

Sebastopol City Special Council Meeting – July 15, 2014 – Synopsis and Commentary

All Council Members were present.

Proclamations:

Having arrived a few minutes late, it was my loss to have missed the awarding of the certificates of appreciation to Larkin Morgan, Jeff Diamond, and Carmen Singiani recognizing their work on the Complete Streets advisory committee.

Public Comment: (aka open mike)

My loss was compounded by **NOT** missing the remarks of a speaker whining about the GPAC* lacking public input. Listening to her could leave the impression that the City was trying to avoid input from the public. After public comment, the City Manager/Attorney reminded her that she had left that meeting early and, had she stayed, she might have found her criticism to be unjustified. She left this meeting early too—way early!

Council members and staff are allowed to respond to comments made and should do so, briefly, after public comment is closed. It would seem appropriate after misleading comments are made about the City or its staff. In most cases, a nice, polite “Oh, bullshit” would suffice.

Another speaker urged the City to support a 1/8th of 1% county sales tax to help out the beleaguered library system. It would appear that the Internet is doing to the library system what it has done to the U.S. postal system. Both of these institutions must adapt radically and soon to survive in any form.

Consent Calendar:

City Hall's roof is already leaking and needs to be replaced. The cost of the roof itself will be around \$57,500 but removing and replacing the equipment on it will bump that up to about \$94,000. **Mayor Jacob** had some ideas about delaying the work but the little beads of sweat on the Public Works director's forehead must have convinced him to desist. Anyone who knows anything about construction will tell you the minute you tear off a roof, the weather is likely to change—and not in your favor!

Discussion and Action Items:

Helena Whistler was appointed as our representative to the Sonoma County Library Commission by a vote of 4:1 with **Council Member Gurney** in the minority. The Council Member seemed to want someone a little more edgy. She also criticized **Supervisor Mike McGuire** for being “against his own compromise” by opposing community funding for libraries. Public statements like that could explain why Sebastopol isn't exactly on best terms with the County of Sonoma.

The gorilla in the room was the UUT. The user utility tax on your gas and electric usage (if you live in the City, that is) brought in \$300,000 per year but will **drop to \$165,000** for the current 2014/15 year. The Council is proposing to reduce it from 4% to 3.75% but add land and cell phones, video, and garbage to the tax. That should give us somewhere in the neighborhood of \$685,000 per year for police, fire, roads, parks, and other services. The tax will **expire in ten years**. The City is allowed only 75 words to pitch this on the ballot and it was a wondrous sight to watch the editing take place that would allow **Council Member Slayter** to cram “bike-path and walkways” into the verbiage. [Thomas Jefferson](#) would have been proud!

My personal take on this is vote yes. Even though this City Council can throw away money faster than the above-mentioned gentleman from Virginia, [this is what we are going to look like if this tax](#)

[fails to pass.](#)

In another item, the City will enter into a consulting contract to update our sewer management plan as required by the State of California

And because one person asked for it, on September 19th, there will be a quasi City Council meeting at Ives Park. There may even be food but you can bet there won't be any **free medical marijuana or beer**. The Council members went on about openness and getting more people involved in the process but to a crusty old dog like me it looks more like an early “**Meet The Candidates Night.**”

City Council reports were generally short and to the point although **Council Member Gurney** is showing some signs of **recidivism**.

There was another **Closed Session** addressing the CVS litigation and there will probably be one more.

A Parting Shot!

*Take the [The General Plan Update Survey](#) here!

Heads up! Some of the questions are clearly politically loaded and others contain two items in them that should appear in separate questions. There is no general comment box either. Well, it's a start.

John Necker

Duration 2:30