

**SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: Library Services Survey

DEPARTMENT: Library & Leisure Services **DIVISION:** Library Services

AUTHORIZED BY: *J. Belama* **CONTACT:** J. Suzy Goldman **EXT.** 1605

Agenda Date 2/28/06 **Regular Consent** **Work Session** **Briefing**
Public Hearing – 1:30 **Public Hearing – 7:00**

MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

Consultant will present the summary results of the Benchmark Survey regarding Library Development Issues.

BACKGROUND:

On July 26, 2005 staff presented to the Board of County Commissioners survey options for determining the perception of Seminole County residents regarding public library service and the possible need for expanding current services and space, as well as adding new services. Based upon the size of the population and the need for statistical validity, a telephone survey was recommended. The Board unanimously voted to conduct the telephone survey and waived the standard bid procedures with authorization for the Chairman and County Manager to negotiate the contract. On August 23, 2005 a purchase order was issued with Barcelo & Company to conduct the survey. During the period of November 9th through November 14th, 2005, interviews were completed with six hundred (600) Seminole County likely voters.

On January 30, 2006, the Library Advisory Board reviewed the survey results. At that time a motion to place the issue of funding library expansion on the November 2006 ballot was passed.

The consultant, Bruce Barcelo, will present the survey's results, as well as his conclusions.

Reviewed by:
Co Atty: _____
DFS: _____
Other: _____
DCM: _____
CM: *JS*
File No. BLLS01



MEMORANDUM FOR Seminole County Board of County Commissioners,
Kevin Grace, County Manager
Suzy Goldman - Library & Leisure Services Director

FROM: Bruce E. Barcelo

SUBJECT: Summary Results -- Library Services Benchmark Survey

DATE: December 9, 2005

METHODOLOGY REVIEW: Under your authorization we conducted six hundred (600) interviews of self-described likely voters in Seminole County, Florida, during the period of November 9th through 14th 2005. These interviews were stratified geographically at the precinct level by turnout in a general election and were conducted on a client-blind basis.

This research has a margin of error of $\pm 4.1\%$ with a with a 95% confidence level.

KEY ISSUES: Stated briefly, there are assumed to be five primary issues:

1. What priority do citizens of Seminole County hold for their library system?
2. What do citizens want from their library system?
3. How do citizens want the library system to develop?
4. What mix of services, locations, size, accessibility, and collection are most valuable to citizens?
5. Are citizens willing to pay for significant expansion of the system?

General Priorities: The dominant issue orientation for voters is public school construction, followed by mix of "improving local roads and transportation" and "holding the line on taxes."

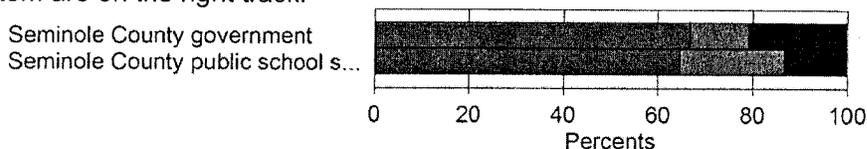
- 42% Constructing public school facilities for children
- 20% Improving local roads and transportation
- 17% Holding the line on local taxes
- 8% Adding more facilities for seniors
- 6% Expanding our library system
- 4% Adding more facilities for public safety
- 4% DK/NR

General
 Priorities:
 (Continued)

As the table below shows, public school construction was a priority for all age groups. Those over 65 – who vote in consistently large numbers - showed a strong secondary priority for “holding the line on local taxes,” while other voters keyed primarily on “improving local roads and transportation.”

	Constructing public school facilities for children	Holding the line on local taxes	Improving local roads and transportation	Adding more facilities for seniors	Adding more facilities for public safety	Expanding our library system	DK/NR
Over 65	31%	22%	16%	13%	5%	6%	6%
51-65	41%	15%	26%	6%	3%	5%	4%
41-50	50%	16%	19%	3%	4%	5%	2%
26-40	58%	10%	21%	3%	1%	6%	1%
18-25	38%	5%	14%	10%	10%	14%	10%

By a strong majority, voters feel that county government and their public school system are on the right track.



	Right Track	Wrong Track	DK/NR
Seminole County government	67%	12%	21%
Seminole County public school system	65%	22%	13%

Interestingly, males in the county rated local performance higher than female did, with the county government as being on the right track by 70%, while females “right-trackers” only totaled 64%. The differential on the school system right track numbers were 68% for males versus 62% for females.

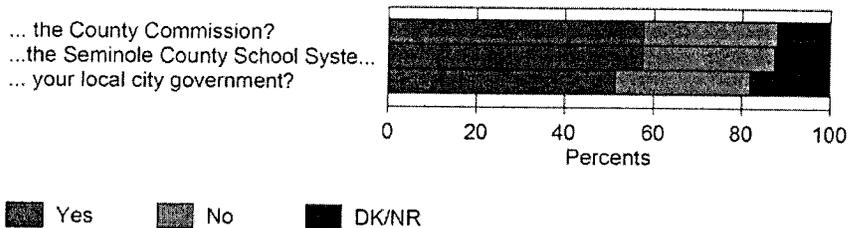
The table below shows the right/wrong track breakdown by stated issue priority, demonstrating broad consensus for the “right track” designation when viewed by the different issue priorities voters that hold.

	Right Track	Wrong Track	DK/NR
Overall	67%	12%	21%
Constructing public school facilities for children	69%	12%	20%
Holding the line on local taxes	69%	14%	17%
Improving local roads and transportation	69%	11%	20%
Adding more facilities for seniors	64%	16%	20%
Adding more facilities for public safety	63%	8%	29%
Expanding our library system	68%	12%	21%
DK/NR	40%	16%	44%

General
 Priorities:
 (Continued)

Continuing the positive theme, voters think their County Commission, School Board, and local municipals governments are good stewards of the tax dollar.

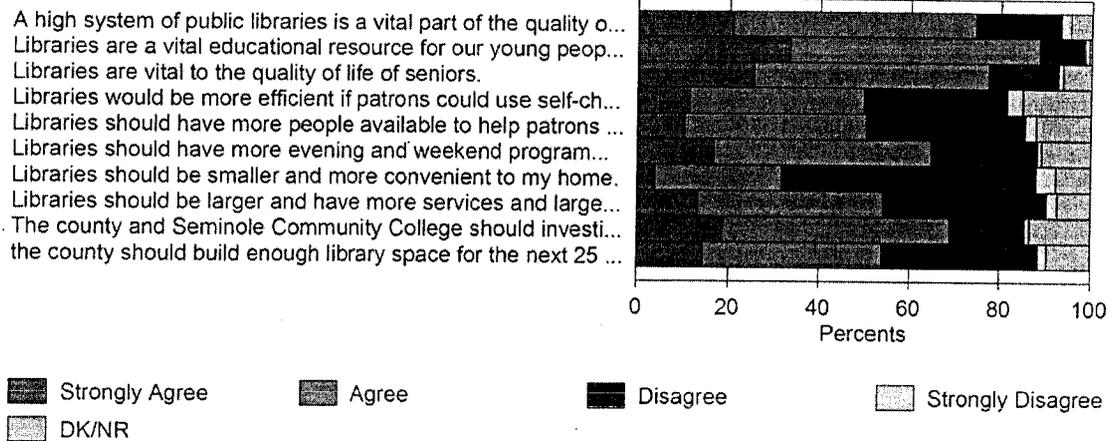
Are your tax dollars generally well spent by...



Tax dollars	Yes	No	DK/NR
... the County Commission?	58%	30%	12%
...the Seminole County School System?	58%	30%	13%
... your local city government?	51%	31%	18%

Library
 System
 Priorities:

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements and then to give the intensity of their feeling about their response.



The tabular array of these numbers is shown on the next page.

Agree / Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK/NR
A high quality system of public libraries is a vital part of the quality of life in Seminole County.	21%	54%	19%	2%	5%
Libraries are a vital educational resource for our young people.	34%	55%	10%	1%	1%
Libraries are vital to the quality of life of seniors.	26%	52%	15%	1%	6%
Libraries would be more efficient if patrons could use self-checkout machinery.	12%	38%	32%	3%	15%
Libraries should have more people available to help patrons who are unfamiliar with the collection	11%	40%	35%	2%	12%
Libraries should have more evening and weekend programming available for community activities.	17%	48%	24%	1%	11%
Libraries should be smaller and more convenient to my home.	4%	28%	56%	4%	8%
Libraries should be larger and have more services and larger collections.	13%	41%	36%	2%	8%
The county and Seminole Community College should investigate developing a mixed-use library for ac	19%	50%	17%	1%	14%
the county should build enough library space for the next 25 years, not just for the next 5 or 10.	15%	39%	35%	2%	10%

While three quarters of respondents see libraries as vital to overall quality of life for the community and its seniors, almost 90% see a robust system of high quality libraries as being a vital educational resource to young people.

Remembering that public school construction is the highest single local public policy priority measured, this casts the Seminole County library system as being particularly in its role as an educational resource.

- Respondents are more mixed on self-checkout machinery, with only 50% favoring the technology.
- Respondents generally would like to see more staff to help those who are unfamiliar with the collections, with 51% overall supporting the measure and opposition coming primarily from those whose policy priority is “holding the line on local taxes.”
- There is a strong presumption in favor of more evening and weekend programming (65% / 25%), in favor of a larger libraries with larger collections (54% / 38%) and in favor a mixed-use academic/community library development with Seminole Community College (69% / 18%).
- By a margin of 32% to 60%, respondents do *not* favor the building of libraries that are smaller and more convenient to their place of residence.
- Finally, by 54% to 34% respondents are in favor of a twenty-five year window for library planning purposes rather than the shorter five or ten years planning horizons.

Library
System
Funding:

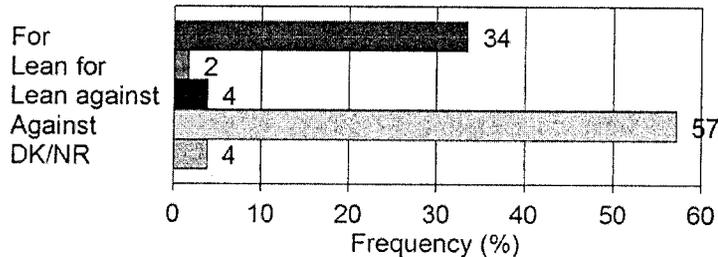
Respondents in Seminole County do not favor increasing their property taxes to pay for a significant expansion in the county's public library system.

Early in the survey sequence, respondents were asked the following question:

"There may be an item on next year's ballot to allow voters the option of increasing property taxes from ¼ of a mil to ¾ of a mil or an additional \$63 for the average Seminole County home. The money would be used to build new libraries and operate an expanded county library system. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against the tax?"

The responses allowed to the participants were: "for," "leaning for" "undecided," "leaning against," and "against." Their overall responses are shown below:

Early Ballot Test



Our experience in Florida is that generally one can assume that it is easier to pass a sales tax increase (an infrastructure surtax) than it is to pass an increase in the property tax paid by individuals, homeowners, and other entities. Florida voters are generally somewhat more willing to allow tourists, seasonal residents, and other visits to share part of the tax load than they are to put the tax load on their own real property.

Our experience in county-level infrastructure surtax referenda in Florida shows that it would be virtually impossible to pass this item were it offered as a sales tax, and almost completely impossible to gain majority voter approval as a property tax increase.

Nearer the end of the survey, we asked the following question:

"Please tell me if it would make you more or less likely to vote for a small millage increase if you knew the money would be used to:"

Various proceeds uses are detailed on the next page.

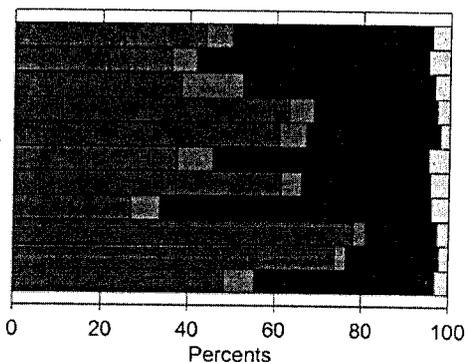
Library System Funding: (continued)

- *A few larger libraries throughout the county*
- *Several more convenient and smaller libraries*
- *A library near my home*
- *A larger collection of books and lending materials*
- *More computers and internet access for children and seniors*
- *More meeting room space in the libraries*
- *Educational and development Videos, CDs, and DVDs*
- *Entertainment Videos, CDs, and DVDs*
- *Enhanced curriculum support services for school-children*
- *Enhanced tutoring and classroom support services for school-children*
- *Drive-through pick-up and drop-off services to be more convenient for families and seniors*

The various uses of proceeds earned the following levels of support among respondents overall.

If you knew the money would be used for...

- A few larger libraries throughout the county.
- Several more convenient and smaller libraries.
- A library near my home.
- A larger collection of books and lending materials.
- More computers for and internet access for children and sen...
- More meeting room space in the libraries.
- Educational and development Videos, CDs and DVDs.
- Entertainment Videos, CDs and DVDs.
- Enhanced curriculum support system for school-children.
- Enhanced tutoring and classroom support services for scho...
- Drive-through pick-up and drop-off services to be more conv...



More / Less	More Likely	Wouldn't Matter	Less Likely	DK/NR
A few larger libraries throughout the county.	44%	6%	46%	4%
Several more convenient and smaller libraries.	36%	6%	53%	5%
A library near my home.	38%	14%	44%	4%
A larger collection of books and lending materials.	63%	6%	29%	3%
More computers for and internet access for children and seniors.	61%	7%	31%	2%
More meeting room space in the libraries.	37%	8%	50%	5%
Educational and development Videos, CDs and DVDs.	61%	5%	30%	4%
Entertainment Videos, CDs and DVDs.	27%	7%	63%	4%
Enhanced curriculum support system for school-children.	78%	3%	17%	3%
Enhanced tutoring and classroom support services for school-children.	74%	3%	21%	2%
Drive-through pick-up and drop-off services to be more convenient for families and seniors.	48%	7%	42%	3%

Library System Funding: (continued)

As the detail above shows, the broad public support for a “more likely” posture stems from

- Enhanced curriculum support services for school-children (78%),
- Enhanced tutoring and classroom support services for school-children (74%),
- Educational and development Videos, CDs, and DVDs (61%), and
- More computers and internet access for children and seniors (63%).

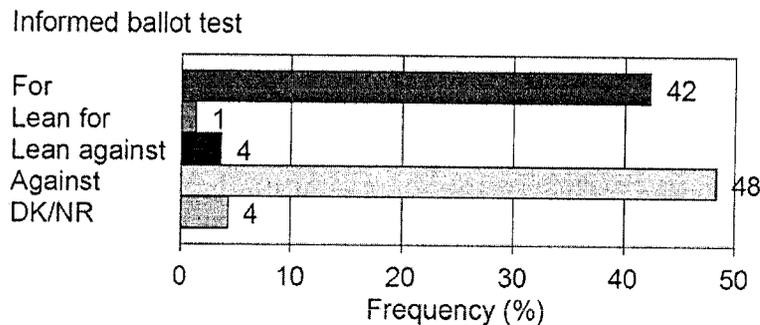
In other words, the programmatic improvement people are primarily looking is tied not to convenience or geographic distribution but rather to programming that enhances pupil performance in the public school system and to computer/internet access and availability for students and seniors.

The proof of the pudding of the more/less series comes in the responses to the question which immediately follows that series: known as the “informed ballot test.”

Respondents were then asked the following question:

“So, let me ask you again, There may be an item on next year’s ballot to allow voters the option of increasing property taxes $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mil to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mil or an additional \$63 for the average Seminole County home. The money would be used to build new libraries and operate an expanded county library system. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against the tax?”

The responses to that item are shown in overall format below.



This one graphic indicates the entire challenge to be met in gaining voter approval for increased property taxes for library expansion: even after considering their own wishes for a use of funds, they are still unwilling to pay for the program.

Library
 System
 Funding:
 (continued)

The table below shows the distribution of the “for” and “against” votes.

	For	Lean for	Lean against	Against	DK/NR
Overall	42%	1%	4%	<u>48%</u>	4%
Voting Frequency Always Votes	45%	2%	3%	<u>47%</u>	3%
Usually Votes	38%	1%	4%	<u>50%</u>	7%
County Right/Wrong Track Right Track	46%	2%	4%	44%	4%
Wrong Track	31%	0%	1%	<u>68%</u>	0%
DK/NR	38%	1%	4%	<u>50%</u>	7%
Schools Right/Wrong Track Right Track	48%	1%	3%	43%	5%
Wrong Track	30%	2%	6%	<u>62%</u>	1%
Issue Priority Constructing public school facilities for children	50%	2%	2%	40%	5%
Holding the line on local taxes	17%	0%	6%	<u>72%</u>	5%
Improving local roads and transportation	39%	1%	3%	<u>52%</u>	4%
Adding more facilities for seniors	42%	0%	7%	<u>51%</u>	0%
Adding more facilities for public safety	46%	0%	4%	46%	4%
Expanding our library system	85%	0%	0%	9%	6%
Early Ballot Test For	88%	0%	0%	8%	3%
Lean for	60%	10%	0%	30%	0%
Lean against	4%	0%	74%	<u>22%</u>	0%
Against	17%	2%	1%	76%	3%
Age 18-25	62%	5%	5%	19%	10%
26-40	40%	0%	4%	<u>50%</u>	6%
41-50	38%	2%	5%	<u>53%</u>	2%
51-65	48%	1%	3%	45%	4%
Over 65	40%	2%	4%	<u>50%</u>	5%
(Grand)children in schools Yes	41%	3%	4%	<u>48%</u>	4%
No	43%	0%	3%	<u>48%</u>	5%
Library Card? Yes	46%	1%	4%	<u>45%</u>	4%
No	32%	2%	4%	<u>59%</u>	4%
Visited library in past two years Yes	48%	1%	3%	43%	4%
No	24%	3%	5%	<u>63%</u>	5%
Other	0%	0%	0%	<u>100%</u>	0%
Voting registration Democrat	51%	3%	3%	40%	4%
Republican	36%	0%	5%	<u>52%</u>	6%
Independent / Other	47%	1%	2%	47%	2%
DK/NR	33%	2%	2%	<u>60%</u>	3%
Watch cable news?	42%	1%	4%	<u>48%</u>	4%
Watch cable news Yes	42%	1%	3%	<u>48%</u>	5%
No	44%	2%	5%	<u>48%</u>	2%
Sex Male	44%	1%	3%	<u>50%</u>	2%
Female	41%	2%	5%	<u>47%</u>	6%

Given the community’s priority on public education, it is instructive that even people with children or grandchildren in Seminole County public schools have a majority opinion opposing the tax increase for library expansion.

Conclusions:

Initially it was posited that there were five primary issues to be addressed:

1. What priority do citizens of Seminole County hold for their library system?
2. What do citizens want from their library system?
3. How do citizens want the library system to develop?
4. What mix of services, locations, size, accessibility, and collection are most valuable to citizens?
5. Are citizens willing to pay for significant expansion of the system?

1. Priority: While Seminole County voters think that a robust, high quality library system is a high priority, the expansion/enhancement of that system is not of a sufficiently high urgency to overcome the priorities of public school construction, improvement of transportation and local roads, and holding the line on local taxes.
2. Agenda: Seminole County voters clearly believe that staff enhancement, collection growth, computer access (for children and seniors), and educationally-related programming are important issues to address.
3. Development: In short, Seminole County voters want their system arrayed geographically as it is, with the agenda shown above embraced.
4. Service mix: Videos, CDs, DVDs, etc. are not high on the list of Seminole County voters, except insofar as they enhance educational attainment.
5. Funding: Voters do not expect to pay significantly higher property taxes for expansion of the system.

Summary:

There is no other way to read this data than to say that while libraries in Seminole County are a successful and vital part of a successful and vital array of county governmental services, citizens do not see sufficient need for expansion and enhancement to grant a tax increase to fund such an initiative.