

Chico Enterprise-Record (<http://www.chicoer.com>)

## Chamber asks for tax increase to pay for roads, public safety

### Chamber: Revenue needed for roads, safety and more

*By Laura Urseny, Chico Enterprise-Record*

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Chico >> The Chico Chamber of Commerce is recommending a tax increase to raise additional money for city services like police staffing, fire, and roadway improvements.

Chamber Chair Anastacia Snyder told more than 250 people who gathered for Friday's State of the City and Business Summit that a chamber task force studied Chico's problems and possible solutions.

Community and chamber members came to the conclusion that more money is needed for the city, she said.

Issues needing attention included police staffing, road improvements, city pensions and fire protection.

While the city's pension issues were discussed, the task force felt it should not be a burden on citizens.

But police, road and fire were appropriate for a tax measure. \*

Explaining the issues, Snyder noted that more police officers are needed, along with new police dispatching equipment and software. On roads, she noted that 80 is a perfect score in a road rating evaluation, but Chico's road conditions were coming in with scores around 57, with some as low as 20.

"It's 14 times more expensive to reconstruct a road than maintain it." But maintenance hasn't been occurring because of the city's budget problems.

Snyder said the group gathered information from business walks, community safety meetings, business listening sessions, and retail roundtables. At the chamber's annual retreat, the board decided a "revenue measure" was needed.

Snyder emphasized that should the city move forward with a tax measure, it should be used for police, roads and fire\*

"We should avoid using for any other purposes."

Asked about details of the tax measure, chamber CEO Katie Simmons said, "The revenue measure is not drafted. The chamber is doing its due diligence."

Simmons said the community conversation about it is starting.

"There's a lot of unknown things," she said.

Earlier, Simmons said, "We rarely have a conversation with a local business that isn't 100 percent centered around concern for our quality of life in Chico."

She said the information to the task force relied on both data and anecdotal input.

“When we first began studying these issues — like crime and infrastructure — they were difficult to quantify. Now we have metrics that help us understand when we’re going in the right direction.”

\* An earlier version of this article did not include fire protection as a tax benefit, but should have.

Contact reporter Laura Urseny at 896-7756.

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