



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Rhea Varley, City Clerk

PREPARER: Rhea Varley, City Clerk

DATE: August 5, 2026

TITLE: **Provide Direction on the Primary Argument in Favor of the Transactions and Use Tax Measure on the November 3, 2026, General Municipal Election Ballot.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council **either**:

- 1) Approve the language of the primary argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax measure for the November 3, 2026, General Municipal Election ballot to be signed and submitted by Council;
- OR**
- 2) Authorize that instead of the Council, the proposed five individual voters can sign the primary argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax measure for the November 2026 election prior to submittal to the Elections Official.

INTRODUCTION:

At its June 17, 2026, regular meeting, the City Council assigned a subcommittee to draft a primary argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax ballot measure placed on the November 3, 2026, ballot. The subcommittee consisted of Vice Mayor Atkins-Salazar and Councilmember Stillman.

Councilmember Stillman provided an argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax ballot measure with a request that the argument be signed by five voters instead of by Councilmember Stillman or the City Council.

The City Council may approve the wording of the argument and direct members of the Council to sign the argument before its submission to the Election Official as initially decided during the Council meeting on June 17, 2026. Alternatively, the Council can provide direction on whether a separate group of five voters presented by Councilmember Stillman should sign the argument instead.

BACKGROUND:

The City Council has authorized a ballot measure to be put forth to the voters at the November 2026 general municipal election. The measure is to extend the City's existing Transactions and Use Tax.

DISCUSSION:

As decided during the City Council meeting on June 17, 2026, and pursuant to Elections Code section 9282, the City Council wishes to submit an argument in favor of the ballot measure and has appointed a subcommittee to draft proposed language for the Council's approval. The primary argument and any rebuttal argument will be printed in the Voter Information Guide mailed out to each registered voter within the City of Arcata.

The City Clerk has received a written argument in favor of the ballot measure from Councilmember Stillman accompanied by a list of five signers who are individual voters in the City of Arcata. The list of signers includes Colin Fiske, Wendy Starr, Jeff Nagan, Charles Powell, and Stephanie Lane (their names and information can be found in Attachment B of this staff report). Guidance is being sought from the Council on whether the signers of this Primary Argument should still be the City Council as originally directed at the June 17, 2026, meeting or if these five voters should be authorized to sign the argument instead.

Primary written arguments for or against the measures must be submitted to the City Clerk by 1:00 p.m. on Friday, August 14, 2026. After that date, no arguments for or against the City measure may be submitted.

In addition to the City Council, any individual voter who is eligible to vote on the measure or bona fide association of citizens, may file a written argument for or against the measure. Arguments must be accompanied by the printed name(s) and signature(s) of the author(s) submitting them, or if submitted on behalf of an organization, the name of the organization and the printed name and signature of at least one of its principal officers.

Arguments must be typewritten and have the following statement on the heading of the first page: "Arguments in favor of or against the proposed laws are the opinions of the authors." If more than one argument for or more than one argument against the measure is submitted to the City Clerk's office within the time prescribed, the Clerk selects one argument in favor and one argument against the measure for printing and distribution to the voters of the City in the following preference and priority as prescribed by the California Elections Code:

- (1) The legislative body, or member or members of the legislative body authorized by that body.
- (2) The individual voter, or bona fide association of citizens, or combination of voters and associations, who are the bona fide sponsors or proponents of the measure.
- (3) Bona fide associations of citizens.
- (4) Individual voters who are eligible to vote on the measure.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

None with this action. Generally, there will be an increased cost for the election due to printing costs associated with the Voter Information Guide.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Receive a staff report;
2. Open public comment;
3. Close public comment;
4. Motion to **either**:
 - a. Approve the language of the primary argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax measure for the November 3, 2026, General Municipal Election ballot and proceed with the City Council signing and submitting the argument;

OR

 - b. Authorize that instead of the Council, the proposed five individual voters can sign the primary argument in favor of the Transactions and Use Tax measure for the November 2026 election prior to submittal to the Elections Official.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Primary Argument.
- B. List of Five Signers.