



# City of Sausalito Fire Protection Issues Survey

*Survey Conducted:  
May 2011*

*Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3*  
*Public Opinion Research & Strategy*

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**WHITEHURST/MOSHER**  
CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND MEDIA

220-3155



## Methodology

- FM3 completed 267 telephone interviews with Sausalito voters
- Respondents screened for vote likelihood
- Interviews on landlines and cell phones
- Interviews conducted between May 4-19, 2011
- Margin of sampling error of +/- 5.9%
- Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding



## Key Findings

- Voters have generally positive attitudes about conditions in the City and local government.
- Most voters have heard little about the issue of consolidation with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District, but once informed more than three in five express support for the concept.
- Initially, voters support a \$90 parcel tax and consolidation by a margin of 50% to 35%. Once voters learn more about the potential measure, that rises significantly, to 63%.
- Voters' chief concerns about the proposal have to do with the condition of the economy and a desire for the City to cut costs.
- Nevertheless, consolidation and a \$90 parcel tax is overwhelmingly preferred to three other alternatives approaches for funding local fire protection services.
- Voter support for this approach appears to stem from a desire to maintain emergency services and to ensure the long-term stability of City services and finances.

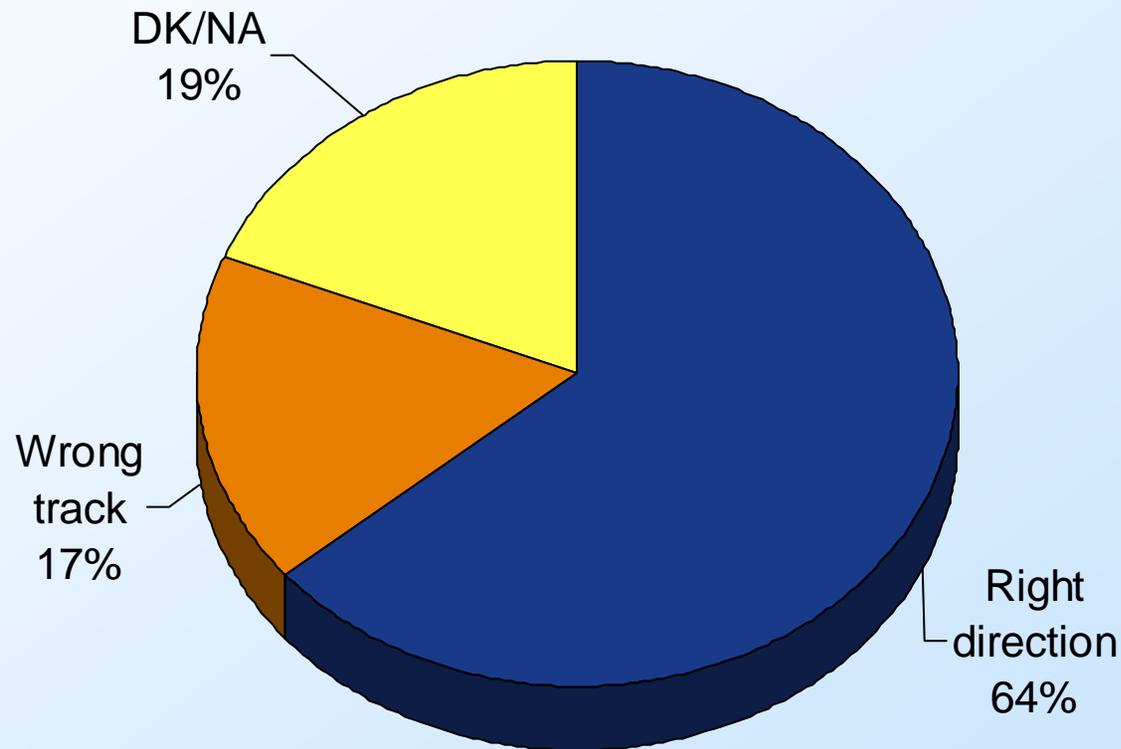


# Community Attitudes



# Voters have a positive attitude about the direction of the City.

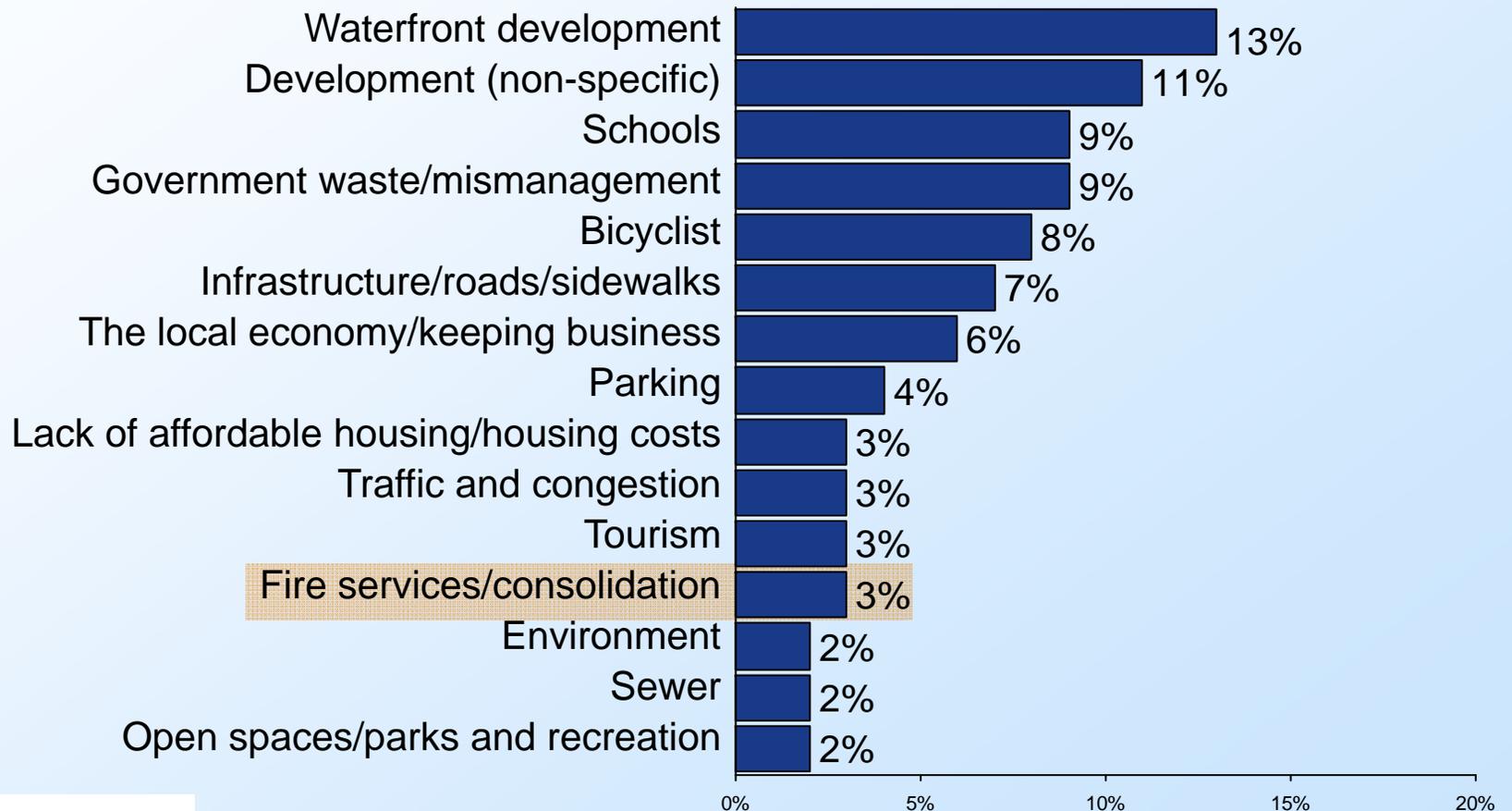
*Do you feel things in the City of Sausalito are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track?*





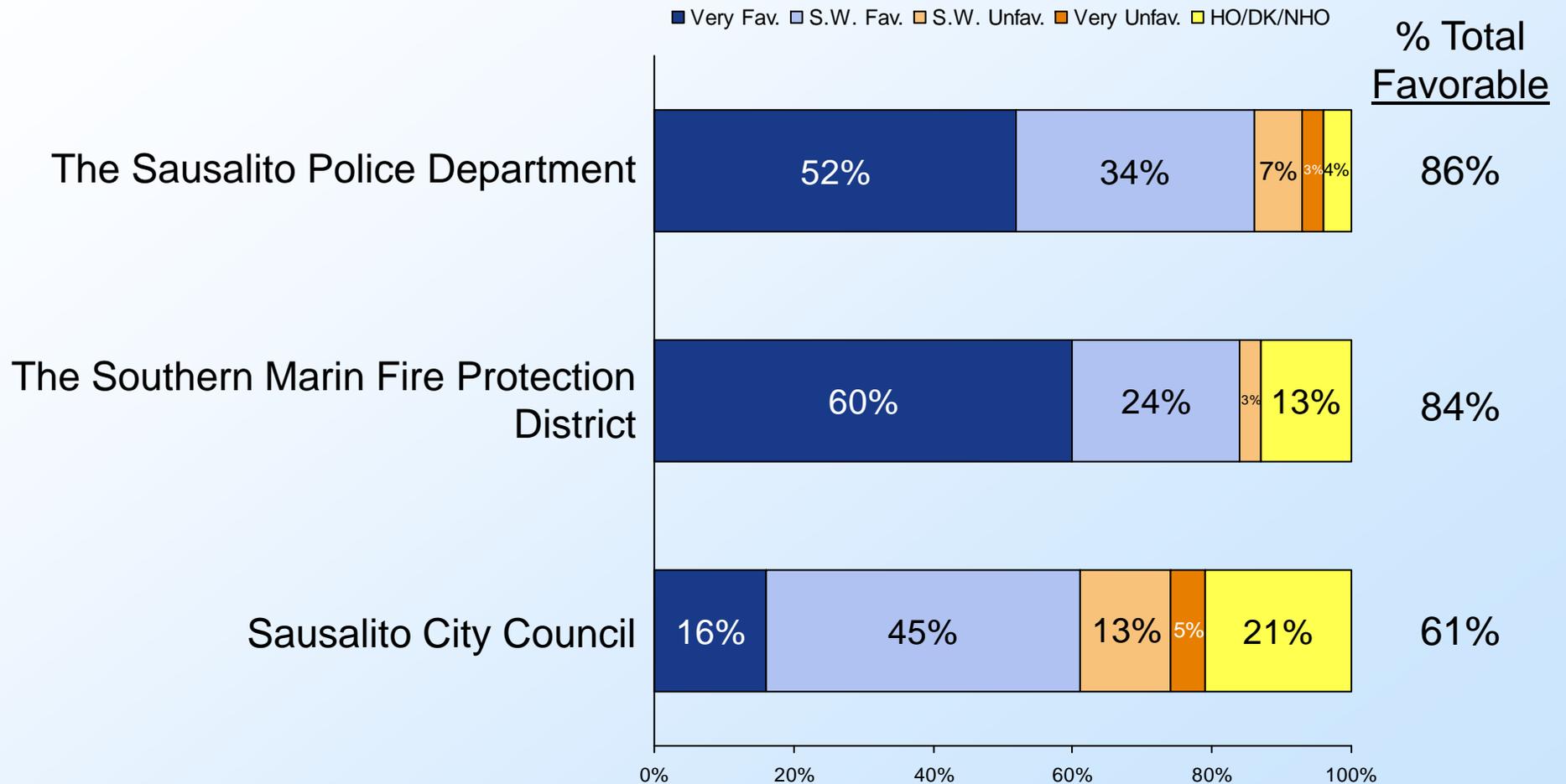
# Development, schools, and government waste are viewed as the top issues facing the City.

*(Open-ended, 1<sup>st</sup> Choice; 2% and Above Responses Only)*



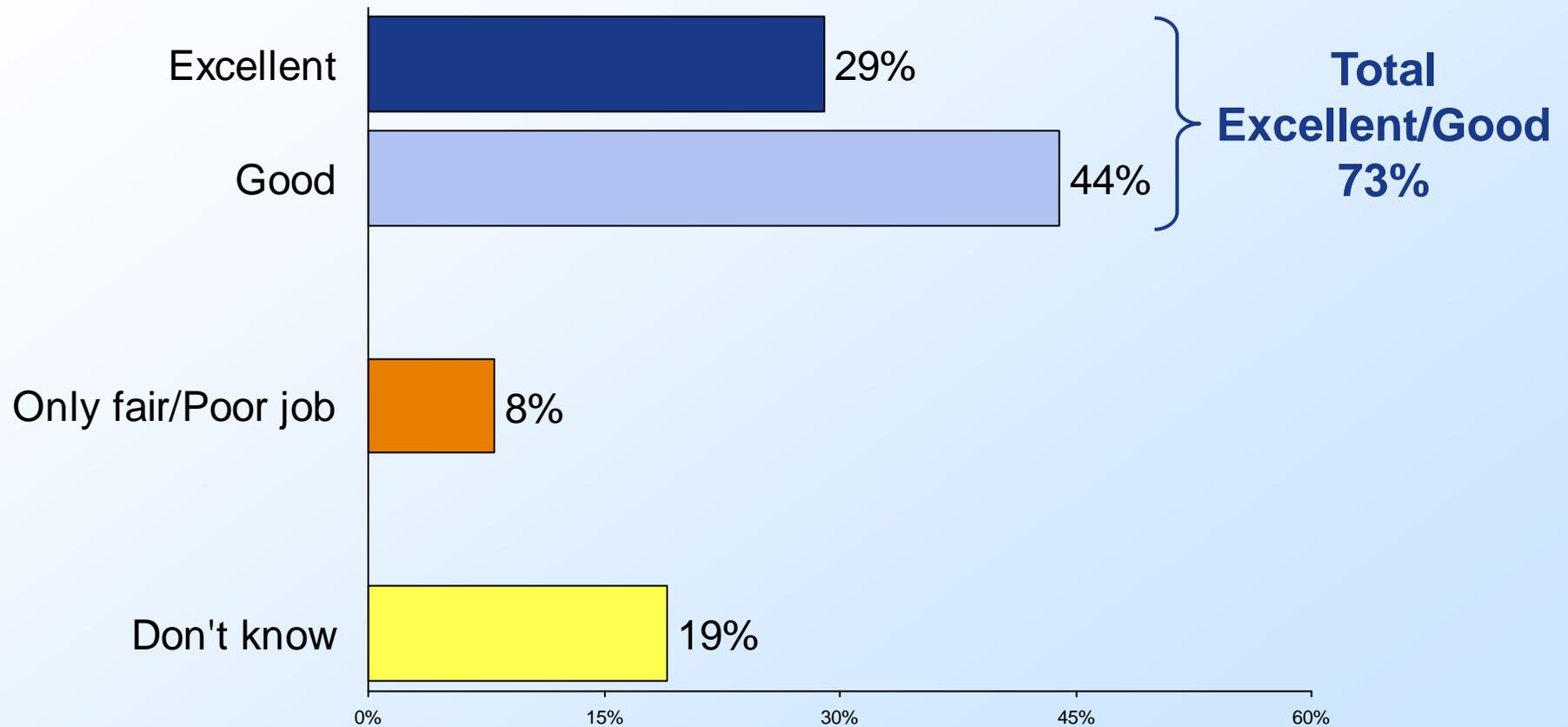


# Voters view the Fire Protection District very favorably...





# ...and most consider the District's performance "excellent" or "good."



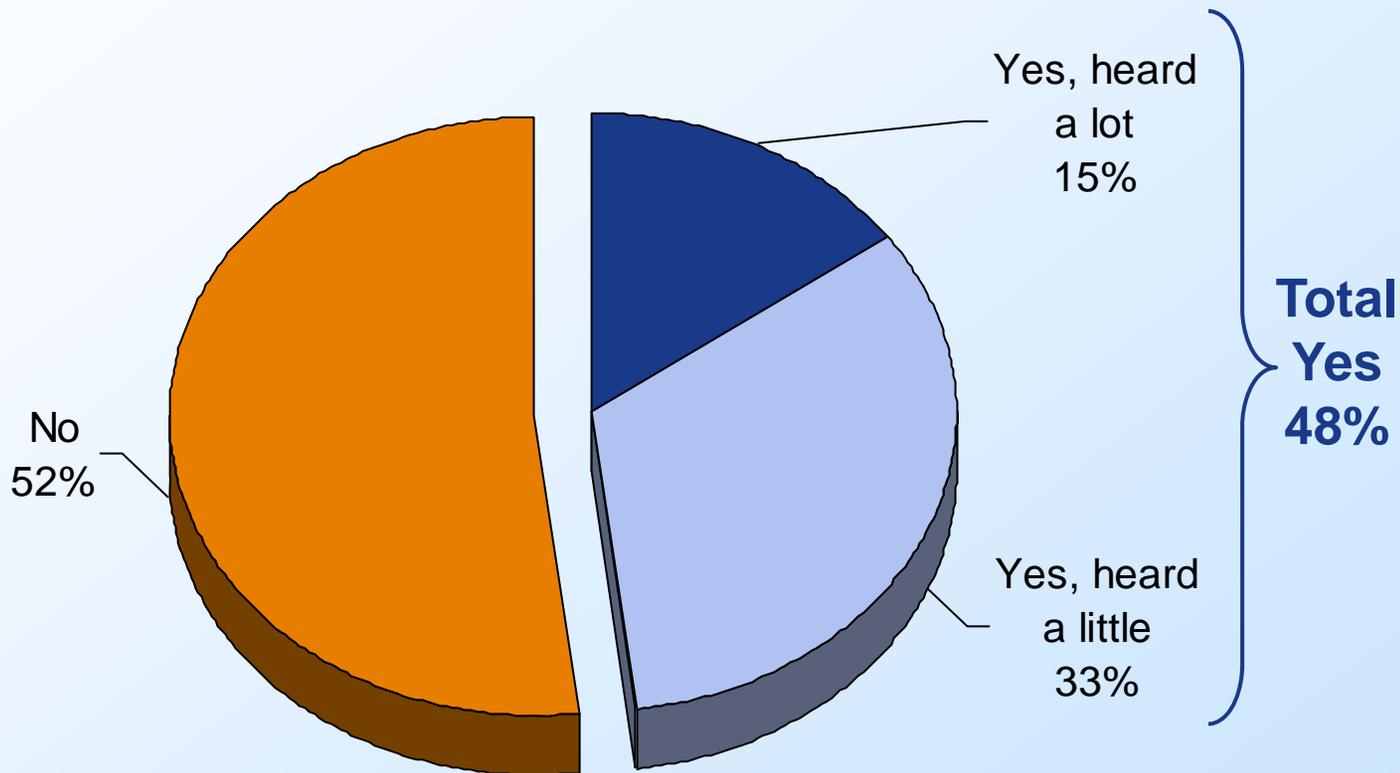


# Attitudes Towards Consolidation



# A majority of voters are unfamiliar with the issue of consolidation.

*Before this survey, had you seen, heard, or read anything about the City of Sausalito consolidating fire protection services with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District?*



# Consolidation Description Provided



Since 2004, the City of Sausalito has contracted with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District for fire protection and other emergency and paramedic services. Under this agreement, the Southern Marin Fire Protection District provides almost all management, operations and administrative services, including a fire chief and other key management and firefighting personnel, while the City of Sausalito owns and maintains its downtown fire station and equipment and employs 15 firefighters who are managed by the Fire Protection District.

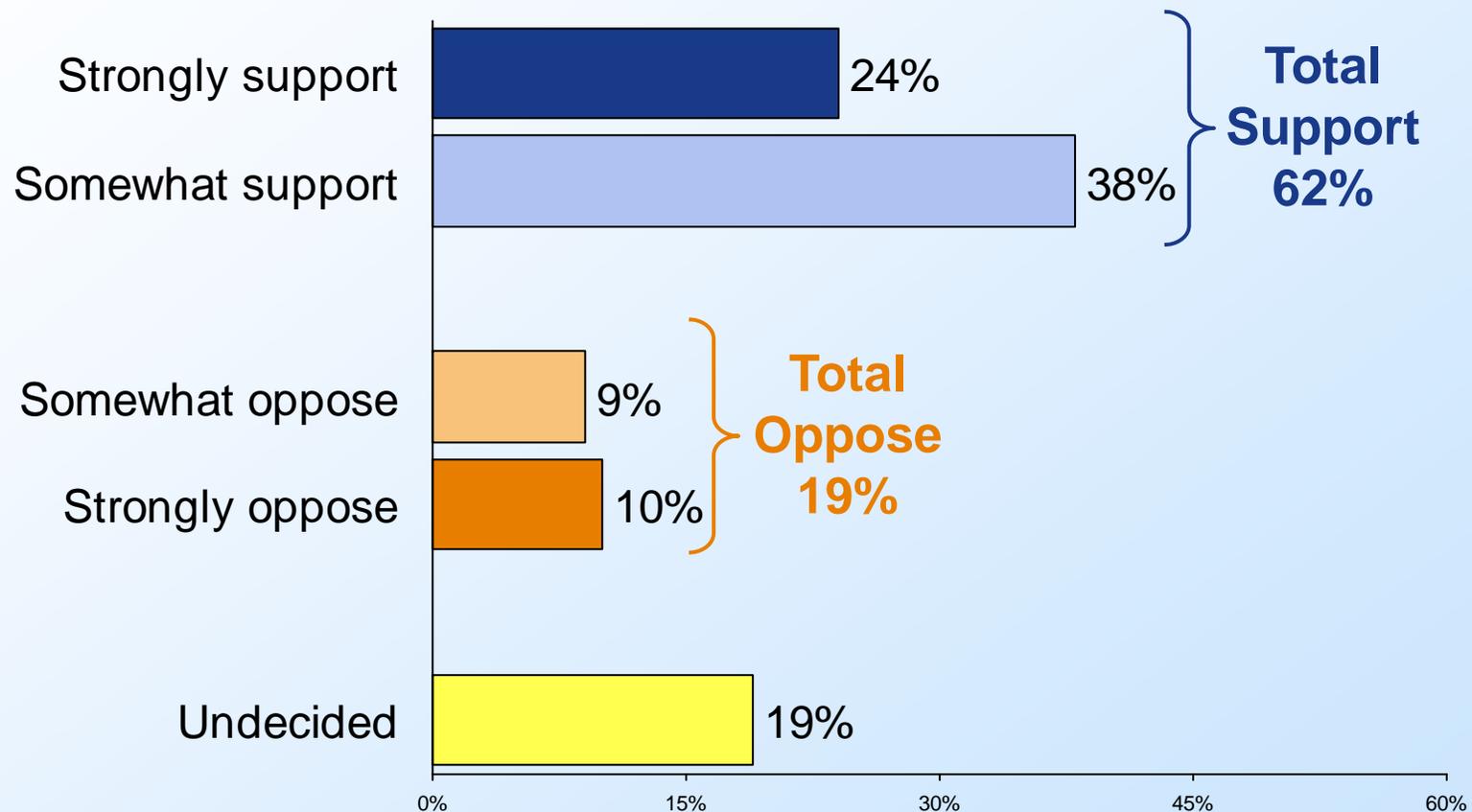
Under the current contract, however, the City of Sausalito is not paying the full cost of services provided by the Fire Protection District. It also includes duplication of some administrative services provided by the City and Fire Protection District.

Together, the City and Fire Protection District are studying alternatives to the existing contract for a service approach that would ensure the fair and equitable provision of fire protection services, increase efficiency and eliminate overlapping administrative functions while maintaining public safety.

One proposal would consolidate fire protection services for the City of Sausalito fully under the authority of the Southern Marin Fire Protection District, with the City retaining ownership of its new downtown fire station and giving Sausalito residents the power to directly elect representatives to the Fire Protection District's Board of Directors.



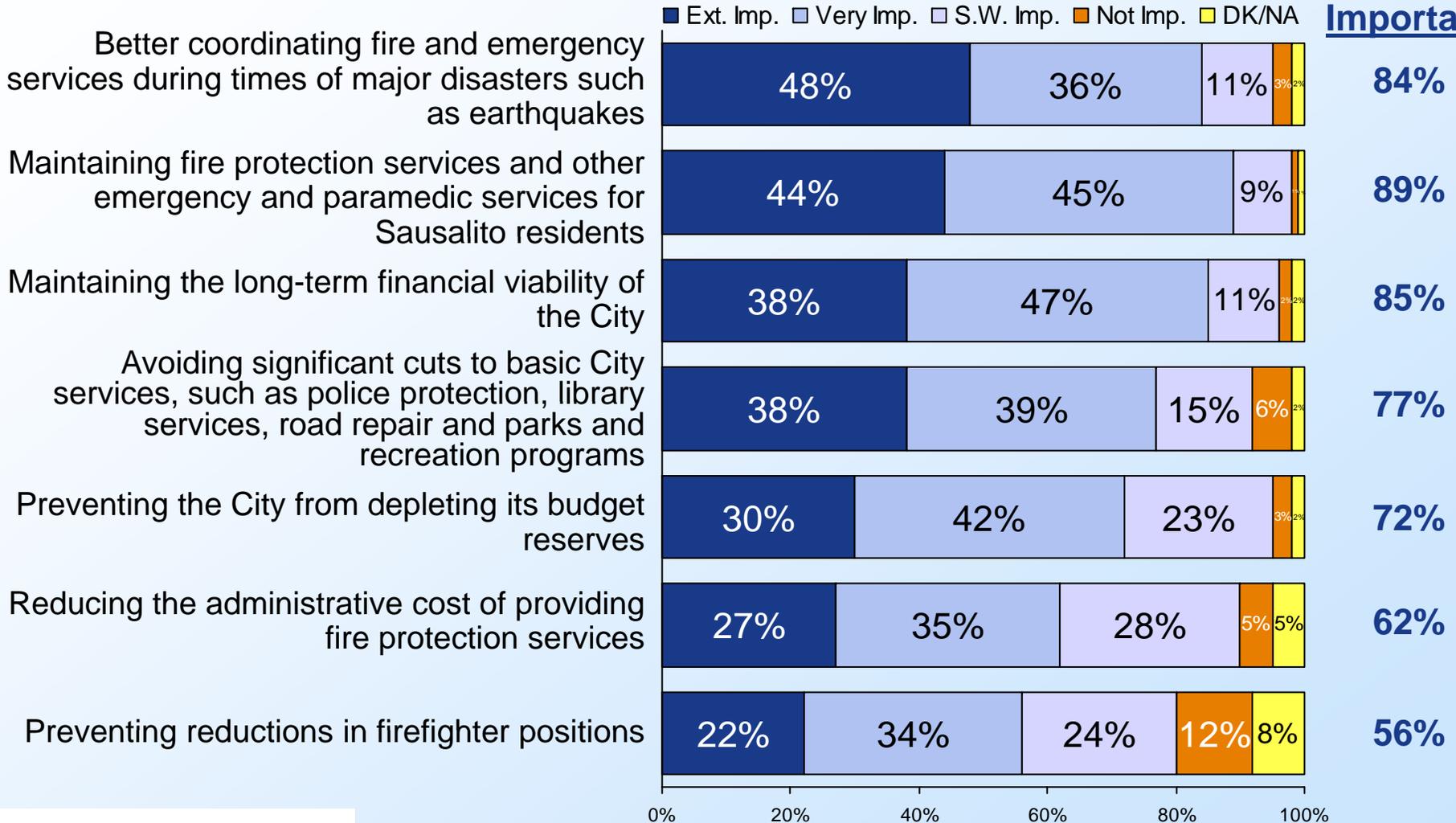
# Three in five voters support consolidation.



# Voters place a high priority on ensuring that emergency services are available when needed.



**% Ext./Very Important**





# Attitudes Towards a Parcel Tax

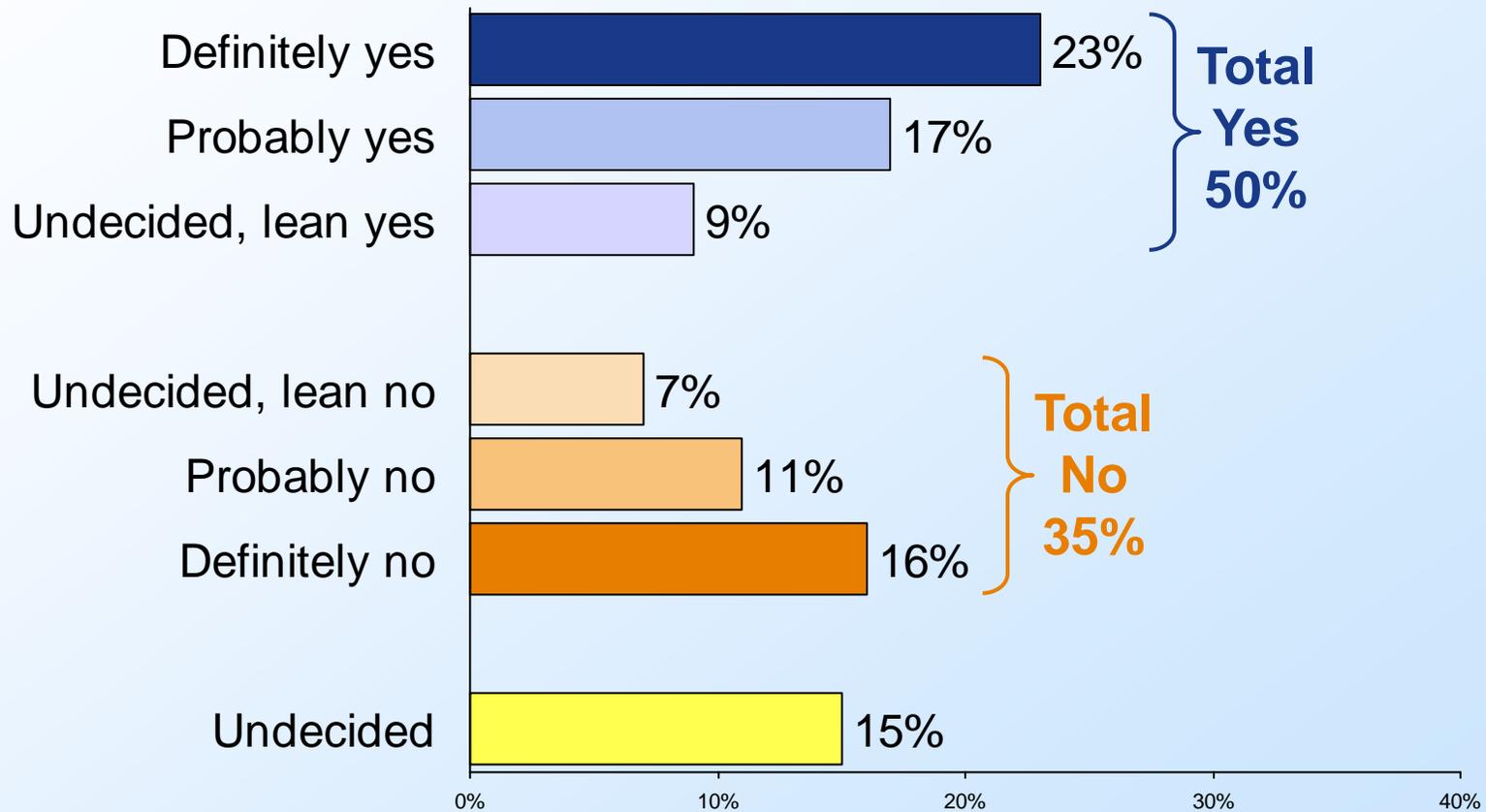


## Ballot Language Tested

**Measure A. City of Sausalito Fire Protection Services Measure.** To protect and maintain fire and other emergency and paramedic services for Sausalito residents through annexation of the City of Sausalito into the Southern Marin Fire Protection District for the provision of fire protection services, and to help avoid significant cuts to essential City services and programs; shall the City of Sausalito be authorized to levy a tax of \$90 per parcel per year, with annual audits and other public oversight?



# Voters initially support the proposal by a 50% to 35% margin.

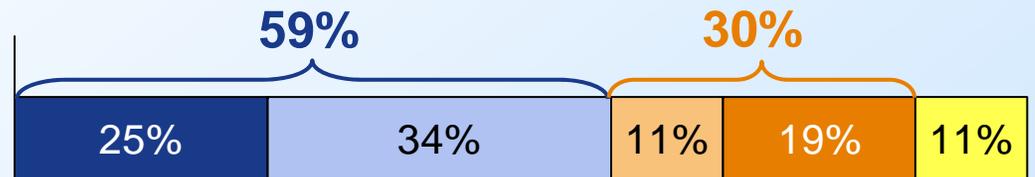




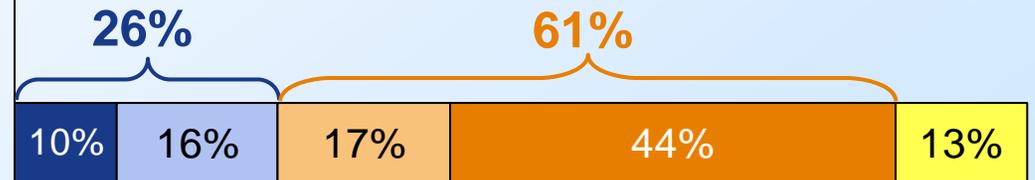
# Consolidation with a \$90 parcel tax is overwhelmingly preferred to three other alternatives.

■ Strng. Supp. ■ S.W. Supp. ■ Strng. Opp. ■ S.W. Opp. ■ DK/NA

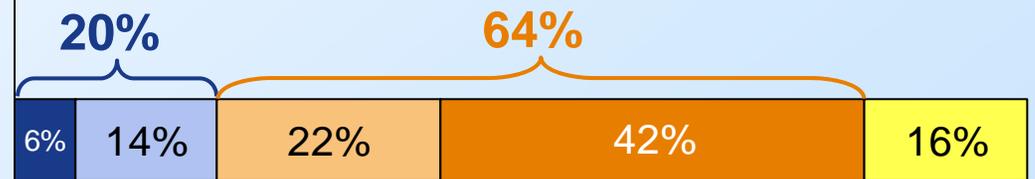
Consolidating with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District and approving the \$90 per year parcel tax



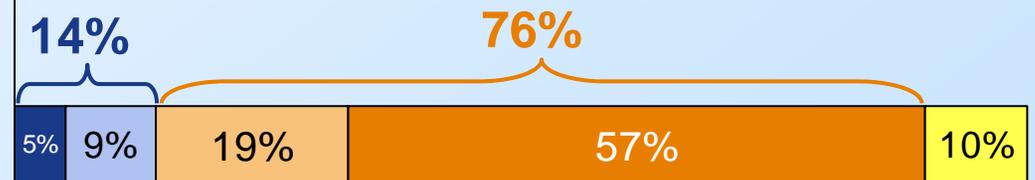
Consolidating with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District without a parcel tax, and paying for fire and emergency services through significant cuts to other City programs and services



Developing a new contract with the Fire Protection District, with a parcel tax of up to 200 dollars per year to cover the full cost of services



Reinstating and fully staffing the City's own fire department, with a parcel tax of up to 400 dollars per year to cover all costs



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

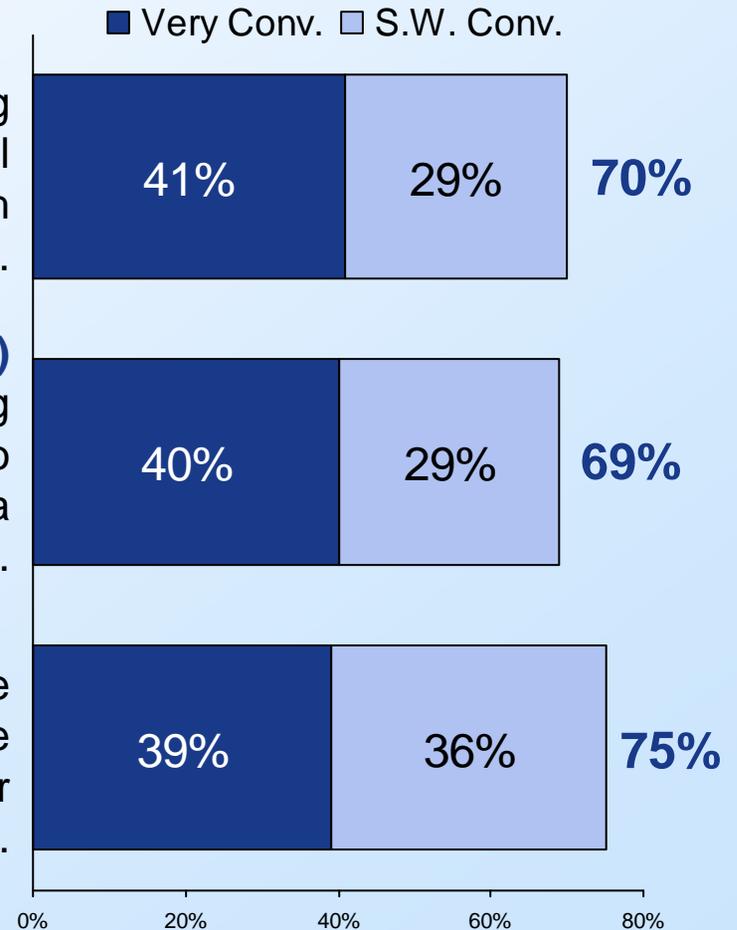


# Messages highlighting the fiscal benefits to the City - ensuring stability and preserving services - are persuasive.

**(LESS EXPENSIVE THAN CONTRACTING)** Consolidating with the Fire Protection District and paying the \$90 parcel tax makes more sense than contracting for service, which would require a parcel tax of up to \$200.

**(LESS EXPENSIVE THAN REINSTATEMENT)** Consolidating with the Fire Protection District and paying the 90 dollar parcel tax makes more sense than Sausalito reinstating its own fire department, which would require a parcel tax of up to \$400.

**(ELIMINATE DUPLICATION)** A consolidated fire department will eliminate duplication of some administrative services, saving the City money that can be used for other essential services.



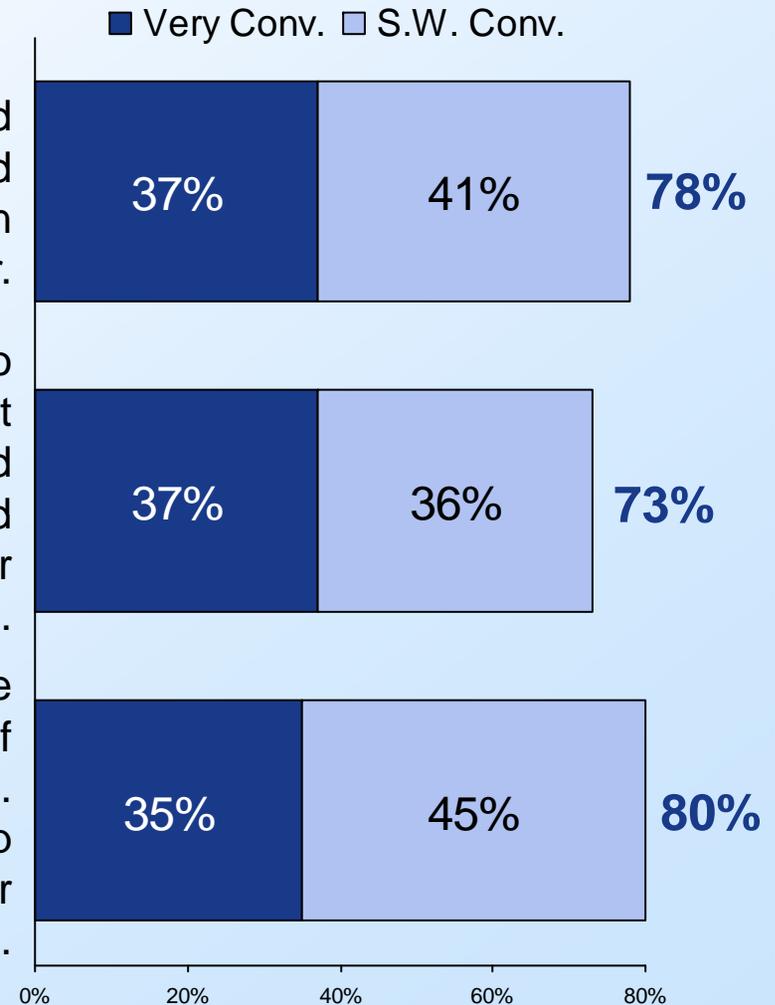
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**(EFFECTIVENESS)** Consolidating fire services and approving Measure A will create greater efficiencies and improve coordination of emergency response during an earthquake, major fire or other disaster.

**(BEST OPTION)** Measure A would make it possible to consolidate with the Fire Protection District, a proposal that is cost-effective, ensures the highest-quality fire and paramedic services for residents and businesses, and maintains local control without significant cuts to other important city services and programs.

**(GOOD TRACK RECORD)** The Southern Marin Fire Protection District is a good partner with a strong record of providing Sausalito with high-quality fire protection services. Measure A will make it possible to continue that partnership through consolidation, without major impacts to other important City services.

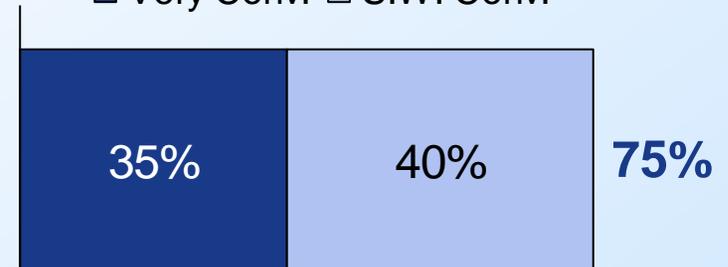


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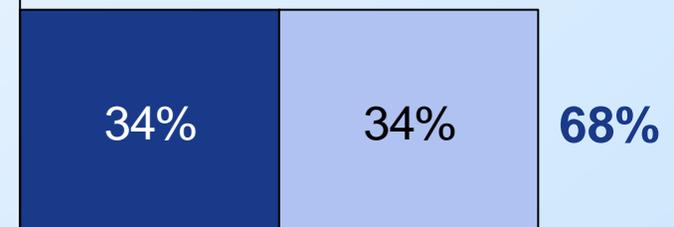


■ Very Conv. □ S.W. Conv.

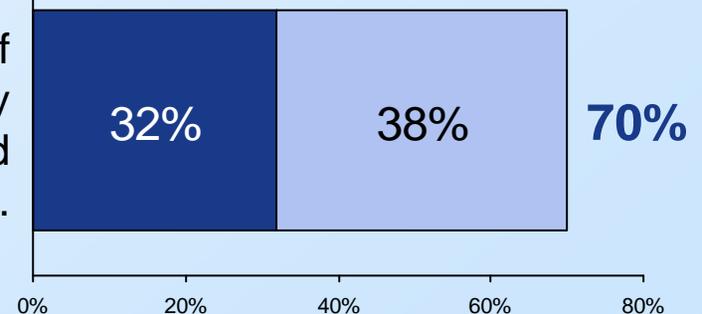
**(MORE ACCOUNTABILITY)** This measure would make consolidation with the Southern Marin Fire Protection District possible. With the power to elect members to the Fire Protection District's Board of Directors, Sausalito residents will maintain their control over local fire services.



**(STABILITY)** Consolidation, along with approval of Measure A, is a long-term solution that provides increased financial and operational stability in how fire services are delivered.



**(CITY SERVICES)** Consolidation, along with approval of Measure A, will avoid severe cuts to other basic City services, such as police, library services, road repair and parks and recreation programs for youth and seniors.





# Fiscal arguments appear to be the most convincing messages against the proposal.

**(CUT COSTS)** Rather than impose more taxes, the City should look at ways to cut costs.

**(ECONOMY)** With more people getting laid-off every day, and the worst economy in a generation, this is not the right time to impose new taxes.

**(ANTI-TAX)** Government is always trying to raise taxes and property taxes are already too high. We should vote no on this measure.



# Continued

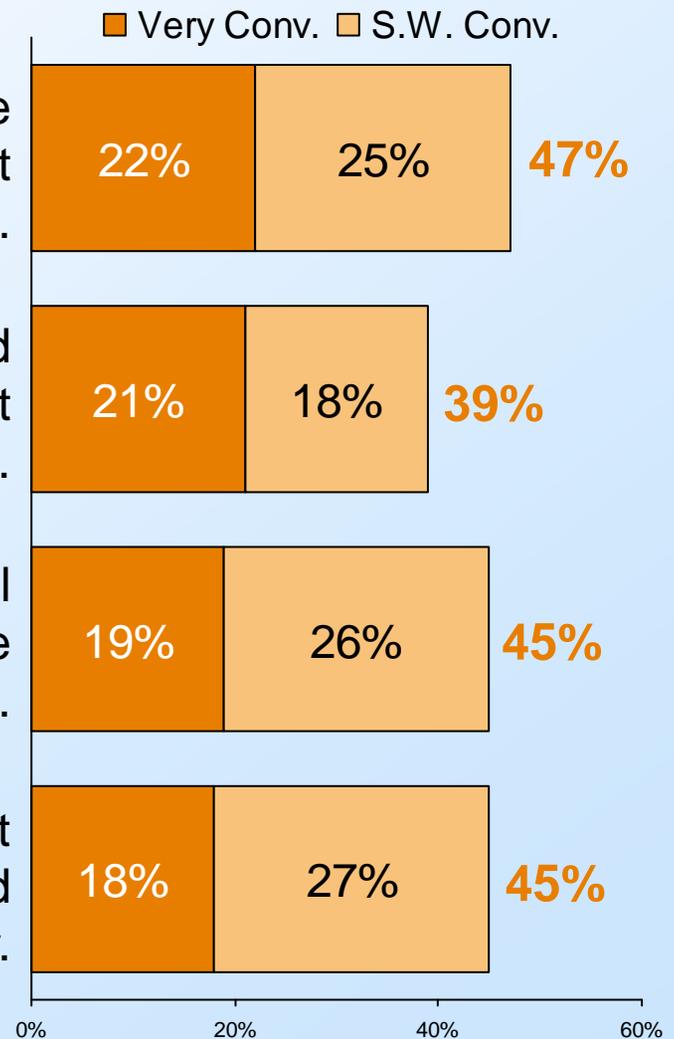


**(BUREAUCRACY)** The money for this measure will be used to support another layer of government bureaucracy—the Southern Marin Fire Protection District.

**(WILL BE SPENT ELSEWHERE)** With consolidation and this parcel tax measure our local tax dollars will be spent outside of Sausalito, which doesn't benefit local residents.

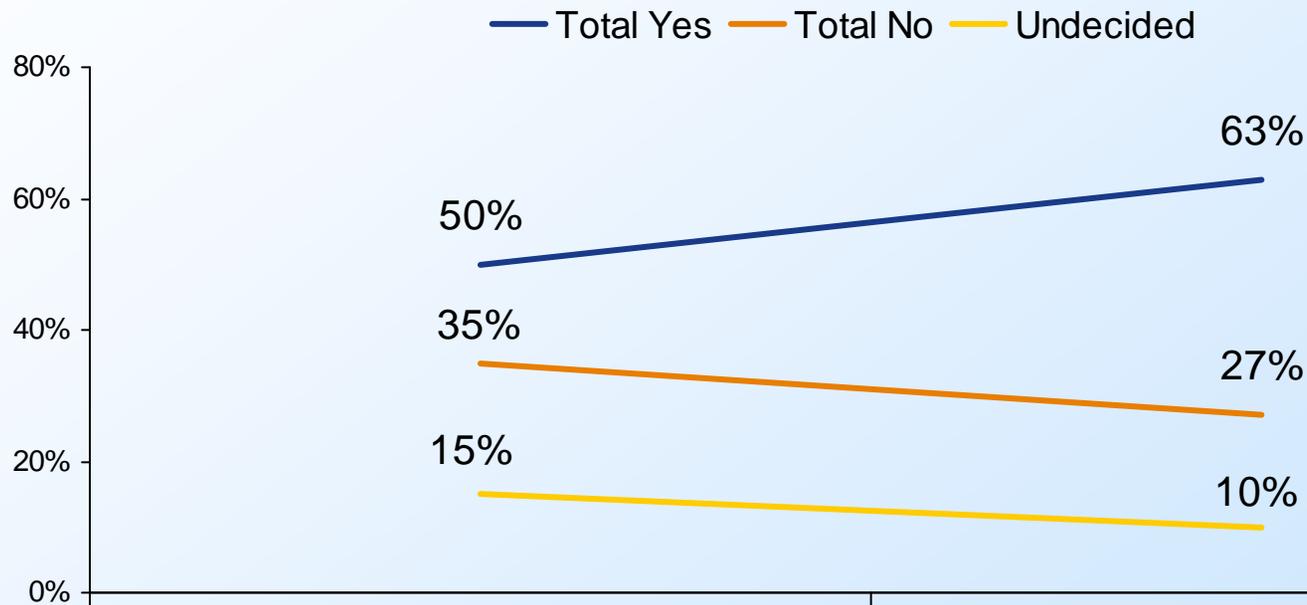
**(CITY FIRE DEPT.)** Consolidation will take away our local control of fire services. The City should have its own fire department.

**(LOWER SERVICE LEVEL)** If we consolidate, we can't be guaranteed we will get the same level of service and attention that we currently enjoy.





# Support increases to 63% after voters hear more about the proposal.



	Initial Vote	After Pro and Con Messages
Total Yes	50%	63%
Total No	35%	27%
Undecided	15%	10%



## Conclusion: Challenges

- None of the available options for financing fire service – which all involve tax increases or service cuts – are inherently appealing to voters.
- The economy clearly leaves voters concerned about the prospect of any tax increase.
- Many voters are inclined to see additional spending cuts before supporting a tax increase.
- The two-thirds supermajority vote requirement, even in the best of circumstances, is a challenging threshold to clear.



# Conclusion: Opportunities

- Voters have a high level of confidence in City government and the Fire District.
- Voters remain largely uninformed about the issue of consolidation, creating an opportunity for public dialogue.
- As voters receive more information, they become more receptive to the idea of consolidation and its associated costs.
- Voters place a high priority on maintaining reliable City services and the City's long-term fiscal health – outcomes which consolidation would be designed to provide.

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