

Slim Chamber majority supports local option tax

By BRIAN STEFFEN
Staff Writer

A slim majority of Ames Chamber of Commerce members supported a 1-cent local option sales tax in a mail survey, with much of the opposition coming from retail businesses that would be forced to add the tax to their sales.

Chamber officials released the survey results after a board meeting this morning, at which they learned that 54 percent of the 122 chamber

members answering the survey support the tax.

Of the 46 percent who said they oppose the tax which voters will decide whether to adopt on Nov. 4, chamber Director Steve Snyder said most were from the retail sector.

"If there was any underlying comment by those opposed to the tax, it was perceived that it might force business out of Ames to other cities that don't have the tax," Snyder said.

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The chamber mailed 332 surveys to its members, and Snyder called the 37-percent response rate "a good response for a mail survey."

The results have a margin of error of plus-or-minus 8 percent.

A private Ames group called the Committee for Property Tax Relief is pushing for the tax, which would add 1-cent to the existing 4-cent state sales tax for many goods and

services. The Ames City Council has taken no official position on the tax.

Proponents say 60 percent of the \$1.8 million to be raised would go to reduce property tax burdens, with the rest going toward human services, the arts and community betterment.

Snyder said that, despite the perception of many retail merchants that the tax will push business out of the city, there is little documentation to support that

claim. Only some cities in Woodbury County — including Sioux City — have the tax, but voters approved it only four weeks ago.

He added the chamber will not take any formal action on the tax, leaving the survey to "speak for itself."

Instead, the chamber will host an educational session on the tax 7:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 30, in the basement of United Bank and Trust, 405 Main St.