

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

On November Second, Twenty Ten, Measure "O" was passed by the voters in Eureka. The measure replaced the "Utility User's Tax" which was a difficult tax to assess and not even handed when levied against businesses. Measure "O" is a sales tax which added a one half percent supplemental transaction and use tax to fund essential services such as police, fire, medical response, street maintenance, environmental programs, zoo, and parks and recreation. The tax has duration of five years and was effective on April First, Twenty Eleven. The measure also required the establishment of a citizen oversight committee to conduct annual audits of all the expenditures generated by the tax to ensure fiscal accountability and public participation. With all that said, it appears that Measure "O" will be up for renewal by the Eureka taxpayers in November. Already, opinions are being expressed as to whether or not the Measure should, or should not, be renewed. I think that an early discussion is very much in order and this does show an interest by Eureka voters as to value of the tax and what is happening to the money so far collected. As to my position at this time, I look at the sales tax as the best method of keeping our emergency services at an acceptable level. One of my concerns is the lack of public information regarding the Citizens' Oversight Committee. The members' names are not readily available nor are the annual audit reports that they are charged with. I am not saying that they don't exist but I am asking if they could be made more available to the public. I have heard rumors that some of the money collected went to a non-profit organization for use benefiting only a portion of the Eureka citizens. I am not going to identify any group or persons as I don't want to publish rumors. A clear cut audit, readily available to all, will discourage such rumors. The City of Eureka periodically circulates a detailed report of the analysis of its drinking water. Why not a report on the annual audit by the Measure "O" Oversight Committee? The day before the "Super Bowl" I dropped by Costco to pick up a few things. What a mistake! First, I had to search for a parking place which I never have to do. Once inside, I face the nightmare of trying to safely maneuver down the aisles. No wonder we have auto traffic problems in our area. Some of these people cannot even operate a shopping cart. One had her cart at a ninety degree angle, effectively blocking everyone while she checked out the merchandise. The food stations actually had lines with shopping carts parked at all angles while people visited and crammed their mouths. I think that some people leave there with more food in their stomachs than in their carts.

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