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HEADLINE: **Sierra Madre shelves new library;**
Residents reluctant to take on new debt

BYLINE: By Lisa Faught , Staff Writer

BODY:

The City Council has decided to shelve plans for a new library after a recent survey found lukewarm support for paying a special tax to fund its construction.

"Clearly the public is extremely skeptical taking on debt even for valued public facilities,' said Mayor Bart Doyle.

In January, the City Council commissioned the survey and hired a consultant to put a special tax for a new library on the ballot if the community support was there.

The survey, by the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College, asked residents how much they would be willing to pay for a new library.

Of those polled, 42 percent would pay \$95 per year for 30 years, 44 percent would pay \$85 per year and 48 percent would pay \$75 per year. A special tax would need a two-thirds vote to pass.

Though library officials had yet to launch a campaign for a new facility, the numbers show a fairly strong base of support, said John Buchanan, library board trustee and City Council candidate.

"There are a lot of reasons there, but those reasons are not really known in the community at this time,' Buchanan said. "With education campaign we can see the community might be more receptive down the line.'

Plans call for replacing the tiny building on Sierra Madre Boulevard with one more than twice its size. The new building would include a community room, computer lab and children's book room.

In recent years, library officials have been forced to throw books away for lack of space.

Initially, the city had pursued funding from the state Library Bond Act of 2000, but faced too much in the way of competition. The bulk of the funding went to cities with growing populations, not stable ones like Sierra Madre.

Rather than try for another round of funding, the city decided to look into asking voters to pass a special tax to raise the construction money.

On Tuesday night, the City Council decided against signing a contract with MuniFinancial to put the special tax on the ballot.

Instead, library officials plan to compile a list of repairs for the existing building and consider a campaign to promote a new library at a later date.

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