



Sebastopol Citizens

E d u c a t e - C o m m u n i c a t e

Sebastopol City Council Meeting March 19 , 2019 – Synopsis and Commentary

- All council members were present.

Proclamations/Presentations:

- Fire Engineer Jim Levy was named firefighter of the year.
- Officer Ben Schott was named police employee of the year.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- The EMF lady said our “special and unique” city is being threatened by devices using the 2.4 gigahertz frequency which is not found in nature. Her thought process is also “special and unique” and not found in nature, at least on this planet, and exposure for long periods of time (18 seconds) can be harmful. Some symptoms may include, but are not limited to, wishing you were now living in Baghuz, Syria, investing your Aunt Beulah’s inheritance with Bernie Madoff, fleeing to Saudi Arabia and shouting “Yo Mama” at Mohammed bin Salman and believing objects in the mirror are not closer than they appear.
- A representative of the [Lantern library group](#) spoke about expansion of the library.
- Another speaker addressed living wages and urged us to support [Jobs For Justice](#).
- The last speaker asked the council to allow scooters and bikes to use the skate park. (All the speakers, save one, spoke for far less than the allotted 3 minutes. Well, the first thing to go when you’ve been gigahertz is your sense of timing. That is followed closely by an absolute conviction everyone is hanging on every word you utter when in fact they are just hoping to soon hear your *last* word.)

Consent Calendar: (Approved 5:0)

- The required annual street lighting assessment was launched. After an assessment, it will come back in May, and we will know how much street lighting will cost us. It should be significantly less going forward as your intrepid city council has stared down the Luddites, who oppose nearly anything that inconveniences electrons, and has approved LED street lighting a few months ago.
- Pat Schoch was named as the next Locals Who Make a Difference honoree.
- The council approved Ordinance Number 1121 to **Prohibit Use and Sale of Disposable Food Service Ware and Other Products Containing Polystyrene Foam with an effective date six (6) months from the date of adoption.** It reads “**Disposable food service ware includes** all containers, bowls, plates, trays, cartons, cups, lids, straws, stirrers, forks, spoons, knives, napkins and other food ware items designed for one-time use for prepared foods, including without limitation service ware for take-out foods and/or leftovers from partially consumed meals prepared by food providers” and “It shall be a policy goal of the city to promote and **encourage, on a voluntary basis, the elimination of all polystyrene foam packaging.** Where elimination is not possible, the city encourages reuse.” Sebastopol is the first city in the county

to pass such an ordinance, of course, and it will be interesting to see what the other cities come up with and if they have any effect on **this ordinance that got done really fast.**

- The council will submit a letter of [support for SB5](#) that “would create a local-state partnership to provide up to \$2 billion annually to fund state approved affordable housing, infrastructure, and economic development projects that also support state policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand transit-oriented development (TOD), address poverty, and revitalize neighborhoods.” At the urging of **Council Member Carnacchi, wording was added opposing any reduction in the funding for schools.**

Informational Items or Presentations:

- [Ives Pool](#) gave its annual report. [And here's the short version.](#)

Regular Agenda Items:

- The GSA fee was discussed. ([Click here for background and scroll to Public Hearing.](#)) Now that you have digested that, take two more TUMS and read on. It's getting worse. [The Santa Rosa Plain GSA Basin](#) has arbitrarily changed our buy-in fee from \$33,000 to \$119,000. This does not include the yearly usage fee estimated between \$18,000 and \$25,000. (We historically use 1,000 acre feet of ground water a year.) And this fee change was done by “staff” and not at an open meeting. ([Here are two of them discussing the increase.](#))

Most of the city falls within the Wilson Grove water basin boundary, and in fact 100% of the city water supply is drawn from groundwater wells all located within Wilson Grove. For reasons that they could not explain, the State of California changed the rating of Wilson Grove so that we were essentially forced to align with cities east of the laguna, who draw their water from another basin. Had the state not changed the rating, we would have not been involved with any of this. After much discussion, this has all become a bridge too far for the council.

Using the term a “general lack of accountability”, Vice-Mayor Slayter and the council decided just to wait and to get more information and explanations from the GSA and the State of California. They are hoping to drag a state official into a council meeting to explain the rating change. [Click here and scroll down to “Discussion”](#) for a more detailed explanation than you are getting here. It's worth reading.

The fearless Mayor Hinton asked the council to discuss abandoning the usually used paper packet at each meeting in favor of using iPads or Microsoft Tablets. The devices would not only move us closer to zero waste but would actually save money on staff time and paper. They would also give council members easy access to more data while attending the many other required agency meetings. **Council Member Carnacchi opposed because he felt he couldn't figure out how to operate a tablet** and worried that the council would spend too much time staring at the tablet instead of engaging with the public. How that is worse than staring at the reams of paper in front of them now is beyond me. **Council Member Gurney said she would be “embarrassed to have the city buy me something”** since they haven't done it in all the past years she has served. She said she would feel **“personally indulgent”** having one and has seen officials at other meetings reading emails or playing poker on them – implying that is what her fellow council members were going to do. Then she played the guilt card and said if anyone should have them it should be staff. Since three council members showed more than a passing interest in moving into the 21st century, staff will do a little more research on policy and [just what kind of tablets would best serve.](#) It will be back. If you are wondering if the Luddites may be behind the objections you are not alone. (Passed 5:0)

- The October 1st council meeting was canceled and moved to October 29th.

City Council Reports:

- The city manager said a \$500,000 insurance payout for flood damage to the Community Center was likely.

A Parting Shot:

- Both presentations were just a fraction over one minute each. Thank you, city staff!

Elapsed Time: 3:10 hours (6:00–9:10pm)

Next City Council meeting is April 2, 2019, at the Teen Center, 425 Morris Street at 6:00pm.

You can view this meeting and others at: <http://bit.ly/sebcctv>.

John Necker

SebastopolCitizens.org