

Sebastopol City Council Meeting – March 6, 2012 – Synopsis and Commentary

--John Necker, a Sebastopol Citizen

Mayor Guy Wilson was absent and Vice Mayor Kyes sat in for him.

In a lightly attended meeting several Proclamations were read and all the Consent Calendar items were approved 4 to 0.

During Public Comment different speakers expressed concerns about fluoride, flavor enhancers, PG&E, Lyme disease and EMF. It was unclear what they expected the City Council to do about any of them.

Although Council Member Sarah Gurney did not state that she opposed fluoridation she did confirm with staff that because Sebastopol's population is less than 10,000, the city does not have to comply with a possible county mandate.

The City Manager, Jack Griffin, gave a report on Mid Year Budget Adjustments. The good news was that the actual budget was very close to the projected. The bad news was the projected budget was wasn't rosy. Sales tax is flat at 0.7% while the Bay Area and State were up 7%. Hotel taxes are up but not many of our visitors are spending money here. Council Member Shaffer expressed hopes the City could find a way to encourage more spending here.

Engineering Director Sue Kelly reported on the condition of our 47.20 miles of our streets. In brief, we have 58% in very good to excellent condition, 15% in good condition and 27% in poor to very poor condition. Historically, Sebastopol's annual revenue budgeted for maintenance is about \$180,000 per year. Again, lower revenues have had a negative impact on maintaining the streets at the desired level.

The City Manager reported on the condition of City's water and sewer system and the lack of funds to make the necessary repairs. He asked the City Council to allow staff to initiate the Proposition 218 election process which requires a majority of the rate payers to approve any

rate increases. He presented a four year plan that would allow the sewer and water systems to again be self-funding (as they were intended to be). He acknowledged that the increases would be painful but the situation is serious and rapidly getting worse. See the [staff report](#) for the proposed significant rate increases.

All Council Members expressed concern about the increases but generally accepted the idea that they were necessary.

Council Member Shaffer stressed that the Council should review them every year and was concerned about low income residents.

Council Member Gurney agreed and asked the staff to come back with a different time line for the plan as well as a clearer picture of the systems.

Council Member Kyes wanted to extend the plan out to seven years and look into bonds or a loan for the funds.

Council Member Slayter thought the staff's recommendations were the best approach.

The City Manager expressed concerns about Council Member Kyes' suggestions because of costs and the deterioration rate of the systems.

In the end Staff will return with a modified plan for comparison purposes.