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[CE SBAC] Checking work on 'Estimating Potential Support' re: 'Selection Criteria #2'

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SBAC and Michael,

My understanding is that Michael has requested assistance in checking his work on finding the Concept most likely to pass a referendum vote: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1R3RLwMKF5z4FosgioaA3jflgsOpuvNlm5ae8u0Fq3i8/edit>

>Methodology 1: Estimating Support Based on 2022 Referendum Results

- >Conceptual Design B: $(38\% * 8\%) + (62\% * 86\%) = 56.36\%$ potential support
- >Conceptual Design C: $(38\% * 27\%) + (62\% * 64\%) = 49.94\%$ potential support
- >Conceptual Design E: $(38\% * 65\%) + (62\% * 25\%) = 40.20\%$ potential support

I'm afraid the numbers in Slide 15 have been misunderstood and used incorrectly. They are not the % of Yes/No voters who support a Concept. They are the % of Concept supporters who voted Yes/No. Those figures cannot be interchanged, so the conclusions are erroneous.

If you're willing to look at the work product of Corinne Bell, she visualized and detailed the % figures you are looking for: <https://www.capeelizabeth.com/media/School%20Building%20Project/Correspondence/May/Bell%20May%205%20attach.pdf>

- **Conceptual Design B:** $(38\% * [1.36/31.71]\%) + (62\% * [14.62/48.69]\%) = 20.25\%$ proven support
- **Conceptual Design C:** $(38\% * [2.16/31.71] \%) + (62\% * [5.12/48.69]\%) = 9.11\%$ proven support
- **Conceptual Design E:** $(38\% * [26.65/31.71] \%) + (62\% * [10.25/48.69]\%) = 44.99\%$ proven support

The data definition for that last line is as follows:

- 38% = % of Yes voters in 2022
- 26.65% = % of weighted survey respondents who voted Yes and selected Concept E
- 31.71% = % of weighted survey respondents who voted Yes and selected either B, C, E, or None
- 62% = % of No voters in 2022
- 10.25% = % of weighted survey respondents who voted No and selected Concept E
- 48.69% = % of weighted survey respondents who voted No and selected either B, C, E, or None

>Methodology #2: Tax Impact Analysis

The fundamental issue with this data is that it clearly doesn't align with past voter behavior. Without significant weighting to align to actual voting results, it is **irrational** to use that dataset to predict the exact type of voting behavior it clearly doesn't correlate to.

- My understanding of PRG's explanation is that voter behavior on a binary decision (especially to support a school bond) is too different from asking someone to set an acceptable tax % increase for the data to be accurate
- That makes sense to me - people are willing to vote Yes to fund schools, even if the tax impact is higher than they are willing to admit to accepting (or if the tax impact is not clear)

With that undeniable disconnect between the data and voter behavior, any analysis to "count up" the tax bands to predict voter behavior is deeply flawed before you even start counting.

If you weighted the tax band results to match past referendum voting behavior, I expect you would get to a very different conclusion than you reached by counting up flawed data.

>Interpretation: Both methods show support for Option E at around 40%, very close to the 2022 referendum results, even before any organized opposition has been organized.

This interpretation is based on numbers used erroneously in Methodology 1 and a fundamentally flawed dataset/analysis in Methodology 2.

>Most people who support Option E would also support Option B or C, but the reverse is not true.

This statement is not supported by the survey data. It seems to rest on an assumption that doing anything is better than doing nothing... that if people are willing to spend more on one thing, then they are willing to spend less on something else.

Concept B is a renovation of old buildings in an attempt to extend their life

- Analysis shows that all school buildings will need significant additional investment in 10-20 years (the middle of the current-\$ ranges sum to over \$200M)
- The financing of the renovation is over 30 years

Concept E is an attempt to fix the immediate needs at 2 schools, while replacing the oldest set of buildings with a new school

- Analysis shows that the other 2 schools will need significant additional investment in 10-20 years, but that a new school has an expected minimum useful life of 60 years without such significant work
- The financing is over the same 30 years

Many people in this town are seeing those facts and coming to a conclusion that goes against your assumption. They believe that spending a historic amount of money to keep old buildings alive - just to have them need more \$ before we've paid off the reno - would be a financial catastrophe for our town and our schools.

Don't trust me. Look at the survey data. (all slide #s from v4)

- Concept B has the HIGHEST % rating of POOR (36 vs 28/32) (while E has the lowest % rating of Poor)
- Concept B has the LOWEST % rating of EXCELLENT (36 vs 28/32) (while E has the highest % rating of Excellent... by an astounding amount)
- A majority of those who selected Concept E gave Concept B a POOR rating (41)

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Here is my interpretation: the SBAC is being asked to solve (or at least to pick) one of these incredibly challenging questions:

- How can a majority of this town be convinced to vote for Concept B, when it is being rejected by those who refuse any investment and also rejected by those who see it as a bad investment?
- How can Concept E be made financially viable enough for a majority of this town to accept, knowing it is the most expensive project this town has ever undertaken and so many people reject any tax increase over 10%?

To paraphrase Larry from a few hours ago: Concept E is the right choice, but it's too expensive for too many people.

Why spend your time and energy trying to convince enough people to accept the wrong choice? Why cast a vote to sign up the School Board and Town Council to make that unpopular sales pitch?

Instead, why not focus all of that effort on solving the financial challenges that are causing the resistance to the right choice? It can be done - the ideas are all out there, just waiting for decision-makers to take action. With the corrected Methodology 1, I hope you can see that the SBAC has almost gotten there already.

Thank you,
Brandon Sweet

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Under Maine's Freedom of Access law, documents - including e-mail - about town/school department business are classified as public records and may be subject to disclosure.