.C. Stuff). That said, I know that I'll be robbed for even more of the same. Illinois is fatally broken, I can't wait to escape."

"Per most government projects, no independent oversight."

"I remember the original library from 45 years ago. To me the new library, plus recent modifications, is amazing. It's hard for me to envision the need to make it even bigger."

"Significant monies were spent on the current redesign/expansion. Another update at this point in time doesn't seem necessary, especially at the price tag being proposed."

"Have not been afforded the opportunity to understand the need, the plans or the program. Taxes in this district just rose again this year. Why are the renovations and expansion needed? What other options have been considered? Is \$39M the guaranteed total cost for these changes? What are the line item details? What level of fidelity is the \$39M at? What portion of the \$39M+ is going to be paid with existing library funds?"

"Because you don't tell me how much this will affect my taxes. While I generally support the library, our tax burden is extremely high. This doesn't tell me anything except \$39M. I don't know what it means to me personally."

"Please show the usage of the library by percentage of walk-in users who are adult taxpayers. We have seen the library used by teens as a social place to do their homework. This example does not justify an approval for an expansion referendum."

"Don't understand the cost, need a more itemized list."

"It's a very high-cost estimate in a time money is tight for US citizens. I'd like to see the project more fiscally sustainable."

"Not everything is needed at this time. Money is tight for everyone. I am for the library as I walked many miles to help get it established. We went to Wheeling/Buffalo Grove before we had our own."

"Sounds very expensive! Taxes here are high. What can be done for less? We don't use library that much."

III. Pro-Referenda Statements

Respondents were shown a series of statements in favor of a proposed VAPLD referendum and asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each as a reason to support. As shown on the next few pages, five of the eight statements tested garner roughly half “excellent/good” ratings (from 48% to 52% of respondents).

➤ Consistently, women, recent VAPL users, older residents, and those who vote in Democratic primaries tend to rate the pro-referendum statements favorably.

The strongest pro-reasons are:

- *Improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).*
 - While other pro-statements generally resonate with older voters (ages 65-74 and especially 75+), this one also does well among those ages 45-54.
 - Those in Lincolnshire and/or Lake Forest also tend to rate this a strong reason.
- *Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.*
 - Likewise, Lincolnshire/Lake Forest voters tend to respond favorably.
- *The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.*
 - Surprisingly, households without children tend to rate this an excellent/good reason (53%, vs. just 38% of those with children under age 18).
- *The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.*
- *The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.*
 - Also, more important among older voters and those without children under age 18.

Note also that most of those rating these statements as strong reasons to support the potential referendum are initial supporters (pre-statement). No more than 16% of initial opponents find any of these statements convincing.

Effectiveness of Individual Pro-Referendum Statements

		Overall Total % Excellent/Good	Initial Supporters	Initial Opponents
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).		52%	80%	13%
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.		51%	77%	16%
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.		50%	77%	14%
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.		49%	77%	12%
The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.		48%	71%	16%

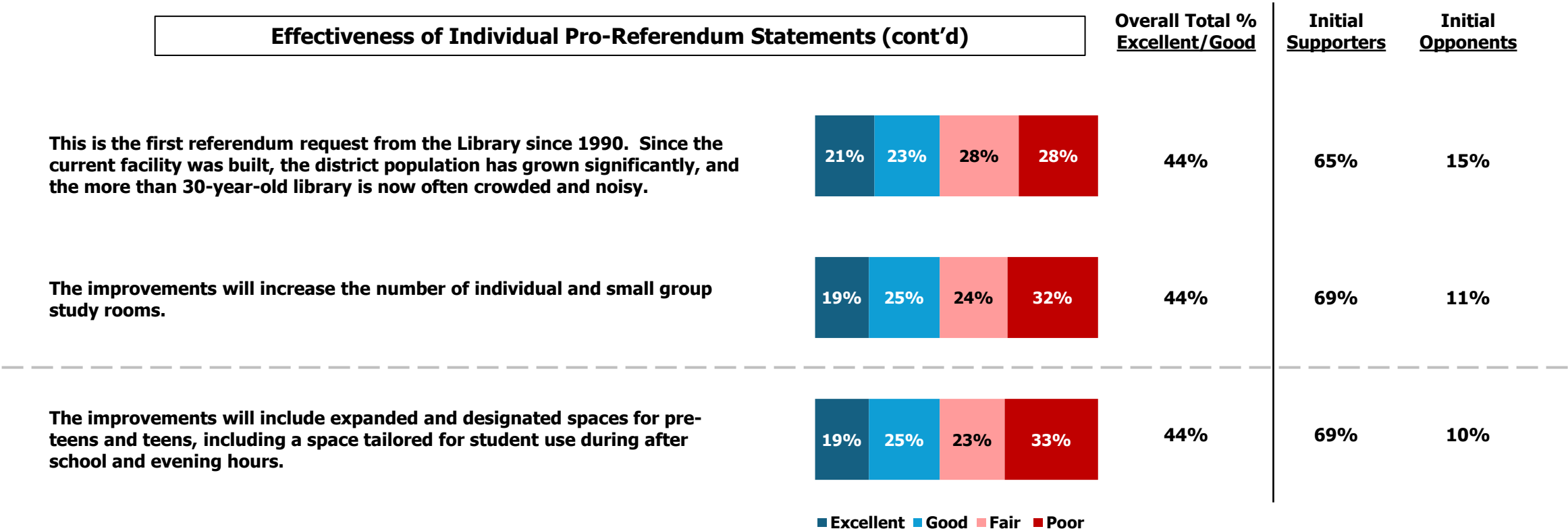
■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor

Significant Differences: Individual Pro-Referendum Statements
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	Significant Differences
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).	(52% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Ages 45-54 (56%), 65-74 (56%), 75+ (61%) ▪ Used Library in past month (57%) ▪ Lincolnshire/Lake Forest residents (59%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (67%)
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.	(51% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Women (56%, vs. 47% of men) ▪ Ages 75+ (63%) ▪ Lincolnshire/Lake Forest residents (56%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (64%)
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.	(50% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Women (56%, vs. 45% of men) ▪ No children in household (53%, vs. 38% of those with children) ▪ Used Library in past month (54%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (67%)
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.	(49% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Women (54%, vs. 46% of men) ▪ Used Library in past month (55%), past 6 months (52%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (67%)
The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.	(48% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Women (54%, vs. 42% of men) ▪ Ages 65-74 (53%), 75+ (56%) ▪ No children in household (50%, vs. 38% of those with children) ▪ Used Library in past month (51%), past 6 months (48%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (62%)

The three remaining pro-referenda statements are deemed less convincing overall (44% “excellent/good” ratings for each).

➤ Consistently, women, recent VAPL users, older residents, and those who vote in Democratic primaries tend to rate the pro-referendum statements favorable.



Significant Differences: Individual Pro-Referendum Statements (cont'd)

	Significant Differences
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.	(44% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Ages 45-54 (52%), 65-74 (47%) ▪ Lived in VAPLD <5 yrs. (53%) ▪ No children in household (47%) ▪ Used Library in past month (48%), past 6 months (47%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (53%)
The improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.	(44% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Ages 45-54 (57%), 75+ (47%) ▪ Lived in VAPLD <10 yrs. (49%) ▪ Used Library in past month (49%) ▪ Lincolnshire/Lake Forest (47%) and Vernon Hills residents (57%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (57%)
The improvements will include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.	(44% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Ages 75+ (53%) ▪ Used Library in past month (49%), past 6 months (47%) ▪ Democratic primary voters (55%)

When asked which one statement represents the strongest pro-referendum statement, two options garner the most responses:

- *This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.*
 - Selected by 25% overall, including nearly a third (31%) of initial supporters and 16% of opponents.
 - Most likely to be strongest among 45- to 54-year-olds (see page 37).

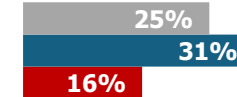
- *Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.*
 - Cited by 22% overall, mostly referendum supporters by a 2:1 margin over opponents (29% vs. 13%, respectively).

Note that the third top response is “none of these are effective/no answer”, cited by 21% overall, including nearly half (48%) of initial opponents. Men and non-users/least frequent Library users tend to give this response (see page 38).

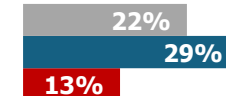
The remaining statements tested are far less convincing overall, with no more than 11% of all respondents selecting any as the “top” reason for support.

Most Effective Pro-Referendum Statements

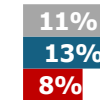
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.



Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.



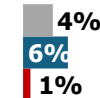
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).



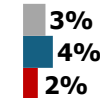
The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.



The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.



The improvements will include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.



The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.



The improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.



None/No Answer



Significant Differences: Most Effective Pro-Referendum Statements

	Significant Differences
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.	(25% Overall) Ages 45-54 (32%)
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.	(22% Overall) - Ages 65+ (30%) - Very likely to vote in November (24%, vs. 5% of somewhat likely voters) - Lincolnshire/Lake Forest (26%) and Vernon Hills residents (30%) - Used Library in past 6 months (32%)
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music performance, etc.) that will also be available for public meetings and events (e.g., Scouts, community groups, recitals, etc.).	(11% Overall) - Women (14%, vs. 8% of men) - Deerfield/Riverwoods residents (18%) - Used Library in past month (14%)
The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.	(9% Overall) Women (12%, vs. 5% of men)

Significant Differences: Most Effective Pro-Referendum Statements (cont'd)

	Significant Differences
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.	(4% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
The improvements will include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.	(3% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.	(3% Overall) Lived in VAPLD <5 yrs. (9%)
The improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.	(1% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>
None/No Answer	(21% Overall) - Men (25%, vs. 16% of women) - Never used VAPL (40%) or last used it in the past year (34%) or two years (43%)

IV. Anti-Referenda Statements

Respondents also evaluated seven anti-referendum statements and rated the effectiveness of each as a reason to be opposed.

Compared to the pre-referendum statements, four of these anti-statements are deemed much more effective. Roughly two-thirds of all respondents (63% to 69%) consider each of the statements below “excellent/good” reasons to be opposed. In addition, roughly half (45% to 51%) of initial supporters tend to agree (along with virtually all opponents – see next page).

These top anti-statements mostly center around opposition to any tax increase, the actual annual increase/impact of one’s property taxes (give the size of the request), and poor economic timing. Most of these resonate especially with men, more middle-aged voters (45-64), those with children, and the least frequent or non-VAPL visitors (see pages 43-44).

- *Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.*
- *If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home’s value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.*
 - Note that at least half (50%+) of initial supporters concede that both are effective reasons to oppose a potential referendum. In addition, 56% of Democratic primary voters also agree that the \$32.74 per \$100K home value is a good reason to be opposed.
- *With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.*
 - An especially strong reason among somewhat newer local residents, and voters in Buffalo Grove/Prairie View.
- *\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.*
 - Stronger among Deerfield/Riverwoods and Long Grove residents, and among 52% of Democratic primary voters.

The three remaining anti-statements are less convincing, resonating mostly among infrequent/non-Library users and younger/more middle-aged voters.

➤ *I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.*

- Most likely to garner favorable response among Long Grove and Vernon Hills residents.

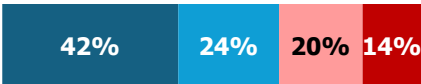
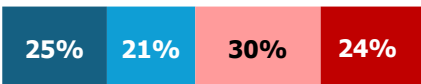
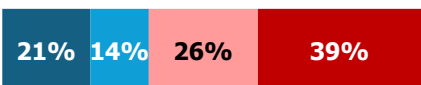
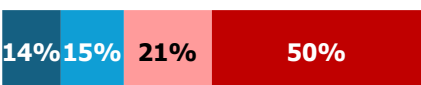
➤ *I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.*

- This is one of the weakest opposition statements, and a further reflection of the high regard and favorable overall opinions that voters have of the Library (a relatively strong level of trust).
- Only 35% overall feel this is an excellent/good reason to be opposed, mostly coming from referendum opponents. Only 13% of supporters feel this is a good reason.

➤ *My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.*

- Non-Library usage is deemed the weakest reason to be opposed. Only a majority of non-VAPL visitors tend to align with this reason (57%). Among all other segments, 50% or less feel this is an “excellent/good” anti-referendum statement.

Effectiveness of Individual Anti-Referendum Statements

		Overall Total % Excellent/Good	Initial Supporters	Initial Opponents
Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.		69%	50%	93%
If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.		68%	51%	91%
With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.		66%	47%	91%
\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.		63%	45%	88%
I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.		46%	20%	81%
I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.		35%	13%	64%
My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.		29%	16%	46%

■ Excellent
 ■ Good
 ■ Fair
 ■ Poor

Significant Differences: Individual Anti-Referendum Statements

	Significant Differences
Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.	(69% Excellent/Good Reason) - Men (74%, vs. 64% of women) - Ages 45-54 (77%), 55-64 (74%) - Households with children (78%, vs. 67% of those without children), especially ages 6-12 (80%) and 13-18 (84%) - Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (75%) - Never used Library (86%) or last visit was over 2 years ago (80%) - Republican primary (77%) and non-primary voters (77%)
If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	(68% Excellent/Good Reason) - Men (72%, vs. 64% of women) - Ages 65-74 (71%) - Households with children ages 6 to 12 (83%) - Somewhat likely to vote in November (83%, vs. 67% of very likely voters) - Never used Library (86%) or last visit was 2+ years ago (87%) - Republican primary (83%) and non-primary voters (75%)
With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	(66% Excellent/Good Reason) - Ages 45-64 (70%) - Lived in VAPLD <5 yrs. (71%), 10-19 yrs. (71%) - Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (71%) - Never used Library (79%) or last visit was past year (75%) or 2+ years ago (83%) - Republican primary (74%) and non-primary voters (71%)
\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	(63% Excellent/Good Reason) - Ages 55-64 (71%) - Lived in VAPLD 30+ yrs. (75%) - Deerfield/Riverwoods (72%) and Long Grove residents (74%) - Last used Library 2+ years ago (78%) - Republican primary voters (84%)

Significant Differences: Individual Anti-Referendum Statements (cont'd)
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	Significant Differences
I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	(46% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Men (53%, vs. 40% of women) ▪ Ages 65-74 (51%) ▪ Long Grove (50%) and Vernon Hills residents (52%) ▪ Republican primary (68%) and non-primary voters (57%)
I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	(35% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Under age 45 (42%), 45-64 (40%) ▪ Buffalo Grove/Prairie View residents (41%) ▪ Households with children ages 6-12 (52%) ▪ Republican primary (54%) and non-primary voters (41%)
My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	(29% Excellent/Good Reason) ▪ Ages 45-54 (31%), 65-74 (31%) ▪ Lived in VAPLD 10-19 yrs. (40%) ▪ Never used Library (57%) or last visit was 2+ years ago (51%) ▪ Republican primary voters (40%)

Four anti-referendum statements are considered most convincing to at least 15% of all voters – including roughly one in five initial supporters (17% to 25% selecting one of these as the best anti-reason).

The top opposition statements are:

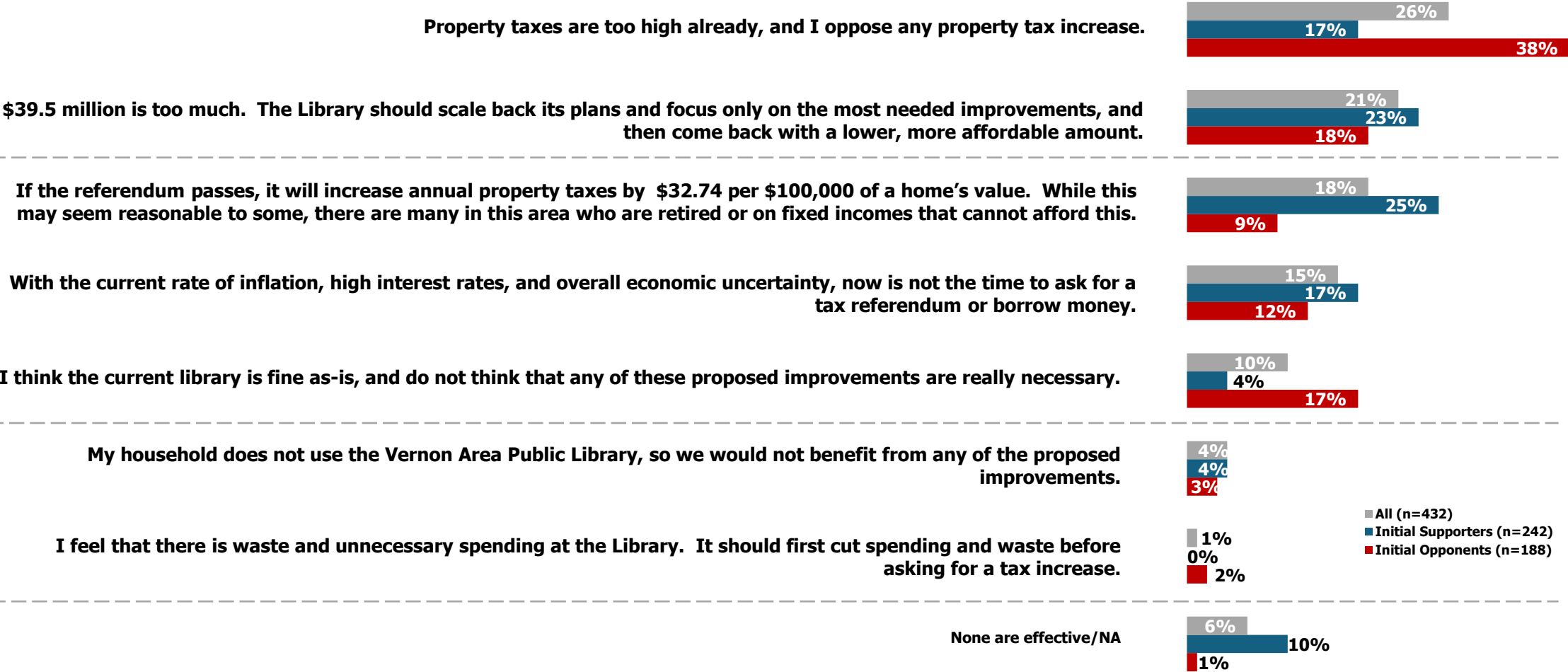
- *Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.*
 - By far the #1 reason among initial referendum opponents (cited by 38% of those opposed -- the most anti-tax voters). Higher response tends to come from men, voters aged 55-64, and somewhat likely voters (see page 48).
 - Seventeen percent of supporters agree that this is the best opposition statement.
- *\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.*
 - Overall, 21% feel this is the best reason to be opposed – with consistent responses from both supporters and opponents (little difference).
 - Note that households with younger children (under age 5) tend to align with this statement.
- *If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.*
 - Identifying the actual property tax increase/impact from the proposed referendum is especially effective among initial supporters, and also past Democratic primary voters.
- *With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.*
 - Those who say that the current economy is a deterrent to support tends to come from middle-aged voters (45-64) and again Democratic primary voters.

Note that the relatively few who feel the current Library is “fine as-is” and does not need improvement (10% best anti-statement) tend to be exclusively referendum opponents (17%). Only 4% of supporters align with this statement.

While half of the initial opponents found none of the pro- statements convincing (as reported on page 36), virtually all of the initial referendum supporters (90%) found at least one of the anti-reasons to be effective statements against the question.

➤ Only 10% of supporters said none of these anti- reasons are effective, along with 12% of voters ages 75+.

Most Effective Anti-Referendum Statements



Significant Differences: Most Effective Anti-Referendum Statements

	Significant Differences
Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.	(26% Overall) - Ages 55-64 (30%) - Men (32%, vs. 20% of women) - Somewhat likely voters in November (41%, vs. 24% of very likely voters)
\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	(21% Overall) - Ages 45-54 (30%) - Households with children under age 5 (44%) - Lived in VAPLD <5 yrs. (28%), 30+ yrs. (28%) - Last visited Library in past month (23%), 6 months ago (20%), past year (27%)
If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	(18% Overall) - Ages 65+ (23%) - Democratic primary voters (27%)
With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	(15% Overall) - Ages 45-64 (19%) - Never visited Library (31%) or did so 2+ years ago (24%) - Democratic primary voters (20%)
I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	(10% Overall) <i>< no statistically meaningful differences ></i>

Significant Differences: Most Effective Anti-Referendum Statements (cont'd)

	Significant Differences
My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	(4% Overall) < no statistically meaningful differences >
I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library. It should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	(1% Overall) < no statistically meaningful differences >
None are effective/NA	(6% Overall) ▪ Ages 75+ (12%)

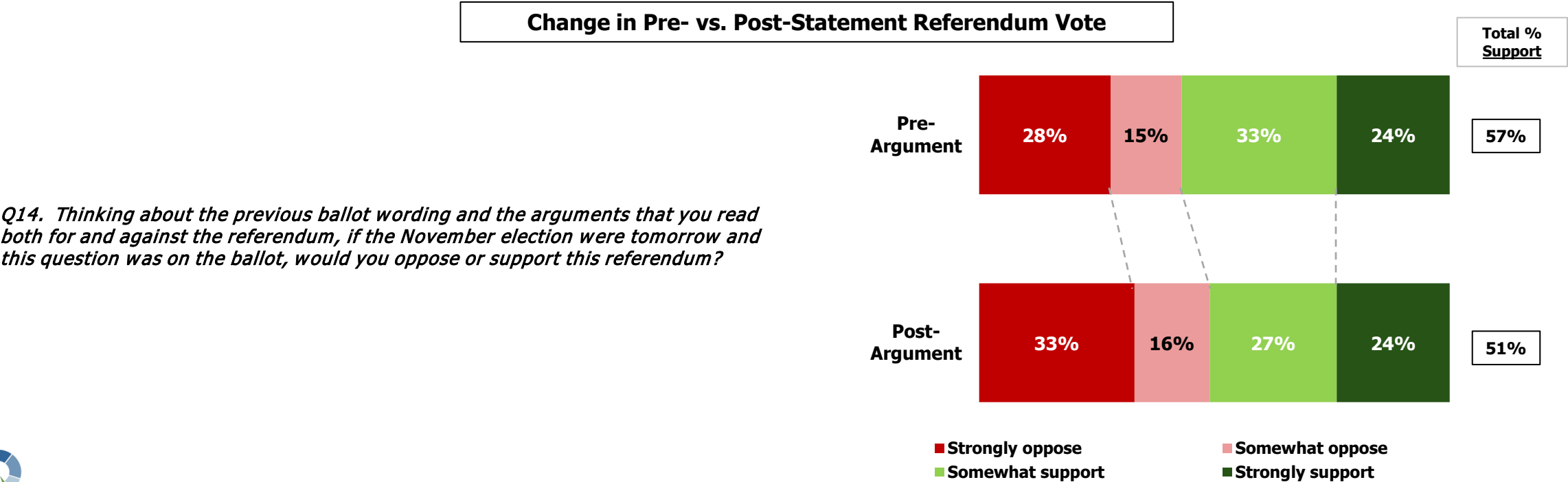
V. Post-Statement Referenda Vote and Top Priorities

After hearing the statements for both sides, there is a clear shift to opposition with only about half (51%) expressing support for a potential referendum (down from 57% initially).

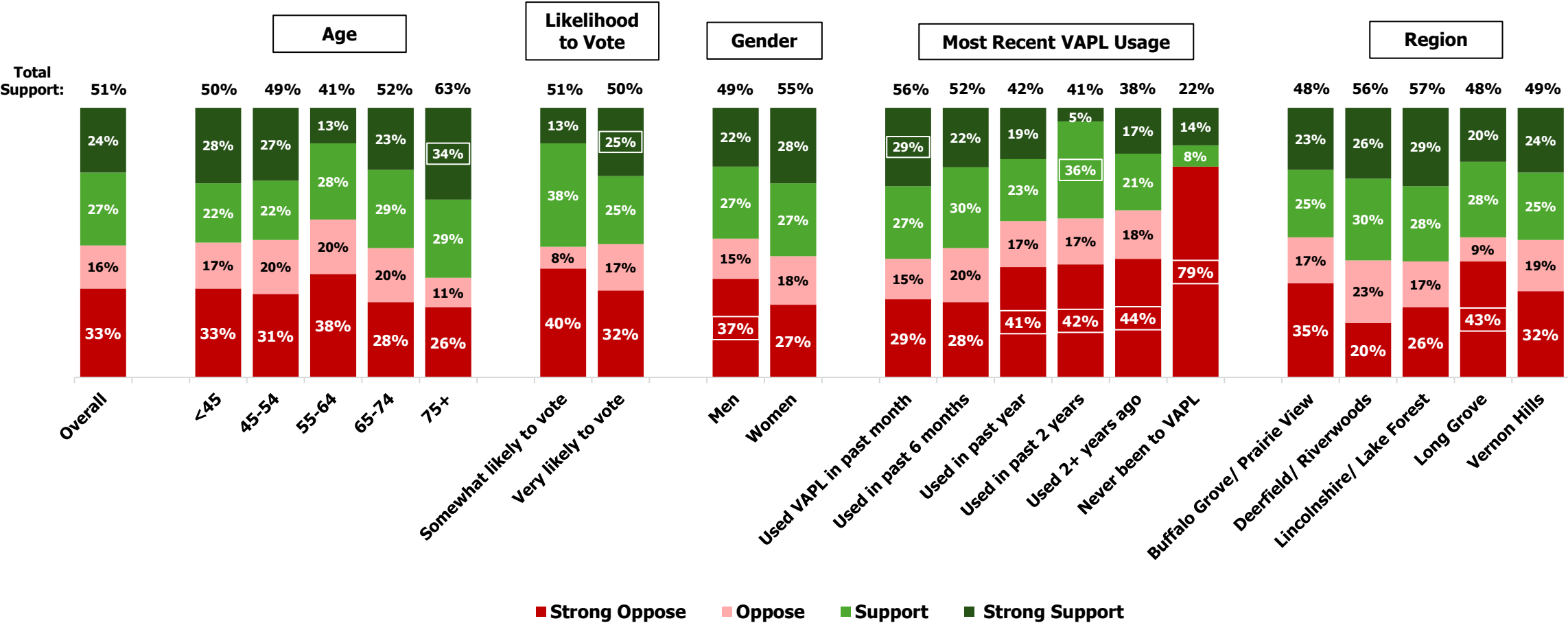
➤ The level of “strong” support holds after the statements (24%), but a third are now strongly opposed (up from 28% pre-statements). The biggest drop is among “not strong supporters”.

As shown in the next page, the post-statement opposition is by far strongest among less frequent and non-Library visitors, and Long Grove residents.

➤ Note that while men remain more strongly opposed than women (37% vs. 27%, respectively), the level of strong opposition is 5% higher for both genders compared to the pre-statement vote (32% vs. 22%, respectively).



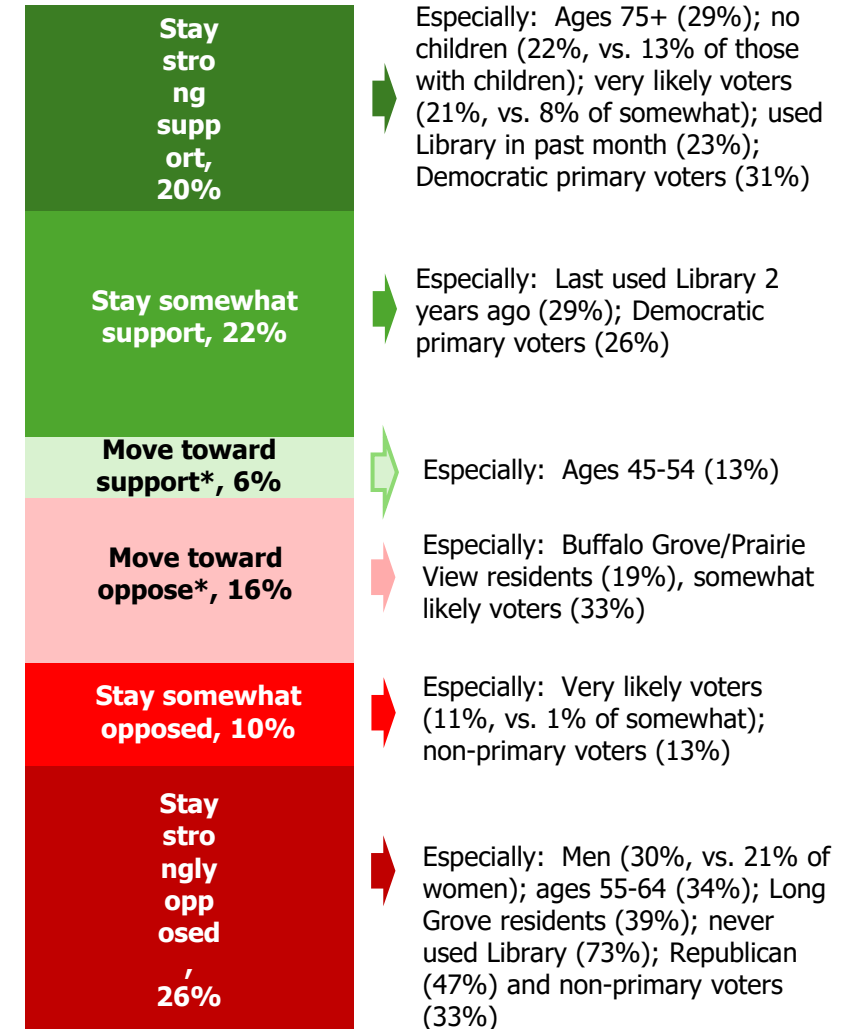
Post-Statement Vote by Key Segments



Most voters stayed with their initial position after reading the statements (very few change their mind).

- Overall, 6% shifted toward support/away from opposition (including 13% of those aged 45-54). The top pro-referendum statements cited by this relatively small group (n=25) are:
 - **51%:** *This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.*
 - **17%:** *Having an excellent public library offering a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live and protects/improves property values.*
 - **15%:** *The improvements include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer/safer handicapped parking, and safer drop-off and pick-up area.*
- Nearly three times as many (16%) went the other way, moving toward opposition. The top anti-statements for this group (n=71) are clearly:
 - **34%:** *Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase.*
 - **25%:** *\$39.5 million is too much; the Library should scale back its plans, focus on most needed improvements, and come back with a lower, more affordable amount.*
 - **20%:** *If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.*

Shifts in Pre-/Post-Statement Vote Questions

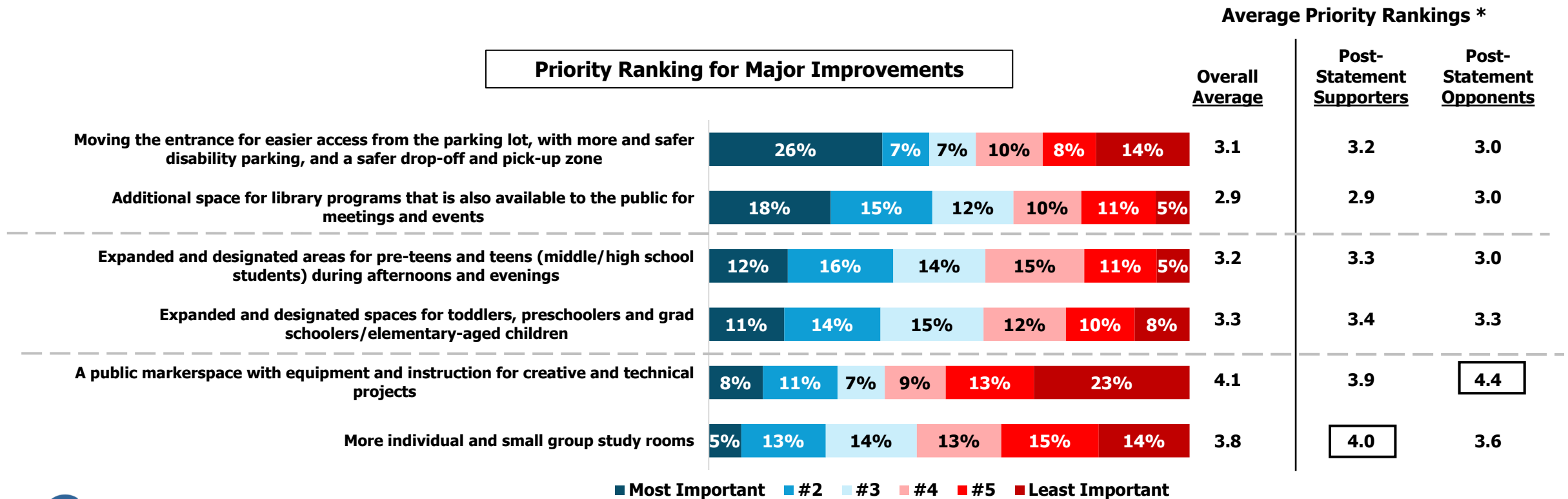


When asked to rank order six specific proposed improvements, no clear option emerges. The top priorities are:

- Moving the Library entrance and provided expanded/safer access (the #1 priority).
- Adding program space available to the public (more of a secondary priority).

Expanding and designing spaces specifically for younger children as well as pre-teens/teens are deemed equally important.

Note that overall, 20% said “none” are important to them (including 30% of post-statement opponents). Note also that opponents are least interested in adding a makerspace (ranked further down the list).



Appendix: Topline Summary/Questionnaire

Topline Survey Results for Vernon Area Public Library District (6/10/2026)
(n=433 registered likely voters; dates of interviewing April 20-May 26, 2026)

Q1. How long have you lived at your current address?

	Overall
Total	431
Unweighted Total	430
Less than 5 years	14%
5 to 9 years	20%
10 to 19 years	21%
20 to 29 years	20%
30+ years	24%
Mean	18.38
Median	15.00

Q2. Are you registered to vote at your current address?

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
Yes	100%
No	-

Q3. How likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming general election.

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
Very likely	91%
Somewhat likely	9%
Not very likely	-
Not at all likely	-

Q4. Please rate your overall opinion of Vernon Area Public Library below.

	Overall
Total	416
Unweighted Total	412
Highest regard (9-10)	57%
Great (8)	17%
Good (6-7)	12%
Neutral (5)	10%
Poor (0-4)	3%
10	37%
9	20%
8	17%
7	8%
6	4%
5	10%
4	1%
3	1%
2	*%
1	1%
0	*%
Mean	8.29
Median	9.00
Unfamiliar	4%

Q5. When was the last time that you or someone in your household visited the Library?

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
In the past month	55%
In the past six months	21%
In the past year/past 12 months	6%
In the past 2 years	5%
More than 2 years ago	10%
I have never been to/used the Vernon Area Public Library	3%

Q6. Have you heard or read anything about a potential referendum for the Library?

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
Yes	22%
No	71%
Do not recall	7%

Q8. If the November election were tomorrow, would you oppose or support this referendum?

	Overall
Total	431
Unweighted Total	431
SUPPORT	57%
OPPOSE	43%
Strongly support	24%
Somewhat support	33%
Somewhat oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	28%

PERCENTBRANCH Q10A/11A and Q10B/11B

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
Branch A	46%
Branch B	54%

Q10_1. The improvements include easier access from the parking lot and closer parking - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	426
TOP 2 BOX	48%
Excellent reason	21%
Good reason	27%
Fair reason	21%
Poor reason	31%

Q10_2. The improvements include expanded and designated spaces for pre-teens and teens - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	426
TOP 2 BOX	44%
Excellent reason	19%
Good reason	25%
Fair reason	23%
Poor reason	33%

Q10_3. Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services increase quality of life - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	426
Unweighted Total	424
TOP 2 BOX	51%
Excellent reason	23%
Good reason	28%
Fair reason	21%
Poor reason	28%

Q10_4. The improvements include a public makerspace - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	426
TOP 2 BOX	49%
Excellent reason	23%
Good reason	26%
Fair reason	21%
Poor reason	30%

Q10_5. The improvements include expanded spaces for children with furniture and activities for children - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	424
Unweighted Total	422
TOP 2 BOX	50%
Excellent reason	21%
Good reason	29%
Fair reason	23%
Poor reason	27%

Q10_6. The improvements include additional space for library programs that will be available for meetings and events - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	428
Unweighted Total	427
TOP 2 BOX	52%
Excellent reason	27%
Good reason	25%
Fair reason	23%
Poor reason	25%

Q10_7. The improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	426
TOP 2 BOX	44%
Excellent reason	19%
Good reason	25%
Fair reason	24%
Poor reason	32%

Q10_8. The district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to support a referendum.

	Overall
Total	424
Unweighted Total	424
TOP 2 BOX	44%
Excellent reason	21%
Good reason	23%
Fair reason	28%
Poor reason	28%

Q11. Please indicate the ONE statement that you feel represents the best reason to support the referendum.

	Overall
Total	432
Unweighted Total	431
This is the first referendum request from the Library since 1990. Since the current facility was built, the district population has grown significantly, and the more than 30-year-old library is now often crowded and noisy.	25%
Having an excellent public library that offers a wide range of services helps make the area a more desirable place to live, which protects and improves our property values.	22%
The improvements will include additional space for library programs (e.g., story times, book discussions, lectures, music)	11%
The improvements will include relocating the entrance for easier access from the parking lot, closer and safer handicapped parking, and a safer drop-off and pick-up area.	9%
The improvements will include a public makerspace, which will provide equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects.	4%
The improvements will include expanded and designated space for pre-teens and teens, including a space tailored for student use during after school and evening hours.	3%
The improvements will include expanded spaces for children with age-appropriate furniture and interactive activities for toddlers, preschoolers and grade schoolers.	3%
The improvements will increase the number of individual and small group study rooms.	1%
None of the above	21%

Q12_1. Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	429
Unweighted Total	428
TOP 2 BOX	69%
Excellent reason	50%
Good reason	19%
Fair reason	18%
Poor reason	13%

Q12_2. We do not use the Vernon Area Public Library - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	422
Unweighted Total	420
TOP 2 BOX	29%
Excellent reason	14%
Good reason	15%
Fair reason	21%
Poor reason	50%

Q12_3. With the cost of living, now is not the time to ask for money - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	427
TOP 2 BOX	66%
Excellent reason	42%
Good reason	24%
Fair reason	20%
Poor reason	14%

Q12_4. I feel there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	424
Unweighted Total	422
TOP 2 BOX	35%
Excellent reason	21%
Good reason	14%
Fair reason	26%
Poor reason	39%

Q12_5. \$39 5 million is too much, needs a more affordable amount - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	424
Unweighted Total	421
TOP 2 BOX	63%
Excellent reason	41%
Good reason	22%
Fair reason	26%
Poor reason	11%

Q12_6. There are many in this area that cannot afford this - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	428
TOP 2 BOX	68%
Excellent reason	43%
Good reason	25%
Fair reason	22%
Poor reason	9%

Q12_7. I think the current library is fine as-is - Please indicate how effective each is as a reason to oppose a referendum.

	Overall
Total	428
Unweighted Total	427
TOP 2 BOX	46%
Excellent reason	25%
Good reason	21%
Fair reason	30%
Poor reason	24%

Q13. Please indicate the ONE statement that you feel represents the best reason to oppose the referendum.

	Overall
Total	432
Unweighted Total	432
Property taxes are too high already, and I oppose any property tax increase	26%
\$39.5 million is too much. The Library should scale back its plans and focus only on the most needed improvements, and then come back with a lower, more affordable amount.	21%
If the referendum passes, it will increase annual property taxes by \$32.74 per \$100,000 of a home's value. While this may seem reasonable to some, there are many in this area who are retired or on fixed incomes that cannot afford this.	18%
With the current rate of inflation, high interest rates, and overall economic uncertainty, now is not the time to ask for a tax referendum or borrow money.	15%
I think the current library is fine as-is, and do not think that any of these proposed improvements are really necessary.	10%
My household does not use the Vernon Area Public Library, so we would not benefit from any of the proposed improvements.	4%
I feel that there is waste and unnecessary spending at the Library; it should first cut spending and waste before asking for a tax increase.	1%
None of the above	6%

Q14. If the November election were tomorrow, would you oppose or support this referendum?

	Overall
Total	432
Unweighted Total	431
SUPPORT	51%
OPPOSE	49%
Strongly support	24%
Somewhat support	27%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Strongly oppose	33%

Q15. TOP CHOICE - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total Answering	432
Unweighted Total	432
Moving the entrance for easier access from the parking lot with more parking	26%
Expanded and designated spaces for toddlers, preschoolers, and grade schoolers/elementary aged children	11%
Expanded and designated areas for pre-teens and teens (middle and high school students) during afternoons and evenings	12%
More individual and small group study rooms	5%
Additional space for library programs that is also available to the public for meetings and events	18%
A public makerspace with equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects	8%
No opinion	20%

Q15. TOP 3 - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total Answering	433
Unweighted Total	433
Moving the entrance for easier access from the parking lot with more parking	41%
Expanded and designated spaces for toddlers, preschoolers, and grade schoolers/elementary aged children	39%
Expanded and designated areas for pre-teens and teens (middle and high school students) during afternoons and evenings	41%
More individual and small group study rooms	32%
Additional space for library programs that is also available to the public for meetings and events	46%
A public makerspace with equipment and instruction for creative and technical projects	26%
No opinion	20%

Q15_1. Moving the entrance for easier access from the parking lot with more parking - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	315
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	26%
2	7%
3	7%
4	10%
5	8%
6	14%
Mean	3.12

Q15_2. Expanded spaces for children - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	304
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	11%
2	14%
3	15%
4	12%
5	10%
6	8%
Mean	3.32

Q15_3. Expanded and designated areas for pre-teens and teens during evenings - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	312
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	12%
2	16%
3	14%
4	15%
5	11%
6	5%
Mean	3.18

Q15_4. More individual and small group study rooms - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	316
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	5%
2	13%
3	14%
4	13%
5	15%
6	14%
Mean	3.82

Q15_5. Additional space for library programs available for meetings and events - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	311
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	18%
2	15%
3	12%
4	10%
5	11%
6	5%
Mean	2.93

Q15_6. A public makerspace for creative and technical projects - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Total Answering	307
Unweighted Total	433
1 (most important)	8%
2	11%
3	7%
4	9%
5	13%
6	23%
Mean	4.10

Q15_99. No opinion - Please rank order each in order of importance.

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
None/NA	20%

Q16A. Please indicate the two sources you rely on the most for information.

	Overall
Total	430
Unweighted Total	429
Your Village newsletter	37%
Your Village website	7%
Local news	8%
Vernon Area Public Library website	29%
Vernon Area Public Library newsletter or emails	66%
Vernon Area Public Library social media	8%
Other website(s)	1%
Other non-Vernon Area Public Library social media	5%
Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, etc.	20%
Other source(s)	3%

Q16B. Which source of information do you rely on the most?

	Overall
Total	423
Unweighted Total	422
Your Village newsletter	16%
Your Village website	3%
Vernon Area Public Library website	11%
Vernon Area Public Library newsletter or emails	48%
Vernon Area Public Library social media (e.g. Instagram, Facebook)	3%
Other website(s), which website(s):	1%
Other non-Vernon Area Public Library social media (e.g. local groups, agencies)	2%
Word of mouth from friends, neighbors, etc.	8%
Other source(s), please specify:	2%
Local news (print, digital, TV, streaming), which papers/stations/sources:	5%

Q17. In what year were you born?

	Overall
Total	421
Unweighted Total	421
<35	13%
35-44	11%
45-54	18%
55-64	17%
65-74	23%
75+	18%
Mean	57.75
Median	60.00

Q18. Please note your gender.

	Overall
Total	433
Unweighted Total	433
Male	46%
Female	52%
Prefer to self-describe:	2%

Q19. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

	Overall
Total	427
Unweighted Total	428
One (I live alone)	20%
Two	39%
Three	17%
Four	18%
Five	5%
Six or more	2%
Mean	2.53
Median	2.00

Q20_1. Ages 5 and under? - How many people in your household are...

	Overall
Total	218
Unweighted Total	190
None	82%
One	15%
Two	1%
Three	2%
Four or more	-

Q20_2. Ages 6 to 12? - How many people in your household are...

	Overall
Total	222
Unweighted Total	195
None	78%
One	18%
Two	4%
Three	-
Four or more	-

Q20_3. Ages 13 to 17? - How many people in your household are...

	Overall
Total	226
Unweighted Total	201
None	76%
One	16%
Two	8%
Three	*%
Four or more	*%

Q20_4. Ages 65 or older? - How many people in your household are...

	Overall
Total	302
Unweighted Total	299
None	46%
One	12%
Two	38%
Three	2%
Four or more	2%

Q21. Which of the following identifies your race.

	Overall
Total	423
Unweighted Total	423
Asian	13%
Black or African American	1%
Hispanic or Latino	2%
Middle Eastern or North African	2%
White	84%
Other	3%

Exhibit P

Final Voter Survey Invoice and Accounts-Payable Email — July 10, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.



Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>

Final survey invoice and follow-up

2 messages

Jeff Andreasen <j.andreasen@aqityresearch.com>
To: Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>

Fri, Jul 10, 2026 at 8:39 AM

Good morning: Attached is the final invoice for the voter survey.

I'm also interested in your take on the presentation to the Board, and interested in any follow up discussion or takeaways from the survey results.

Thanks much!

Jeff

Jeff Andreasen, President

aQity Research & Insights, Inc.

1330B Sherman Ave.

Evanston, IL 60201

Cell (best): [REDACTED]

Office: 847-424-4171, ext. 218



 aQity Research Invoice #26043 071026 VA22601-A.pdf
105K

Anne Rasmussen <arasmussen@vapld.info>
To: Accounts Payable <accountspayable@vapld.info>

Fri, Jul 10, 2026 at 8:43 AM

aQity final bill
[Quoted text hidden]



aQity Research Invoice #26043 071026 VA22601-A.pdf

105K

Exhibit Q

Building Project Website Complete Archive — July 24, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.

Reimagining Our Library: A Space for Every Story

From a humble classroom to the current building, Vernon Area Public Library District spaces and buildings have evolved over our first half-century of service. As we look to the future, now is the time to reimagine space on our campus.

For more than two years, planning has been underway to evolve the library buildings and grounds, to provide updated and sustainable public spaces for you to meet, study, collaborate, create, and play. We are excited to now share the Schematic Design for your consideration.



Key features of the proposed renovation include:

- **Dedicated Makerspace:** Hands-on STEM learning and creative tools.

- **10 Study Rooms:** Addressing rising demand for quiet workspace.
- **150-person Community Room:** A versatile space for large programs and public use.
- **Enhanced Children's Area:** A purpose-built room for storytimes.
- **New HVAC, Lower Bills:** Modernizing the 30-year-old heating and cooling systems to lower energy consumption and preserve air quality.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Including a more central entrance closer to parking.

Why is this project needed?

While our current facility has served us well since 1993, both our population and the ways we use library resources have evolved beyond the building's original design.

Since the current building opened, we have seen a 30% increase in residents, our collections have grown by 63%, and attendance at our programs has more than doubled. The current facility was intended to meet community needs for 20 years; it is now more than 30 years old and demand regularly exceeds our capacity:

- **Space Shortages:** General seating is often limited during afternoons and evenings. Study rooms are in such high demand that use must be limited exclusively to cardholders.
- **Program Overflow:** Our storytimes outgrew their dedicated room years ago and now occupy the main meeting room three mornings of most weeks. With rooms in use for library programs, we had to stop offering space for community groups, recitals, and other local uses.
- **Evolving Expectations:** In 1993, a computerized catalog was a major innovation. Today, patrons expect purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Several building systems, including the 33-year-old HVAC system, are at the end of their life. Additionally, parts of the campus require modernizing to ensure equal access for all residents.

After two years of community input, we have a proposed design that addresses these challenges. The plan suggests adding 22,000 square feet of public space — achieving half of that by bringing the unused annex building back into code and connecting it to the main building.

Financial Stewardship

The library has not requested funds for capital improvements since 1990.

The library expects to cover approximately 25% of the total project cost (\$13.5 million) through the library’s savings, existing budget, and federal incentives.

To fund the remainder, the library board is considering placing a referendum question on the November ballot to issue 20-year general obligation bonds totaling \$39.5 million. For a home worth \$500,000, the estimated tax impact over the life of these bonds is approximately \$164 per year — about \$13.64 per month.

Estimated Tax Impact Calculator

Fair Market Value of Home

\$500,000

For purposes of this property tax impact estimator, use the fair market value from your property tax bill. Visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information.

Exemptions

Select applicable exemptions to more accurately estimate the tax impact for your situation.

- ☒ General Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Senior Homestead Exemption
- ☐ Returning Veteran's Exemption
- ☐ Disability (HEPD)

Equalized Assessed Value \$166,667

This value is used to determine property tax impact. EAV is ⅓ of Fair Market Value.

Property Tax Exemptions \$-8,000

Net Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) \$158,667

Annual Tax Impact
\$155.85

Annual impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Monthly Tax Impact
\$12.99

Monthly impact of the proposed bond on your property tax.

Property taxes are based on your home's value as determined by the assessor. You can visit [Lake County Property Tax Inquiry](#) to locate this information for your home.

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	—
Simply put, we have outgrown our current space. Our main building was constructed in 1993 and designed to meet the community's needs for 20 years. It is now over 30 years old, and daily use exceeds what it was originally built to handle. The way our community uses the library has shifted. Beyond traditional library use and checkouts, modern libraries are expected to provide purpose-built spaces for collaboration, creation, and connection. Our neighboring libraries offer their patrons a makerspace for hands-on learning and creation, ample spaces for both group collaboration and individual focus, and an expanded youth space for imaginative play and exploration — things we do not have in our current footprint. Over the past several years, we have conducted community research and conceptual planning to identify gaps in our current facilities. This proposed plan would address those	
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	—
Instead of starting completely from scratch, this plan proposes to use our existing resources by integrating our two separate buildings into a single structure. By upgrading the current Annex building and grounds, we would add a modern makerspace, flexible programming areas, and new community meeting rooms. The design would expand general seating, increase study room capacity, and build a purpose-built, adequately sized Youth Program Room for children's activities.	

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened? Since 1994, our community and library usage have grown significantly: • 30% more residents (growing from 33,923 to 44,002). • 63% more books and print materials on the shelves. • Attendance at library programs has more than doubled, growing to over 44,500 attendees per year.	—
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently? • In 2021, we expedited part of what was already in the long-term plan: we added a drive-up window. That project allowed us to ensure continued access to library services during the uncertainty of the pandemic. • Almost a decade earlier, in 2012–2013, we did an interior refresh. This project replaced furniture, shifted some interior walls, and updated aging incandescent lighting to energy-efficient fixtures, which have already paid for themselves through energy savings. Neither of these updates expanded our footprint or addressed the Annex. Both projects were paid for under the existing library budget.	—

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
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Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	—
• General Seating & Quiet Rooms: Often filled to total capacity, with no seating available most afternoons and evenings. • Study Rooms: Due to demand, we’ve had to limit use strictly to cardholders. This impacts local students who attend nearby schools but live just outside our taxing district. • Youth Programs: Storytime attendance exceeds the capacity of the Youth Program Room, forcing us to displace other events to use the main meeting room. • Community Groups: With meeting rooms in frequent use for library programs, we no longer offer space to outside community groups or local events, such as piano recitals.	

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn’t the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	—
If the board decides to move forward with the referendum and if the referendum were to pass, the estimated tax impact would be roughly \$33 a year (or \$2.73 a month) for every \$100,000 of your home’s market value. Use the Tax Impact Estimation Tool above for a more refined estimate for your home value and exemptions.	

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system? Using the library's existing savings — not new bond funds — we are already planning a near-term upgrade to our 33-year-old HVAC system. By potentially tying this infrastructure update into the larger renovation, we could install energy-efficient, sustainable systems that will use less energy overall while improving the library's environmental footprint.	—
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass?	+
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass? If the proposed referendum is not on the ballot or it does not pass, the library would prioritize its capital fund and other available funding to replace the library's 30+ year-old HVAC system and focus on safety improvements for the library campus.	—
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass?	+
When might this be on the ballot? No decision has been made to place a referendum question on the ballot. We expect the library board to decide in August whether they will move forward with placing a referendum question on the November 2026 ballot.	—
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass?	+
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say? The legally required bond wording on the ballot would describe exactly how the funds will be used (the scope of the project) and the maximum amount of money the library would be authorized to borrow. Should the board decide to move forward with a referendum question, we will post the exact, official ballot language here as soon as it is finalized by our legal and bond counsel so you know exactly what to expect when you step into the voting booth.	—
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	+

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Need

Why does the library need a building project?	+
How much has library usage grown since the current building opened?	+
What specific space shortages is the library currently facing?	+

About the Plan

What would the new library plan change?	+
Didn't the library just do a renovation recently?	+

About Finances and the Ballot

How much would this increase my property tax bill?	+
Would any of this money go toward regular maintenance, like the heating and cooling system?	+
What would happen if the board decides not to pursue a referendum or if it does not pass?	+
When might this be on the ballot?	+
What would the language on the ballot actually say?	+
Are public funds being used to campaign for this project?	—
No. By law, public funds and library resources can only be used to provide objective, factual information to the public about the building plan and the ballot language. Public money is never used to advocate for a specific election outcome.	

Online Feedback

What do you think? Do the plans successfully address the priorities that the public has identified? Is there anything we missed? What do you like best? What is most important to you?

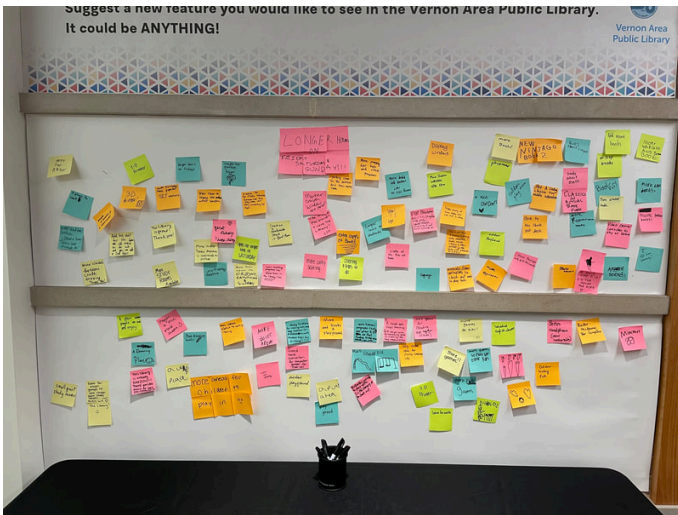
SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Past Feedback Events

A look at previous public and staff feedback sessions.













Stay Informed

Updates will be posted to this webpage as they are available. To receive email with news and to potentially be invited to small-group feedback sessions, sign up using the link below.

[SIGN UP FOR UPDATES](#)

Location

Vernon Area Public Library
300 Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, IL 60069

[View Map](#)

847-634-3650

Exhibit R

District FOIA Response to Brian Costin — August 7, 2026

The following pages reproduce the supplied record.



Vernon Area Public Library

August 7, 2026

VIA EMAIL: (bcostin@afphq.org)

Re: Response Letter – Freedom of Information Act

Dear Mr. Costin:

The Vernon Area Public Library District (“Library”) received your July 24, 2026 Illinois Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) request seeking copies of the following records:

“This request includes records in the possession, custody, or control of the Library District, including records held by officers, employees, Board members, attorneys, consultants, contractors, vendors, or agents acting on behalf of the Library District. I am asking for documents from May 19th to today.

1. **Vendor, contract, and payment records.** All vendor contracts, agreements, scopes of work, purchase orders, invoices, payment records, procurement records, board approvals, and legal review records related to aQity Research, the voter survey, referendum polling, message testing, ballot-language testing, voter research, patron research, or referendum feasibility research.
2. **Survey instruments and results.** The full survey instrument, draft survey questions, final survey questions, scripts, email invitations, postcards, website landing pages, ballot-language tests, materials shown to respondents, topline, cross-tabs, raw data, reports, memoranda, presentations, recommendations, and any oral or written summaries of survey results.
3. **Lists and data provided to the vendor.** All records identifying what voter, resident, taxpayer, household, mailing, patron, registration, circulation, library-card, or other lists or datasets were provided, made available, matched, appended, or disclosed to aQity Research or any other contractor, consultant, vendor, attorney, or agent.
4. **Unique passwords and tracking identifiers.** All records explaining, assigning, matching, or using unique passwords, access codes, QR codes, personalized URLs, household IDs, respondent IDs, voter-file IDs, patron IDs, library-card-linked IDs, tracking codes, lookup tables, data dictionaries, matching logic, metadata, or other individualized identifiers used in connection with the survey.
5. **Communications about referendum strategy and targeting.** All communications, including emails, text messages, memoranda, meeting notes, calendar invitations, presentations, and attachments, between or among Library Board members, Library staff, aQity Research, attorneys, consultants, vendors, campaign-related persons, or agents concerning referendum language, message testing, voter targeting, voter data, patron data, persuasion, likely voters, opposition

arguments, support arguments, turnout, referendum amount, referendum scope, probable vote outcome, or referendum strategy.

6. **Ethics, confidentiality, privacy, and complaint-process records.** The Library District's ethics ordinance, ethics resolution, prohibited political activity policy, employee ethics handbook provisions, ethics officer or ethics commissioner information, ethics complaint process, complaint forms, complaint procedures, confidentiality policies, privacy policies, patron-data policies, Library Records Confidentiality Act policies, records-retention policies, and any rules implementing the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, the Library Records Confidentiality Act, or any local ethics complaint process."

Previously, on July 24, 2026, the Library extended the time for responding to your request. The undersigned Library FOIA officer has now prepared this letter in response to your FOIA request.

The Library has performed a reasonably diligent search of its physical and electronic records repositories and identified several sets of records responsive to your FOIA request within its possession or custody, which will be disclosed via a link sent to your email address.

However, the Library has withheld certain records and redacted certain exempt information contained within the responsive records pursuant to applicable FOIA exemptions. The Library's detailed factual and legal basis for withholding certain records and redacting exempt information is explained below with reference to each discrete portion of your request.

1. Vendor, contract, and payment records. All vendor contracts, agreements, scopes of work, purchase orders, invoices, payment records, procurement records, board approvals, and legal review records related to aQity Research, the voter survey, referendum polling, message testing, ballot-language testing, voter research, patron research, or referendum feasibility research.

Responsive records have been disclosed via the link sent by email along with this correspondence. Further, please also refer to records previously circulated to you in response to your May 19, 2026 FOIA request. The Library has redacted signatures pursuant to Section 7(1)(b) of FOIA, which exempts private information from disclosure. 5 ILCS 140/2(c-5); 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(b). The Library has also redacted account numbers and similar account information the disclosure of which could result in identity theft or impression or defrauding of the Library. 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(kk).

2. Survey instruments and results. The full survey instrument, draft survey questions, final survey questions, scripts, email invitations, postcards, website landing pages, ballot-language tests, materials shown to respondents, topline, cross-tabs, raw data, reports, memoranda, presentations, recommendations, and any oral or written summaries of survey results.

Responsive records have been disclosed via the link sent by email along with this correspondence. Further, please also refer to records previously circulated to you in response to your May 19, 2026 FOIA request.

3. Lists and data provided to the vendor. All records identifying what voter, resident, taxpayer, household, mailing, patron, registration, circulation, library-card, or other lists or datasets were provided, made available, matched, appended, or disclosed to aQity Research or any other contractor, consultant, vendor, attorney, or agent.

The Library, after its reasonably diligent search, identified no records responsive to this request from the time period of May 19, 2026 through July 24, 2026. Responsive records were provided to you in response to your May 19, 2026 FOIA request.

4. Unique passwords and tracking identifiers. All records explaining, assigning, matching, or using unique passwords, access codes, QR codes, personalized URLs, household IDs, respondent IDs, voter-file IDs, patron IDs, library-card-linked IDs, tracking codes, lookup tables, data dictionaries, matching logic, metadata, or other individualized identifiers used in connection with the survey.

The Library, after its reasonably diligent search, identified no records responsive to this request from the period of May 19, 2026 through July 24, 2026. Responsive records were provided to you in response to your May 19, 2026 FOIA request.

5. Communications about referendum strategy and targeting. All communications, including emails, text messages, memoranda, meeting notes, calendar invitations, presentations, and attachments, between or among Library Board members, Library staff, aQity Research, attorneys, consultants, vendors, campaign-related persons, or agents concerning referendum language, message testing, voter targeting, voter data, patron data, persuasion, likely voters, opposition arguments, support arguments, turnout, referendum amount, referendum scope, probable vote outcome, or referendum strategy.

Responsive records have been disclosed via the link sent by email along with this correspondence.

The Library has redacted personal e-mail addresses, personal phone numbers, and residential addresses pursuant to Section 7(1)(b) of FOIA, which exempts private information from disclosure. 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(b); 5 ILCS 140/2(c-5). The Library has also redacted dates of birth pursuant to Section 7(1)(c) of FOIA, which exempts from disclosure personal information that, if disclosed, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(c); Ill. Atty. Gen. PAC Op. 16-009 (Nov. 7, 2016).

The Library's responsive records contain intra-agency communications among Library staff that include expressions of deliberative opinions, thoughts, and recommendations concerning Library policies and actions, which have not been publicly cited or identified by the Library Board of Trustees. Therefore, these communications are exempt from disclosure pursuant to Section 7(1)(f) of FOIA, which exempts preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, memoranda, and other records in which opinions are expressed, or policies or actions are formulated, except that a specific record or relevant portion of a record shall not be exempt when the record is publicly cited and identified by the head of the public body. 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(f). Because the Library's responsive records also contain preliminary draft documents and preliminary notes, which are *per se* exempt from disclosure under Section 7(1)(f) of FOIA, the Library also properly withheld this information. *Id.*

Because the Library's responsive records contain attorney-client privileged communications by and between Library personnel and its attorneys for the purpose of soliciting, giving, or receiving confidential legal advice, and these communications were made in confidence with the expectation that they would not be disclosed, the Village properly withheld these communications pursuant to Section 7(1)(m) of FOIA, which exempts from disclosure communications between a public body and an attorney representing the public body that would not be subject to discovery in litigation. 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(m).

6. Ethics, confidentiality, privacy, and complaint-process records. The Library District's ethics ordinance, ethics resolution, prohibited political activity policy, employee ethics handbook provisions, ethics officer or ethics commissioner information, ethics complaint process, complaint forms, complaint procedures, confidentiality policies, privacy policies, patron-data policies, Library Records Confidentiality Act policies, records-retention policies, and any rules implementing the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, the Library Records Confidentiality Act, or any local ethics complaint process.

The Library, after its reasonably diligent search, identified no records responsive to this request from the period of May 19, 2026 through July 24, 2026. Responsive records were provided to you in response to your May 19, 2026 FOIA request.

You have a right to have this partial denial of your FOIA request reviewed by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor ("PAC"). 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). You can file your Request for Review with the PAC by writing to:

Leah Bartelt, Public Access Counselor
Office of the Attorney General
500 South 2nd Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701
E-mail: public.access@ilag.gov
877-299-3642

You also have the right to seek judicial review of this partial denial by filing a lawsuit in the circuit court. 5 ILCS 140/11.

If you choose to file a Request for Review with the PAC, you must do so within 60 calendar days from the date of receiving this letter. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). Please note that you must include a copy of your original FOIA request and this letter when filing a Request for Review with the PAC.

Sincerely,

Anne Rasmussen
FOIA Officer