

North Colonie Central School District

2016 Capital Project Vote Exit Survey Report

Introduction

The North Colonie School District conducted an exit survey during its capital project referendum on December 15, 2016. The purpose was to collect demographic data about who voted on the capital project and information about why voters voted the way they did.

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Paper and online surveys were made available to voters at the polling site for anyone who chose to fill one out after voting. While these results do not represent the opinions of all voters, they do provide many residents' perceptions about the district and the 2016 capital project.

The following data were compiled by the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service in cooperation with the BOCES public information specialists assigned to North Colonie, Taryn Kane and Judy Frost.

Please note: Percentages, where provided, are out of the number of survey participants who responded to that particular question, and not out of the total number of survey participants. For some questions, total percentages may add up to more than 100% due to rounding or because participants were able to select more than one answer choice.

Of the 4,031 residents who voted, 506 chose to fill out an exit survey, a response rate of 13%.

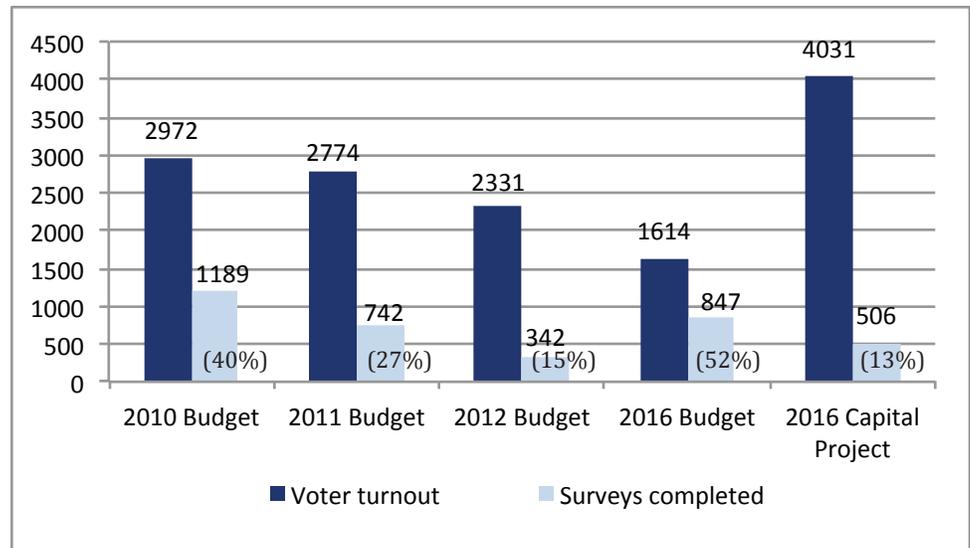
Who voted in North Colonie's capital project referendum?

Of the 4,031 residents who voted on the capital project, 506 chose to fill out an exit survey, a response rate of 13%. According to district officials, voter turnout was the highest for any district referendum since 1986. However, the survey response rate was the lowest it has been since the district began conducting exit surveys in 2010. (Note, the district did not conduct exit surveys in 2013, 2014 and 2015.)

Nearly 58% of survey participants said they voted in support of the district's annual budget in May 2016, while 12% said they voted against the budget. More than 30% indicated they did not vote in May 2016.

About half of survey respondents (52%) said they think the district's planning process for the capital project was sound, while 24% said it was not sound and another 24% had no opinion or were unsure.

VOTER TURNOUT AND SURVEY RESPONSE RATE



Voters between the ages of 45 and 60 constituted 37% of all survey respondents—a ratio greater than the 30% this age group represented on the May 2016 budget vote exit surveys. More than 31% of respondents said they are 61 or older, compared with 37% of respondents who said the same in May. Only 7% of respondents said they were between 18 and 29 years of age, which is similar to past budget votes.

Respondents with and without children in North Colonie schools

Survey data indicates that nearly 40% of respondents said they have children currently attending North Colonie schools. This is consistent with the May 2016 school budget vote, when 43% of exit survey participants said they have children currently attending North Colonie schools.

Of those who said they have children currently attending North Colonie schools, 68% said they have children attending the elementary schools, 30% said they have children attending the junior high school, and 41% said they have children attending the high school.

Respondents were also asked if they would have children attend North Colonie schools in the future. More than 47% said “yes,” while 44% said “no.” Nearly 9% said they do not have children.

Of those who said they do not have children currently attending North Colonie schools, 19% indicated their children will attend North Colonie in the future.

The capital project approval rate among survey respondents was 64%, while the actual approval rate was 46%.

How did North Colonie residents vote?

Of the 506 voters who completed an exit survey, 9 participants did not indicate how they voted on the capital project. Of those who did, 319 said they voted “yes” on the project, while 178 said they voted “no.” This represents a margin of 64% in favor and 36% opposed.

The actual approval rate of the capital project was 46%—a difference of 18 percentage points—meaning that a higher percentage of “yes” voters filled out an exit survey than did “no” voters. In our experience, this is not uncommon with school fiscal referendum exit surveys.

Approval rates among different voter categories

Voters who indicated they are age 18-29 approved the capital project proposal at a rate of 89%. The lowest approval rate, 55%, was among those who said they are age 45-60.

Of those who said they voted in support of the 2016-17 school budget, 81% also voted “yes” on the capital project. Of those who said they voted against the budget in May, 86% said they also voted “no” on the capital project. More than 53% of those who said they did not vote in May voted in favor of the capital project.

Among those who said the district’s planning process for the capital project was sound, 96% approved the project, while the approval rate among those who said the planning process was NOT sound was 9%. Of those with no opinion about the planning process, 54% supported the project.

Although a majority of survey respondents approved the capital project regardless of parental status, those with children attending North Colonie schools voted in favor of the project at a higher rate (76%) than those without children in the schools (58%), as was the case during the May 2016 budget vote.

Of those with children in the schools, support for the project was highest (82%) among respondents with children attending North Colonie elementary schools. Support was lowest among respondents with children who attend Shaker Junior High School (68%).

The following chart provides the approval rate among survey respondents who indicated their parental status:

| | Approval Rate |
|--|--------------------------|
| Parents of current North Colonie students | 76% |
| Parents of North Colonie elementary school students..... | 82% |
| Parents of North Colonie junior high school students..... | 68% |
| Parents of North Colonie high school students | 71% |
| Parents of children who will attend NC in the future..... | 78% |
| Future North Colonie parents* | 84% |
| Parents whose children will NOT attend NC in the future..... | 53% |
| Respondents with no children | 70% |
| Non-North Colonie parents* | 53% |

** Note, it is possible to identify 45 survey respondents as “future parents” by isolating those who said they do not currently have children attending North Colonie schools (survey question 11) and also said their children will attend North Colonie in the future (survey question 13). These respondents may be parents of preschoolers or may have children attending private or parochial schools or who are home schooled but will likely attend North Colonie in the future.*

Similarly, it is possible to identify 196 survey respondents as “non-North Colonie parents” by isolating those who said they do not currently have children attending North Colonie schools (survey question 11) and also said their children will NOT attend North Colonie in the future or have no children (survey question 13).

Why did voters vote the way they did?

The following, in descending order, are the reasons given by the “yes” respondents for approving the 2016 capital project.

| | |
|---|-----|
| It will improve the quality of education in North Colonie | 84% |
| I believe in investing in education | 80% |
| The scope of the project is reasonable..... | 52% |
| The proposed tax increase is reasonable | 47% |
| Other reason [<i>see comments, pp. 12-13</i>]..... | 9% |

The following, in descending order, are the reasons given by the “no” respondents for voting against the 2016 capital project.

| | |
|---|-----|
| The proposed tax increase is unreasonable..... | 52% |
| The scope of the project is unreasonable | 52% |
| Other reason [<i>see comments, pp. 14-15</i>]..... | 26% |
| It will not improve the quality of education in North Colonie | 22% |
| I want to support it, but can't afford it..... | 15% |

From this data, one can draw a few conclusions; namely, that:

- A greater percentage of “yes” voters were influenced to vote the way they did by the effect that they believe the project will have on education in North Colonie than by other factors.
- The same percentage of “yes” voters said that the scope of the project is reasonable as the percentage of “no” voters who said the scope of the project is NOT reasonable.

Who voted on the capital project but did not vote on the budget in May?

One subset of survey participants to look at is those who did not vote on the 2016-17 budget in May but did vote on the capital project in December. Of the 506 people who completed an exit survey, 134 said they did not vote in May. Of those, 53% said they voted in favor of the capital project – an approval rate nearly 11 percentage points less than the overall survey approval rate.

Data distribution in this subset was similar to the overall results for most questions, with a few notable exceptions. Approximately 9% of those who did not vote in May attended one or more public presentations on the capital project, compared with 19% overall. Also, 40% of those who did not vote in May said the capital project planning process was sound, compared with 52% overall, while 34% of those who did not vote in May said they had no opinion or were unsure about the planning process, compared with 24% overall.

Exit survey participants were asked about their level of support for seven major elements of the capital project (see page 6). With the exception of “enhanced security measures at the front entrances of every building,” support for each project element was 8 to 12 percentage points lower among respondents who said they did not vote in May than overall.

Fifty of the survey respondents who identified themselves as parents of current North Colonie students (29%) said they did not vote in May. About 29% of the 196 individuals who are non-North Colonie parents (as defined on page 4) did not vote in May, while 43% of the 45 individuals identified as future North Colonie parents (as defined on page 4) did not vote in May.

Which capital project elements did North Colonie residents support?

Exit survey participants were asked about their level of support for seven major elements of the capital project. The element that received the greatest support from all survey respondents was “enhanced security measures at the front entrances of every building,” with 85% saying they were in favor of this element. The element that received the least support, with 44% of all respondents saying they were in favor, was “addition of synthetic surfaces for Walker Field and Lower Maloy Field for multipurpose use.”

It is possible to look at this data through several different lenses, including by “yes” and “no” voters, as well as respondents by their parental status. Certain subsets of parents are also worth examining based on the likelihood that parents of younger children might consider the possibility of their children being affected by the capital project if they assume their children will begin or continue to attend North Colonie schools in the future.

The following chart summarizes the percentage of respondents who said they were in favor of a project element based on how they voted or their parental status:

| | All Voters | “Yes” Voters | “No” Voters | Current Parents | Future* Parents | Elem. Parents | Non-NC* Parents |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Moving 6th grade to Shaker Middle School..... | 55% | 73% | 21% | 66% | 66% | 69% | 46% |
| Enhanced security at building entrances..... | 85% | 94% | 70% | 86% | 93% | 89% | 82% |
| Expanded elementary media centers..... | 67% | 90% | 25% | 73% | 76% | 78% | 63% |
| New classrooms at Boght Hills..... | 73% | 94% | 36% | 77% | 80% | 82% | 70% |
| Expansion of Shaker HS auditorium..... | 63% | 87% | 20% | 74% | 64% | 77% | 57% |
| Expanded MS/HS parking, bus/drop-off loops | 67% | 92% | 22% | 80% | 78% | 83% | 55% |
| Synthetic surfaces at two fields..... | 44% | 63% | 8% | 54% | 53% | 55% | 34% |

** Note, it is possible to identify 45 survey respondents as “future parents” by isolating those who said they do not currently have children attending North Colonie schools (survey question 11) and also said their children will attend North Colonie in the future (survey question 13). These respondents may be parents of preschoolers or may have children attending private or parochial schools or who are home schooled but will likely attend North Colonie in the future.*

Similarly, it is possible to identify 196 survey respondents as “non-North Colonie parents” by isolating those who said they do not currently have children attending North Colonie schools (survey question 11) and also said their children will NOT attend North Colonie in the future or have no children (survey question 13).

Where did voters get their information?

Nearly 77% of survey respondents said they received enough information about the proposed project. Of those, 77% voted in favor of the capital project, compared with the 25% approval rate among those who said they did not receive enough information.

Approximately 19% of respondents said they attended at least one public presentation or workshop about the capital project during the past year. Of those, 82% voted “yes” on the project, compared with the 60% approval rate among those who said they did not attend a presentation.

More than 64% of survey participants said they learned about the capital project from the district newsletter and mailings, while 40% said they learned about it from the media (TV and newspapers).

The highest approval rate, 89%, was among those who said they learned about the project from a district presentation. Nearly 73% of those who said they learned about the project from the district newsletter voted “yes.” The lowest approval rate, 54%, was among those who said they learned about the project from the media.

Who were the “yes” voters in North Colonie?

Of the 319 survey respondents who said they voted “yes” on the capital project:

- 91% said they received enough information about the project
- 73% said they learned about the project from the district newsletter and mailings, while 40% said they learned about it from School News Notifer
- 24% said they attended at least one public presentation or workshop about the capital project during the past year
- 76% said they think the district’s planning process for the capital project was sound
- 72% also voted “yes” on the 2016-17 budget in May; 25% did not vote in May
- 33% said they are age 30-44; 31% said they are age 45-60
- 47% said they have children who currently attend North Colonie schools; of those, 73% of children in the elementary schools
- 56% said they have children who will attend North Colonie schools in the future

Who were the “no” voters in North Colonie?

Of the 178 survey respondents who said they voted “no” on the capital project:

- 51% said they received enough information about the project
- 52% said they learned about the project from the media, while 50% said they learned about it from the district newsletter and mailings
- 10% said they attended at least one public presentation or workshop about the capital project during the past year
- 6% said they think the district’s planning process for the capital project was sound
- 28% also voted “no” on the 2016-17 budget; 41% did not vote in May
- 48% said they are age 45-60; 39% said they are age 61 or older
- 27% said they have children who currently attend North Colonie schools; of those, 56% have children in the elementary schools and 51% have children at Shaker High School.
- 30% said they have children who will attend North Colonie schools in the future