

July 17, 2017

We are truly blessed in many ways here in Humboldt County. Clean air and water, beautiful surroundings, good neighbors and a community that supports the welfare and safety of those who live here.

Over the years those essential service to public safety have been lacking due to strained budgets at both state and local level. Crime has increased and the citizens of Humboldt County have demanded better service not only for Law Enforcement, but also for enhanced fire and emergency medical aid along with better roads and other infrastructure needs. All these under the public safety umbrella are issues that truly impact our citizens.

In response to the need for enhanced public safety an initiative was placed on the ballot, Measure Z, which asked the voters to approve the increase of sales tax by $\frac{1}{2}$ percent to be used for only public safety, which included Law Enforcement, Fire, services to the homeless, roads and other vital concerns for the safety and well-being of our communities.

The voters approved the measure, which is now entering its 3rd year, so we are at the halfway mark of a 5 year initiative. The Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to review applications for Measure Z funds and make recommendations back to the board regarding those proposals that best fulfilled

the intent of Measure Z. I have had the honor of serving on the committee as your elected Sheriff until my retirement in May.

When measure Z was enacted many thought services would immediately begin due to the increased and I wish it could have. In the case fire services and roads the benefits of the increased funding was realized almost immediately. Fire services purchased much needed equipment which has enabled them to respond with up to date apparatus. Roads were repaired, as funding allowed and many areas in the county have benefited.

In regards to the Sheriff's Office the situation is different because the need was for more deputies which takes time to recruit, go through an extensive background and then appropriately train based upon state mandates. This has been a long, tedious process but it is finally paying off.

The Sheriff's Office is now at a point where the increase in staffing is making a difference in the field. Just recently the Sheriff's Office sponsored 9 new deputy sheriffs in the College of the Redwoods Law Enforcement Academy, which is unprecedented. These new deputies along with those who have been hired in the past two years have and will continue to have an impact on the crime that infects our communities.

Measure Z has had an impact and has changed things for the better. Thank you Humboldt County for seeing the need and passing an initiative that increased the sales tax you pay. The

investment was and is worth it. This is Mike Downey for
Community Comment.