

Letter: What is a Vital Service?

August 25, 2024



Even though I write this commentary thousands of miles from Del Norte, I continue to have keen interest in just exactly how Del Norte County spends its revenue. The current projected budget is \$182 million, a decline of \$29 million from the last 2023/24 budget. While in the remaining days of the process, it will no doubt increase the dollar amount somewhat, in final form by October 1, a full quarter has elapsed through the current budget cycle.

August will be the time of “budget workshops” that have already begun, to shape this final version as well as providing some avenue for the public to have a shot at injecting some of their own ideas into the mix.

These ideas will likely be ignored, the unwashed after all, but the concept of transparency is the object of the workshop “show” and not in anyway to determine what in the budget is truly worthy of the expenditure of taxpayer dollar, or what is being left out.

Over the course of the next budget cycle 2024/25 how exactly the County spends the money will vary due to “unexpected needs” will no doubt magically appear to satisfy the “critical need” that nobody really cares about or needs.

How does money in various department budgets get spent when employee vacancies exist? Transfer it elsewhere? For what, who knows? While the general framework might be kept, the actual expenditures what the bureaucracy desires to spend at any given moment.

Currently, the County is sitting on \$3.7 million of Measure R funds that were advertised to be spent on supporting “vital” public services. It would seem to any reasonable person, “vital” would indicate some form of urgency.

Why is Del Norte sitting on \$3.7 million of our money?

Why have two the paving of parking lots and fencing for Pyke’s Field rise to the level of “supporting vital services”?

Unfortunately, there is little concern by most County residents how local elected spend our money. Too often, funds are allocated on services and employees which do very little to ensure any beneficial result to the local community. As government programs and employees increase, so do the number of folks mired in dependency.

While this year’s budget may show signs of retreat, one must seriously question why there was a need for the \$29 million in the previous year’s budget.

Finally, Del Norte’s budget of \$182 million covers 26,000 folks. Neighboring Curry County will operate on a budget of just under \$65 million, serving 23,000 Curry residents. Apples to oranges?

You figure it out.

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Samuel Strait

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