



County of Humboldt

Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget

Budget In Brief

Proposed
June 2, 2020

Board of Supervisors



Rex Bohn
1st District



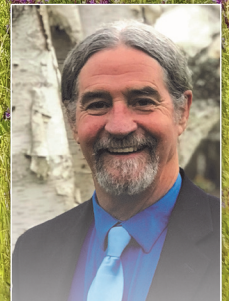
Estelle Fennell
2nd District, Chair



Mike Wilson
3rd District, Vice
Chair



Virginia Bass
4th District



Stephen
Madrone
5th District

A Message from County Administrative Officer Amy S. Nilsen

Dear Board Members and Residents,

I am pleased to present Humboldt County's balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21, created in accordance with policies adopted by your Board to guide staff. Last year my budget message centered on the decisive actions your Board has continued to take to build a strong foundation and put Humboldt County on a path to prosper. Today I write to tell you that the work of the past was done for moments like this, and it will be vital as we work to continue providing services to the people of Humboldt County in the face of challenges.

I also write to remind you that while communities and economies around the globe are suffering as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Humboldt County has survived before in the face of declining revenues, increased demand for services, unfunded mandates, state takeaways, natural disasters and other difficult circumstances. And we will survive again.

Humboldt County was the first rural county in the country to report a positive COVID-19 case, on Feb. 22. Since then our case count steadily increased, then largely flattened after the Public Health Officer and Sheriff declared health and local emergencies, respectively. The Governor delivered a state-wide shelter-in-place order, then after nearly 2 months laid out criteria to allow sections of the economy to reopen. Humboldt County, after opening its Emergency Operations Center and Joint Information Center, established an alternate care site to ready for a surge in cases, set up the first state-sponsored testing site to increase testing, staffed up to increase contact tracing, and adopted several policies to help employees as they serve the community and care for loved ones. The county also had its reopening plan approved by the state to allow businesses to start serving customers again, with modifications. In short, Humboldt County began its emergency operations early in the pandemic

and responded swiftly in an effort to lead our community through the process.

These efforts, however, do not come without a cost and they have not mitigated all effects. As of this writing, local businesses have reported more than \$40 million in losses, nearly 2,500 lost jobs, 16 permanent business closures, while more than 13,000 unemployment claims have been filed. And the county's response to the needs this has created has been nothing short of extraordinary. More than 1,100 COVID-19 disaster loans have been issued to private industry, over \$132 million in resources have been leveraged for private industry and non-profits, nearly 2,300 workers have been served through the Job Market, and we secured a Support Service grant award of \$126,000 for economically impacted individuals. The cost to the county for emergency operations is more than \$2 million, and will continue to rise as the pandemic persists.

Some of these costs can be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), but the county will still bear significant expense and will draw down fund balance until reimbursement is received. Even then, additional funding from the state and/or federal governments will be required to prevent service reductions. The federal government has yet to provide direct aid to counties of our size (jurisdictions with populations of 500,000 and larger did receive direct payments from the US Treasury), though our federal delegation has supported such proposals. However, the President in April signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which established the Coronavirus Relief Fund and appropriates \$150 billion to the fund, \$15.3 billion of which went to California. On the state side, Assemblymember Jim Wood and Senator Mike McGuire have championed efforts to bring additional aid to Humboldt County, and we will continue working with them to make



Mission Statement:

The County of Humboldt, through the dedication and excellence of its employees, is committed to meeting the needs and addressing concerns of the community and enhancing the quality of life.

Humboldt County Budget Fiscal Year 2020-21

Focus:

To Promote a Safe, Healthy,
Economically Vibrant Community

that a reality. Their efforts have already benefited our area as the Governor in his May budget revision allocated \$13.8 million to Humboldt County. This funding is not dedicated solely to county activities and can only be used for certain COVID-19 response activities such as public health and law enforcement actions. It cannot be used for revenue replacement.

The total economic impact of COVID-19 is still unknown, though we know it will be significant. The state is projecting a \$54 billion deficit over the next 2 years, and though it entered FY 2019-20 with more than \$20 billion in reserves, state departments are taking action now to reduce expenditures and place less stress on the budget. However, these actions alone will likely not be enough to make ends meet. If past behavior is any indicator, we can expect the state to implement three strategies: make additional maneuvers like those described, increase revenues, and propose cuts. The latter of these strategies is most concerning to Humboldt County as it would equate not only to fewer services for residents, but in the past these cuts have manifested as unfunded mandates, requiring local governments to take on state responsibilities without requisite support.

These realities are concerning, but we have seen similar events play out in the past and as I mentioned previously, we have laid substantial groundwork to help weather difficult circumstances. While the strategies I will describe later in this message take significant steps to mitigate revenue decreases and corresponding increased demand for services, FY 2020-21 will require that we monitor the budget much more closely than normal, and we will come to your Board with frequent updates.

The proposed budget before your Board is in many ways a placeholder while we further study the effects of COVID-19. By adopting this budget, your Board is granting spending authority to departments to deliver services to the community.

Your department heads, however, are well aware of the context of the budget before you and are committed to responsibly maintaining their own respective budgets until staff can come back to your Board at the first quarter budget report with a more refined spending plan based on new information.

With that said, the proposed budget is significantly different from years past. Staff is estimating significant reductions in revenue to the General Fund, particularly from sales tax, including Measure Z and Prop. 172, transient occupancy tax, and code enforcement fines and fees. If the budget were adopted with these reductions in estimates and policy level contributions to the General Reserve, Project Trellis marketing contribution (the innovative, multi-pronged effort to support the local cannabis industry, Contingencies, and the Public Agency Retirement System (PARS), staff estimates the General Fund would end FY 2020-21 with a fund balance of roughly \$989,000. For comparison, the General Fund ended FY 2018-19 with a fund balance of \$21.3 million, and is projected to end FY 2019-20 with a balance of \$11.3 million.

It is fiscally irresponsible to leave less than \$1 million in fund balance when General Fund expenditures are estimated at more than \$150 million, and therefore staff are recommending that we temporarily halt the above-mentioned contributions. By taking these actions alone, we could end FY 2020-21 with a fund balance in the General Fund of \$8.4 million. Suspending these contributions are significant actions to take. In particular, the General Reserve, which currently has a \$5.4 million balance, is where we draw emergency funding and is not yet to your Board's stated goal of 10% of General Fund expenditures, and even further from the national best practice of 16%. Additionally, the county needs its PARS account (currently at \$6 million) to offset increases in required contributions for employee retirement, and would do well in the long-term

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A Message from County Administrative Officer Amy S. Nilsen

to increase investment in this regard. The local cannabis industry continues to need additional support, due in part because it is federally prohibited from accessing banking services, and Project Trellis provides direct aid and marketing for the industry as a whole. It is vital that the county continue these contributions as quickly as possible, but a temporary reprieve is prudent for the moment.

Staff are pursuing additional actions to help ease pressure on the budget including: voluntary furloughs and reduced office hours; reductions in overtime and extra-help expenses; holding positions vacant; reduced travel expenses; exploring Partial Service Retirement options with California Public Employees' Retirement Systems (CalPERS), and; exploring a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program.

The total spending plan before your Board today is a balanced budget with \$465.4 million in total expenditures, an increase of \$13.8 million or 3% over FY 2019-20. This increase is due to \$1.7 million for Economic Development activities; \$9.4 million for Natural Resources for Integrated Regional Water Management; and \$7 million is attributable to state and federally reimbursable activities in Health and Human Services. These increases are partially offset by a decrease in the General Fund of \$5.8 million, primarily due to the elimination of one-time investments in anticipation of reduced revenues as a result of COVID-19, the completion of Capital Projects in FY 2019-20 and the removal of Solid Waste (\$1.5 million) from the General Fund and placing it in its own fund.

General Fund expenditures are proposed at \$156.9 million with \$146.8 million in estimated revenue. This budget proposes 2,404.37 total personnel, a reduction of 21.6 FTE or 1.2% compared to FY 2019-20.

Make no mistake: Your Board has done hard work, shown commitment to the community and to the future by making the investments with discretionary dollars in the General Reserve, PARS, Project Trellis and others I detailed above.

It is precisely because of this work that we are able to consider making a one-time change to this strategy in order to soften the economic blow of COVID-19. If successful, we will have minimized the impact on critical services to residents during this time, while providing additional support to local industries where we can leveraging outside funding to the maximum extent possible. That is our goal for this year.

In closing I would like to thank all of our departments for the hard work they have done preparing their budgets, and the work they will be doing to put together refined spending plans for the first quarter budget report. As always, I would also like to thank the dedicated staff in the Management & Budget Team for their tireless work in reviewing budgets and putting together this document: Elishia Hayes, Karen Clower, Sean Quincey, Fiona Wilson, Vanessa Ericksen, Rosa Maciel and Shannon Adair. This talented group put together a budget document last year that won the Distinguished Budget Award from the Government Finance Officers' Association (GFOA), a first for the County of Humboldt. We intend to submit our budget document again this year for recognition as we believe it again contains the important information residents need to understand what the county is doing with public funding.



Amy S. Nilsen
County Administrative Officer



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Helping Humboldt

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: OES

During times of crisis look for the helpers. Support and assistance can come from the most unexpected of places. Including, from our county's very own private sector and from private industry.

After establishing its Emergency Operations Center in response to the pandemic, the Humboldt County Office of Emergency Services (OES) began its daunting task of distributing over 30,000 pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to local health care facilities and first responders. However, as the need and demand for these supplies increased, the availability of the supply dwindled.

Like other jurisdictions across the nation, the county soon found itself in an awkward position where it was competing with regional, state and national partners for PPE resources. In a pre-Covid world the general public (and also government) might have looked to large manufactures to mass produce PPE products. But those sources were drying up, and even manufacturers could not keep up with demand.

Help was needed. The beacons were lit. And the cry for help was not unheard.

When government is unable to provide for its residents, residents must work together to provide for themselves. And that is just what Humboldt's business community did. Local businesses began to change their operations in order to be part of the solution, and Humboldt's private sector began manufacturing and donating supplies in order to help agencies and first responders to gain access to the equipment that was so desperately needed.

Early on into the pandemic, local distilleries like Alchemy Distillery and Humboldt Distillery began making hand sanitizer in response to a shortage. Fabric stores began making masks. And College of the Redwoods, Humboldt State University, Quality Body Works and Holly Yashi utilized 3D Printers to Produce Face Shields for emergency service personnel and disaster service workers. The race for private industry to fill the supply gap and provide for it's own community was on.



LOCAL BUSINESS IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Data as of May 18, 2020

783	\$41,529,494	2503	13,161	16
Businesses Reporting	Private Industry Revenue Loss	Total job loss	Unemployment claims	Permanent Closures
1,114	\$132.5 Million	917	2,273	
COVID Disaster Loans issued to private industry	Leveraged Resources for Private Industry and Non-Profits	Local Businesses Served by SBDC	Workers assisted through The Job Market	

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Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework acts as staff's guide from the Board of Supervisors for all County work



Core Roles

1

Enforce laws and regulations to protect residents

2

Provide for and maintain infrastructure

3

Encourage new local enterprise

4

Create opportunities for improved safety and health

5

Protect vulnerable populations

6

Support business and workforce development and creation of private-sector jobs

7

Strengthen climate change resiliency

Priorities for New Initiatives

Provide our core services:

Match service availability with residents' needs

- Provide community-appropriate levels of service
- Support self-reliance of citizens
- Streamline permit processes
- Retain existing and facilitate new living-wage private sector jobs and housing

Safeguard the public trust

- Manage our resources to ensure sustainability of services
- Invest in county employees
- Invite civic engagement and awareness of available services

Make proactive decisions:

Partner to promote quality services

- Foster transparent, accessible, welcoming and user-friendly services
- Facilitate the establishment of local revenue sources to address local needs
- Seek outside funding sources to benefit Humboldt County needs
- Facilitate public/private partnerships to solve problems
- Build inter-jurisdictional and regional cooperation

Be an effective and influential voice for our community at the regional, state and federal levels

- Advance local interests in natural resource discussions
- Engage in discussions of our regional economic future
- Engage new partners

Budget Process

BUDGET PREPARATION

Departments receive input from the community and the Board about priorities for the new fiscal year.

The CAO verifies department requests, compiles them into a cohesive county budget and presents a recommendation to the Board.

BUDGET REVIEW

The Board is obligated to use roughly two-thirds of the budget on state and federally funded programs.

General Fund monies are under the discretion of the Board and are allocated based on the Strategic Framework, and any other specific guidelines set by the Board.

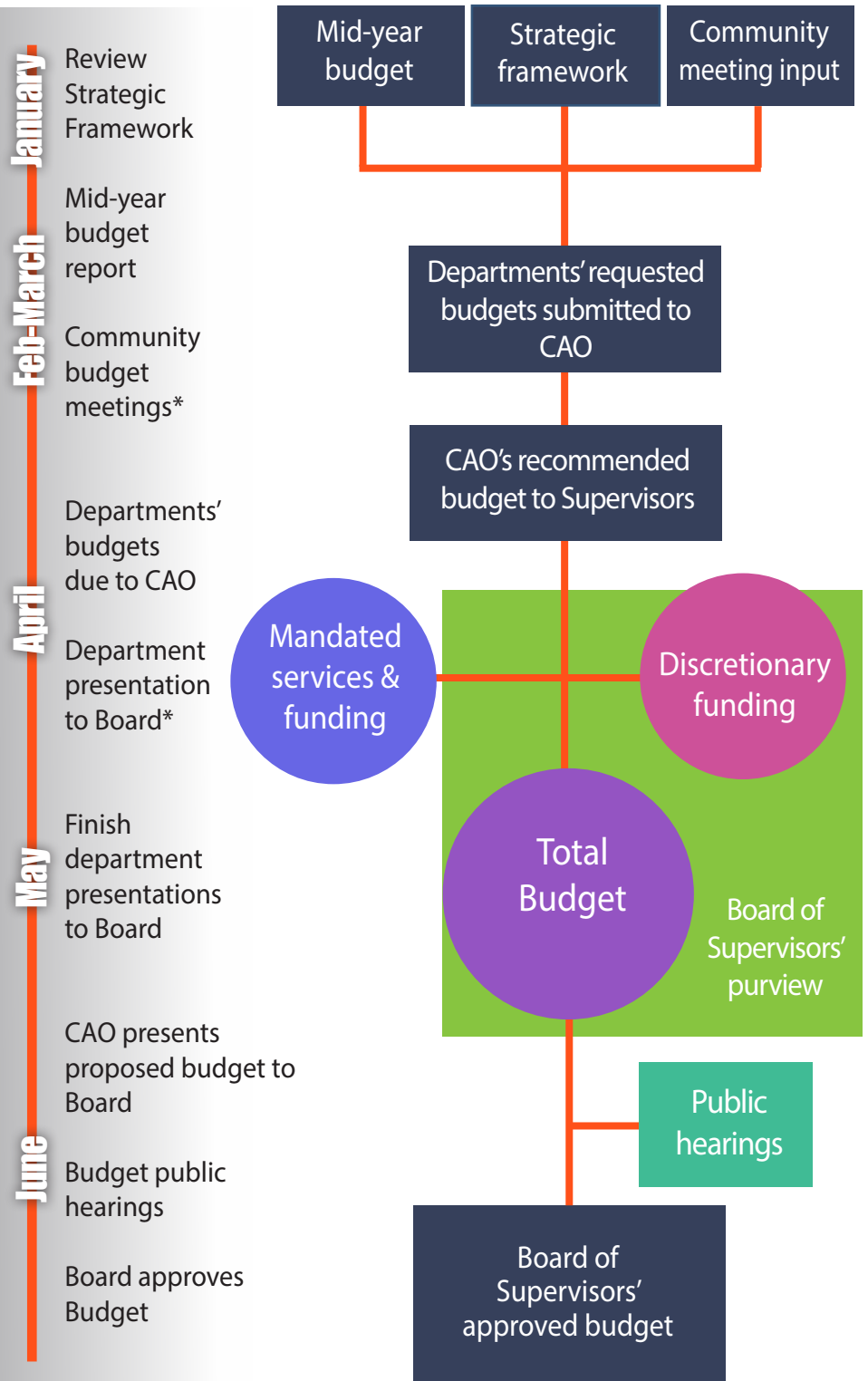
Upon presentation to the Board, the public has an opportunity to provide feedback.

BUDGET ADOPTION

Budget scheduled for adoption at the June 23, 2020 Board meeting.

County budgets are important documents, but their meaning can be difficult to decipher for citizens. This is intended to provide a high-level overview of the budget, in plain terms. Giving a better idea of where public funds are being spent and picture of the issues facing our community.

**Events below occur in a typical year, but were cancelled for FY 2020-21*





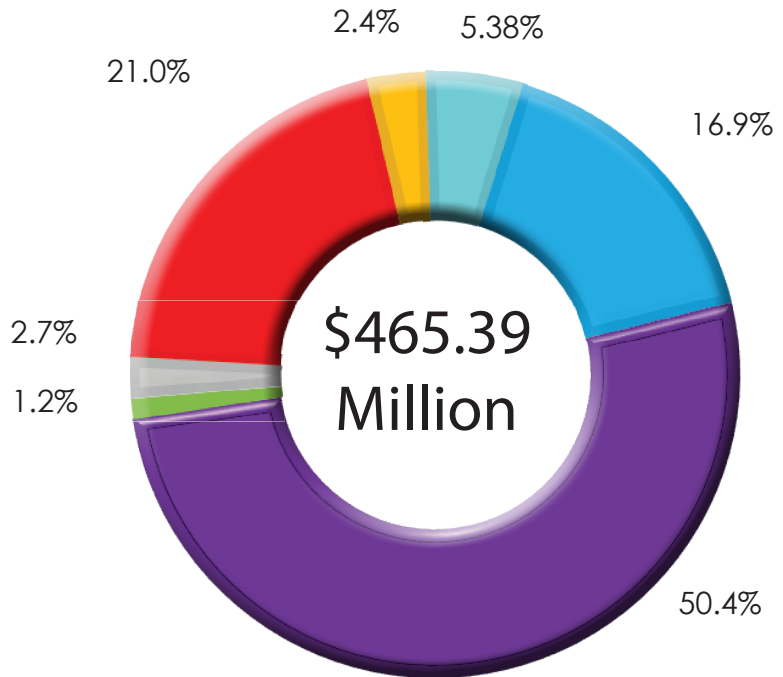
Total Budget: \$465.39M

Nearly half of the County's budget each year is spent on Health & Human Services. This includes vital services like CalFresh, the State's supplemental nutrition assistance program for low-income families, and Medi-Cal, which is California's health care system. Public Works projects like road repairs and bridge maintenance also make up a significant portion of spending each year.



Expenditures by Service

- Law & Justice
\$78.69M
- Health & Human Services
\$234.38M
- Education & Agriculture
\$5.72M
- Planning & Building
\$12.64M
- Public Works
\$97.73M
- Transfers & Contingencies
\$11.19M
- Admin Services
\$25.04M



7.8%

Redevelopment*

Property Tax Distribution Where do your property tax dollars go?

1.9%

County Library

7.4%

Special Districts

62.2%

Schools

2.3%
Cities

16.1%

County General Fund

2.2%

Roads

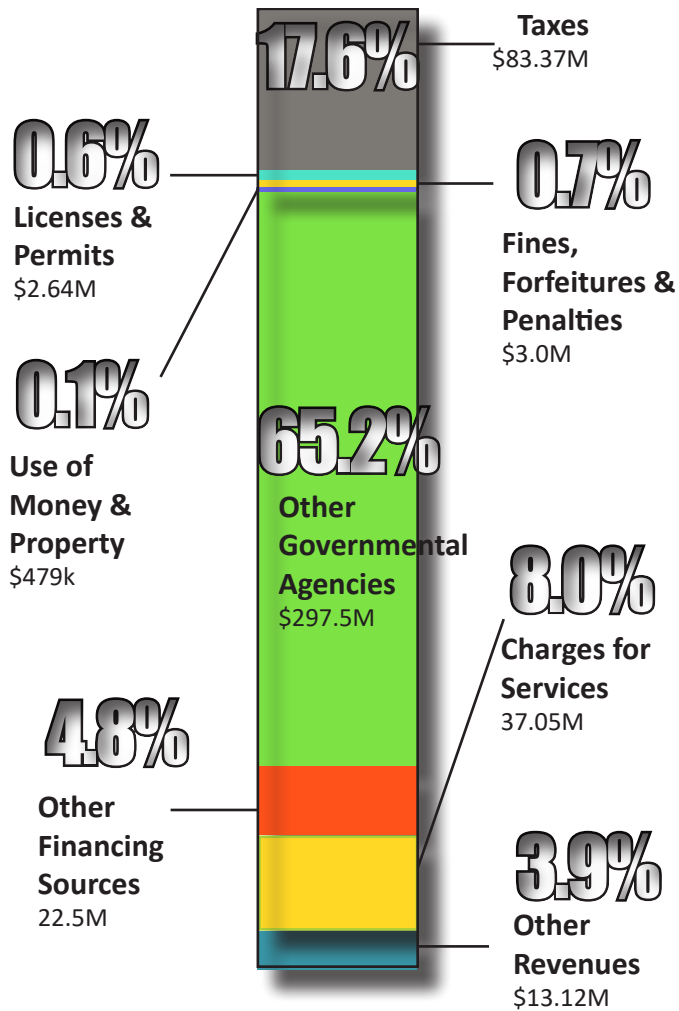
*Redevelopment agencies have been dissolved. This funding is to pay for the debt of those agencies.

Revenues: \$442.86M

Other Financing Sources (Uses): \$22.5M

Total expenditures are projected to exceed revenues in FY 2020-21. To make up the difference, the county will use \$1 million in General Fund fund balance, or money left over from the prior year, and \$21.5 million from other sources such as transfers from various trust funds.

Revenue by Source



4 Key Visions for 2020-21

This year the Board will seek to enhance our core services by:

1 Emphasizing Healthy and Safe Communities

Supporting a Healthy Environment with Robust Infrastructure **2**

3 Encouraging a Resilient and Thriving Economy

Improving County Government Operations **4**



Personnel Allocation

2,404.37 Funded positions
Decrease of 21.6 funded positions

48% Of all expenses are personnel costs

5% Increase in costs from FY 2020-21



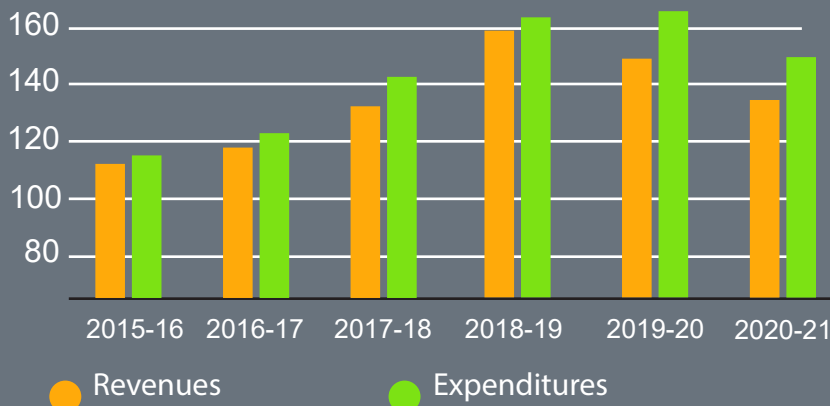
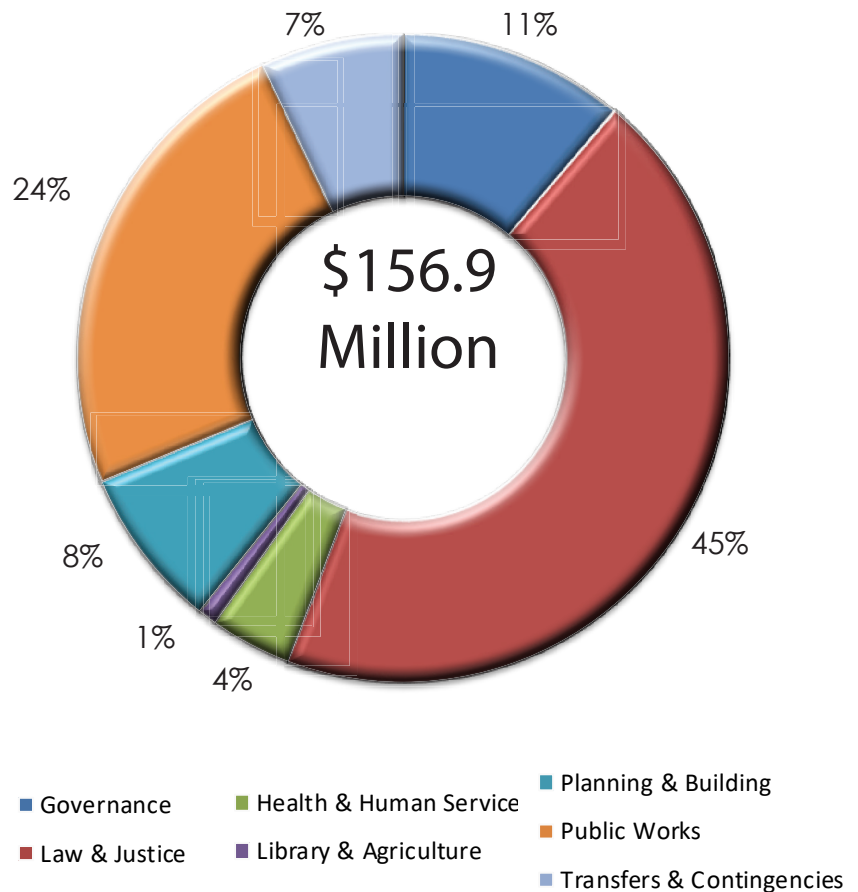
General Fund: \$156.9M

Much of the revenue that comes into the General Fund is not tied to a specific activity and can be spent on local needs, which can change from year to year. In Humboldt, roughly half of those dollars are spent on law and justice services, such as the Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, Probation and Child Support Services.



General Fund Expenditures

- Law & Justice
\$70M
- Health & Human Services
\$6.4M
- Education & Agriculture
\$1.5M
- Planning & Building
\$12.6M
- Public Works
\$37.8M
- Transfers & Contingencies
\$11.1M
- Admin Services
\$17.6M



General Fund Past Trends

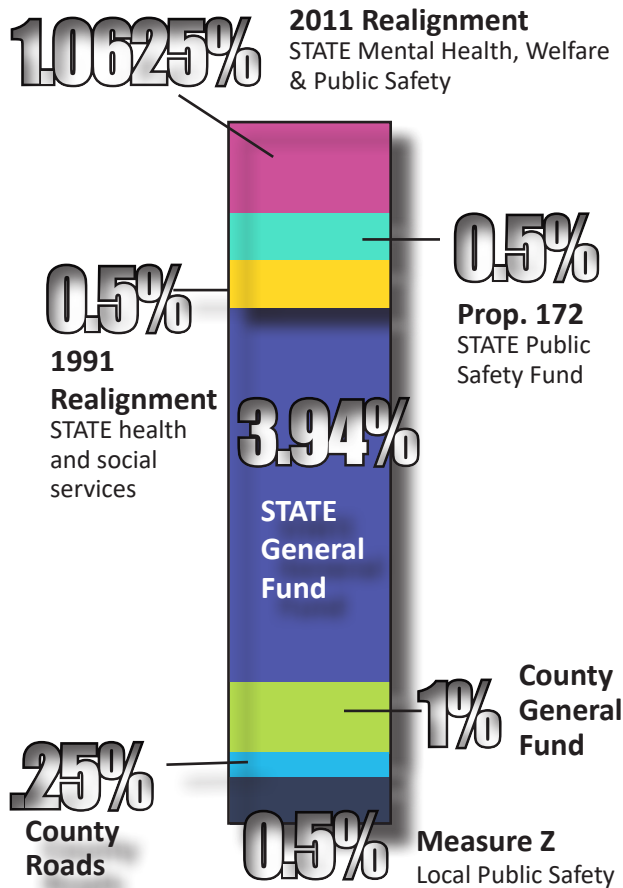
The General Fund will depend on fund balance left over from prior year to finance activities in future fiscal years. In FY 2020-21, the County will utilize \$1,054,889 in fund balance.

This will result in an estimated balance of \$8.4 million at the end of the year.

Revenues: \$146.8M Other Revenue Sources (Uses): \$10.1M

Sales Tax: Where Does It Go?

The sales tax rate in the unincorporated areas of Humboldt County is 7.75%. Of that amount, 7.25% is imposed at the state level, and 0.5% is local.



Additional Funding

Departments requested funding for one-time expenses (\$7.4 million) and ongoing costs (\$1.5million). However, due to limited funds as a result of COVID-19, no requests are recommended for funding. The following funding requests were submitted by departments:

One-Time Costs

- \$31K Contract to regulate short-term rentals
- \$6K Powered snakes for clearing clogs in county facilities
- \$8K Two workstations for facilities staff
- \$40K Professional design consultant for facilities
- \$450K Ferndale Vets Building maintenance, improvements
- \$2.9M Juvenile Hall project
- \$911K Eureka Vets Building, audio visual project
- \$2.5K Lost revenue for Fortuna Vets as a result of COVID-19
- \$75K Lost revenue for Arcata Vets as a result of COVID-19
- \$9.5K Lost revenue for Eureka Vets as a result of COVID-19
- \$25K Lost revenue for Westhaven Fire as a result of COVID-19
- \$95K Start up funding for Peninsula CSD
- \$260K Patrol vehicles with command consoles
- \$900K Replace failing roof on Phase 1 of county jail
- \$500K Nuisance abatement for Code Enforcement
- \$649K ADA, facility improvements at Clark Complex
- \$15K 4-H program by UC Cooperative Extension
- \$150K Workforce Development Program
- \$129K Housing support for MIST program
- \$132K Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) funding for First 5
- \$100K Sampling, investigation ordered by State Water Board

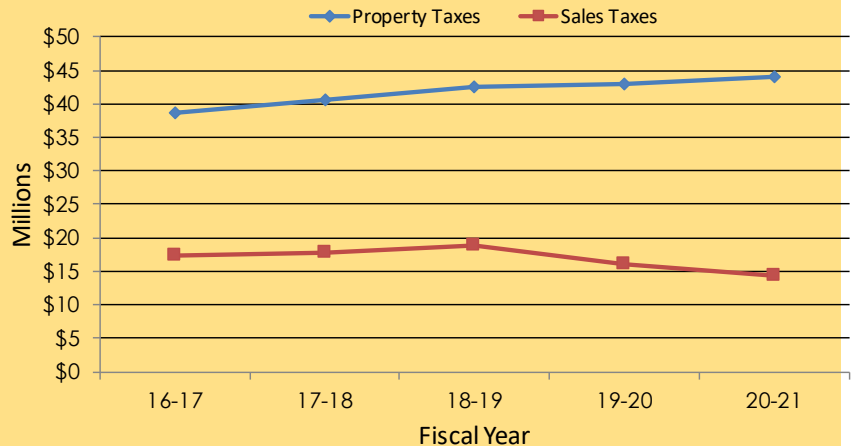
Ongoing Costs

- \$5K Smartphones and Facility Management software
- \$272K 1.5 FTE Investigator, 0.5 FTE Deputy District Attorney
- \$12K Design and construction software for facilities staff
- \$50K Unfunded mandates for County Surveyor
- \$250K Increased cost allocation charges for Sheriff
- \$303K 1.0 Public Info Specialist, 1.0 Crime Analyst, software
- \$297K Smartphones and data for facilities staff
- \$178K 2.0 Correctional Deputies
- \$200K Costs allocation charges for Correctional Facility

Property and Sales Tax Revenue

At this point in time and based on current information, property taxes are estimated to grow at 2.7% while sales tax is projected to decrease by 9.85% compared to FY 2019-20.

Total revenue for both is estimated at \$58.4 million. The sales tax includes Measure Z revenue. This information will be refined as the fiscal year progresses.

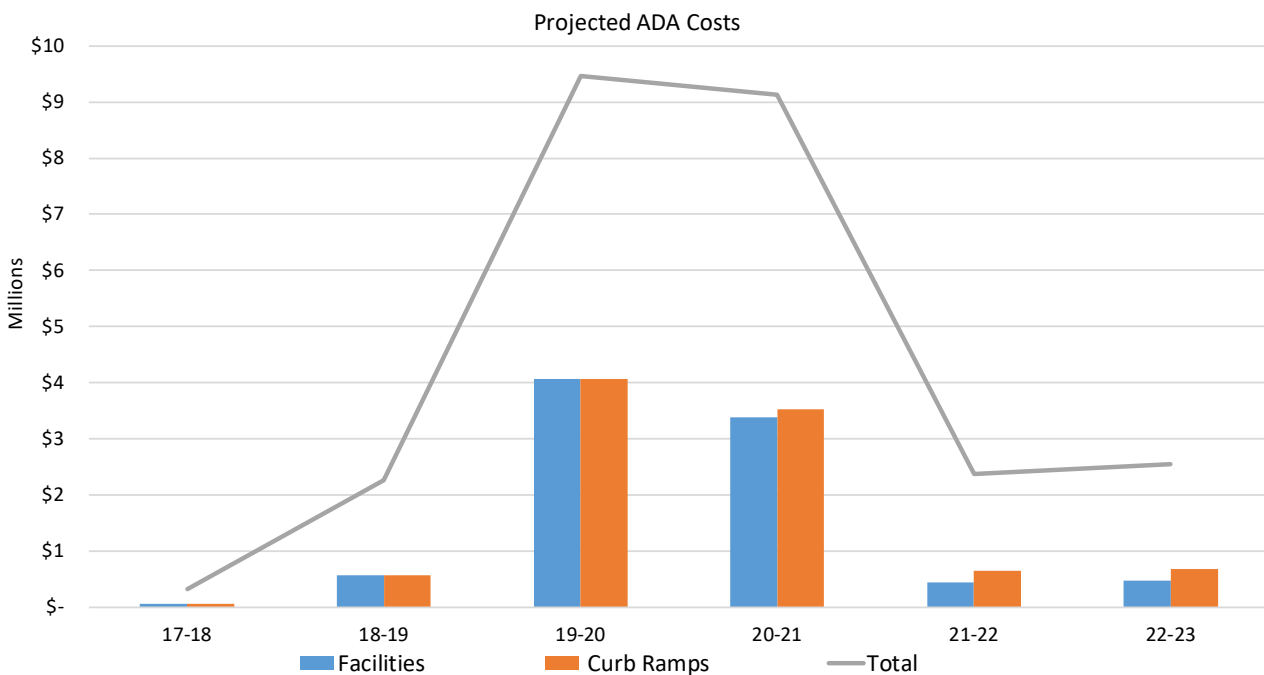




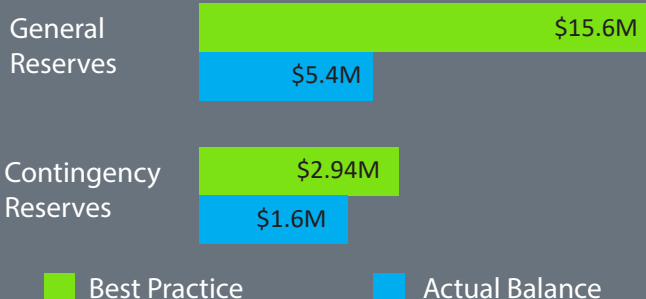
Challenges

The county in March submitted its final report to the Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding implementation of ADA-related projects laid out in its 2016 consent decree with Humboldt County. The county has made significant progress on those projects, and while not every project is fully complete, the DOJ allowed the county to be removed from the consent decree based on the work that has been completed and the county's plan moving forward. While the county is now out of the consent decree, significant work still remains, and the county will continue to work on an ongoing basis to ensure all of its facilities, programs and services can be accessed by the public, regardless of disability. The county has established an internal service fund (ISF) to pay for

and allocate costs for required ADA projects. Cost estimates in terms of barrier removal in the form of public projects, including \$7.9 million for curb ramps (and purchase of public rights of way) and \$3.6 million for the Garberville Government Complex, total \$14.1 million over the next 3 years. Some of the largest expenditures planned for that time-frame include work on the county jail, courthouse, Clark Complex, Public Works main office, Department of Health & Human Services facilities, and further work on creating a Garberville Government Complex. While the DOJ approved the county's transition plan, which lays out the steps the county will take to remain in compliance with the ADA, much of the cost projections will depend on construction and labor costs, which vary widely and typically increase each year.



Reserves: Best Practices vs. Actual Balance



General Reserves is a rainy-day fund to be used in cases of financial hardship or emergency. Finance officers recommend maintaining a balance of 10 to 16 percent of General Fund Revenues in this fund. For Humboldt, that would equal at least \$15.6 million. The Board revised its General Reserve policy to add 10 percent of cannabis tax revenues to reserves per year.

Contingency Reserves is funding set aside in a yearly budget to be used for unforeseen circumstances. Recommended levels for this fund are between 2-3 percent of General Fund revenues, or \$2.94 million.

Opportunities

The Humboldt County cannabis industry is at a critical moment in history. Cannabis businesses, especially small farmers, are struggling as they transition from an environment that has been illegal for more than 50 years to a legal market. Project Trellis: The County of Humboldt Cannabis Micro-grant, Marketing, and Local Equity Program (LEP) aims to support local businesses by promoting growth and sustainability in the new legal market. Project Trellis has the potential to provide supportive services, marketing, grants and loans that are critical to local cannabis businesses becoming more competitive in the market, thereby providing a greater chance that the Humboldt County economy can thrive, and local public safety and essential services such as those funded by Measure Z, the half-cent sales tax, can continue.

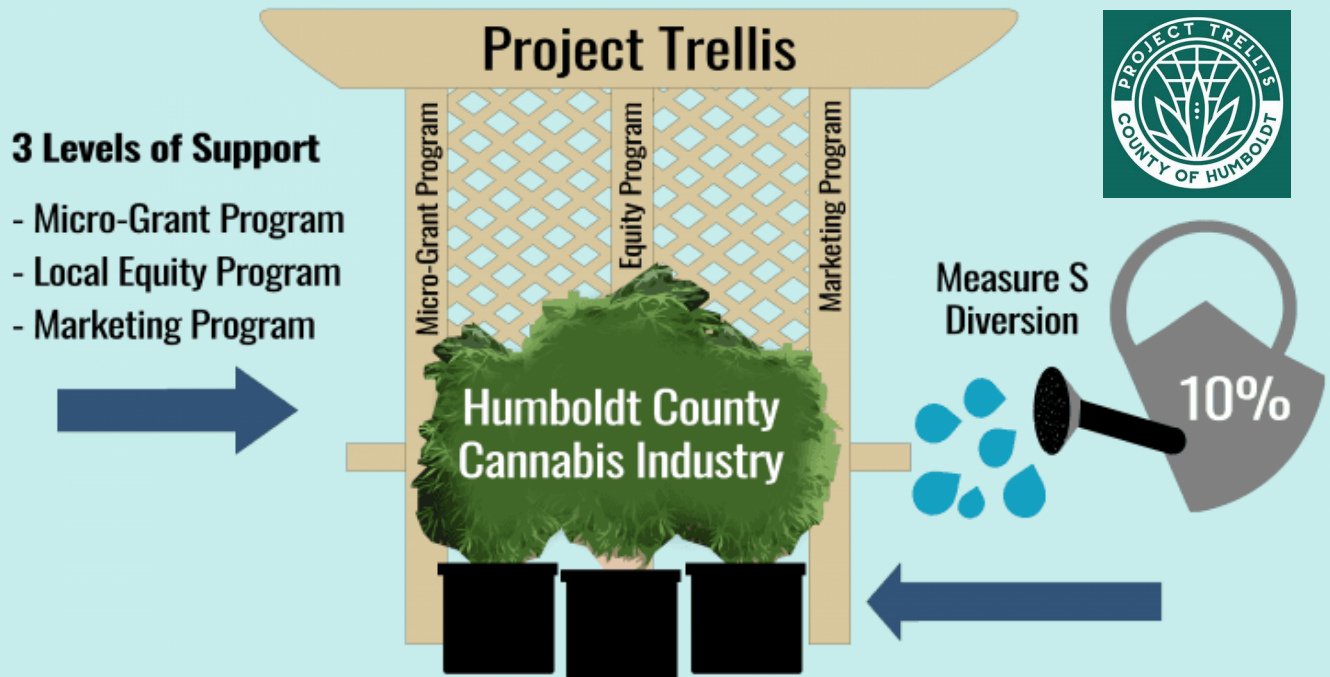


This funding will help businesses get the funding they need to participate in the legal cannabis industry. Humboldt and Mendocino counties will be able to award grants and loans directly to businesses that need a leg up.

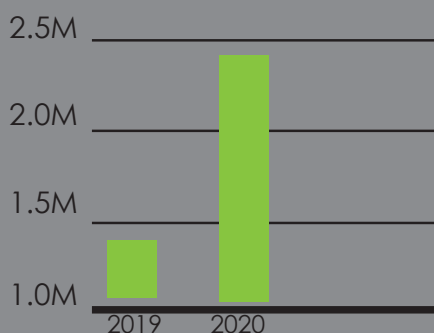
- Connie Stewart,
Executive Director of
the California Center for
Rural Policy



County of Humboldt Cannabis Micro-Grant, Marketing, and Local Equity Program



Equity Program Funds from state



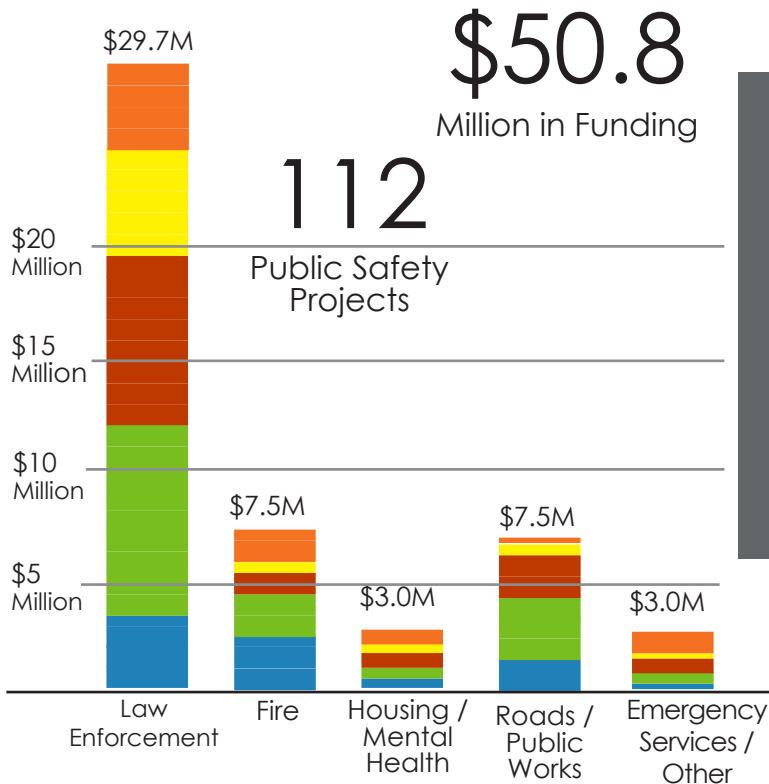
Cannabis Equity Grants Program for Local Jurisdictions focuses on the inclusion and support of individuals in California's legal cannabis marketplace who are from communities negatively or disproportionately impacted by cannabis criminalization. This is done through small business support services like technical assistance to individuals, reduced licensing fees or waived fees, assistance in recruitment, training, and retention of a qualified and diverse workforce, and business resilience such as emergency preparedness.



Measure Z

Measure Z is a half-cent local sales tax passed by voters in 2014 and renewed in 2018. Funds from Measure Z are intended for public safety and essential services. This funding has allowed more than 70 personnel to be added at the county, as well as city governments and local non-profits. Volunteer fire departments have received necessary equipment, including fire engines, breathing apparatuses and industry standard protective clothing that would not have been possible otherwise.

Public Safety Projects Funded in First 5 Years of Measure Z



Measure Z funding will give the OVFD, and the whole River community from TiBar to Weitchpec, a safe, clean building for fire and EMS response as well as essential service meeting space.



Orleans Volunteer Fire Department
Project is funding the replacement of an existing unsafe structure and construct new fire station



Fortuna Police received \$311,000 to continue funding for a Student Resource Officer and a Drug Task Force Officer. Measure Z is making a difference in Fortuna and the entire Eel River Valley!



City of Fortuna press release 2/5/2019
Project is funding City of Fortuna Police department 1 School Resource Officer.

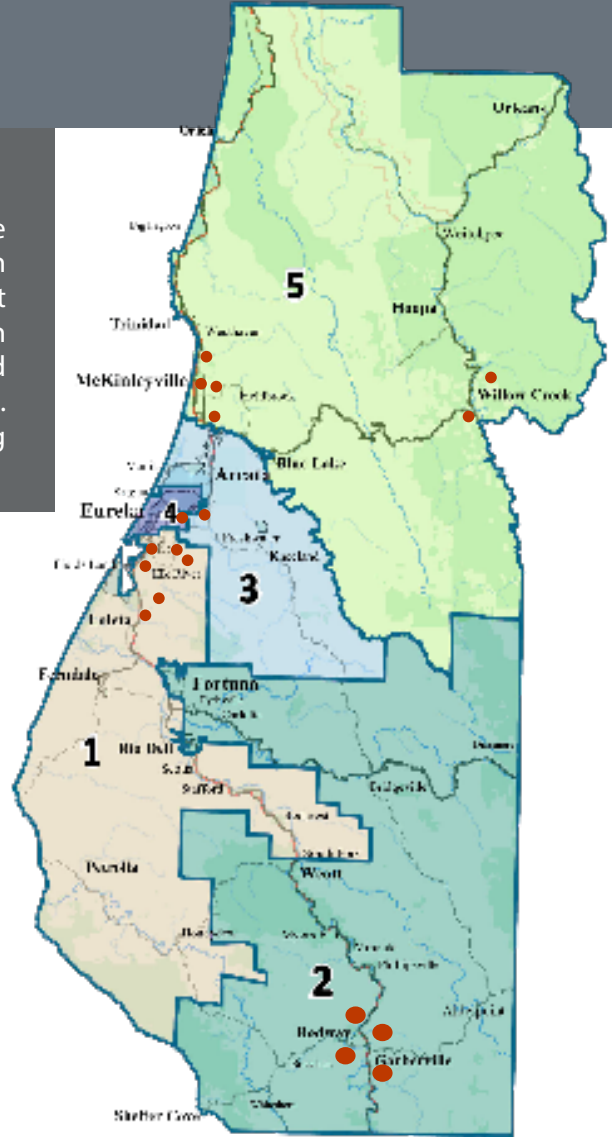
Category	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Law Enforcement	\$3.5M	\$6.9M	\$7.9M	\$4.7M	\$6.7M
Fire	\$2.5M	\$2.1M	\$1.3M	\$500k	\$1.6M
Housing / Mental Health	\$223k	\$582k	\$896k	\$375k	\$865k
Roads	\$1.6M	\$3.0M	\$1.8M	\$672k	\$115k
Em. Svc's/ Other	\$285k	\$524k	\$659k	\$317k	\$1.4M
TOTAL	\$8.1M	\$13.1M	\$12.6M	\$6.6M	\$10.8M

*Graph indicates funds actually spent
**A complete list of Year 5 projects is in Section J.

Public Safety

Measure Z Night Coverage

Prior to the passage of Measure Z, deputies were unable to provide 24/7 law enforcement services to our Southern and Northern Humboldt areas. During that time, the night shift consisted of 6 deputies patrolling the entire county in 12 hour shifts. With funding from Measure Z, continued by Measure O, we now have 24-hour coverage in all areas. Additionally, overnight we now have 17 deputies patrolling the county in 10 hour shifts.



Filled Positions

- 18 Patrol Deputies (Including Supervisors)
- 9 Correctional Deputies (Including Supervisors)
- 3 Community Service Officers
- 3 Support Staff

A Focus on Service

Through Measure Z, the Sheriff has been able to bring back the Community Service Officer program. Community Service Officers (CSO) investigate crimes with no identified suspects and help free up deputies to take emergency calls for service. The Sheriff also has one CSO dedicated entirely to abandoned vehicle abatement, helping get abandoned vehicles off of our public roadways. CSOs also participate in outreach at local schools and in the community.



“ Officer Swanson is part of the Mobile Intervention Services Team (MIST), partnering DHHS social workers with police officers. He knows people by name, has built rapport, and is aware of their individual needs. His position allows him to slow down interactions, identify the underlying issues, and work on solutions. In the long run, these interactions reduce calls for service and free up time for patrol officers.

Ranger Gagnon patrols all Eureka parks and trails, keeping them clean and safe. You can find him walking through Sequoia Park, checking for helmets at the Coopers Gulch Skate Park, meeting dogs at the Del Norte Dog Park, and maintaining the Hikshari' Trail.

Eureka Police Department

Project funds 2 police officers, park ranger, homeless liaison





Innovation



County of Humboldt receives two California State Association of Counties Challenge Awards

The CSAC Challenge Awards program recognizes the innovative and creative spirit of California county governments as they find innovative, effective and cost-saving ways to provide programs and services to their citizens.

Prescribed Burn Program Saves Property, Builds Community Connection

In February 2020, a Challenge Award was presented for ongoing education and training being conducted by Humboldt County's Prescribed Burn Association – the first of its kind west of the Rockies.

Lenya Quinn-Davidson and Jeffery Stackhouse, who both work for the UC Cooperative Extension in Humboldt County, developed the program in 2017 and have seen it steadily grow ever since. The association is comprised of landowners, nonprofits, volunteer firefighters and other community members who work together to carry out prescribed burns on private land. Until the association was created, most landowners and community members had lacked access to prescribed burn information and training.

Beyond eliminating invasive species, the association is utilizing prescribed burns to reduce fuels to prevent future wildfires, as well as restore wildlife habitat. But most importantly, the training and education empowers landowners and others to reconnect with fire as a management tool.

Since the association was created, it has burned more than 1,000 acres in Humboldt County. The association has also been able to build a strong working relationship with Cal Fire, which also conducts prescribed burns on private lands in Humboldt.

Quinn-Davidson and Stackhouse have presented the Humboldt County model to numerous counties around the state, and new associations are cropping up around California.



Creativity

Satellite Monitoring Program Allows Monitoring of Illegal Cannabis Cultivation in Far Reaches of County

In March 2020, the County of Humboldt was awarded CSAC's Challenge Award for the Humboldt Environmental Impact Reduction Program, a state-of-the-art strategy employed by the County's Planning and Building Department used to identify unpermitted cannabis cultivations. What once involved sending staff into the depths of the 4,000-square-mile county (i.e. to find illegal "grows") can now be addressed with a click of the mouse and a review of current satellite footage.

At the time of legalization (in 2016) it was estimated that there were more than 15,000 cultivation sites on 6,000 parcels. And, despite the legalization of cannabis, illegal cultivation sites persisted. However, all this changed with the "eye in the sky". Since the Humboldt Environmental Impact Reduction Program was implemented more than 1,000 non-compliant sites have been identified. Approximately 400 more have come into complete compliance with another third working toward compliance. Others have just simply stopped growing. Use of this satellite technology has also resulted in a tenfold increase in the number of cases processed.

Prior to making use of this new technology the County was primarily dependent on citizen complaints to identify illegal cultivation activity. Staff were often sent to investigate these claims in person, a process that could take upwards of a day or more to inspect a small number of sites. There also remained the obstacle of encountering locked gates or not being able to find the hidden cannabis grow.

The satellite program is achieving one of its primary goals which is to reduce adverse environmental impacts that illegal cultivation sites have on Humboldt's ecosystem. Unpermitted sites often involve poor grading, the use of pesticides, roads never intended for daily travel; failed culverts, badly engineered ponds, and loss of tree canopy

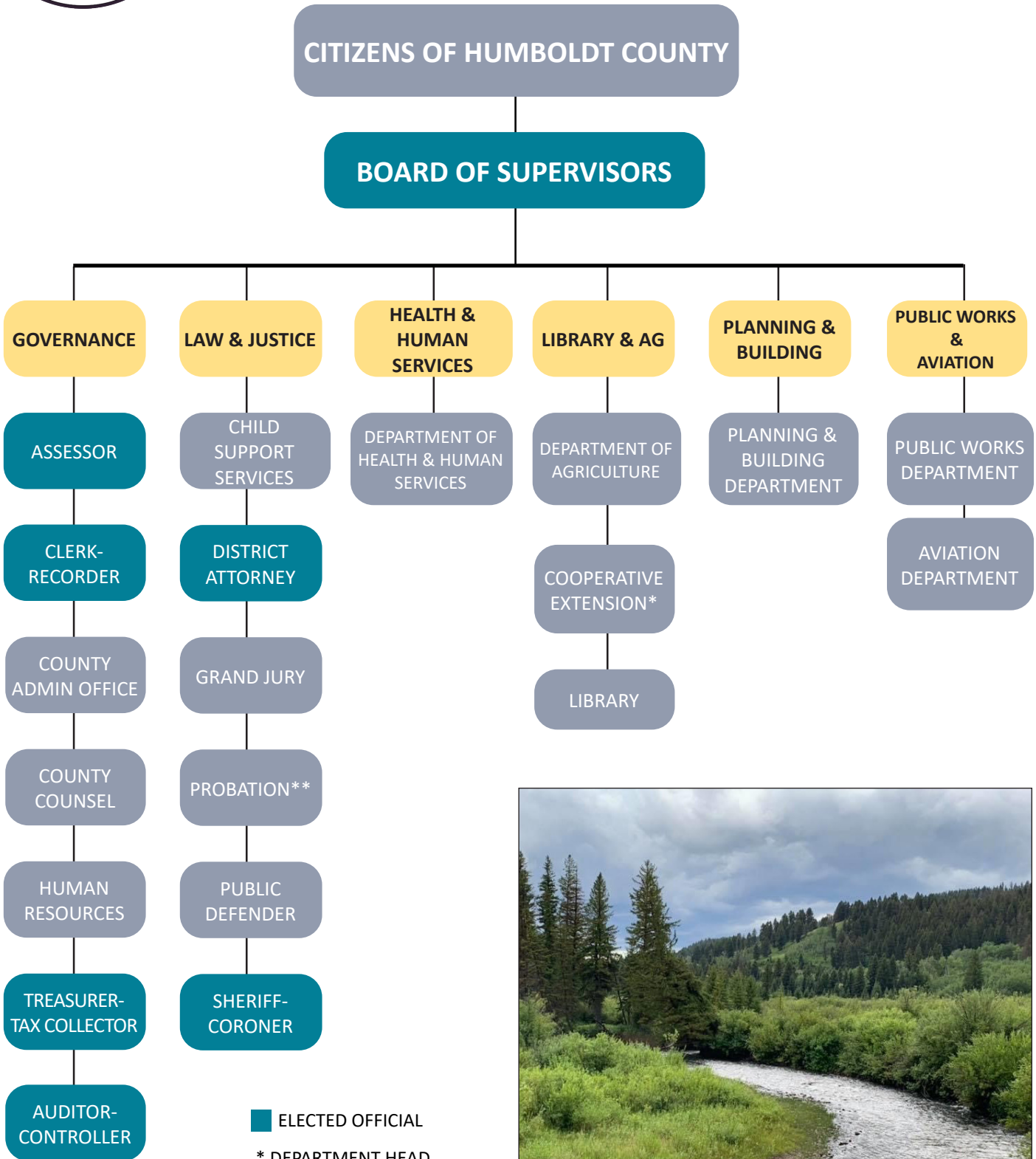


and timberland. The impacts to water quality and wildlife go on and on.

To its knowledge, Humboldt County is the first in the country to purchase satellite time to collect data solely for the purpose of identifying and monitoring cannabis operations. While there is obviously a cost involved with this purchase, the County is saving significant amount of staff time; with fines set at \$10,000 per day for each violation, revenues have significantly exceeded the cost of the imagery and staff time to manage it.



County Organizational Chart



■ ELECTED OFFICIAL
 * DEPARTMENT HEAD APPOINTED BY STATE
 ** DEPARTMENT HEAD APPOINTED BY COURTS



Staying Involved

Digitally at Humboldt.gov.org

- Sign up for the county's monthly electronic newsletter
- Weigh in on county issues on the Open Humboldt discussion forum
- Join Nextdoor.com to connect with your neighbors

In Person

- Watch a Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesdays
- Participate the budget hearings in June

Photography credits

PROPOSED
BUDGET
FY 2020-21



HUMBOLDT COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

