

All in for Inver Grove!

FOUR STEPS TO REFERENDUM SUCCESS *Inver Grove Heights Story*

1. Community Engagement

- Stratified random sample community survey through Springsted
- Maintain relationships, especially those established long before the referendum
- Include district staff first so they understand the referendum in order to answer the questions community members will inevitably direct to them and so they understand what is expected of them
- Get details about what the levies will include because that's the first thing people want to know

2. Good Project

"Give them a reason to vote ... and then a reason to vote yes" & "Listen to the data"

The district decided to propose an operating levy increase and a capital projects levy. The decision:

- was based on community survey results as well as staff and project needs
 - asked for what the district needed, not wanted
 - included something for everyone
- used a capital projects levy instead of a technology levy based on the fact that residents had voted against technology levies in 2011 and 2012 because of perceptions about 1:1

less Than
\$11 PER MONTH
ON AN AVERAGE
\$235,000 HOME

The City

- ☞ Population: 35,000
- ☞ District enrollment: ~3,700
- ☞ Large retirement community
- ☞ 80% without school-age children

The Situation

- ☞ Revenues stagnant
- ☞ Slightly declining enrollment
- ☞ Costs increasing
- ☞ 3 years of deficit spending
- ☞ FY17: \$1.5 million in cuts
- ☞ FY18-19: \$2.8 million in cuts identified

The Survey

- ☞ More than 65% said they would support an operating increase
- ☞ 63% said they would support a capital projects levy
- ☞ 67% said they supported our financial management, up from 55% in 2013
- ☞ Those surveyed largely asked that the combined impact not exceed \$128 per year for the average homeowner

Inver Grove Heights Schools 2017 Referendum

Operating Levy Increase

- Maintain class sizes
- Increase supports for struggling students and for student behavior and mental health needs
- College and career prep
- \$6.50 per month on a \$235,000 home, the average home value in Inver Grove Heights

Capital Projects Levy

- Provide access to digital content, vocational-technical tools, computers, and software
- Replace large musical instruments, outdated furnishings, textbooks, and materials
- \$4.17 per month on a \$235,000 home, the average home value in Inver Grove Heights

Tax impact for an average Inver Grove Heights homeowner came to about \$128 per year, as requested via the survey

3. Good District Story

- Ask for help
- Develop *Fast Facts* sheet, which will be the foundation of consistently communicated information
- Have district's advisory council review information and provide feedback on the *Fast Facts* sheet before it goes out to voters
- Yes voters will ask questions after receiving *Fast Facts* so they feel confident as ambassadors

> *Career-Focused.* > *College-Ready.* > *Competitive.*

4. Committed Advocates



- Recruit leadership and committed volunteers
- Plan a strategy and budget
- Fundraise
- Identify messages and messengers
- Coordinate the advocate group's plan with the school district's
- Determine the number of voters needed to win
- Identify Yes voters
- Get Yes voters to the polls

Why does every referendum campaign need committed advocates?

- Advocates can say "Vote Yes," adding the power of suggestion and the bandwagon effect
- They have a pulse on the community
- They are a third party endorsement who are different from the school district, and some community members would rather hear from other community members

What's the advantage of having advisors in addition to advocates?

- Provide support for both the district and advocates
- Help recruit leaders and committed volunteers
- Allow the district to maintain everyday functions

RESULTS

Operating Levy Increase: **YES 58.60%** **NO 41.40%**

Capital Projects Levy: **YES 58.16%** **NO 41.84%**

Build Your Story

- ↳ Research your community
- ↳ Develop a strategic communications plan
- ↳ Create a strong theme and messaging

Share Your Story

- ↳ Direct mail
- ↳ Website
- ↳ Video
- ↳ Presentations
- ↳ Emails
- ↳ Social media

"Meet people where they are."

TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

START EARLY AND PLAN AHEAD

Referendum planning started a year prior to the vote, but the district consistently involved the community long before that

BE PREPARED TO FULLY COMMIT TO YOUR REFERENDUM

Ask for help to run a successful referendum campaign while maintaining your everyday work

GATHER AN ACCESSIBLE AND ENGAGED COMMITTEE

Your advocates, or lack thereof, can make or break your campaign

ACT AS A UNITED FRONT

Messaging should be consistent from the school board, district administration and staff, and advocates

TAILOR YOUR PLAN TO YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Election year strategy differs from campaigns in off-years