

Consolidated Community School District 181
2016 Resident Telephone Survey
Executive Summary
May 22, 2016

In late April and early May 2016, 500 randomly selected, head-of-household, registered voters were interviewed via telephone to determine their views on why the March 2016 referendum for District 181 was unsuccessful and what the next steps for the school district should be, on the issue of a new Hinsdale Middle School.

A quota was established regarding the balance of interviews with current student families (25%) and non-current district student families (75%), in an effort to generally match the distribution found within the school district's boundaries. A "soft quota" of 50% of the interviews each, came from the attendance areas for Clarendon Hills Middle School and for Hinsdale Middle School.

The interviews were conducted via landline and cell phone numbers. Based on the randomness of the interviews, the size of the population in the district, and the completed interview count of 500, the data in this report that reflects the views of all 500 participants has a Margin of Error of plus or minus 4.3%.

The results were as follows:

Awareness of, and participation in, the March 2016 election

One of the first survey questions asked respondents if they had voted in the March election, and 76% said they had. Those who said they had not voted were presented some brief information about the proposal and then asked if they had *heard* about the referendum (before that information was read to them). Combining those who voted with those who did not vote, but who were aware of the referendum, the percentage of those who had heard nothing about it was only 4%.

Reasons that the referendum lost

Survey participants were asked, in separate open-ended questions, to name the top three reasons they believed the referendum was not successful. Using a 3-point weighted scale for analysis of the responses, "The total project cost was too high" was the runaway top choice. The next two (although quite a distance from the "total project cost" answer) were also money issues: "The design seemed to be extravagant, compared to other middle schools" and "The tax impact for homeowners was too much."

Next steps for the district on the issue of HMS

More than half (58%) of the respondents said that the district should “Develop a new, less expensive design for HMS.” This was followed (in terms of popularity) with a sort of middle-of-the-road answer, “Before running another referendum, modify the Hinsdale Middle School plans to find some overall cost savings. But try to keep the design the same as the one that was voted on in March,” (29%). Only 3% said, “Don’t make any changes to the plan for the new Hinsdale Middle School and run the referendum again.”

In terms of the plans themselves, respondents were asked, in separate open-ended questions, to name the most important and second-most important changes that should be made to the HMS plan. Using a 2-point weighted scale this time, the results were a little closer. “Removing the 500-seat auditorium” was in the top spot, followed closely by “Reduce the overall size of the building.” In third place were the 158 participants who said that their first choice was the only important one to them. Leading the way in the “most important” choices for these individuals were eliminating the auditorium and reducing the overall size of the building.

Location for a new HMS

Slightly over half (51%) of the respondents said that HMS should “stay in the same location,” while 31% said it should “move to a new location.” The financial impact of such a move (cost to acquire land, extra transportation costs, etc.) did not phase the “new location” respondents, as 59% said that information didn’t affect their opinion while, interestingly, 25% said that it made them *more* in favor of moving to a new location.

Project cost and funding issues

Somewhat more than half (54%) of the respondents said that they would prefer “A small annual tax increase over a longer period of time, with a higher total cost to the district” over “A more significant annual tax increase over a shorter period of time, with a lower total cost to the district” (28%).

After being reminded that the previous proposal had been \$65 million, respondents were asked to identify a total project cost that they thought “would be successful in a future referendum.”

This was an open-ended question, with the interviewers having ranges to use when recording the response. There wasn’t much concrete information for this topic, as 43% said, “Don’t know.” Coming in second was “Less than \$45 million” (32%), followed by \$45 to \$54.9 million (14%).

Timing for a potential future referendum.

Of the four choices that were read to them regarding the timing for the next referendum, “Whichever (meaning whichever of the three options that had just been read to them) is needed to allow the time to develop a design that the community can support” was at the top, with 36%. Fairly close behind (31%) was “Right away, like November of this year.” There was much less interest in either “Wait a little bit, meaning run it about April of 2017” (16%) or “Wait even longer, meaning run it about April of 2018” (9%).

Most effective method of reaching the respondents with referendum news

In answer to an open-ended question, 158 survey respondents said that e-mail would be the “best way to get information about the details of that (meaning “the next”) referendum to you.” Also at the top of the list of preferences were a mailer or newsletter (70 mentions), the newspaper (62 mentions) and the school district’s website (57 mentions).

Final voting questions

Survey participants were presented with a hypothetical situation in which District 181 was on the ballot with another taxing entity, whose proposal would also result in a tax increase. If something like this were to happen, what did the respondent think he or she would do?

Forty-two percent of the respondents said, “Don’t know,” suggesting, if you will, that the thought may have never crossed their minds. Below that were “I would vote ‘no’ on both proposals” (18%), “I would vote ‘yes’ on District 181’s proposal and ‘no’ on the other entity’s proposal” (16%), “I would vote ‘yes’ on both proposals” (11%) and “I would vote ‘no’ on District 181’s proposal and ‘yes’ on the other entity’s proposal (<1%).

The survey drew to a close by asking individuals who said they had voted in March *how* they voted – “Yes” or “No?” Fifty-five percent of the respondents said they had voted “No,” 40% said they had voted “Yes” and a surprisingly low 5% refused to answer.

The report presents the data in sections that each have a title, description of what was discovered in the research, the data and all the appropriate cross-tabulations. A brief summary closes the report.

Consolidated Community School District 181
2016 Resident Telephone Survey
Final Report
May 22, 2016

Introductory comments and qualification questions

In late April and early May 2016, a 12- to 15-minute telephone study was conducted with 500 randomly selected registered voters in the Community Consolidated School District 181 (to be simply identified as “District 181” or “D181” in this report). The purpose of this research was to secure input from residents about why the March 2016 referendum lost, and what the district’s next steps should be.

Calls were placed to landlines and cell phone numbers and were subject to what is known as a “soft quota” of having close to 50% in each of the two middle school attendance areas. (Respondents were asked to identify the elementary school that “children in your neighborhood” attend, to simplify the process for them.)

A “hard quota,” meaning that the distribution must follow the identified formula, was established for student status, where 25% of the respondents needed to be parents of a current district student, with 75% being non-current district student families. This distribution was intended to generally match the pattern of student families vs. non-student families across the school district.

Using a 500-interview total produces data that has a Margin of Error of plus or minus 4.3%.

After confirming that he or she was a registered voter (question 1), each respondent was asked a series of questions designed to establish somewhat of a demographic profile. Aside from the qualification questions about student status and where the individual lived in the district, the most interesting finding was that more than three-fourths of the survey participants said they had voted in the March 2016 referendum. (They were only asked whether or not they *had voted*, not *how they voted* – a topic which will come up in the last question of the survey.)

A cross-tabulation analysis, comparing student status to the percentage of individuals who said they had voted, showed an expected pattern. Those respondents ages 35-54 (42%), those who have lived in the district up to five years and those who currently have a district student in their households (34% each) were the highest percentages of those who voted in March.

Those who said they did NOT vote in March were asked (in question 5) whether or not they were *aware* of the ballot issue. The combined percentage of those who had voted in March and those who had not voted – but who did know about the referendum – was 96%. In numbers, rather than in percentages, this means that only 21 of the 500 survey participants didn’t vote and hadn’t even heard about the referendum, until they received this survey call.

2. Did you vote in the March 2016 referendum proposed by District 181?

Response	Percentage
Yes	76%
No	24%

3. Where do the children who live in your neighborhood go to Elementary School?

Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below. There was a “soft quota” of 50% for each middle school attendance area. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.

Response	Number
<i>Clarendon Hills Middle School attendance area – total</i>	248
Monroe	93
Prospect	87
Walker	68

<i>Hinsdale Middle School attendance area – total</i>	252
Elm	64
Madison	52
Oak	76
The Lane	60

4. Do you currently have a child attending a District 181 school?

Response	Percentage
Yes	25%
No	75%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who said they HAD voted in March compared to whether or not they had a current district student in the household by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” will not square with “overall” score, because seven respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=71)	35-54 (n=217)	55 or older (n=205)	Up to 5 years (n=32)	5-15 years (n=149)	More than 15 years (n=319)	Female (n=287)	Male (n=213)
Yes, I currently have a child in a D181 school	25%	31%	42%	6%	34%	32%	21%	26%	24%
No, I do not currently have a child in a D181 school	75%	69%	58%	94%	66%	68%	79%	74%	76%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who said they HAD voted in March compared to whether or not they had a current district student in the household, by attendance area and whether the individual said that he or she voted “Yes” or “No” in the March 2016 election. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the responses from the “voted Yes/No” subgroup will not square with the “overall” score, because they reflect the responses of only the 382 participants who said they had voted, voted minus the 19 respondents who refused to answer the question on how they voted.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=248)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=252)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, no (n=374)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
Yes, I currently have a child in a D181 school	25%	23%	28%	n/a	n/a	34%	23%
No, I do not currently have a child in a D181 school	75%	77%	72%	n/a	n/a	66%	77%

As you may recall, District 181 placed a referendum on the ballot on March 15, which was defeated. Had it passed, it would have provided funding to replace Hinsdale Middle School. The school district and its Board of Education are using this survey to gather the opinions of residents about the past referendum – and about what steps the district should take next.

5. Were you aware of the March 15 referendum for building a new Hinsdale Middle School, before you heard the information that I just read? It's OK to say, "No" if the answer is really, "No." Many people we have already talked to have said, "No." *The introduction to this question, along with the question itself, were read to only the 118 respondents who answered "No" on question 2. If the respondent answered "Yes" on question 2, a "Yes" was recorded here, but the question itself was not asked. Four percent on this question represents a total of 21 respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Yes	96%
No	4%

Why the referendum was unsuccessful

Participants were then asked to identify the most important, second-most important and third-most important reason they thought the referendum was defeated.

These were *open-ended questions*, however, the interviewers were provided with a list of possible reasons for the defeat at the ballot box for their use if the person they were speaking with expressed sentiments that were similar to a phrase on the list. This list was *not* read to the respondents.

By analyzing these results using a weighted, 3-point scale (with 3 points awarded for each “most important” response, down to 1 point given for each “third-most important” answer), it is clear that cost was the most important reason for the loss. “The total project cost was too high” led the way, followed, at a significant distance, by “The design seemed to be extravagant, compared to other middle schools” and “The tax impact for homeowners was too much.” Answers that dealt with the location of the new NMS, not trusting the district and criticism of the design registered very low scores.

In the time since the election, the district has been hearing from some residents why they think the referendum lost.

6-8. What do you think was the most important reason that the referendum failed? What do you think was the second-most important reason? And, finally, what was the third-most important reason? *The list of responses on this question, question 7 and question 8 was not read to respondents, but was there for the convenience of the interviewer only. Results shown using a 3-point weighted scale, with 3 points for each “Most important reason” selection, 2 points for each “Second-most important reason” selection and 1 point for each “Third-most important reason” selection.*

Reason	Most important reason	Second-most important reason	Third-most important reason	3-point weighted scale points
The total project cost was too high	304	68	17	1,065
The design seemed to be extravagant, compared to other middle schools	43	120	25	394
The tax impact for homeowners was too much	51	43	40	279
The total cost for the project kept changing	4	39	21	111

I thought it was a mistake for a new HMS to stay in the same location	11	9	9	60
I didn't know much about it	12	4	0	44
Most people that I talked to seemed to be against the referendum	10	0	10	40
The process felt too rushed	0	15	7	37
I don't trust the district to spend this new money properly	6	0	14	32
What the district put out about the proposal wasn't very helpful to me	5	2	0	19
I didn't like the design	3	1	0	11

Other responses for “most important”

Twenty six respondents said that “something else” was the most important reason, and 25 said, “Don't know.”

Only three respondents were asked a follow-up question requesting more information about what they didn't like about the design and five others said there was something that was important that was missing from the proposal.

Other responses for “second-most important”

A total of 126 respondents said that “only one reason was important.” That one reason, overwhelmingly at the top of the list (89 of 126), was “The total project cost was too high.”

Thirty-one respondents answered that “something else” was the second-most important reason and 17 participants said “Don't know.”

Two respondents said that something important was missing from the proposal, and one individual did not like the design.

Other responses for “third-most important”

A total of 138 respondents said that “only two reasons were important.” “The total project cost was the most popular first or second reason, with 131 out of the 138 indicating this answer.

Twenty respondents answered that “something else” was the third-most important reason, and 31 participants said, “Don't know.”

Zero respondents said either that something important was missing from the proposal or that they did not like the design.

Next steps for the district on the issue of a referendum to build a new Hinsdale Middle School

After saying why they thought the proposal lost, respondents were then asked for advice on when to run another referendum and what changes, if any, should be made before any referendum is placed on the ballot.

A majority of survey participants (58%) said, “Develop a new, less expensive design for HMS.” This was followed, again, at a distance, by “Before running another referendum, modify the Hinsdale Middle School plans to find some overall cost savings. But try to keep the design the same as the one that was voted on in March” (29%). “Don’t make any changes to the plan for the new Hinsdale Middle School and run the referendum again” had little support, with 3%.

Comparing these recommendations with the demographic and geographic aspects of the participants, the order of preference was the same for all subgroups. Also, five of the subgroups had at least 60% support for the “new, less expensive” idea option. Those subgroups were:

- Those who voted, “No” in March – 63%
- Those ages 18 to 34 – 63%
- Those who live in the Clarendon Hills attendance area – 62%
- Current student families – 60%
- Male respondents – 60%

Research participants were then asked to identify the “most important” and “second-most important” *changes* that need to be made to the plan before the district runs another referendum. Again, the list that is shown in this report was NOT read to the respondents, but was there for the convenience of the interviewer. For this question, a 2-point weighted scale was used, because respondents were only asked to identify their top two choices, rather than three, as was the case earlier.

These results were quite a bit closer. “Remove the 500-seat auditorium” accumulated 220 points, followed by “Reduce the overall building size” at 189 points.

A total of 158 people said that “Only one change is important.” Their answers to the “most important change” question were dominated by “Remove the 500-seat auditorium” and “Reduce the overall building size.”

9. In a minute, I'll be asking for your opinion on some issues related to a potential future referendum for Hinsdale Middle School. As you think about it now, overall, which of the following statements would be your general advice to the district?
Reponses, except where indicted, were read to respondents in the order displayed in the chart below.

Response	Percentage
Don't make any changes to the plan for the new Hinsdale Middle School and run the referendum again.	3%
Before running another referendum, modify the Hinsdale Middle School plans to find some overall cost savings. But try to keep the design the same as the one that was voted on in March.	29%
Develop a new, less expensive design for HMS.	58%
A different idea.	2%
Don't run a referendum at all (not read).	3%
Don't know/Not sure (not read).	5%

Verbatim responses for those participants who said "a different idea."

Stick with existing structure and refurbish it.

Both modify cost and design.

Move to a different location and get a quality design by an architect that specializes in building schools.

Just add on to HMS.

Repair the current school. Don't build a new building.

Different location for the school would be better.

Move the location to 55th and County Line Road.

A good plan that is well organized.

All I know is it doesn't need to be downtown.

They need to find a new location.

Renovate.

Focus on convincing Clarendon Hills residents to vote for it.

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents in support of various next steps for the district by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” will not square with “overall” score, because seven respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=71)	35-54 (n=217)	55 or older (n=205)	Up to 5 years (n=32)	5-15 years (n=149)	More than 15 years (n=319)	Female (n=287)	Male (n=213)
No changes to the plan; run it again	3%	3%	5%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Modify plans to find cost savings, but keep the design the same	29%	28%	29%	29%	31%	35%	25%	31%	25%
Develop a new, less expensive idea for HMS	58%	63%	57%	58%	56%	56%	59%	56%	60%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents in support of various next steps for the district, by middle school attendance area, by the presence (or lack) of a current district student in the household, and whether the individual said that he or she voted “Yes” or “No” in the March 2016 election. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the responses from the “voted Yes/No” group will not square with the “overall” score, because they reflects the responses of only the 382 who said they had voted minus the 19 respondents who refused to answer the question on how they voted.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=248)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=252)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, no (n=374)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
No changes to the plan; run it again	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%
Modify plans to find cost savings, but keep the design the same	29%	27%	31%	32%	28%	39%	22%
Develop a new, less expensive idea for HMS	58%	62%	54%	60%	57%	48%	63%

10-11. In terms of the plans for HMS, what do you think is the most important change to the original plan that needs to be made before any future referendum is run? What would you say was the second-most important change? The list of responses on question 10 and 11 was *not read* to respondents, but was there for the convenience of the interviewer only. Results shown using a 2-point weighted scale, with 2 points for each “Most important change” selection and 1 point for each “Second-most important change” selection.

Response	Most important change	Second-most important change	2-point weighted scale points
Remove the 500-seat auditorium	78	64	220
Reduce the overall building size	83	23	189
Only one change is important	n/a	158	158
Reduce the overall cost	62	0	124
Remove the elevated running track	45	19	109
Renovate instead	35		70
Change the location	31	0	62
Eliminate the synthetic turf	19	3	41
Something else/Other	26	27	n/a
Don't know	121	85	n/a

Verbatim “Something else/other” comments on question 10 (most important change)

Not so extravagant.

Eliminating water feature.

New architectural group; start all over again.

Remove unnecessary extras that are not needed. Too many extravagancies that are not needed in a middle school, such as the oversized gym.

No changes.

Keep it the same; the school is needed but better communication is needed.

Find ways to make the old school workable.

Location - have only one school in Clarendon Hills.

Finding a way to get Clarendon Hills’ families to vote for it is the only change I can think of right now.

They need parking for school use only and not the Village.

None.

Revised architectural plan.

Better marketing.

Just add on to the Clarendon Hills Middle School, instead of building a new one.

Look at themselves in the mirror and ask if they think this proposal is over the top.

It seemed so extravagant that perhaps they should look into changing who designed the proposal.

I've heard they plan to have an indoor track and field - too extravagant.

You have to fix the roads that we pay taxes on before anything else.

Exclude planetarium.

Review the entire proposal.

No changes.

Add another classroom at the grammar school level.

They should enhance the present design, make it not so overwhelming.

Fix what they have; that isn't so expensive.

Don't have many unnecessary things in the design.

Focus on academics rather than activities that won't do the community any good.

Verbatim “Something else/other” comments on question 11 (second-most important change)

No need for expanding.

Maybe changing the location.

Try to reduce the cost.

Reduce cost.

Have it the same as Clarendon Hills.

Add more public space-like parking.

Probably reduce the cost.

Work on lowering the cost.

Price.

Cost; it's way too expensive.

Classrooms; the majority of the building is not for academics.

I guessing lower the cost.

Whole plan needs to be reworked.

Do nothing, but make necessary repairs.

They should consider moving to a new location.

It should be similar to Clarendon Hills, not more extravagant.

Surely a new school can be built for less. If not, find a new contractor.

The land was too expensive.

Be competitive with Clarendon Hills.

Make it more similar to the other middle school, Clarendon.

There has to be a way to do it at a lesser cost. It's a school and not a college campus.

Add more parking.

Try to be competitive with other districts.

Show due diligence and that they did their homework about everything. Do they even know what the people want?

Make sure all school buildings are handicapped and disability accessible.

New labs are not needed.

Reduce the over-the-top amenities.

12. Do you have any other ideas about what should, or should not, be included in the new Hinsdale Middle School? Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.

Response	Number
Yes	26
No	268

Verbatim “Yes” responses

Make it similar to Clarendon Hills.

They need to deal with the parking situation.

They need to start over.

Perhaps focus on the educational or academics improvements, instead of the sports, like tracks and gyms.

The track shouldn't be included.

We don't need two gyms.

Eliminate the running track; put a paved track outside instead.

Use Clarendon Hills Middle School as an example. It was much less expensive.

Look at more options around the Village and build three smaller schools, instead of two larger ones.

Lower the cost.

Follow the Clarendon Hills Middle School plan - their plan was good.

They need to address the parking situation. It's bad!

If staying at the same location, come up with a better plan for dropping off and picking up kids.

I think all sixth graders should go to Clarendon Hills, keep seventh and eighth grades at HMS.

Modify in terms of the projective need of students and the community.

Address the parking problems more.

Drop the skylight and find cost savings.

Remove the walking track.

Maybe make it similar to Clarendon Hills and they would vote for it.

They should look at different location options. It was way too expensive for us. It was very extravagant.

Space for administration.

They don't need a running track.

Drop the A trim they had in the auditorium, elevated track and turf. Come up with a plan that makes sense.

Improved parking is needed.

They need to make it appropriate for 12-14 year olds, instead of what they are proposing.

Go back to a more traditional architecture.

Recommendations regarding the location of the new HMS

The survey then turned to the issue of the location of the new HMS.

A little over half (51%) of the respondents said that the district should “Stay in the same location” and 31% said to “Move to a new location.”

The demographic and geographic subgroup data shows that the top choice in every group was “Stay in the same location” and that no subgroup strayed very far from the 51% score for the entire group.

The 163 respondents who recommended that the new school be in a different location were then presented – as blandly as possible – some of the issues that might surface if, in fact, the new HMS is in a different location.

Interestingly, this information either didn’t have any effect on the person’s preference or even made his or her views more firm. A total of 59% said that these issues “Don’t affect my opinion” and 25% said they would be *more in favor of moving*. Only 5% said they would be less in favor of moving, after hearing the challenges associated with the district taking such a step.

In reviewing these numbers, it is important to keep in mind that the question was asked of only the 163 research participants who said they preferred a new location – not the entire survey group of 500. Even so, *although they are a minority of those who participated*, the individuals who want the new HMS to be in a different location appear somewhat strident in their views.

13. The district has heard from some residents who think it would be better to build a new Hinsdale Middle School some place other than its current location. What do you think? Choices, except where indicated, were read to the respondents.

Response	Percentage
Stay in the same location	51%
Move to a new location	31%
It depends on the location (not read)	9%
Don’t care (not read)	6%
Don’t know (not read)	10%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for two location options for a new HMS – stay in the same place or move to a new location by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” will not square with “overall” score, because seven respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=71)	35-54 (n=217)	55 or older (n=205)	Up to 5 years (n=32)	5-15 years (n=149)	More than 15 years (n=319)	Female (n=287)	Male (n=213)
Stay in the same location	51%	56%	48%	53%	53%	54%	49%	48%	54%
Move to a new location	31%	31%	30%	32%	31%	26%	33%	32%	29%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for two location options for a new HMS – stay in the same place or move to a new location by middle school attendance area, by the presence (or lack) of a current district student in the household, and whether the individual said that he or she voted “Yes” or “No” in the March 2016 election. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the responses from the “voted Yes/No” group will not square with the “overall” score, because they reflect the responses of only the 382 who said they had voted minus the 19 respondents who refused to answer the question on how they voted.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=248)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=252)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, no (n=374)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
Stay in the same location	51%	48%	53%	48%	51%	50%	51%
Move to a new location	31%	31%	31%	28%	32%	31%	30%

14. What if a move to a different location could involve providing transportation for all students because of the varying quality and safety of some of the walking routes, and would probably mean that the new school would be on the edge of the district boundaries? Does that make you...? Asked only of the 163 respondents who answered question 13 either “Move to a new location” or “It depends on the location.”

Response	Number
More in favor of moving to a new location for HMS	25%
Less in favor of moving	5%
It doesn't affect my opinion	59%
Don't know (not read)	11%

Preferences on how this referendum would be funded

It is clear that those who were interviewed for this survey were more interested in having a smaller increase in their annual taxes – even though the total cost will be higher.

A total of 54% selected “A *small annual tax increase* over a longer period of time, with a higher total cost to the district” and 28% chose “A *more significant annual tax increase* over a shorter period of time, with a lower total cost to the district.”

All but one subgroup (respondents ages 18 to 34) had a majority who said they preferred the “smaller annual tax increase” option.

The final financial question reminded participants that the March referendum was for \$65 million and then asked them to identify a “total project cost that would be successful in a future referendum.” Once again, the options shown in the chart below were there for the interviewer’s convenience, but were not read to participants.

The most popular answer to this question, with 43%, was “Don’t know.” With it being clear that cost was a concern in March, it is not surprising that the second-most popular choice (32%) was “Less than \$45 million.” Coming in third was “\$45 to \$54.9 million, with a score of 14%.

This is, perhaps, the most important piece of data on this subject. These results strongly suggest that the participants had little or no reference point regarding the cost of a new school building – but they knew that they were against a cost of \$65 million.

The next two questions deal with the funding of any future referendum – if a referendum were to pass.

- 15. There are three components involved in paying for a project like this: the size of the tax increase for residents, how long it takes to pay off the bonds, and the total cost. Which of the following do you think would be the best choice? Choices, except where indicated, were read to respondents.**

Response	Percentage
A small annual tax increase over a longer period of time, with a higher total cost to the district	54%
A more significant annual tax increase over a shorter period of time, with a lower total cost to the district	28%
It would depend on the specifics of the cost (not read)	6%
None of these/Don’t want another referendum on this (not read)	9%
Don’t know (not read)	2%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for each of the two funding options by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” will not square with “overall” score, because seven respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=71)	35-54 (n=217)	55 or older (n=205)	Up to 5 years (n=32)	5-15 years (n=149)	More than 15 years (n=319)	Female (n=287)	Male (n=213)
A small annual tax increase over a longer period of time, with a higher total cost to the district	54%	41%	59%	56%	59%	55%	54%	54%	55%
A more significant annual tax increase over a shorter period of time, with a lower total cost to the district	28%	41%	25%	27%	16%	27%	29%	30%	24%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for each of the two funding options election by middle school attendance area, by the presence (or lack) of a current district student in the household, and whether the individual said that he or she voted “Yes” or “No” in the March 2016 election. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the responses from the “voted Yes/No” group will not square with the “overall” score, because they reflect the responses of only the 382 who said they had voted minus the 19 respondents who refused to answer the question on how they voted.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=248)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=252)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, no (n=374)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
A small annual tax increase over a longer period of time, with a higher total cost to the district	54%	51%	58%	59%	53%	56%	57%
A more significant annual tax increase over a shorter period of time, with a lower total cost to the district	28%	29%	26%	26%	28%	34%	25%

16. The District's proposal in March 2016 was a 65 million dollar project. Do you believe there is a total project cost that would be successful in a future referendum?
Choices were not read to respondents. Interviewers selected the choice that fit the respondent's answer.

Response	Percentage
\$65 million again	1%
\$62.5 to \$64.9 million	0%
\$60 to \$62.4 million	1%
\$55 to \$59.9 million	4%
\$45 to \$54.9 million	14%
Less than \$45 million	32%
No/None/Would not support at any cost	5%
Whatever it takes to build the school with the changes as described	1%
Don't know	43%

Recommended timing for a future referendum

The final issue in this discussion was when to run a future referendum to give it the best chance for success.

Research participants were presented a variety of options on the time frame, and they were asked to select the option that would be “the best time to do so.”

Not surprisingly, the rather non-committal answer “Whichever is needed to allow the time to develop a design that the community can support” was the most popular, at 36%.

This was followed by “Right away, like in November of this year,” (31%), “Wait a little bit, meaning run it about April of 2017” (16%) and “Wait even longer, meaning run it in about April of 2018” (9%)

Within the cross-tabulation subgroups, support for the “Whichever is needed” ran from 31% (those who said they voted, “Yes” in March) up to 40% (for both those who said they voted, “No” in March and those who were age 55 or older). The range of support for the “Right away” answer was 22% (the small group of respondents who have lived in the district up to five years) up to 37% (for those who said they voted, “Yes” in the March 2016 election).

17. If the district decided to run another referendum regarding Hinsdale Middle School, when do you think would be the best time to do so? Choices, except where indicated, were read to respondents.

Response	Percentage
Right away, like in November of this year	31%
Wait a little bit, meaning run it about April of 2017	16%
Wait even longer, meaning run it about April of 2018	9%
Whichever is needed to allow the time to develop a design that the community can support	36%
Not at all/Never (not read)	4%
Cost is more important than when the election happens (not read)	1%
Don't know (not read)	3%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for each option on the timing of a potential future election by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group. “Age” will not square with “overall” score, because seven respondents refused to answer this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=71)	35-54 (n=217)	55 or older (n=205)	Up to 5 years (n=32)	5-15 years (n=149)	More than 15 years (n=319)	Female (n=287)	Male (n=213)
Right away, like in November of this year	31%	34%	34%	27%	22%	34%	30%	33%	28%
Wait a little bit, meaning run it about April 2017	16%	18%	18%	14%	19%	17%	16%	17%	15%
Wait even longer, meaning run it about April 2018	9%	7%	9%	11%	16%	7%	11%	9%	9%
Whichever is needed to allow the time to develop a design that the community can support	36%	35%	34%	40%	38%	38%	35%	35%	38%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents for each option on the timing of a potential future election by middle school attendance area, by the presence (or lack) of a current district student in the household, and whether the individual said that he or she voted “Yes” or “No” in the March 2016 election. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents in each group, and the responses from the “voted Yes/No” group will not square with the “overall” score, because they reflect the responses of only the 382 who said they had voted minus the 19 respondents who refused to answer the question on how they voted.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=248)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=252)	Student, yes (n=126)	Student, no (n=374)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
Right away, like in November of this year	31%	32%	30%	34%	29%	37%	28%
Wait a little bit, meaning run it about April 2017	16%	18%	15%	17%	16%	17%	16%
Wait even longer, meaning run it about April 2018	9%	8%	11%	8%	10%	10%	8%
Whichever is needed to allow the time to develop a design that the community can support	36%	34%	39%	37%	36%	31%	40%

Most effective method of disseminating information to survey participants about a future referendum

As the survey was beginning to draw to a close, an open-ended question asked participants to identify the best way to get information to them about a future referendum and all its details.

The chart below shows a strong preference for e-mail, but a scan of the remainder of the chart and of the verbatim comments (which were either “one off” answers, had two or more answers in them, or both) show strong preferences for nearly every item in the communicator’s toolbox.

This suggests that there is no “magic bullet,” meaning one or two methods that are head and shoulders above the rest and, therefore, should be the exclusive focus of the communications efforts for any future referendums. Rather, this data tells us that a broad-based strategy should continue to be employed, with the focus – as always – on repeated presentations of simple messages that describe how the plan will benefit students, families and the school district as a whole.

- 18. If the district went ahead with another referendum at some point in the future, what would be the best way to get information about the details of that referendum to you?** *Responses were coded, based on common words, phrases and ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
E-mail	158
Other (see below)	74
Mailer/newsletter	70
Newspaper	62
On the school district’s website	57
Town hall meetings	44
Local TV news	21
By all means possible	14

Verbatim “other” comments

Fliers

Going door to door, talking to individuals and discussing the benefits of the school - increase on property value.

Local TV and newspapers.

TV ads and through the mail.

Run in newspaper and online, like they did before.

E-mail or regular mail.

District website for people with kids in the schools and mailings for those without kids in school.

Local papers, mailings like brochures; the mailings that were previously sent I thought were plenty.

Print publications, such as newspapers, or informational meetings at parishes, but not religious-based; be there to get out info about the referendum.

Knock on every door and talk to people.

The Hinsdalean newspaper, events to talk about it - town hall meetings, but not just one meeting.

Phone calls or door-to-door campaigning.

E-mail and mailers.

Meetings at the school.

Newspaper, e-mails, mailers, town meetings.

Town hall meetings, but do them at local elementary schools, not middle schools.

Local media and online.

I would seek out the information for myself.

Social media.

Local newspaper and e-mail.

I think they need to target all those that voted "No."

District newsletter, local paper and district website.

Facebook and e-mail or leaflets at the door.

Pass out information door to door and also the people who hand them out should be able to explain. Go to all school open houses; that draws a lot of people.

Billboards encouraging voters to seek info on a website or phone number.

In written form.

U.S. Mail or in the local media.

Local newspaper or school website.

It would probably be best to have them go door to door to educate and through social media.

Newspaper and mailings or town hall meetings.

Internet, either by website or e-mail.

E-mail or website.

Put out a benefits-to-cost page via email, mailer and fliers. I would also have it on the school website.

E-mail system from the school.

Local newspaper and e-mail.

E-mail, community meetings to let people know what's going on.

By phone.

Local media.

Direct mailings and fliers, media interviews to inform the public.

Newsletter, town hall meetings.

To help with getting votes in Clarendon Hills, maybe you should do a comparison of how the school is to theirs.

E-mail or mailers.

Articles in the newspaper, e-mails and town hall meetings.

E-mail and newsletters.

E-mail, newspaper, post on the web.

E-mail and U.S. Mail.

Fliers.

Traditional mail, local paper, e-mail with the link with all the information.

Online.

Local media.

Have several radio call-in shows to ask questions and to explain.

I have no response.

It won't matter if they don't keep it simple and easy to understand; then they can do about anything.

Town halls and through some literature; people can have a voice in town hall meetings.

Advertise in the newspaper, send out fliers for those who don't have kids in the school.

E-mail or newspaper.

Local ads in the newspaper giving a phone number to call if people have questions.

E-mail or mail or town hall meetings.

Handouts at community events.

E-mails or fliers in the mail.

I don't know.

About any social media.

E-mail, Facebook, or any social media.

Local news media and website.

E-mails; anything online.

Website, mail - it doesn't matter. What matters is content - be honest and know what they are doing.

Local newspaper, website.

Mail and e-mail.

Online.

My kids don't go to that school, so probably none.

Meetings at the local elementary schools, like they did before, was fine.

Direct mail, posters throughout the Village and enclosed with utility bills.

I am too old to say what would be the best way for everybody. The information has to be presented correctly.

News media, newspaper and TV news.

Questions related to participant demographics

The beginning of the survey had a series of demographic and geographic questions designed to make certain that the survey group matched the soft and hard quotas that had been established.

These two questions, on the other hand, were not quota-driven, but were used simply to collect this information for use in the cross-tabulations seen earlier in this report.

The respondent's gender, which is *recorded* by the interviewer (not asked of the respondent) is the very last question in the survey.

Thank you for staying with me. These last few questions will help divide our responses into groups.

19. How long have you, yourself, lived within the boundaries of District 181? Is it...*Choices were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
Less than 2 years	1%
2 years to 5 years	5%
More than 5 years to 10 years	13%
More than 10 years to 15 years	17%
More than 15 years	54%
I've lived here all my life	10%

20. In what age group are you? Is it...*Choices, except where indicated, were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
18 to 24	1%
25 to 34	14%
35 to 44	19%
45 to 54	25%
55 to 64	23%
65 or older	18%
Refused (not read)	2%

Final tax and March 2016 questions

A big challenge that is faced often by school districts is when its proposal is not the only one on the ballot that would result in a tax increase. In such a circumstance, what would voters do?

The results were not particularly helpful, as 42% said, “Don’t know,” while the core answer choices (“Yes on both,” “No on both,” “Yes” on one and “No” on the other, etc.) didn’t gain much traction.

21. If a referendum from another taxing entity appeared on the same ballot as a referendum from District 181, what do you think you would most likely do, as you think about it today? *Choices, except where indicated, were read to respondents.*

Response	Percentage
I would vote “yes” on both proposals.	11%
I would vote “yes” on District 181’s proposal and “no” on the other entity’s proposal.	16%
I would vote “no” on District 181’s proposal and “yes” on the other entity’s proposal.	<1%
I would vote “no” on both proposals.	18%
Depends on the cost (not read)	13%
Don’t know (not read)	42%

This was followed by a question, which was read after some explanation content, that asked all those who voted in March whether they voted, “Yes” or “No.”

The percentages for each answer were not far off the actual vote tally. Also, only 5% of the respondents (19) refused to provide this information. Clearly, the interviewer had built up the necessary rapport during the survey process to secure an answer on this important question.

Two items of note surfaced in the cross-tabulations.

First, the total percentage of current student families who said they had voted, “Yes” was notably higher than those who said they did not have district children, but who also said they voted, “Yes.”

Second, the percentages of “Yes” voters who lived in the Clarendon Hills attendance area and those who lived in the Hinsdale attendance area were, essentially, identical. (As would logically follow, the same was true for the percentages of “No” voters.)

22. And, finally, the company that is facilitating the telephone interviews is called Patron Insight, Inc. They will be providing District 181 a report that contains all the data, and they will also break down the information to see if there are differences of opinion, based on factors such as age, middle school attendance area, having a child in a District 181 school right now, and so on.

One very important factor is seeing the differences of opinion, based on how people voted in March. Remember, your responses to every question on this survey are confidential. The district will only receive a summary report – but it will not see any individual responses.

Now that I have described how the information will be used, will you please tell me whether you voted, “Yes” or “No” on the recent referendum? *Asked only of the 382 respondents who answered, “Yes” on question 2. Those who answered, “No” on question 2 skipped to question 23.*

Response	Percentage
Yes	40%
No	55%
Refused (not read)	5%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who said they voted “Yes” or “No” for the March referendum by age, length of time living in the district, and gender. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents who said they did vote in the March 2016 election who *also* answered this question. Subgroups that do not appear to square with the overall score were those that were most impacted by the 19 refusals on this question.

Response	Overall score	18-34 (n=49)	35-54 (n=144)	55 or older (n=166)	Up to 5 years (n=17)	5-15 years (n=106)	More than 15 years (n=240)	Female (n=221)	Male (n=142)
Voted “Yes”	40%	37%	47%	40%	58%	42%	41%	47%	35%
Voted “No”	55%	63%	53%	60%	41%	58%	59%	53%	65%

Cross-tabulation: Percentage of respondents who said they voted “Yes” or “No” for the March referendum by middle school attendance area and by the presence (or lack) of a current district student in the household. Note: “n” equals the number of respondents who said they did vote in the March 2016 election who *also* answered this question. Subgroups that do not appear to square with the overall score were those that were most impacted by the 19 refusals on this question.

Response	Overall score	Clarendon Hills attendance area (n=155)	Hinsdale attendance area (n=208)	Student, yes (n=100)	Student, no (n=263)	Voted “Yes” (n=153)	Voted “No” (n=210)
Voted “Yes”	40%	41%	43%	52%	38%	n/a	n/a
Voted “No”	55%	59%	57%	48%	62%	n/a	n/a

Final thoughts on a potential future referendum

The survey came to a close with an open-ended question asking participants if they had anything else that they “would like the District 181 Board and Administration to consider for the next referendum.”

There were just a few answers to this question that had information that had not already been expressed. The verbatim comments here, and throughout this report, make for interesting reading, but it is important to remember that each is from a single person and, therefore, not indicative of a trend.

23. Is there anything else that you would like the District 181 Board and Administration to consider for the next referendum? *Responses were coded, based on common words, phrases and ideas. Numbers, rather than percentages, displayed below.*

Response	Number
No/nothing	193
Focus on keeping cost down/more cost-efficient design	129
Other (see below)	84
Communicate plans better/sooner	63
Renovation	31

Verbatim “other” comments

Not to do it.

Get business support for the referendum. I give permission to call. I want to help. *Name and phone number which were part of the full response, were provided to District 181, but were removed from this report to protect confidentiality.*

Just educate people about the benefits as much as possible.

Early Childhood programs.

They need to keep the middle school in Hinsdale.

Don't shoot for the moon; be realistic with your plan.

Manage cost better and more media push with the information on the referendum.

We need a new middle school, but not at that price.

Make sure they keep to the integrity of the plan, not try to please everyone and build something cheap.

Improve the curriculum for the gifted students.

Thank you to the district for all they do, but please work on the basic plan and lower costs, if possible. Be more frugal.

No, just listen to the people and this survey and act accordingly.

No, I like the referendum as it is.

Just building a new school next door to the old will help property values go up.

Emphasize the education benefits.

We need to figure out how to get this done. They need to find examples of other districts that have not improved their schools and determine what happens to property values.

The middle school doesn't have to be extravagant. The teachers are what matter.

Just be more proactive, and not just Hinsdale.

There was a huge conflict in the high school - they had a political take over.

I would like to see a comparison to similar districts in the area, cost-wise.

I think they need to think of a different way of getting the info out, whether it is paying for a spot in the newspaper or sending out mailers.

Try to take some of the feedback from people and make some minor changes to satisfy those that voted "No" on the previous referendum.

They need to target Clarendon Hills voters and justify the cost.

They need a safe learning environment; up to date and safe.

Do a better job of getting information out to people; do town hall meetings.

Prove to the community that the district can keep the costs under control.

The school referendum is the only place to vote “No” on a tax increase.

Just have a vote for the families with kids that are going to that school. I know that's not possible, but I don't think the older people should be affected with school taxes.

The referendum that looks at all the needs of schools in 181. It makes the cost of schools in 181 visible outside of HMS.

Consider all capital improvements for the next 30 years.

Just think about the kids and their education, and not a fashion project.

Explain how the cost is necessary.

I would say strongly - moving the location.

Start from scratch.

Show the community why they need so many additional things. How to utilize the space when there are not a lot of kids attending. They should continue trying to be an excellent school district and show respect to their facility and teachers.

"Be better shoppers" - get a better price. Look for the best deal and not just accept the first bid.

I hope they get all their ducks in order and come up with a better, lower cost plan.

Be very cautious about the money and focus on educating the community.

Keeping the Hinsdale Middle School without the bells and whistles like Clarendon Hills has.

Even though I voted for it, I did so reluctantly. The cost was too high and involved more additions to the building than were needed.

They need to talk to as many people as possible and keep the cost down.

Population studies - we have an aging population and we need to see if the community will continue to support the expansions they want.

The school district is wasting too much money. Taxpayers look at the schools together, the high school is asking for \$95 million and HMS \$65 million - that's ridiculous. Taxpayers would be the ones suffering.

Be realistic.

The more people feel they had an input, the more likely they are to vote in favor. Somehow show that you listened and implemented the constituents' suggestions.

Cut the cost and keep the public informed.

Put more emphasis on education and technology improvements than all the "fluff."

Really reaching out in more depth to the residents of the community who don't have kids in the district and showing them how this would help our community.

Since they never said what they would do with the old building, I suggest making two buildings together – keeping the older one and building a smaller one next to it.

Add on to the existing school in Clarendon Hills.

They need to fix the curriculum first before worrying about updating the building, because they have lost parents' confidence in all areas.

It needs to focus on a reasonable impact and what that would mean. How it will improve school and how it will improve property values.

Just keep the cost in mind, as well as the yearly increase in taxes.

Show how this would improve property value.

Review the whole plan altogether. Take your time, look at the input and come up with something.

Make it comparable to Clarendon Hills.

They should take the same architectural plans from Clarendon Hills Middle School and duplicate them.

Look at the population of the middle schools; it is getting lower. Maybe go back to a junior high school and place the sixth grade back with grade school.

Show people they are making every effort to reduce their budget and how building the new school benefits everyone, not just those with kids in school.

Need to communicate primarily with people with kids in elementary school and younger.

Somehow do a better job informing, one on one, how this plan benefits everyone.

Justify the \$65 million and how will it help the community and the school.

They need better due diligence and a lot of leg work needs to be done, because they didn't do it.

I think they need to think about the fiscal impact it has on them and the financial impact it has on the voters.

Look for the best ways to make cost savings. Make good administrative decisions. Keep finances under control.

Add another classroom at the grammar school level. It will take away some of the overcrowding in the middle school.

Look at a sales tax proposal so everyone contributes, not just homeowners.

Get as much community input as possible and get the project done soon.

Get rid of that piece of junk artwork they put up years ago.

I'm in favor of a new middle school, even though my children went to the other middle school. But it needs to be appropriately priced.

It seems we are asking for much more than other new schools in the area that are or were built. Tell us why or explain, if that is incorrect.

Just don't ask for the best of everything, when you can achieve a good education with more emphasis on quality teachers, technology etc. and not fancy buildings.

Keep things within their budget for a change. Cut budget, don't raise taxes.

Learn how to deal with less money. We have streets that need repair, but you want to build multimillion dollar schools? Priorities are all wrong.

Make the job a competitive bid.

They need to be fiscally responsible with other peoples' money.

No; just be open to pursuing different locations.

Find out why some people move out of the district as soon as their children graduate.

Consider keeping the downtown area viable for people moving here.

Just find another location.

Don't build a new school.

Not to have one.

Have a program to educate citizens about what all the referendum is about.

Keep it out in the open and keep everyone informed about what's going on.

24. RECORD GENDER

Response	Percentage
Female	57%
Male	43%

Summary

The late April/early May telephone survey of head-of-household registered voters, who live within District 181's boundaries, showed that residents either overwhelmingly voted in, or at least knew about, the March 2016 referendum. Their thoughts on that referendum and on the next steps the district should take to follow up on that loss were as follows:

- **Cost was the primary reason the referendum lost.** The frequency of responses that the cost for the overall project, the impact the project would have on residents' tax bills, and the view that the design shouldn't have been so "extravagant" all contributed to this finding.
- **The District should return with a referendum that has a new, less expensive design for HMS.** But the respondents also had no real strong views on when that referendum should occur or what the new design should cost.
- **The 500-seat auditorium was the specific project from the March 2016 plan that drew the most criticism.** And, again, the size and the cost of the project were mentioned as an issue that should be addressed, before any future referendum is run.
- **While there are those who want a new HMS to be in a different location, the majority would like to see it stay put.** It was, however, a small majority (51%).
- **They have no specific input on the total cost, just that it needs to be lower.** They also said they would prefer a smaller annual tax increase over a longer period of time than the reverse – even though that option would end up costing more in the long run.
- **They also don't have a strong feeling on when a next referendum should be run.** The top answer on that issue, paraphrased, was "As long as it takes to get a plan that will win."

When the final plan is identified, the most important messages to disseminate (over and over again) will be:

- What is different
- Why it has changed
- The impact the changes have had on the total cost
- These modifications to the plan were a result of your feedback

The issue appears to have nothing to do with the merit of the total project itself; some kind of substantial change related to HMS is seen as appropriate. The tipping point is the cost, which should be the first order of business, as the plans are revised.