



May 16, 2016

The Sycamore Chamber mission and vision statements

MISSION:

We create opportunities to help businesses succeed, strengthen our community and grow our local economy.

VISION:

Through the commitment of our members as engaged community leaders we will advocate, educate and create opportunities to ignite economic growth, help businesses succeed and strengthen our community.

As a result of these publicly stated values we are mandated by our membership to uphold them. Many of our 500 plus members call our neighboring communities home and have joined our ranks so they may have an advocate and an active voice in issues that directly affect them. Therefore, we have composed a response in opposition to the DeKalb County School Facility Occupation Tax that is being proposed by the DeKalb School District and a select group of smaller districts in DeKalb County.

The districts are led by a bonding company, Stifel Nicolaus, who package and sell bonds and then also assist school districts in passing tax increases to pay for those bonds. Local school districts bring these companies in to offer an independent opinion using presentations to the board and communities about the dollars a new county school facility occupation tax brings in.

Those that are proponents of the increase in our taxes seem to think this increase is necessary because of concerns their individual districts over extended themselves on construction in the past, or have deferred maintenance issues on their existing structures. We find it unfortunate, however, that this so-called need has not been publicly vetted in a forum conducive to debate amongst proponents and detractors. Instead, meetings have been held among a handful of district superintendents who have decided that they are in favor of passing this new tax across the entire county.

Our State Legislature, in their quest for more funding, (they get to keep 2%) has changed the rules for giving authority to bring this tax to ballot. Giving local school boards the ability to bring the tax to a vote rather than appropriately leaving the decision in the hands of our elected county officials who capably deal with county-wide issues every day.

It's particularly unfortunate that Stifel Nicolaus and a handful of people following their lead are pressing this tax, especially since if it succeeds it will only offer limited "relief" while being unavoidably detrimental to all of the efforts made in DeKalb County to try to attract new businesses to want to make their home in our community. The new occupation tax can only be used for building expense not operating expense.

Sycamore Chamber of Commerce

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Therefore, this new tax will never solve all budget issues affecting the school districts which feel this short term solution is desirable.

This is a NEW TAX imposed upon all persons in DeKalb County engaged in the business of selling tangible personal property at retail. The Sycamore Chamber takes both our mission and vision statements seriously. This tax will not help business in DeKalb County succeed. This tax will not strengthen our community or help grow our local economy. This tax will not create opportunity and will hobble the ability of all our local Chambers and Municipalities making it increasingly difficult to advocate for all of DeKalb County.

In the spirit of education and educators everywhere, where the excellent philosophy of advancing knowledge, understanding, and free exchange of ideas prevail, we ask people to think carefully about the choices to be made. We appeal to the superintendents who chose their profession as a result of these tenets and simply ask, until this can be properly vetted and understood at the county level in a venue where civil discourse is encouraged, that the issue of the new School Facility Occupation Tax not be placed on the ballot at this time.

There are consequences to every choice we make, and on behalf of the business community we urge that those choices be made with an eye toward the common good of all, not the narrowly perceived interests of the few.

Thank you,



RoseMarie M. Trembl
Executive Director
Sycamore Chamber of Commerce