



Town of Topsham, Maine Community Center Needs Assessment

Review of Findings

September 5, 2024

The mission of the Community Center Committee is to understand the desires and needs of the Topsham Community to identify accessible, affordable, sustainable recreational solutions that will serve the multi-generational community and foster social connections among Topsham citizens.



Overview of the Process

The scope of Phase One of the study included the following items:

1. Research Existing Programs and Facilities

- Analysis of Current Facilities
- Assess Partnership Opportunities

2. Public Outreach / Community Engagement

- Focus Group Meetings
- List of Facility Amenities and Probable Costs
- Townwide Feasibility Survey

Research Existing Programs and Facilities

- Many programs currently hosted at school facilities
- Community programs compete with school and adult-ed programs for available time
- Staffing and space limitations
- Primary recreational programs, not social
- Focus is on youth activities

Research Existing Programs and Facilities

Reviewed over 40 activities, 20 indoor and outdoor venues. Rec department oversees many of these.

	Activity	Venue
INDOOR	Swimming, Basketball, Open Gym, Youth Wrestling, Summer Camp Basketball, Summer Camp Volleyball, Dance, Photography, Drama, Art, Music, Merrymeeting Band, Santa Reads	Bowdoin Pool, MTA HS Gym, MTA HS Cafeteria, MTA HS Forum, MTA MS Theatre, MTA MS Gym, MTA MS Baseball Field, Library, Williams-Cone School Gym, Woodside Elementary Gym
OUTDOOR	Summer Camp (SC)-Challenger, SC-Soccer, SC-Field Hockey, SC-Lacrosse, Family Events and Parties, Softball, Baseball, Sledding, Skating, Soccer, Lacrosse, X-Country Skiing, Kayaking, Trails, Picnic, Alpine Skiing, Snowboarding, Softball, Field Hockey, Track and Field, Fishing, Bike Rally	Foreside Rec, Head of Tide, Lost Valley, MAHS Turf Field, MAHS Softball Field, MAHS Practice Field, Transfer Station Ponds, Transfer Station Pump Track

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Focus Groups

- TCCC Conducted Six Focus Groups representing broad area of community interests
- Results assisted in shaping the Townwide Feasibility Survey
- Broad solicitation for participation in focus groups:
 - Website
 - Facebook – Various Town pages
 - Park & Recreation email list
 - Library Email List
 - Notification in the Cryer

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Focus Groups – Meeting Dates

Date	Invited	Attended
1. Friday, January 12	14	10
2. Wednesday, January 17	11	5
3. Saturday, January 20	10	8
4. Monday, January 22	12	8
5. Wednesday, January 24	8	5
6. Monday, January 29 (Interested Business Groups)	10	6
Total	65	42

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Focus Groups – Demographics

Age Range	Count
18-25	1
26-40	21
41-55	28
56-69	12
70+	3

Topsham Residency	Count
Resident	54
Part-year Resident	2
Non-Resident	9

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Focus Groups – Areas of Interest

- Youth Sports
- Childcare
- Music Community
- Arts Community
- Teen Center
- Adult Education
- Senior Activities
- Adult Recreation/Fitness/Aquatics
- Community/Social Events
- Health and Wellbeing

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

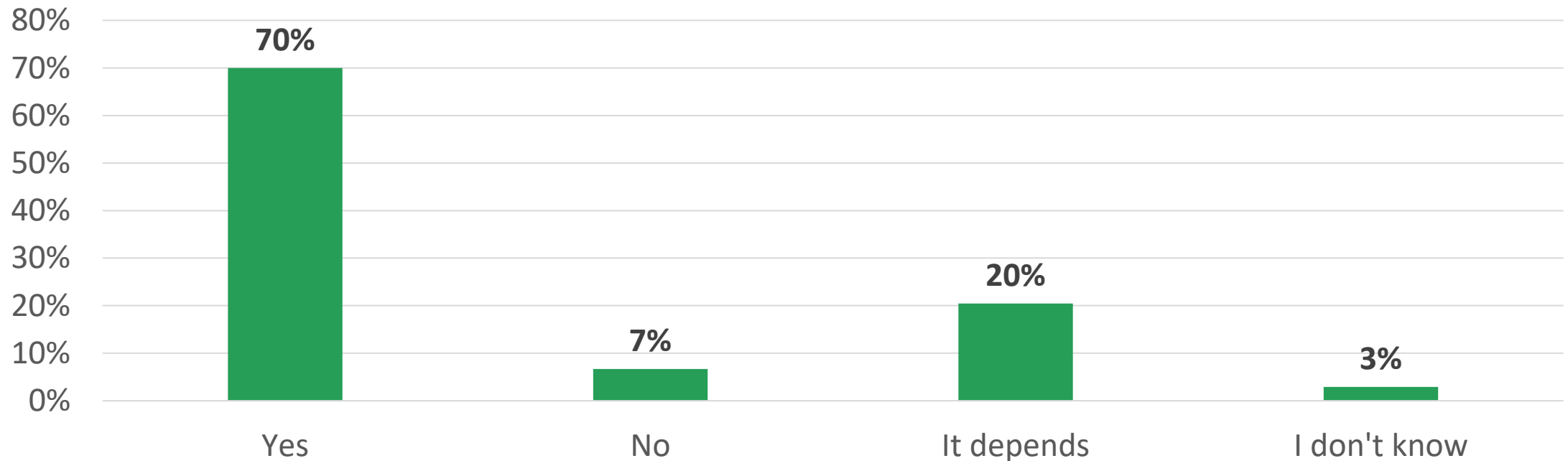
Townwide Feasibility Survey

- Developed by the Town of Topsham Community Center Committee from information gathered from focus groups in collaboration with Harriman Architecture and Design and Market Decisions Research
- Goal: To more broadly assess the interest in developing a community center in the Town of Topsham and the types of facilities that should be considered
- The survey was administered between March 8 and May 1, 2024.
- The survey was available to complete online along with a paper version of the survey.
- Broad solicitation on Website, Facebook, P&R list serve, voting polls, tax collector's desk, notice in The Cryer, Easter Egg Hunt
- **914 Topsham residents** responded to the survey.

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Townwide Feasibility Survey

CC01 - In general, would you support the Town of Topsham building a multi-purpose community center for its residents?
(n=899)



Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Help us design a community center! The base facility would include a large multipurpose gymnasium with a goal of housing activities such as two basketball courts, pickle ball, volleyball, rock climbing.

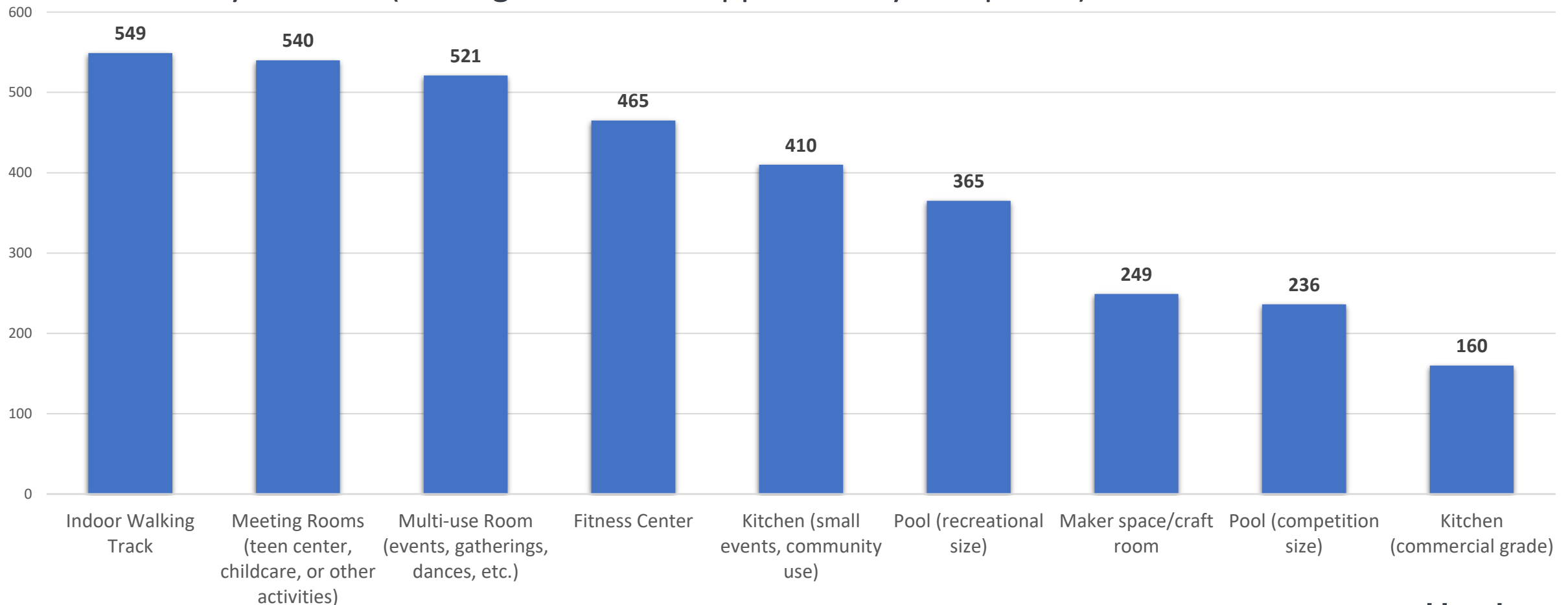
CC03 - In your opinion, what additional facilities should the town consider including in a community center? (Among those that support or say it depends)

Facility	Count	%
Kitchen (commercial grade)	160	21%
Kitchen (small community use for events)	410	53%
Pool (competition size)	236	31%
Pool (recreation size)	365	48%
Meeting rooms to serve various needs (a teen center, childcare, or other activities)	540	70%
Indoor walking track	549	71%
Fitness center	465	61%
Multi-use room for functions (such as events, gatherings, or dances)	521	68%
Maker space/craft room	249	32%
Some other type of facility (Please Specify)	117	15%
None of these facilities	11	1%
I don't know	11	1%
I prefer not to answer	5	1%
Total	768	100%

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

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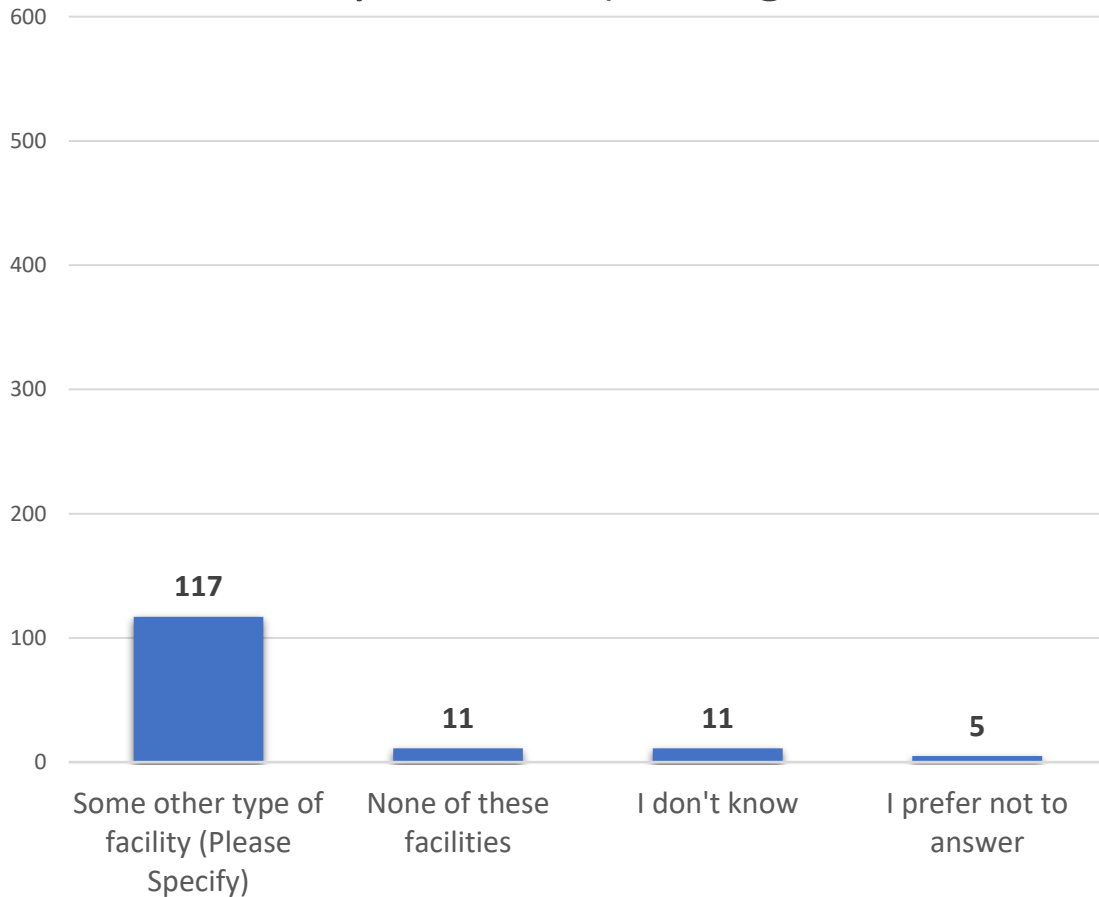
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Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Help us design a community center! The base facility would include a large multipurpose gymnasium with a goal of housing activities such as two basketball courts, pickle ball, volleyball, rock climbing.

CC03 - In your opinion, what additional facilities should the town consider including in a community center? (Among those that support or say it depends)



Common Responses

- *Ice Rink*
- *Indoor Courts (Basketball, Pickleball, Tennis)*
- *Meeting Spaces (Seniors, Teens, Youth)*
- *Fitness Rooms*
- *Activity Rooms*

Public Outreach/Community Engagement

The table below provides an estimate of how much each type of facility might increase the annual property taxes of a typical (\$350,000) residential home in Topsham based on a 20-year bond.

Facility Amenity	Annual Tax Increase
Base Facility	\$266.59
Kitchen (Commercial)	\$21.94
Kitchen (Community)	\$10.12
Pool (Competition Size)	\$219.34
Pool (Recreation Size)	\$113.82
Meeting Rooms (Teen Center, Childcare)	\$32.89
Indoor Walking Track	\$19.90
Fitness Center	\$49.36
Multi-use Function Rooms (Dances, Gatherings)	\$39.24
Maker Space/Craft Room	\$10.12

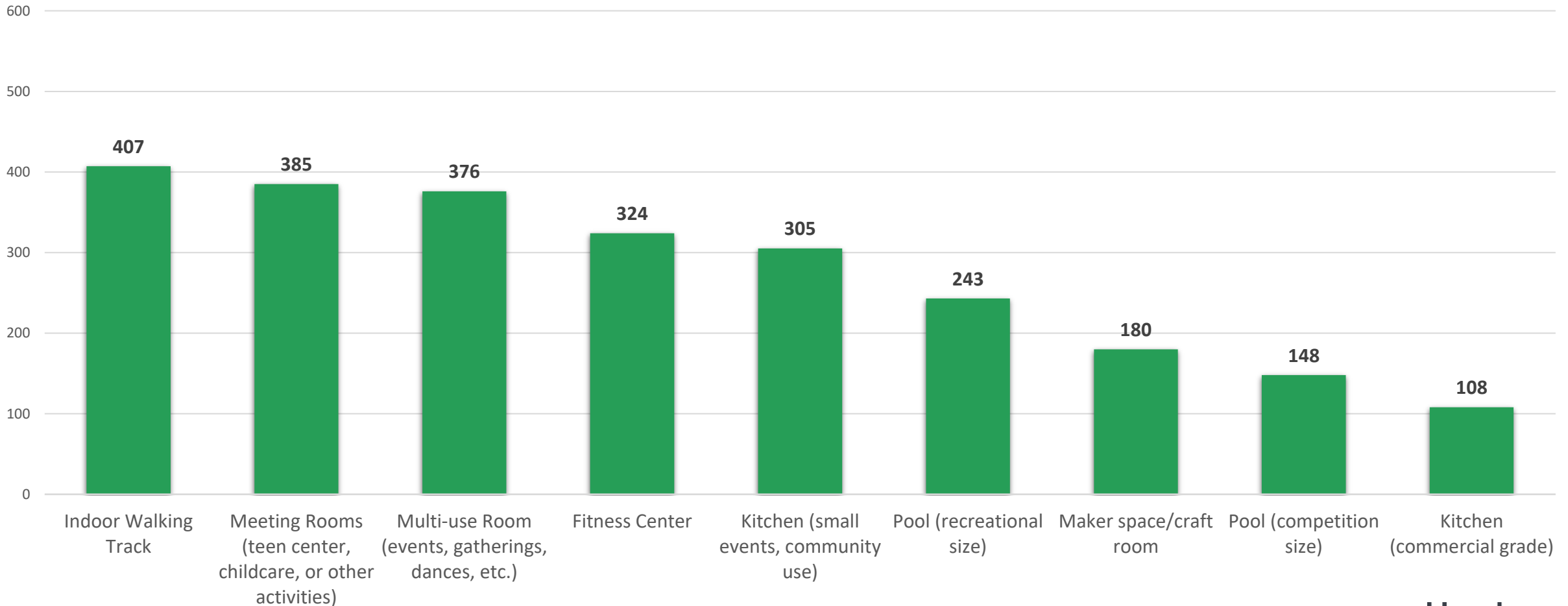
Public Outreach/Community Engagement

NCC05 - What types of facilities should the town consider including in a community center? (Percentage among all indicating they support a community center or say it depends to CC01 - combined list based on CC03, CC04 and CC05)

Facility	Count	%
Kitchen (commercial grade)	108	15%
Kitchen (small community use for events)	305	41%
Pool (competition size)	148	20%
Pool (recreation size)	243	33%
Meeting rooms to serve various needs (a teen center, childcare, or other activities)	385	52%
Indoor walking track	407	55%
Fitness center	324	44%
Multi-use room for functions (such as events, gatherings, or dances)	376	51%
Maker space/craft room	180	24%
Some other type of facility (Please Specify)	69	9%
None of these facilities	91	12%
I don't know	73	10%
I prefer not to answer	5	1%
Total	742	100%

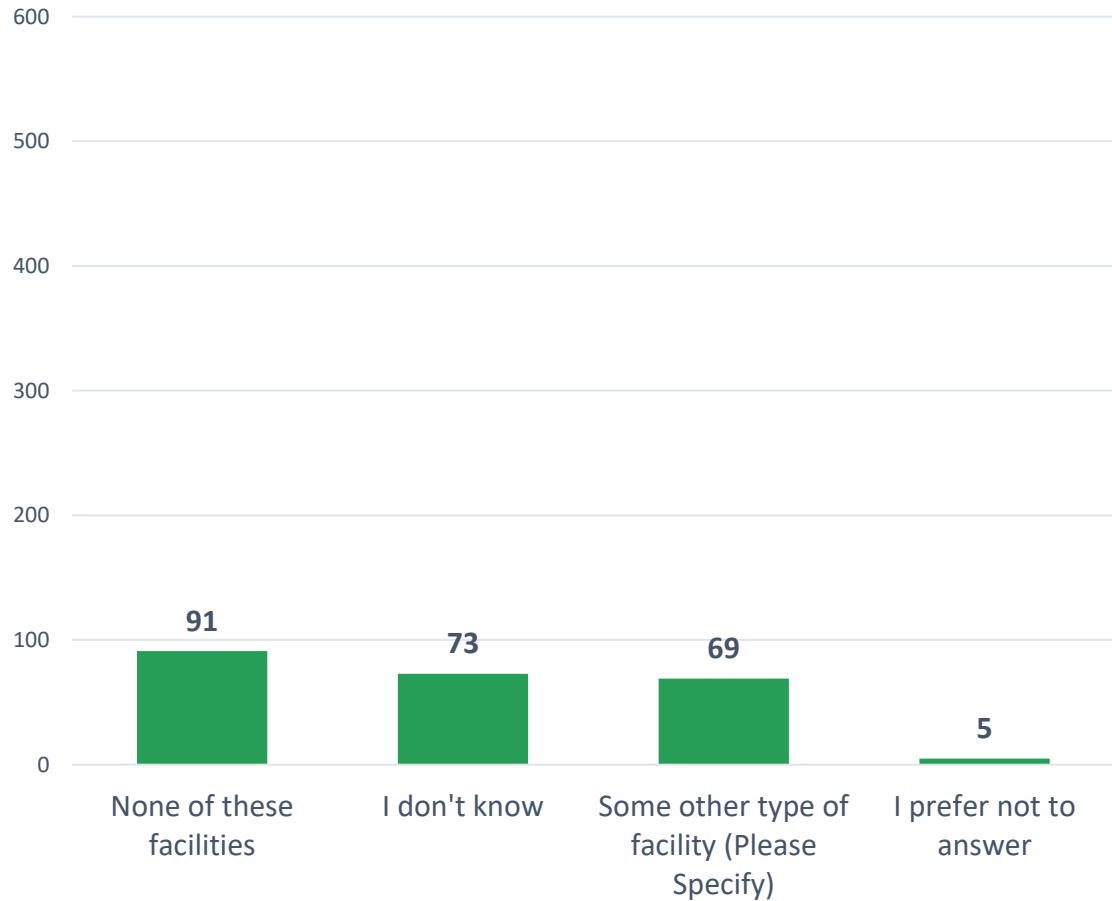
Public Outreach/Community Engagement

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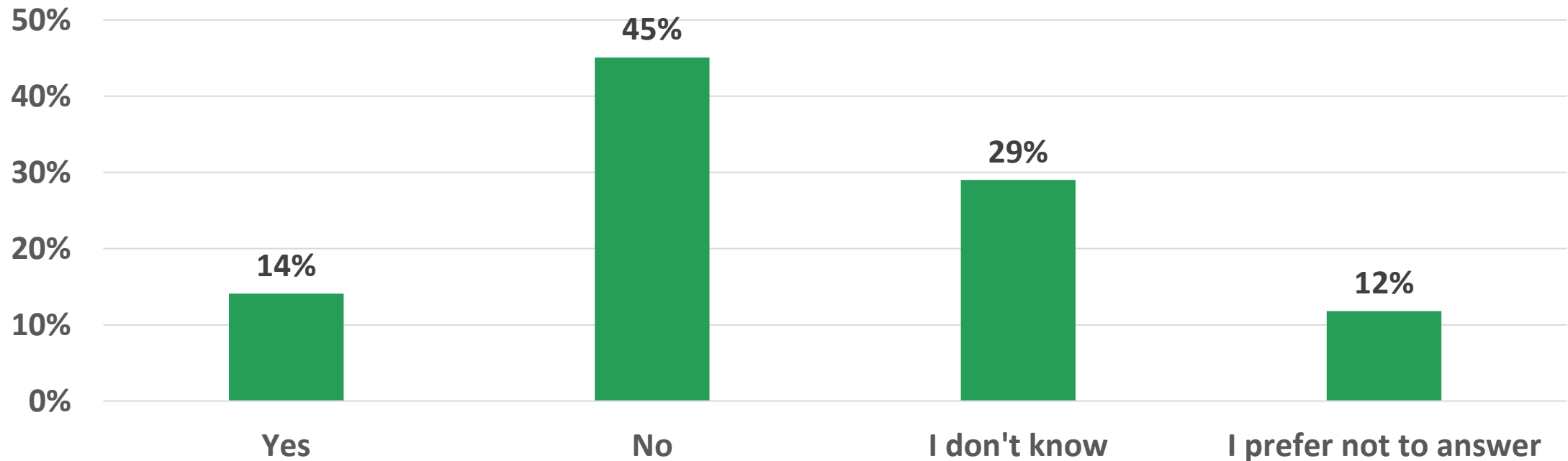
Public Outreach/Community Engagement

NCC05 - What types of facilities should the town consider including in a community center? (Percentage among all indicating they support a community center or say it depends to CC01 - combined list based on CC03, CC04 and CC05)



Public Outreach/Community Engagement

CC08 - Would you be interested in helping with this effort to raise private funds to offset the cost to be paid with taxes?
(n=703)



Public Outreach/Community Engagement

Townwide Feasibility Survey - Responses

A community center would offer a safe place for residents to gather and promote health, wellness and community.

It depends on the actual use as well as the continual cost of staffing and maintaining the building.

A gathering place with activities for all generations seems like a good use of space and money.

I do not think it is feasible to do so at this time with the cost of construction and general concerns with the economy and the additional costs to taxpayers.

A needed resource in the community.

It's vital to enhancing the services available to our residents and to growing our community

Conclusion and Recommendations

Townwide Feasibility Survey - Summary

- 70% support for a Town of Topsham Community Center as indicated through this process (focus groups and survey)
- Support was maintained with consideration for an increase in property taxes
- The top list of amenities desired include Walking Track, Meeting Rooms (Teen Center, Childcare), Multi-use Function Rooms (Dances, Gatherings), Fitness Center, Community Kitchen, Recreation-sized Pool

Conclusion and Recommendations

Committee Recommendations

It is the recommendation of the Topsham Community Center Committee that the select board move forward with Phase Two for a potential Community Center. This should include:

- Budget and land need estimates
- Initial review of locational options
- Review additional types of uses, as well as costs
- Determine space requirements based on building location/ size
- Review similar locations to determine potential development costs/ operating costs
- Funding Options based on size (Bonds, grants, fund raising, taxes)
- Potential Options for Shared Space

Conclusion and Recommendations

Committee Recommendations

Recommendation for Charge for New or Continuing Topsham Community Center Committee:

1. Work with Town Management to investigate potential land locations.
2. Work with Town and Harriman to initiate next phase of their contract (building conceptual design).
3. TCCC to assist in drafting ideas for funding opportunities including potential local partnerships, community outreach and other projects.
4. TCCC to continue to review other local Community Centers to gain insight into best approach with overall operating cost, fundraising for set up and recommended management of a facility.

We request a one-year term to accomplish the above.



Town of Topsham, Maine Community Center Needs Assessment

Discussion / Q&A