



Sebastopol Citizens

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

Sebastopol City Council Meeting July 7, 2020 – Synopsis and Commentary

- All council members were virtually present.

Proclamations/Presentations have been suspended until further notice.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- A speaker wanted to know why this town is so white.
- Another speaker got to comment later in the meeting because he couldn't get Zoom working at first. Mistake. This is the fellow, who in the past, accused Mayor Slayter of wanting to burn the Constitution of the United States. But tonight, mellowing, he accused the mayor of wanting to burn only the Amendments. This, and his previous rant, seems to have erupted when the mayor, at an [October 20, 2015 meeting](#), supported a resolution to reduce gun violence, stricter background checks and a ban on assault weapons. There was no mention of burning anything in that resolution but it apparently set his hair on fire anyway. This guy needs more than a background check. And if he needs more than two rounds to “neutralize” an assailant, he shouldn't be allowed to own a firearm. Such a poor marksman would be spraying lead in all directions, making him a danger to the community for yet another reason. Oh, yeah. And if he was trying to be amusing while eating his snack while on Zoom, we were not.

Consent Calendar: (Passed 5:0)

- The minutes for the June 16 and the June 23 meetings were approved and will appear here shortly. [Scroll down to Past Council Meetings](#). Not all minutes are available on the website.
- The fiscal year 2020/21 budget meeting schedule was approved. [You can see that here. The actual schedule is on page 3.](#) Council Member Gurney pulled this, pushed for, and succeeded in, scheduling an added public hearing on the budget. We'll show up in droves for that hearing.
- Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency proclamation for the City of Sebastopol was extended.

Informational Items/Presentation:

- Vice-Mayor Glass asked the council to consider a tobacco retail license ordinance. Its main focus is to discourage youngsters from vaping and smoking. Among other ideas, four components of the proposed ordinance are as follows:
 1. A requirement that all tobacco retailers obtain a license and renew it annually;
 2. An annual licensing fee to fund administration and enforcement;
 3. Meaningful penalties for violators through fines and penalties, including possible suspension and revocation of the license; and
 4. A provision stating that any violation of existing local, state, or federal tobacco laws constitutes a violation of the ordinance.

Her position was largely supported by the Gravenstein Health Action Coalition, in collaboration with Tobacco-Free Sonoma County Community Coalition. The Health Action

speaker, showing no mercy, subjected us to a 30 minute presentation made even more painful by her reading what was on the screen right in front of us as if our first language was Serbo-Croatian and we had only been in this country a week. Then fellow tormentors zoomed in to prolong the agony until any real or perceived opposition, which was not present, was broken and capitulated. Kinda like water boarding but without the water or the board. Then the council launched into a discussion where it became apparent that they were ready to move ahead with this when she said “Hello”. Had that happened it would have made the agenda item one hour and sixteen minutes shorter. It will come back after some polishing.

Regular Agenda Items:

- The death of George Floyd has prompted Mayor Slayter to introduce a “[Resolution Committing the City of Sebastopol to promote racial equity in City](#) relationships, programs, services and policies,” which is a default position for many who live in this area. This remains a work in progress and will come back to the council.
- Also related to Floyd’s death, was a discussion to consider a Black Lives Matter movement art project. This was introduced at the June 30 special meeting and “on July 6, 2020, the Public Arts Committee (PAC) held a special meeting to discuss the concept, location, funding, designating a PAC liaison to work with the sponsors/activists, and developing a recommendation to the City Council.” It came before the council tonight and is largely driven by local teenagers. They were articulate, knowledgeable and didn’t scream. They are the kind of people who get things done and they want to paint “Black Lives Matter” on the sidewalk in the Mario Savio Free Speech Plaza (aka just the plaza.) The cost would be around \$1,000 and would come from the PAC. When the above yogurt- eating, assault-weaponed, Amendments fire fighter heard that, he zoomed right in threatening to sue the city et al. if taxpayer’s funds were used. As it turns out, the funds are in lieu fees paid by developers that would otherwise have to supply some sort of art for their developments. This moved ahead on a 4:1 vote with Council Member Carnacchi abstaining because “we are all the same.” At least that was part of it but his logic for abstaining surpassed my ability to grasp it.
- Council Member Hinton introduced an idea to establish a Small Business Loan Sustainability program. The funding for this proposed program “will come from the 2020-21 General Fund Unassigned Anticipated Reserve which is estimated to be \$3,035,679 on June 31, 2021. This unassigned reserve figure represents 29.5% of our actual reserve level. The City Council unassigned fund balance reserve policy not less than 15% of annual operating expenditures for the fiscal year with a multi-year goal of achieving a 20% unassigned fund balance level. The program proposes a three-year or five-year repayment plan (based on the amount borrowed), no interest loan that will fully repay the loans back to the City of Sebastopol over time.” This is going to come back for more discussion. Council Member Gurney was concerned about “our responsibilities,” such as losing staff and what our future revenues are going to be. Vice-Mayor Glass was concerned about [CoMission](#) not being in the loop although it doesn’t seem as if Council Member Hinton’s idea really needs them.
- The city has several banner locations. Some are reserved for city council approved use (such as Locals Who Make A Difference) and others, having a 30 day limit, are for non-profits on a first come first serve basis. Talks with downtown merchants have discovered a desire for “fresh citywide banners.” Staff has come up with a plan and a design and the council, probably out of sheer exhaustion at the late hour, voted 5:0 to let staff carry on. Anyone want to give me odds that when refreshed, the council will come back and micro manage this plan into a major project? The downtown merchants are looking for something that will mark a “Grand Re-Opening” of downtown businesses after the COVID-19 shelter in place order is lifted – should

that ever occur.

A Parting Shot:

- On Monday, July 13, the bell rings and the gates open and the race for two city council seats begin. You can get into the race then. But you better start early as there is a rumor that [failed presidential candidate Gil Fulbright](#) will be running for a council seat and he's a formidable opponent.

Elapsed Time: 4:50 hours (6:00–10:50pm)

Next City Council meeting is July 21, 2020 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