

Aptos Chamber backs storm tax

Proposition A — the county proposal for a "storm tax" to raise money to repair roads damaged by the January storms, received an endorsement this morning from the Aptos Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

Following presentations by Supervisors Chairman Robley Levy and former supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat, and a lengthy discussion by chamber directors and members, the proposal was endorsed on a 5-2 vote by board members. The endorsement was given "much to my chagrin," said Chamber President Bob McKenzie, one of the two directors

to vote against it. There was one abstention.

In presenting the case for the proposition, Mrs. Levy told board members there was an "extraordinary" amount of damage to the roads, that the damage was widespread throughout the county, that the amount of repair needed lay beyond the engineering and physical capabilities of the county road department, that the state "is balancing its budget on the backs of cities and counties," that the greatest portion of county budget expenditures are beyond the control of the supervisors, and that the proposed tax was the "quickest and fairest way to raise the money."

Mrs. Liddicoat reiterated her arguments as a signer of the ballot arguments against the tax, by saying that it is an unfair tax, that the county has sufficient revenues to make the repairs if it practices better fiscal management, that the county spends money on projects for which there is no demonstrated need and that the county needs to reorder its spending priorities.

It was argued that the county could finance the road repairs by forming assessment districts in the affected areas, but Mrs. Levy argued that the tax, as proposed, was in effect creating an assessment district within the county's unincorporated area.

The proposal calls for a \$30-a-year tax for the next three years on single-family homes, \$90-a-year on multi-family residences and commercial buildings and \$15-a-year on unimproved property. The measure will be on the June ballot.

Following the vote by the chamber directors, it was decided that the chamber will sponsor a public forum sometime in mid-May at which the matter will be once again debated.