



Sebastopol Citizens

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

Sebastopol City Council Meeting September 15, 2020 – Synopsis and Commentary

- All council members were virtually present.

Proclamations/Presentations:

- **Mayor Slayter** had one, proclaiming and recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month that runs from September 15 to October 15. While reading the proclamation, he apologized for having to use the word “Hispanic.” Ya’ know, sometimes it’s just better to say nothing.

Public Comment (aka Open Mike):

- A speaker wondered how the city was coming along with outdoor seating on Main Street. (The mayor said they are still working on it and are trying to meet with Caltrans.)
- An owner of a popular restaurant that used to make wonderful lentil burgers, recited a long list of things she thought needed fixing in the Facade Improvement Program. (The mayor said she brought up some good points and staff will be looking into making some changes.)

Consent Calendar: (Consented to 5:0)

- The minutes for the September 1, 2020 meeting were approved and will appear here shortly. [Scroll down to Past Council Meetings](#). Not all minutes are available on the website.
- The tobacco ordinance became law and will become effective in 30 days. It’s aimed mostly at hampering sales to youth. Sales of electronic smoking devices, flavored tobacco products, and small cigars, are prohibited. In addition, every business that sells tobacco products must be licensed and the terms for issuing those licenses will have a negative effect on existing sellers and make it very difficult for new tobacco businesses to open in Sebastopol.
- The sewer management plan was approved. “In June 2020 the City Council approved a new Settlement Agreement and Mutual Release of Claims with [River Watch](#) that has required the City to make certain changes in that plan. Included is a requirement for the city to “follow a defined condition assessment cycle for the sewer pipelines, evaluate the need for Collection System Inundation Mitigation Projects, revise and amend the spill response plan for sampling of and testing to determine the extent and impact of overflows on the surface waters, eliminate the use of chemical root control chemicals, and consider the development of a lateral inspection/repair program.”
- Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the city will extend the time requirements for building permits (Normally permits must be issued one year after the application.) and planning entitlements to September 15, 2021. The agenda item states “There are one or two large projects with existing approvals that this may assist, including the [Hotel Sebastopol project](#).”
- The council approved an agreement between the police department and the county health services for the county to provide forensic services for sexual assault cases at a cost of \$1,800 for each examination. Sebastopol averages approximately one to two examinations per year.

Informational Presentations:

- [Brandis Tallman](#) introduced us to the world of bonds. The council is flirting with the idea of offering bonds to raise cash for projects that are crucial but not affordable. And while Mr. Tillman's report on bonds was very encouraging and informative, [it omitted a venerable one](#).
- There was a slide show by staff and a discussion about the maintenance of the 45 lane-miles of streets that meander through our mystical little land by the bay. Stop reading. Go mix yourself a stiff drink or fire one up and come back and then read on. To bring all the streets in Sebastopol up to standards will cost us around \$15 million dollars. And the reason they are not fixing your street is the same reason they are thinking about bonds – no, not Bonds, bonds. Money, rather the lack of it, forces the city to triage the ailing streets. It's a better long term financial strategy to repair a salvageable marginal street than to expensively repair a failed street. So the council directed staff to come up with a recommendation of streets that need repairs while the council will pursue Vice Mayor Glass' idea of setting priorities instead of "micromanaging staff."

Public Hearing:

- Increased fees for planning, building, land development engineering, encroachment, fire prevention and a few new ones were discussed. In the past the council did this itself, usually decrying fees that will impact their pet projects while letting the others suffer a less nurturing fate. And it took forever to do it! Tonight, [ClearSource](#), an outside consultant politely exposed the city's bargain-basement fee structure. Our fees are woefully low compared to many private and public agencies in this area. The general fund--that has generally been subsidizing the low fees for years--will net about a \$180,000 increase a year if the consultant's recommendations are adopted. That's right, Toto's dog tags are going to cost more. The council voted 5:0 to move ahead with the consultant's recommendations with some "tweaking." **We shall see if Vice Mayor Glass' admonition about "micromanaging staff" applies here.**

Regular Agenda Items:

- The council discussed the roles and responsibilities of [Home Sonoma County](#). Mayor Slayter will send a letter asking for some changes in its structure. Home Sonoma County is so Byzantine that all the work that our little town has done for the homeless has been ignored and all the grant money has gone to the county and the big cities. We have received zilch, zero, nada. **Council Member Hinton suggested we try to claw back** some of those funds for the work we have done and are doing. She's going to need a large backhoe but it's a good idea. The council voted 5:0 to let the mayor send the letter calling for each jurisdiction to have a seat on the Leadership Council. The letter will also request a change funding allocation and a need for experts to provide input on policy matters.
- A resolution having the League of California Cities Conference and Expo being held virtually October 7 – 9 seemed innocent enough until a "recommendation" popped up further down the document that would "ask Congress to enact legislation that would allow cities the ability to hold social media companies liable for their role in promoting criminal acts." If enacted, online platforms would be required to provide relevant information to law enforcement to assist in the identification and apprehension of persons who use the services of the platform to solicit and to engage in criminal activity." **Vice Mayor Glass** had some doubts about the cities that were supporting the resolution as "**not being terribly progressive**" and **Council Member Gurney** was concerned about "**political suppression**". Mayor Slayter thought the benefit "outweighs his curiosity about the supporting cities." [You can read it and decide for yourself if this resolution is a good idea.](#) That's a decision the Mayor and the delegates will make when they virtually attend the conference.

City Council Reports:

- The city manger said, because of Covid-19, **Florence Avenue will not be closed for Halloween.** He is hoping the county health officer will soon issue county-wide guidance regarding Halloween.

A Parting Shot:

- For those of you who live in shame because you are “not being terribly progressive,” you may be pleased to find that being so is not punishable by law – just yet. However, it may be in the gray zone between a venial and mortal sin. That can be fixed with a few interfaith novenas. Fasting not required.

Elapsed Time: 4:30 hours (6:00–10:30pm)

Next regular city council meeting is October 6, 2020 at the Teen Center, 425 Morris Street at 6:00pm.

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

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