



Ft. Collins (CO) REALTORS® Commission Poll Showing What Voters Really Think About City Council Proposal

When the Fort Collins, Colorado City Council began floating the idea of extending its term limits beyond two terms of two years each, the Fort Collins Board of REALTORS® (FCBR) took a good hard look at the whys and wherefores.

“It wasn’t a matter of our being for or against the issue, necessarily,” says Clint Skutchan, Chief Executive Officer and Director of REALTOR® and Consumer Advocacy of the 775-member organization, “but we felt it was important for us as an organization to gauge public opinion, and understand where the community stood on term limits.” In fact, Skutchan and Regional Government Affairs Director Barbara Koelzer suspected that term-limit extension was not an issue being pushed by citizens, but, rather, by one or two Council members in particular who were understood to be “feeling their mortality.” They happened to be members whose interests had not been historically in line with those of the REALTORS® -- and they were trying to convince their fellow council members to put the matter up for a special election in November (before their terms expired in April 2013,) at an estimated cost of over \$100K from the public coffers.

“We knew that this was not a good rationale for making this decision, let alone spending that kind of money on a special election,” says Skutchan. “At the same time,” adds Koelzer, “we didn’t want to spend too much political capital opposing it, if longer term limits were indeed what the community wanted. So we decided to conduct a poll.”

Koelzer had worked extensively with the Government Affairs division at the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, and was aware that polling grants were available. “I always thought it seemed like a great service, and had been holding it in the back of my mind until we had the right project for it. The Fort Collins term limit issue suddenly gave us one.” She contacted NAR and filled out the Polling Request form. “We provided a summary of the situation, and our objectives, but no dollar amount. The request was approved, and Joe Goode, NAR’s veteran polling consultant, took care of the rest. We gave him our background information, from which he drafted the survey questions and set the statistical parameters. He was quick and responsive, and made it so easy for us.”

It was extremely important to the FCBR that the poll be conducted in a politically and statistically valid way. “The fact was, we commissioned the poll for our information as an organization, so we wanted it to be as accurate as possible, to best serve our understanding. But we also wanted to feel comfortable presenting the results to the public as true and unbiased fact,” says Skutchan.

The unbiased fact as revealed by the poll was that the citizens of Fort Collins were not in favor of extending the term limits of its City Council, nor did they want to spend tax dollars bringing the issue to a special election. As a courtesy, Skutchan called the two Council members who were behind the proposed term-limit extension, to make them



aware of this information and the fact that the FCBR would be sharing it with local business partners to create broad public sentiment. “We decided to give the local paper an exclusive,” he explains, “I met with the editorial board and handed them the entire survey.” The Saturday before the Council was to vote on the special election, a front page story appeared in *The Fort Collins Coloradoan*.

Skutchan offered to sit down with each of the seven Council members to discuss the poll results, and did meet with key decision makers. In a dramatic moment on June 12th, the evening of the scheduled vote, the Council stepped out for a private discussion. When they returned, the mayor announced that there would be no further action on the term-limit item.

“We’re not claiming that the poll was responsible for that result, but there’s no question it helped - significantly,” says Skutchan. In any event, thanks in some part to the energetic efforts of the FCBR and the polling services of NAR, current term limits have been maintained in Fort Collins, which will remove some less-REALTOR®-friendly Council members from the power seats come April. It also saved the citizens a whopping \$100K or so, the estimated cost of the proposed special election. Says Skutchan, “I think we can all imagine better uses for that kind of money...”

Interested in learning more? Contact Barbara Koelzer, Regional Government Affairs Director, at barbara@ires-net.com or (303) 886-5675; or Clint Skutchan, Chief Executive Officer and Director of REALTOR® and Consumer Advocacy, at clint@fcb.org or (970) 402-0852.

SATURDAY
June 12, 2012

FOR COLLINS COLORADOAN

THE FORECAST
High 69°
Low 49°
Sun 69°-50°

Perfect plant placement
Get the most out of plants in your yard and others to plant them.
BY LISA HENNING

Foxes open season tonight
Fort Collins summer hunt begins to play the game of your neighbor's neighbor.
BY JEFFREY HARRIS

Trails open and close as fire flares
Several trails around Bennett park closed today.
BY JEFFREY HARRIS

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By Robert Skutchan

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By Robert Skutchan

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