

Keys to a Successful Referendum



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Keys to a Successful Referendum:

- ❑ Adequate time
- ❑ Citizen involvement
- ❑ Experienced architect on the team
- ❑ Campaign kickoff meeting
- ❑ Research past referendums



Memorial Middle School Site
South Portland Schools Study

New Middle School
June 23, 2005

Keys to a Successful Referendum:

- ❑ Identify proponents and opponents and get their involvement
- ❑ Clearly defined message
- ❑ The right mix of tools for communicating the message and getting feedback
- ❑ Getting “yes” voters to the polls
- ❑ Lots of “face time” with the community



Campaign Kickoff Meeting:

- ❑ Appoint individuals to leadership positions (chairperson and coordinators)
- ❑ Establish subcommittees
- ❑ Assign and schedule tasks
- ❑ Define:
 - Who is the key point of contact for information?
 - Who will be responsible for writing and issuing press releases?
 - Who will keep the website updated and answer website questions?
 - What medium will you use to get your message out?
 - How will you get feedback on a continuing basis from the community?



Campaign Kickoff Meeting:

- Define (Con't):

- What community groups will you make presentations to and who will do them?
- Don't forget the elderly!!!
- How to organize a large group of parent volunteers to help you?
- What is your strategic schedule month by month during the public information process?

Campaign Kickoff Meeting:

□ Define (Con't):

- What promotional materials will you need to get your message out?

- Press releases
- Graphics
- Flyers
- Press releases
- Newsletters at each school
- Video
- Direct mail
- Telephone banks
- drawings in public places
- website
- interviews – radio, newspaper, tv
- local access cable channel
- “The top 10 reasons for the project”
- Neighborhood “walk and talks”
- Letters to the editor
- Involve the PTA/PTO

Citizen Involvement:

- ❑ Volunteers do the bulk of the work
- ❑ Volunteers provide personal contact
- ❑ The familiar faces in the community are the ones who can best explain and promote the project



Research Past Referendums:

- ❑ Determine what is required for a successful vote (number of votes)
- ❑ Learn from past successes and failures
- ❑ What are the community's issues?



Clearly Defined Message:

- Address issues and concerns of the public
- Address the arguments of the opposition with facts
- Simplicity – focus on 3-4 key facts that address major questions
- Repeat message consistently



Clearly Defined Message:

- Include:
 - Need for the project
 - Benefit to the community
 - Alternatives considered
 - Tax impact on a typical home
 - Result if nothing is done
 - How it is cost effective
 - How much are you spending annually on maintenance of old buildings?



Identify Proponents and Opponents and get their input:

- ❑ Know your community
- ❑ Utilize public hearings and questionnaires to identify their issues and concerns
- ❑ Understand why proponents support the project
- ❑ Determine why opponents oppose the project
- ❑ Identify what opponents might support
- ❑ Assess electoral strength of each group



The Right Mix of Tools for Communicating the Message and Getting Feedback:

- Materials prepared by architect
 - Site plans
 - Floor plans
 - Exterior elevations and renderings
 - 3D models and animations
- Demographic research
- Cost comparisons
- Tours of existing conditions



Adequate Time:

- ❑ Start at least 3-6 months before the referendum date
- ❑ Allow time to organize, design the campaign, and disseminate information to the voters
- ❑ Avoid municipal votes and summer months



Experienced Architect on the Team:

- ❑ Provides expertise and technical guidance
- ❑ Prepares designs and documents
- ❑ Shares knowledge from other similar projects
- ❑ Provides professionalism and credibility



Getting “YES” voters to the polls:

- Primary purpose of the campaign

