



BOARD MEETING AGENDA SUBMITTAL

TO: GCSB Board of Directors

FROM: Peter Kampa, General Manager

DATE: August 13, 2024

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 6D: Consideration of a Position on the Tuolumne County Measure Z, Sales Tax and its Associated Advisory Measure Scheduled for the November 2024 Ballot

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the following action:

I move that the Groveland Community Services District Support Tuolumne County Measure Z, Sales Tax and its Allocation to the Fire, Emergency Services and Roads

BACKGROUND:

Tuolumne County has been struggling for decades to solidify its funding sources for its County Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services, Law Enforcement and roads. Each year, the cost to provide these services has exceeded the revenue available, causing critical equipment replacement funds and any reserves to be drawn down to the point where, when current grant funding runs out in two years for the fire engines and staffing in Columbia, East Sonora and Groveland, it is likely that cutbacks will need to be made.

As the Board is aware, after several years of effort and difficult conversations with the County, they have agreed to collocate a staffed County fire engine in the GCSB station, which is currently grant funded for two more years. This additional engine in Groveland has allowed our staffed GCSB engine to remain in the District while the County engine runs calls outside the District. This additional engine has also provided the resources to put out local structure fires before they spread to the surrounding wildland, which could have been catastrophic in recent weeks. If the Groveland area was to lose its County fire engine, we would be left with two personnel on a single engine when CAL FIRE is off the hill addressing major wildfires throughout the state.

In addition to the second engine, County Fire funds the cost for emergency dispatch operations, firefighter training, the fire marshal and fire investigations, inspections and most importantly for GCSB and the Groveland community, backup resources under mutual aid to handle large incidents and keep small fires from getting worse. County fire has helped with grant funding for the GCSB department and strategic planning for all departments.

The County has placed Measure Z on the November 2024 ballot, which would levy an increase in the sales tax charged countywide. In addition, the County has placed Measure A on the same ballot, as an advisory measure to determine if the public supports this new sales tax funding being spent on fire, law enforcement and roads. GCSD management recommends the Board take a support position on Measure Z, to allow the General Manager or Board to be listed in support on the in-favor ballot argument. The District is prohibited from lobbying for or against a ballot measure but is allowed to take a position publicly.

Adopting a support position shows GCSD's commitment to maintaining and improving the level of fire services locally, cooperation with the County and an understanding of the value of a financially stable fire department countywide. The District will continue to engage vigorously in countywide fire services planning, and in particular working to ensure the county continuously dedicates appropriate fire resources in the Groveland area. With our stated support and the Measure's success, we will expect County Fire's presence in south county to be permanent.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Argument in Favor of Measure A (County Supervisors)
2. Argument in Favor of Measure Z (Stakeholders)

Measure Z isn't just another tax — it's a path toward financial independence for Tuolumne County residents.

Millions of dollars in temporary grants for emergency services will expire soon. Measure Z is a small cost (one penny per dollar) that provides urgently needed, sustainable funding for core services like fire, law enforcement, and roads while keeping the sales tax rate well below the 8.85% State average.

Revenue from this one-cent general sales tax stays 100% local, cannot be taken by California, will largely be paid for by visitors, exempts groceries, will be up for a re-vote after 20 years, and directly impacts everyone's daily lives.

Our group, Protect Tuolumne County, is a bipartisan and independent coalition of citizens, business owners, and community groups recognizing three critical points:

- 1) Local Firefighters, Deputies, and Road Workers deserve reliable long-term funding
- 2) Our economy and safety depend on these services
- 3) LOCAL revenue is LOCAL control

Our local leaders continue to prioritize public safety and roads; however, these ongoing issues simply cannot be fixed without new revenue.

The Firefighters, Deputies, and Road Workers we're talking about — they're our local Tuolumne County neighbors working each day to keep us safe, and we want to secure local long-term funding for them.

Additionally, a YES vote on the companion Measure A firmly states that fire services, law enforcement, and road projects are the priorities for Measure Z funds. A citizen review committee provides further public accountability.

This is an easy and smart choice. Today, we're making decisions to secure a safe future for our businesses and families. Protect Tuolumne County — Vote YES on Measure Z.

Signed,

Cindy Zelinsky, Business Owner (Emberz, Lazy-Z Resort)

David Vasquez, Tuolumne County Sheriff

Mario Torres, CAL FIRE Local 2881 TCU Chapter Director

Len Otley, Tuolumne County Lodging Association

Pete Kampa, General Manager, Groveland Community Services District

Argument in Favor of Measure A

We are all frustrated with rising costs, from fire insurance to groceries to transportation. The system works against rural communities, and it's understandable why some think a sales tax increase is *ridiculous* and ask why the county cannot live within its means.

The truth is since the 1980s, revenues haven't kept up with increasing costs. Measure A is about priorities: Law Enforcement, Fire Services, and Rural Residential Roads.

For 3 years, faced with limited resources, our Board prioritized increasing deputy wages, adding three grant-funded fire stations in Columbia, Groveland, and Soulsbyville so we don't burn down, and investing \$6.24 million into roads.

What would be ridiculous is continuing to idly accept a status quo of 40+ minute deputy response times, entire communities losing fire protection a decade after the Rim Fire, and declining roads ruining suspensions.

We recognize trust in government is low. You may support one signatory here but detest another. Indeed, we don't always agree. But as elected representatives—Republicans, Independents, and Democrats – we want to solve problems, not avoid them.

We're standing shoulder-to-shoulder humbly asking for your trust and to hold us accountable for spending your tax dollars on these core services. A YES vote on Measure A confirms our shared priorities of Law Enforcement, Fire Services, and Rural Residential Roads.

The County must legally balance budgets so increasing costs with limited funding will mean continued service cuts — pitting deputies against libraries, fire against housing, and roads against recreation. It will affect cherished family programs, infrastructure, and public safety, and we are prepared, with no satisfaction, to do that job.

There is no silver bullet. Budgets will still be tight. This will not fix California. But if Measure Z passes, we pledge to spend it on our shared priorities confirmed by a YES vote on Measure A.

/s/ Supervisor David Goldemberg (Sonora)

/s/ Supervisor Jaron Brandon (Columbia, Jamestown)

/s/ Supervisor Ryan Campbell (Soulsbyville, Crystal Falls, Phoenix Lake)

/s/ Supervisor Anaiiah Kirk (Tuolumne, Twain Harte)

/s/ Supervisor Kathleen Haff (Groveland, Chinese Camp, East Sonora)