

*GROTON SCHOOL FACILITY  
INITIATIVE TASK FORCE  
COMMUNITY SURVEY*

*Prepared for:*



*July 2015*

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## **Statement of Confidentiality and Ownership**

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All of the analyses, findings and recommendations contained within this report are the exclusive property of the Groton School Facility Initiative Task Force.

As required by the Code of Ethics of the National Council on Public Polls and the United States Privacy Act of 1974, The Center for Research and Public Policy maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the firm conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondent.

Moreover, no information regarding these findings will be released without the written consent of an authorized representative of the Task Force or Milone & MacBroom.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The Center for Research & Public Policy (CRPP) is pleased to present the results of a Groton community survey on behalf of the Groton School Facility Initiative Task Force. The survey was conducted among residents of Groton including the City of Groton, the Town, Groton Long Point & Noank, Mystic and the Naval Base area.

The survey was designed to collect input on public school facilities in town.

The research included a comprehensive telephone survey. CRPP, working together with Task Force members and representatives of Milone & MacBroom, Inc., designed the survey instrument to be used when calling Groton residents.

This report summarizes information collected from telephone surveys conducted June 9 – 25, 2015.

The survey instrument employed in the Community Survey included the following areas for investigation:

- Current quality of life living in Groton, Connecticut;

- Awareness of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force and their efforts;
- Levels of interest in the planning process for the School Facility Initiative's Groton 2020 Plan;
- Support or opposition to The Groton 2020 Plan;
- Perceptions held regarding varied school facility options, issues, investments;
- Impact of varied Plan details/characteristics on support or opposition;
- Support for the Plan at various increased property tax levels;
- Sources for information about Groton schools; and
- Demographics.

Section II of this report discusses the Methodology used in the study, while Section III includes Highlights derived from an analysis of the quantitative research. Section IV is a Summary of Findings for the telephone surveys - a narrative account of the data.

Section V is an Appendix to the report containing a cross tabulation table and a copy of the survey instrument.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

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Using a quantitative research design, CRPP completed 386 interviews among Groton residents.

All telephone interviews were conducted June 9 - 25, 2015. Residents were contacted between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. weekdays and 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on the weekend.

Survey input was provided by Task Force officials and representatives of Milone & MacBroom, Inc.

Survey design at CRPP is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by CRPP (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly agree)

are balanced evenly. And, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

CRPP utilized a super random digit telephone sample. This process allows randomization of numbers, which equalizes the probability of qualified respondents being included in the sampling frame. A mixed access sample was utilized that included both cell phone and landline numbers.

Respondents qualified for the survey if they confirmed they were registered to vote in Groton and were at least 18 years of age or older.

Training of telephone researchers and pre-test of the survey instrument occurred on June 8-9, 2015.

The facets of the study included: sample design, survey design, pre-test, computer programming, fielding, coding, editing, verification, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis, and report writing.

Completion rates are a critical aspect of any telephone survey research. Because one group of people might be easier to reach than another group, it is important that concentrated efforts are made to reach all groups to an equal degree. A high completion rate means that a high percentage of the respondents within the original sample were actually contacted, and the resulting sample is not biased toward one potential audience. CRPP maintained a 70% completion rate on all calls made during the Community Survey. And, a high completion rate, many times indicates an interest in the topic.

Statistically, a sample of 386 surveys represents a margin for error of +/-4.96% at a 95% confidence level. Weighting of data occurred based on age.

In theory, a sample of Groton residents will differ no more than +/-4.96% than if all users were contacted and included in the survey. That is, if random probability sampling procedures were reiterated over and over again, sample results may be expected to approximate the large population values within plus or minus 4.96% -- 95 out of 100 times.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time period in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public relations or information campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein may be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted and extrapolated.

Furthermore, it is important to note that all surveys contain some component of "sampling error". Error that is attributable to systematic bias has been significantly reduced by utilizing strict random probability procedures. This sample was strictly random in that selection of each potential respondent was an independent event, based on known probabilities.

Each qualified resident had an equal chance for participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

# HIGHLIGHTS

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## ON QUALITY OF LIFE...

- A large majority of Groton residents surveyed, 80.6%, reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the community as a “place to live”.
- Nearly three-quarters, 70.7%, reported their current standard of living -- compared to two years ago -- as “good” or “no movement, but good”.
- Respondents provided the Groton Public Schools a fair overall rating. Just 42.2% rated the schools positively using a scale of one to ten. Another 25.9% provided poor or very poor ratings. The remainder were either neutral in their ratings or were unsure. When “don’t know” respondents were removed from the data, the positive rating moved to 47.5%.

## ON AWARENESS...

- Nearly two-thirds of all respondents, 64.2%, reported being very or somewhat aware that a group of appointed Groton residents called the “School Facilities Initiative Task Force” has been at work on a plan to upgrade and modernize school facilities in town.

## ON INTEREST...

- Interest in the planning process for the “School Facility Initiative’s Groton 2020 Plan” is strong. Three-quarters, 74.8%, suggested they are very or somewhat interested in the plan for upgrades and modernization of school facilities in town.
- Further, 64.7%, indicated they are following the planning process very or somewhat closely. Just 10.4% suggested “not at all closely”.

## ON THE PLAN: BALLOT I...

- Once researchers introduced the Groton 2020 Plan to respondents, each was asked how they might vote in a referendum “held today” on the Plan. Just over one-third, 36.5%, indicated they would definitely or probably support the Plan while 44.6% noted they would probably or definitely oppose the Plan as they understand it. A significant percentage, 18.9%, were unsure or didn’t know.
- When “don’t know” respondents are removed from the data, 45.0% would likely support the Plan while 55.0% would likely oppose the Plan.
- Reasons offered by those opposed to the Plan included (in declining order by frequency of mention): taxes already too high / the cost, don’t need it / a waste, renovate / don’t build – maintain the current buildings / not needed, fix administration problems first, schools already were upgraded / they closed schools and no details / not necessarily opposed but need more information.
- Reasons offered by those in support of the Plan included (in declining order): outdated facilities are in bad shape / need upgrade / modernize aging buildings, well thought out Plan / right thing to do / trust them, quality education is important, improves education system, and consolidating centralizing is good.

## ON PERCEPTIONS...

Resident survey respondents were presented with a number of statements and asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

- There exists significant agreement (strongly/somewhat) among residents in a number of areas...
  - ✓ Pre-K education in Groton is important – 83.2%
  - ✓ In general, I’m a supporter of modernizing Groton Public School facilities – 75.1%

- More moderate but strong agreement was found in other areas...
  - ✓ Land at any closed schools should become playing fields – 64.0%
  - ✓ Education quality is impacted by facility quality – 62.2%
  - ✓ Improved school facilities will impact economic development – 61.1%
  
- Majorities agreed with the following...
  - ✓ The long term fix offered by the Plan makes more sense than short term repairs – 54.1%
  - ✓ Groton schools were never properly maintained – 53.9%
  - ✓ In-town Magnet Schools should be included in any Plan – 53.4%
  
- And, some statements met agreement that was short of a majority...
  - ✓ Surrounding towns are surpassing Groton in quality of education – 46.9%
  - ✓ Groton needs more playing fields – 40.2%

### ON VOTE IMPACT...

- Some specific characteristics of the Groton 2020 Plan are more likely than others to move respondents to support the effort. These characteristics are displayed here with the associated percentage of respondents who suggest each makes them “more likely” to support passage of the Groton 2020 Plan in a referendum. “Don’t know” respondents were removed from the data.
  - ✓ The Groton 2020 Pan addresses buildings over 60 years old – 56.7%
  - ✓ Helps eliminate the State mandated redistricting for racial imbalance – 50.7%
  - ✓ Plan includes in-Town Magnet Schools – 46.5%
  - ✓ \$2.5 million dollars are sent to surrounding Town Magnet schools for attending Groton students – 41.4%

- ✓ Plan includes new construction over renovation – 38.5%
- ✓ The Plan includes a combined middle school and high school campus – 35.4%
- ✓ The Plan increases the amount of playing fields in town – 33.5%

### ON TAX IMPLICATION: THE BALLOT II...

- Following the deliberation allowed by the survey, respondents were asked again to report their own support or opposition to the Groton 2020 Plan if a referendum was to be held “today”. In this question, the average increased annual property tax was named by researchers.
  - ✓ At an average annual property tax increase of \$250.00, 51.8% would support the Plan.
  - ✓ At an average annual property tax increase of \$200.00, 53.6% would support the Plan.
  - ✓ At an average annual property tax increase of \$150.00, 58.3% would support the Plan.

### ON COMMUNICATION...

- Primary sources for information about the Groton Public Schools included local print newspapers, friends/family/neighbors/co-workers, directly from the schools, TV and the internet / websites.
- Over one-half of all respondents, 54.9%, indicated they use Facebook while 8.3% use Twitter and 4.4% are using Instagram. Two-fifths, 41.5%, suggested they don't use social media.

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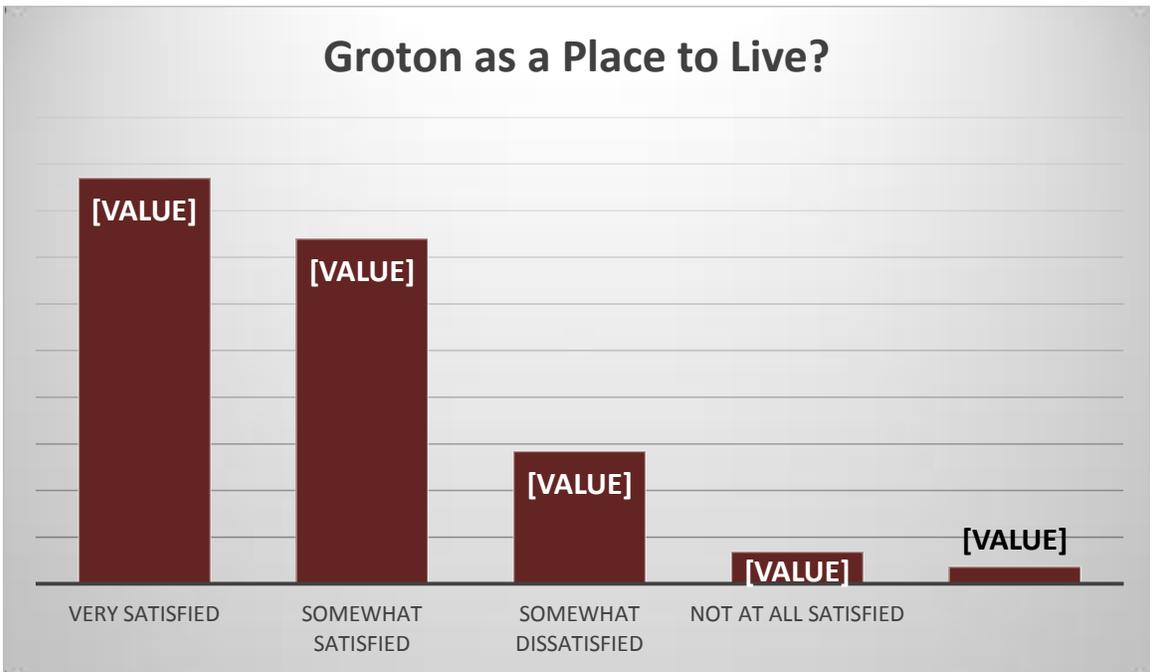
## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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Readers are reminded that the following section summarizes statistics collected from surveys among 386 Groton residents.

### QUALITY OF LIFE...

A large majority of all Groton residents surveyed, 80.6%, suggested they were very or somewhat satisfied with Groton, Connecticut as “a place to live”. Some, 17.6%, suggested they were somewhat or very dissatisfied. A few, 1.8%, were unsure. Results are presented in the following graph.



All residents were asked to describe their own standard of living today compared to two years ago. Nearly three-quarters, 70.7%, suggested their standard of living was either improved (21.8%) or no movement but good (49.0%). Just over one quarter, 26.7% offered their standard of living saw no movement and is not so good (13.5%) or had declined (13.2%). Some, 2.6% were unsure. Results are presented here.



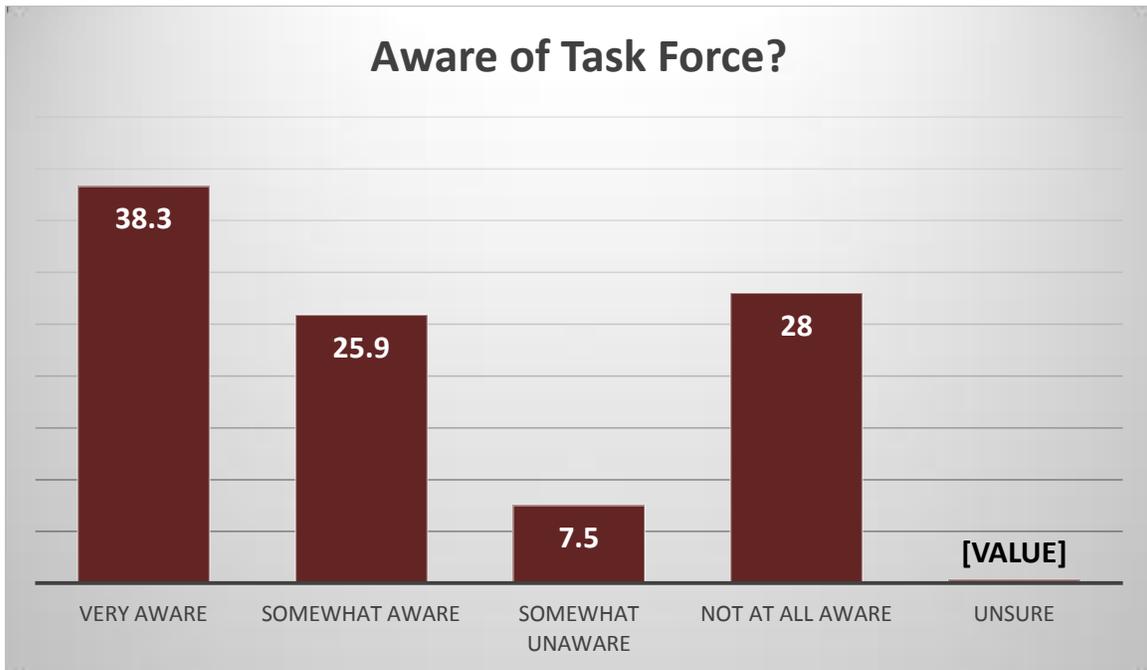
Respondents were asked, based on all they know or have heard, to rate the Groton Public Schools overall using a scale of one to ten where one was very good and ten was very poor. Just over two-fifths, 42.2%, provided positive cumulative ratings of one through four while one-quarter, 25.9%, provided negative cumulative ratings of seven through ten. Results are also depicted with “don’t know” respondents removed from the data.

Rating Groton Public Schools	Very Good & Good	Very Poor & Poor	Unsure
With “Don’t knows”	42.2	25.9	11.1
Without “Don’t knows”	47.5	29.2	---

**AWARENESS...**

Survey respondents were asked how aware they were that a group of appointed Groton residents called the School Facilities Initiative Task Force has been working for three years on a plan to upgrade and modernize school facilities in town. Nearly two-thirds, 64.2%, suggested they were either very (38.3%) or somewhat aware (25.9%). Another one-third, 35.5% suggested they were somewhat unaware (7.5%) or not at all aware (28.0%).

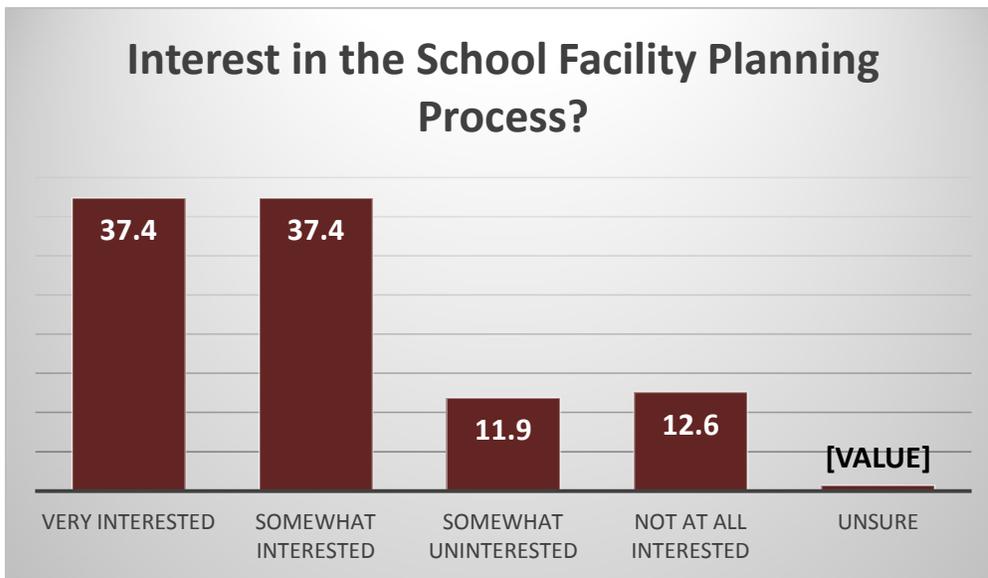
The following graph presents the results as collected.



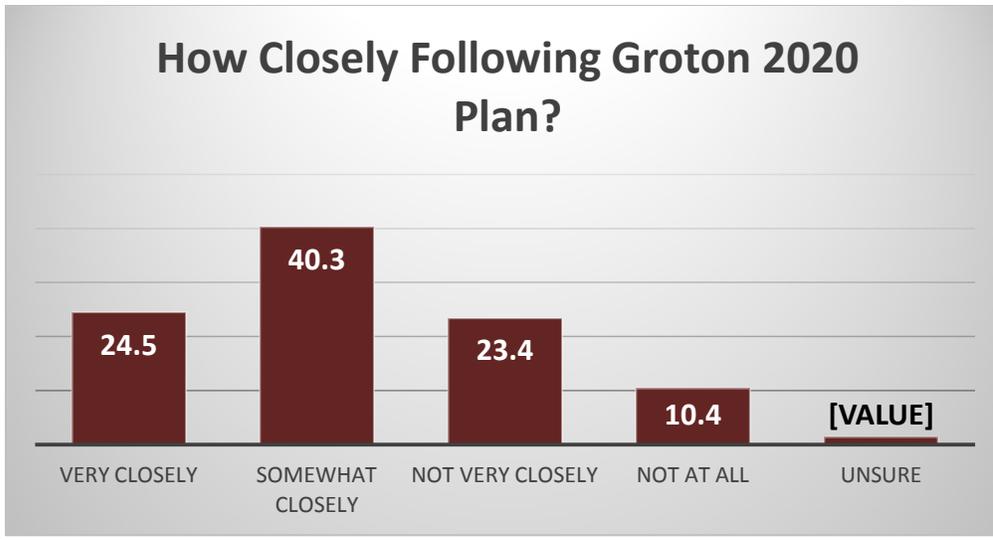
## INTEREST...

Nearly three-quarters, 74.8%, suggested they were very (37.4%) or somewhat (37.4%) interested in the planning process for the School Facility Initiative's Groton 2020 Plan.

Just under one-quarter, 24.5%, suggested they were somewhat uninterested (11.9%) or not at all interested (12.6%). The following graph presents the results as collected.



Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 64.7%, noted they are following the planning process for the School Facility Initiative's Groton 2020 Plan very (24.5%) or somewhat (40.3%) closely. Another 33.8% offered they were following the process "not very closely" (23.4%) or "not at all" (10.4%).



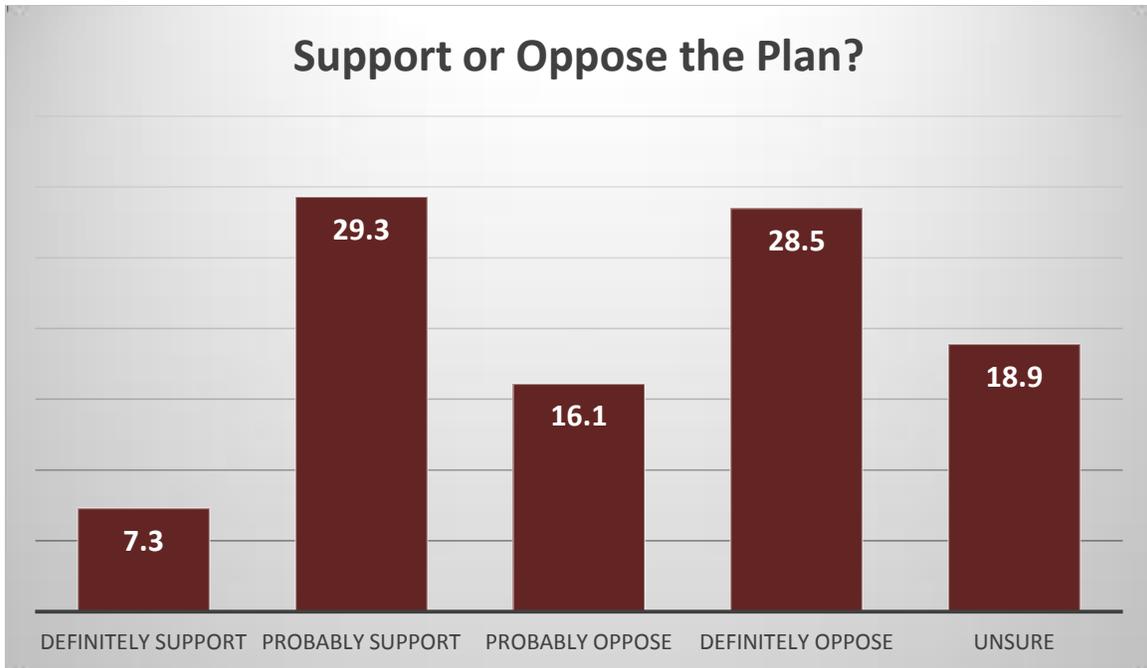
### THE PLAN: THE BALLOT I...

In an initial “ballot test”, researchers presented the following information to respondents and then asked each how they might vote in a referendum held today.

“Currently, the Task Force is recommending the Groton 2020 Plan. The plan would address aging facilities requiring significant capital investments and expanding educational opportunities for all Groton residents. Groton 2020 Plan calls for the construction of a new middle school adjacent to the Fitch High School. Upon completion of the middle school construction, two new elementary schools will be built at Cutler and West Side. Once completed, Pleasant Valley, Claude Chester and S.B. Butler will be closed.

Based on this information regarding the Plan, if a referendum was held today, how would you vote? Would you say...”

Just over one third, 36.5%, indicated they would definitely support (7.3%) or probably support (29.3%) the plan. Another 44.6% anticipated they would probably oppose (16.1%) or definitely oppose (28.5%) the plan. Nearly one-fifth, 18.9%, were unsure. When “don’t know” respondents are removed from the data, 45.0% would likely support the Plan while 55.0% would be opposed. Results are presented here.



In an open-end format question, all respondents – those in favor of the Plan and those opposed – were asked for their reasons. Results are presented in the following tables in declining order by frequency of mention.

Reasons for Opposition	Percent
Taxes already too high / the cost	21.7
Don't need it / a waste	18.0
Renovate / Don't build - Maintain the current buildings / not needed	11.8
Fix administration problems first	6.8
Schools already were upgraded / they closed schools	6.2
No details / not necessarily opposed but need more information	5.6
Plan will funnel too many kids in to too few schools	3.0
Plan calls for closing schools / merging schools	3.0
Buildings don't educate - teachers do	2.4
Don't like the sites proposed	2.4
Believe in smaller schools	2.4
Not in the best interest of the kids	1.8
Believe in neighborhood schools	1.8

They don't upkeep current schools	1.8
Oppose to more busing	1.8
Proposed land use	1.8
There's no racial imbalance	1.0
Will create hostile environment	1.0
School system doing a poor job now	1.0
Planning group is fiscally irresponsible	0.6
Unclear how money will be spent	0.6
Want own kids to remain where they are currently	0.6
Facilities are fine	0.6
Kids get too much already	0.6

Reasons for Support	Percent
Outdated facilities are in bad shape / need upgrade / modernize / aging	39.1
Well thought out Plan / right thing to do / trust them	22.7
Quality education is important	13.6
Improves education system	7.3
Consolidating is good / centralizing is good	7.3
Must reinvest in schools and move forward	2.7
Current racial imbalance	1.8
I work in the system and know	1.8
Because other towns have magnet schools	0.9
Better than separate schools	0.9
Low interest rates today	0.9
Population increases	0.9

### PERCEPTIONS...

The following are a number of statements related to school facilities in Groton presented to all survey respondents. Respondents were asked to report if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement. The following table presents the cumulative totals for those suggesting they strongly or somewhat agreed. The third column holds results after removing "don't know" respondents from the data. Results are presented in declining order by agreement.

Statements	Strongly & Somewhat Agree	Strongly & Somewhat Agree (Without DK's)
Pre-K education in Groton is important	83.2	85.6
In general, I'm a supporter of modernizing Groton public school facilities	75.1	79.7
The land at any closed or consolidated schools should become playing fields and open space for Groton residents	64.0	69.0
Education quality is impacted by the quality of school facilities	62.2	64.5
Improved school facilities will impact economic development in Groton in a positive way	61.1	66.9
The Groton 2020 Plan, as a long term fix supported by taxpayers through a limited term bond, makes more sense than spending \$55 million in immediate short term repairs needed	54.1	68.8
Groton school facilities were never properly maintained or re-invested in	53.9	63.0
Groton school facility planning should include in-town Magnet Schools	53.4	63.2
Surrounding towns are surpassing Groton in quality of education programming and facilities	46.9	58.2
Groton needs more playing fields	40.2	47.3

### VOTE IMPACT...

Researchers read the following to each respondent...

“Earlier, I asked you if you would support or oppose the School Facility Initiative Groton 2020 Plan described. The following are a number of details or characteristics of the Groton Public Schools. For each, please tell me if the characteristic makes you more likely or less likely to support the Initiative Plan or would it not make a difference.”

Results are presented here in declining order by “More likely”.

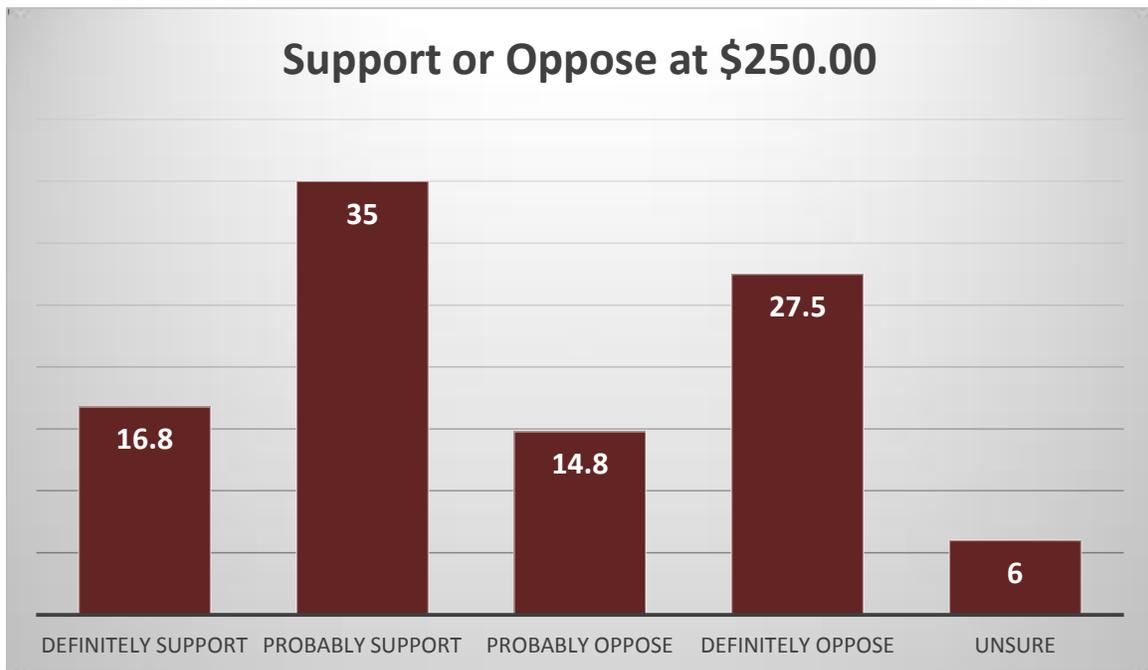
Characteristics of Groton School Systems	More Likely	Less Likely	No Difference	Unsure	More Likely (w/o DK's)
The Groton 2020 Plan addresses five schools that are, on average, 60 years old	51.3	18.4	20.7	9.6	56.7
It helps eliminate State mandated redistricting to address racial imbalance	45.6	25.1	19.2	10.1	50.7
If the plan included in-town magnet schools	43.5	27.7	22.3	6.5	46.5
If the plan includes new construction instead of renovation	36.0	36.3	21.2	6.5	38.5
If you knew that \$2.5 million dollars annually is sent from Groton to surrounding town Magnet schools where Groton students are attending	36.0	28.0	23.1	13.0	41.4
If the plan included a combined middle school and high school campus	33.4	40.7	20.2	5.7	35.4
If the plan increased the amount of playing fields in Groton for public use	32.1	29.0	34.7	4.1	33.5

## TAX IMPLICATION: THE BALLOT II...

Researchers, for the second time and after deliberation allowed by the survey, asked respondents how they would likely vote in a Plan referendum in Groton. The question posed is included here...

“We have had a moment to discuss many of the issues surrounding the School Facility Initiative Groton 2020 Plan. I would like to ask you again about your own support or opposition to investment in Groton’s school facilities if the cost to the average property owner in **increased annual property tax would average \$250.00**. How would you vote on the plan? Would you say you would ...”

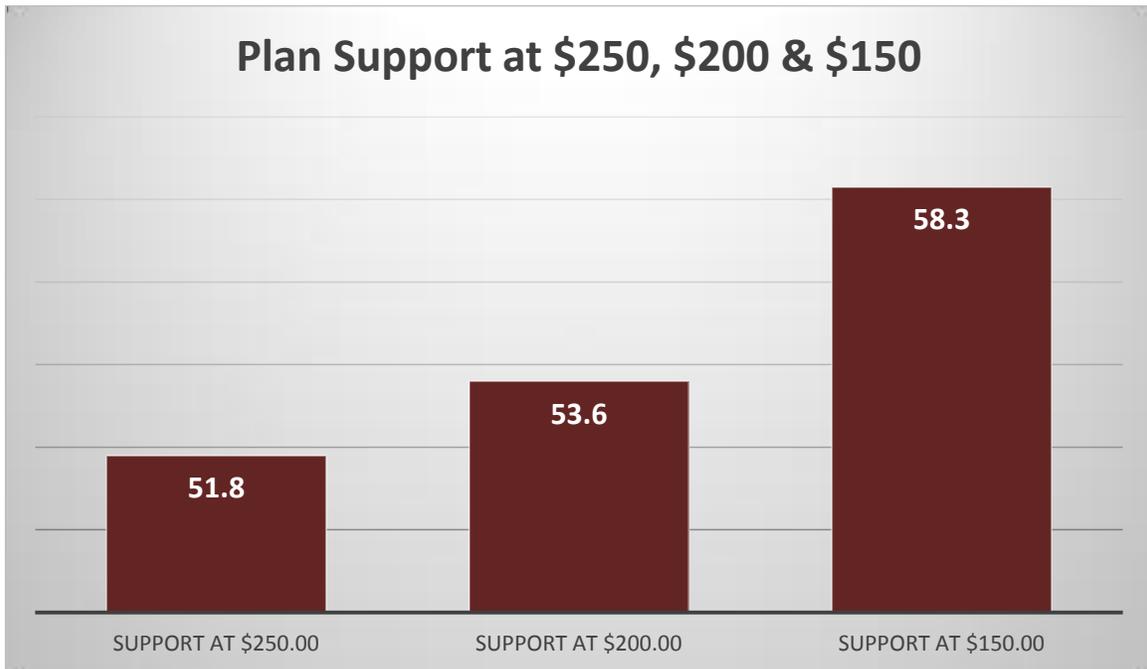
In this second ballot question, 51.8% indicated they would definitely support (16.8%) or probably support (35.0%) the proposed Plan while 42.3% suggested they would probably oppose (14.8%) or definitely oppose (27.5%) the Plan. Results are presented here.



All respondents who indicated they were inclined to oppose the Plan (probably or definitely) at a \$250 average annual property tax increase or were unsure were asked a follow-up question **at \$200.00 instead**. In this question, another 1.8% moved to support.

Following this question, all those who were inclined to oppose the Plan (probably or definitely) at a \$200 average annual property tax increase or were unsure were asked a follow-up question **at \$150.00 instead**. In this question, another 4.7% moved to support.

Results are presented in the following graph.



## COMMUNICATION...

Researchers asked survey respondents to report where they usually get information about Groton Schools. Results are presented in the following table in declining order. Multiple responses were allowed.

Sources for Communication	Percent
Local newspapers: print	50.8
Friends/Family/Neighbors/ Co-workers	28.8
Directly from the schools	27.7
TV	17.6
Internet / websites	12.2
Radio	6.7
Local newspapers: online	4.7
Unsure	4.7
Other	3.9
State news outlets	3.6
Social media such as Facebook	2.8

Employer	2.6
Direct mail	0.8
Blogs	0.5

Additionally, respondents were asked to report social media they used. Results are presented in the following table in declining order. Multiple responses were allowed.

<b>Social Media Used</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Facebook	54.9
Don't Use Social Media	41.5
Twitter	8.3
Instagram	4.4
Google+	3.9
LinkedIn	2.1
YouTube	1.8

Pinterest	1.6
MySpace	0.5
Unsure	0.3
Yelp	---
Foursquare	---
Neighborhood Porch or similar	---

## DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Years Living in Groton</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mean	45.21

<b>Age</b>	<b>Percent</b>
18-24	4.1
25-34	11.4
35-44	17.1
45-54	25.9
55-64	19.9
65 or older	18.1
Refused	3.4

<b>Income</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under \$9,999	1.3
\$10,000 to less than \$40,000	9.6
\$40,000 to less than \$70,000	14.2
\$70,000 to less than \$100,000	22.0
\$100,000 to less than \$130,000	8.8
\$130,000 to less than \$160,000	4.1
\$160,000 or more	9.6
Unsure	3.4
Refused	26.9

<b>Children</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Pre-school or younger	6.0
Currently attending Groton schools	32.9
Currently attending non-Groton schools	5.2
Attended Groton schools in the past	42.0

Attended non-Groton schools in the past	11.7
No children	19.7
Unsure/DK/Refused	4.9

Have Voted in Groton Referendum in Past	Percent
Yes	76.4
No	19.4
Unsure	3.6

Likely to Vote in Referendum in 2016?	Percent
Very likely	74.6
Somewhat likely	17.6
Somewhat unlikely	1.3
Not at all likely	1.6
Unsure	4.9

Gender	Percent
Male	44.6
Female	55.4

# 5 APPENDIX

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## INTERPRETATION OF AGGREGATE RESULTS

The computer processed data for this survey are presented in the following frequency distributions. It is important to note that the wordings of the variable labels and value labels in the computer-processed data are largely abbreviated descriptions of the Questionnaire items and available response categories.

The frequency distributions include the category or response for the question items. Responses deemed not appropriate for classification have been grouped together under the “Other” code.

The “NA” category label refers to “No Answer” or “Not Applicable.” This code is also used to classify ambiguous responses. In addition, the “DK/RF” category includes those respondents who did not know their answer to a question or declined to answer it. In many of the tables, a group of responses may be tagged as “Missing” – occasionally, certain individual’s responses may not be required to specific questions and thus are excluded. Although when this category of response is used, the computations of percentages are presented in two (2) ways in the frequency

distributions: 1) with their inclusion (as a proportion of the total sample), and 2) their exclusion (as a proportion of a sample sub-group).

Each frequency distribution includes the absolute observed occurrence of each response (i.e. the total number of cases in each category). Immediately adjacent to the right of the column of absolute frequencies is the column of relative frequencies. These are the percentages of cases falling in each category response, including those cases designated as missing data. To the right of the relative frequency column is the adjusted frequency distribution column that contains the relative frequencies based on the legitimate (i.e. non-missing) cases. That is, the total base for the adjusted frequency distribution excludes the missing data. For many Questionnaire items, the relative frequencies and the adjusted frequencies will be nearly the same. However, some items that elicit a sizable number of missing data will produce quite substantial percentage differences between the two columns of frequencies. The careful analyst will cautiously consider both distributions.

The last column of data within the frequency distribution is the cumulative frequency distribution (Cum Freq.). This column is simply an adjusted frequency distribution of the sum of all previous categories of response and the current category of response. Its primary usefulness is to gauge some ordered or ranked meaning.