

## Survey finds Butte voters would back library tax

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OROVILLE -- People in Butte County would support a sales tax increase to provide additional library funding, according to survey results presented to the Board of Supervisors last week.

Tuesday, Amelia Davidson, senior research manager of the San Mateo-based Godbe Research, told the supervisors a scientific telephone survey conducted in September found 75 percent of county residents "would definitely" or "probably would" vote for a one-eighth cent sales tax increase to support the library system.

The survey, which was paid for with private money donated by the various Friends of the Library units, covered a wide range of topics including community satisfaction with existing library services, public knowledge of what those services are, and improved or additional services citizens might want.

Derek Wolfgram, Butte County library director, stressed that no public funds were spent on the survey.

He also said the library was not, at this point, asking the supervisors to put a proposed sales tax increase on the ballot.

The goal of the survey, according to the director, was to identify what library services will be needed in the future, and to get "hard data" on public opinion related to a potential tax hike.

Davidson said, according to the survey, 48 percent of county residents had visited the library in the last 12 months.

She said that is 10 to 15 percent below the national average.

Among the people who had not visited the library, the vast majority said

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they didn't have the time, they preferred to use the Internet to do research, or they preferred to own the books and other items they use.

Not surprisingly, the survey showed non-library patrons, as opposed to those who use the library on a regular basis, are less aware of additional library services such as the availability of online databases, being able to request items from libraries all over the state, or that library staff can be contacted by phone or e-mail to get research help.

Davidson said the survey, which contacted 450 individuals — 300 of whom were likely voters — and who included racial and gender ratios equivalent to the Butte County's population, found 96 percent of the people who regularly use the libraries are satisfied.

Given the high level of user satisfaction and the fact non-users are unaware of all the available services, Davidson's report stated a "strategic approach to marketing" that emphasized the wide range of available services could increase library patronage.

Wolfgram told the board, even without a new marketing campaign, library usage is surging. He said on a month-to-month basis patronage has been climbing by double digits.

He also told the board he and his staff will use the survey as a tool to chart future plans for the county libraries.

The library discussion was for information only and the supervisors took no action.

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