



September 21, 2015

Mayor Tari Renner
109 E. Olive Street
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Dear Mayor Renner,

There is never a good time to implement a new tax or fee. The result, albeit to businesses or residents, is to incur a new mandated financial responsibility. In the midst of a still recovering national economy, continual changes within our local business climate, and the substantial deficiencies within the operations and funding levels from the State of Illinois, there's understandably little to no appetite for the consideration of an additional 1% sales tax.

As a standing position in the 2015 Legislative Agenda, The McLean County Chamber of Commerce supports a competitive and fair tax climate that promotes and fosters economic growth. While our community(s) have been fortunate to escape some of the severe financial consequences that those surrounding us have endured, we are guilty of resting on our laurels, complacent in our operations, and not giving the necessary focus on growth, development and competitiveness in the regional, national and now global marketplace.

The Chamber was asked by several members of the Council for an official position on the sales tax increase this week. While we appreciate the opportunity to offer our collective opinion, we were unsuccessful in gathering a quorum for an impromptu meeting. What we offer in this letter, while a consensus of those in attendance, is an unofficial position for your review and consideration in making this very important decision.

We're in favor and an avid supporter of collaboration and working together to move our regional community forward. It's in the collaborative spirit that we could conditionally and unofficially lend our support to the proposal with the following qualifiers:

1. That a commitment of 1/4 % be specifically allocated to Mental Health in McLean County.
2. That the initiatives set forth by the BN Advantage, and in collaboration with the Town of Normal including public transit service expansion, economic development and business development, have a percentage of the revenue dedicated to these initiatives.
3. That a percentage of the revenues be allocated to schools from the 1% collected. Stellar education is the mainstay of economic development as it relates to the quality of workforce for our members, the talent necessary for their business success, growth and overall future business attraction.



4. That an agreement is made to reduce the structural deficit by 50% or greater by including, but not limited to, the recommendations provided by the Budget Committee Task Force not including any new revenue that may be generated from a tax.
5. That the City of Bloomington work with the McLean County Chamber of Commerce in drafting and implementing a local purchase policy which gives preference to local businesses for needed services and necessary purchases. Such a policy allows for the City to invest in its local businesses while retaining tax dollars in our community. Knowing that additional sales tax will incur a competitive disadvantage for our members with on-line shopping, we also ask that the City of Bloomington invest in the "Make Your Money Mean More" buy local initiative, and to lead by example by encouraging City employees and residents alike to shop local which is paramount to the success of our members and in turn growing needed sales tax revenue.

We want our community to look forward, be competitive, enhance necessary services and invest to better our quality of place and focus on our current, prospective and future workforce. These are all items that are addressed and have been heavily discussed throughout the creation of the BN Advantage Economic and Marketing Strategy. With confidence and support of this recently published Strategy by the McLean County Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council of Bloomington Normal, The Bloomington Normal Conventional and Visitor's Bureau, the McLean County Regional Planning Commission and the Bloomington Normal Airport Authority, we truly believe that Bloomington's future and economic vitality has unprecedented potential. If your choice is to move forward with the request at hand, we sincerely hope you'll look forward; with accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility in order to provide the leadership that will be required during this time of transformational change in meeting our future mutual goals as a region.

Sincerely,



Robert Miller
Chairman of the Board



Charles Moore
President & CEO

CC: City Manager - David Hales
Alderman Ward 1 - Kevin Lower
Alderman Ward 2 - David Sage
Alderman Ward 3 - Mboka Mwilambwe
Alderman Ward 4 - Amelia Buragas
Alderman Ward 5 - Joni Painter
Alderman Ward 6 - Karen Schmidt
Alderman Ward 7 - Scott Black
Alderman Ward 8 - Diana Hauman
Alderman Ward 9 - Jim Fruin