

City Council  
Mayor Patrick Slayter  
Vice Mayor Neysa Hinton  
Una Glass  
Sarah Glade Gurney  
Diana Rich



**Agenda Item Number: 2**

City Manager/Attorney

Larry McLaughlin

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Assistant City Manager/Attorney/City Clerk, MMC

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## City of Sebastopol

### CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MINUTES FOR Meeting of May 17, 2022

As Approved by the City Council at their regular meeting of June 7, 2022

The City Council Regular meeting will be held via teleconference pursuant to AB 361. Pursuant to AB 361 (2021), Teleconference Restrictions of the Brown Act Have Been Suspended, as Well as the Requirement to Provide a Physical Location for Members of the Public to Participate in the Meeting. The City of Sebastopol City Council meeting will not be physically open to the public and all City Council Members will be teleconferencing into the meeting via Zoom.

Please note that minutes are not meant to be verbatim minutes and are meant to be the City's record of Actions Taken (Approved Motion of Agenda Item(s)).

#### **6:00 pm                      Convene City Council Meeting - Meeting Start Time (ZOOM VIRTUAL FORMAT)**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Slayter called the regular meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

#### **ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Mayor Patrick Slayter – By video teleconference  
Vice Mayor Neysa Hinton – By video teleconference  
Councilmember Sarah Gurney – By video teleconference  
Councilmember Diana Gardner Rich - By video teleconference

**Absent:** Councilmember Una Glass – Excused

**Staff:** City Manager/Attorney/City Attorney Larry McLaughlin  
Assistant City Manager/Attorney/City Clerk Mary Gourley  
Fire Chief Bill Braga  
Public Works Superintendent Dante Del Prete

#### **COUNCIL PROTOCOLS FOR MEETING:**

City staff read the protocols for the meeting.

- This meeting is being conducted utilizing virtual settings for teleconferencing and electronic means consistent with State of California Executive Orders regarding the COVID 19 pandemic and AB 361.
- Live stream and zoom are being utilized for this meeting.
- Members of the public may view and listen to the meeting by use of Zoom and Live Stream as noted on the City's website and as noted on the agenda.
- Members of the public wishing to speak to the City Council may do so during public comment or may comment on agenda items during the discussion of each item and must be logged into Zoom. Live Stream is a viewing only format.
- Anyone using abusive, vulgar, offensive, threatening, or harassing language, personal attacks of any kind or offensive terms that target specific individuals or groups will be muted, will be asked to adhere to protocols and /or will be removed from the meeting.

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**City Council Meeting Packet of: June 7, 2022**

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**SALUTE TO THE FLAG:** Mayor Slayter led the Salute to the Flag.

**PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:** The following were presented:

- Certificate of Retirement – Nate Sutton
- Certificate of Appreciation – Katie Davis – Sebastopol Area Senior Center Executive Director

Mayor Slayter opened for public comment on the proclamations/presentations.

Linda Berg commented as follows:

- I just wanted to place my personal appreciation to Nate who is always just a fine person.
- Many of the employees and people in our town are.
- I want to thank him, too, for coming out here to where I live upon my request in popping a few lids off of the water meters, the existing water meters that we've had, the traditional ones, and answering all my questions and showing me how they work, which is very important to me to know how things work.
- In addition to removing the lids it was only with a screwdriver, they just come right off, and explaining how they work and how long they last, like 40 years, similar to our analog electric meters.
- He's already shared with me that he and his wife had to move from Santa Rosa because they put a cell tower up near their house and his wife couldn't tolerate the radiation, so they happily found another rural place
- He also showed me his cell phone in which he showed me how he made it
- He shielded both his wife's and his own cell phone by cutting out a piece of lead and taping it to the backs of the cell phones which provides shielding
- He's been a big help and he's a fine person, and I appreciate him and wish him and his family well.

Katie Davis commented as follows:

- I just also, Nate, just wanted to tell you how appreciative I am of you and I'm very excited for your retirement, though sad to see you go.
- Nate was one of the first people I interacted with from Public Works at the Senior Center, and he's just always went above and beyond, so responsive and helped me learn the ropes there about the building and it's just been a great pleasure working with you, so thanks for everything.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I just wanted to take a minute to recognize Nathan Sutton.
- I've known him for a long, long time and have always been impressed by his commitment to our town and his willingness to step up and meet people on any topics at any level.
- He's given us great service, and I think it's super important to recognize everything that he's done in supporting public works and our town.
- He's just been a great guy.
- I will miss him as a City employee.
- All the best to you, Nathan.

Reference Order Number: 2022-168

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- Public Comment on all items listed on the agenda will be limited to two minutes, per person, per item.

- The Public Comment Portion of the Agenda will allow for 20 minutes at the beginning of the meeting and public comment not heard during those 20 minutes will continue at the end of the agenda, following the last calendared item and before Reports.

Council welcomes and encourages additional comments via email. Public Comment Emails can be sent to: [CityCouncil@Cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:CityCouncil@Cityofsebastopol.org)

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA :**

During General Public Comment, the public is invited to make comments on items of public interest that are within the City Council's subject matter jurisdiction and that are not listed on the current agenda.

Speakers are allowed to speak for a maximum of three minutes so that all speakers have an opportunity to address the City Council.

Power point or visual presentations for public comment shall not be permitted unless approved by the Agenda Review Committee two weeks prior to the requested meeting date.

Speakers may not "yield" a portion of their allotted time to others.

The Mayor has the authority to limit or extend the time allowed for speakers dependent on the number of speakers in attendance.

The Mayor can poll the members of the public for an indication of the number of people wishing to speak, then call on individuals to speak.

It is the goal of the Council to conclude the public comments portion of the agenda within 20 minutes. If the public comment period exceeds twenty minutes, the presiding officer, typically the Mayor, reserves the right to reduce the time per speaker or carry over public comments to after all business items are completed.

The City Clerk will monitor the time for public comments and inform the speakers when the time limitation has been reached.

The Mayor could survey the members of the public, as appropriate, to move agenda items up or back to address the members of the public items of concern.

Public participation is encouraged on all public agenda items.

Council and staff will treat participants and each other with courtesy. Derogatory or sarcastic comments are inappropriate.

The public will likewise be encouraged by the Mayor to maintain meeting decorum.

In Council meetings when citizens are agitated, the Mayor may call a short recess to calm the situation.

If a member of the public is unable to attend the Council meeting, written communications may be sent to the City Clerk by e-mail or by regular mail. Communications received after distribution of the agenda packet will be made available to the Council at/or as soon after the meeting.

A member of the audience (Sevenfold) commented as follows:

- I want to speak on behalf of Sebastopol applying for a Caltrans grant.
- It just seems like the timing might be of the essence right now with California's \$64 billion surplus.
- I don't know where it's going, but I'm sure they need to spend it.
- I also know that Caltrans over the last few years has some new blood in it, they have new energy and they want to help cities with circulation and to be safer places for people.
- I also think Sebastopol would be a very likely candidate to win a grant like this, or be awarded a grant, when considering the two major arterials that come through town, and also the benefit of a good plan would really be high.
- It seems like sometimes businesses that are fronting these arterials have a difficult time simply because traffic is moving so fast that there's not time to pull over or to recognize them, so if Caltrans was able to get in and get things kind of connected see Sebastopol as a whole rather than parts and to get the flow to kind of be uniform instead of extreme in one situation and light in another, it could be a good outcome.
- There's a group of us that have been getting together, and we would like to help with this effort if we can in terms of, like, writing to get this grant.
- There are some folks who have connections and reads would be possible to put into the network.
- This might be a lost opportunity if we don't go after it.
- I would like to see the City of Sebastopol support this effort.

Bart Levine and Sally Heard commented as follows:

- I just wanted to acknowledge Mayor Slayter and the City Council and the work that you've done to hold the City together through these really difficult times.
- I think it's been remarkable.
- We moved here ten years ago from Chicago, and we've seen tremendous change in the City in the short time that we've been here.
- We've seen projects like the Barlow, which has sprouted up, even amidst controversy. It's become very successful.
- We're excited about the changes that are happening.
- We're also supporting Sebastopol applying for the grant.
- Successfully, I think we can for the transportation planning grant program award as this is a great opportunity for us.
- We've seen since we've lived here, a great influx of private money in projects like the Barlow and like the hotel that's coming, and I think it's time for us to take advantage of the public monies that are available to towns like Sebastopol to make change.
- We've been here ten years, and we live near downtown, we've seen the traffic double, and I've heard from people that have been here 20 years that it's triple in that time.
- There has to be some kind of revitalization of the downtown area in order for progress to happen.
- I think if you did a poll of these business owners, you would see that there is a need for this.
- We've looked at some of the people that have received the grants including a town that received this year, such as Iselton, population of 804 people received a grant to revitalize their Main street of \$215,000.
- I'd like to propose that we at least get some bids from grant writers to see if we can qualify, and if we can get it.
- If we can, it will cover the cost of the grant rider.
- I want to know how we can help as citizens to move this forward.

Lori and Alex Bryant, People Music, commented as follows:

- We are on board with the idea of the grant rider. It sounds like a necessary thing to get things rolling.
- I would just like to quickly give a couple of examples.
- I have people coming into the store that have lived here for years and I had a guy the other day, a musician, 16 years.
- He didn't know that we existed. He actually said to me that he drives like it's a panic zone on the 100 block of Main Street that he doesn't have time to look at any of the stores, so he just he's trying not to rear-end somebody.
- So I really feel like there is a bit of an issue there.
- It would be great if we could do something. I'm not sure how far we can go with it.
- I also invite all of you from the City Council to come down and talk to the business owners one on one and see what's going on down there and get a feel for it.
- We just want to say we're on board if we can spend a little money, get a grant rider, get some money from Caltrans. That would be super beneficial.

Jim Wheaton commented as follows:

- I was also at a meeting with some business owners and citizens and I'm totally in favor of trying to figure out how to get this Caltrans grant.
- I think having lived here 20 years I don't want to just throw my hands up and not try to do something about the downtown traffic.
- I don't know what should be done.

- I'd like to get the sidewalks widened
- It's going to take money, it's going to take time, but we have to hold some sort of vision as a town.
- As the hotel comes in and the livery starts up, that block really needs help.
- It could be just slowing the traffic down or making the sidewalks wider.
- I'm not sure exactly what, that's why it's going to take some time and it's all expensive.
- I just want to say I'm really in favor of that.
- If we have to hire somebody, I think we can probably make good use of them, but not being a grant rider, I don't know.
- The other thing I want to say is I know so many people in town that want to help the City improve itself.
- The Councilmembers are overwhelmed, and you get a lot of complaints and a lot of demands, and I want to encourage you to see partnerships with groups and really go out of your way to get people in.
- We have a little bit of time, we have a little bit of money, and by we I think of any group in town.
- Downtown Association or the Senior Center or Center for the Arts
- We can be partners and we can be mobilized to help a process that will make the downtown section better.
- I know it may not happen very quickly, but I would love to see one or two champion together as a long-time goal.

Jann Eyrich commented as follows:

- We've met a couple times around the table, and I call it a round table because it's the concept of a round table, and the sharing, the ideas, the talent that is coming to these meetings.
- Business owners that are residents, the positivity, trying to work through all the snags who, like most of us, put in front of us.
- Let's work through this. We can do this.
- This is so real that that grant we're talking about, Caltrans is devoting \$29 million in the next go-round.
- We are not the only one out there, but we are the perfect little town to go for this.
- I'm hoping, and a lot of people who have experience with this, are hoping we can even recoup the expense of a grant writer out of the grant.
- It's a little bit of a puzzle, but I think we can solve it.
- Thank you for your attention and try to put this in the budget considerations as you move forward and all the best.

Linda Berg commented as follows:

- I'd like to shed a little bit of light upon how this traffic situation came about and a lot of the other things came about.
- After I got over my fear of public speaking 12 years ago or so, and people started talking to me, people hanging out in the lobby of the Youth Center where City Council meetings were being held, people came to me and I got a lot of the unsolicited information, a lot of it about the policies from our last public Planning Director and who turned out he was all pro-business.
- He was so pro-business, I got no less than 20 solicited complaints that he was opposed to public health and environmental complaints.
- We had one meeting and there were eight of us. People had evidence of how he had altered the traffic study that enabled the Barlow to be built.
- These people went to the City Council and our staff at the time with hard evidence that this had happened.
- There's some other things that happened and nothing was done. They got away with it.

- That's how come the Barlow got built and the traffic that we have is happening again with the wireless water meters.
- Nobody is looking at the public health results of being exposed to a lot of unwanted wireless, unnecessarily wireless radiation coming up through the sidewalks in the wireless water meters which are unnecessary and are costing us and won't work, anyway

Michael Carnacchi commented as follows:

- The traffic woes, of course, I've always attributed to not having that bypass and Caltrans always misses that as one of the potential resolutions for traffic woes is a bypass or alternate route.
- Sam Spooner, when he was on Council, he got it taken out of the County general plan, so that's the biggest hurdle we need to do.
- The County is currently redoing their general plan, so it would be nice if Sebastopol put a little pressure on them to put the bypass back in or the alternative route or the additional evacuation route, because we saw what happened during the evacuations.
- So having another road that has the capacity to handle a lot of traffic would be a good thing, I think, in the case of an emergency.
- I know Sarah is an SCTA Board member.
- I know the talk about a bypass has been floating around on that level, so I think if Sebastopol would write to the County and ask that the bypass was put in the update, that would be a great first step to really changing the way Sebastopol can do with their downtown, because then we would take ownership of that road.

Angela Ford commented as follows:

- Last year in the wee hours, Sebastopol Council passed an order and made the decision to convert all of Sebastopol's 3,000 legacy water meters into EMF emitting meters.
- In just one meeting with no City outreach or involvement.
- The City has exuded lack of due diligence in this entire matter.
- If we move forward, we will continue to erode our health, our privacy and our digital security.
- As EMF pollution increases incrementally throughout our once Green City and brings with it the well-documented health challenges of the EMFs to humans and all living beings, including humans, in trees, bees, butterflies, birds.
- So the health impacts are profound.
- We lose increasingly our own personal privacy through the unwittingly becoming sources of data for sale and use in the far-flung domains of local corporate elite, losing the privacy of our lives behind closed doors and beyond.
- If we move forward, we also enter the world of increased digital insecurity, becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberhacking, malware.
- Sebastopol recently lost 1.2 million for this reason and the possibilities of grid shutdown.
- It's time to reclaim our local and for our community to be reflected in terms of responsiveness to all of us.
- Time for a rethink.

Martha Glaser commented as follows:

- I would like to talk about what it feels like to have harm from magnetic frequencies.
- It's like having a friend that gets sick of all things citrus.
- There's drinking orange juice or eating a lemon and she goes into anaphylactic shock.
- Is this sending her to the hospital immediately? No.
- Does it mean washing and taking a Benadryl? Yes.

- When I take my daily walks into town with the dog to save energy, is walking over sidewalk meters the same as my walking up to a cell phone tower and hanging out on the bench by the livery which I cannot do without having great pain, piercing headaches, jolts to my skull, heart palpitations, without fear of fight or flight kicking in?
- However, you want to stay away and keep your environment clean so she can avoid pain and suffering.
- While this is an uphill battle for those who call themselves EMF sensitive, it is one working towards.
- On a business conference on Friday, Dr. Magda Hartis spoke and said if it doesn't move, it doesn't need to be wireless.
- So why should we have 3,000 meters in front of our homes that are not analog or digital?
- Even in the name of environment climate solution, watch out for Green washing.
- It would still mean more non-recyclable pieces of equipment needing non-replaceable batteries to work and more materials leaching into and filling up our beautiful and irreplaceable Earth.

Nick Demakas commented as follows:

- I've lived in Sebastopol my whole life. I'm 36. I've been to Hillcrest, Analy, all the schools.
- I live in the rural area, I've never lived in town, but I use the City. I drive through it, for the most part.
- I don't really understand a lot of the changes that have been happening.
- I'm not very involved, I don't know what the protocol is, but even with what is going on 116 towards downtown, all these little things that I'm not really sure what the future is going to hold for Sebastopol.
- As a concerned citizen that has lived here and is going to live here the rest of my life for my children, I get confused about the future of them and the future of our City.
- We have a very small town with a big personality. It has a big personality and I love it very much.
- Like I said, it's changed a lot and I don't really like going into town anymore. It's a whole new place.
- I wanted to say that much and I look forward to contributing more to this in the future.

Patty Hiller commented as follows:

- I lived at Burbank Heights and I wonder where we start with the Woodmark development.
- I know a lot of us feel not objective standards, and I wonder how the City Council feels about that, and I wonder what will be the next steps.
- I wonder if they have an SB 35. I wonder if they will get one. I wonder about all sorts of facets of that.
- As Nick said, I, too, avoid driving in the City. Downtown is so clogged up, and what on Earth will it be like with another couple hundred cars besides the normal population growth to add another big project that has to shuffle its way around to get through the City.
- That's a pretty scary thing.
- Then I have heard that phase 1 of the road repair is going to go right in front of Woodmark, so if this whole thing is going to happen, does it really make sense to repair the roads before all those big trucks will be hauling out tons and tons of Earth?
- Those are my questions.
- Anything you could tell me I would appreciate.

Judith lam commented as follows:

- Just to follow on Patty's comments, I often think about the Woodmark when I'm sitting in the 5 to 10-minute delay that gets me from where I live down about three blocks to the light at the center of town, and I think how I was luckily not around when the great fires and evacuations occurred, but I understand it was a 7.5-hour gap to get to Petaluma.
- it's literally a life-threatening situation to clot that area up further.
- I'm so sorry, I didn't leave myself enough time.

- Last time I participated it was the communication that came from the manufacturers of the smart meters to our Public Works person that showed that every reason that was given for using those, quote, smart meters, was absolutely decried by the creator of them.
- So spending millions on them was so counter logical that I didn't think this would proceed.
- But apparently it has proceeded and 56 meters have been installed.
- So I think the people need to make it clear to our representatives that we are not for this, we are against this harm to public health is in addition to every other greenwashed reason for using it.
- I don't know what it will take to stop it, but you're on notice.

Omar Figueroa commented as follows:

- I am a resident, business owner, employer all within City limits, and I want to address the Supreme Court decision which was leaked and has now been confirmed as authentic which has been an attack on every citizen's right to privacy.
- This is not something the City Council ordinarily takes on, but there should be a resolution that I think should be passed unanimously to speak out in favor of a person's right to choose and reproductive autonomy.

Kyle Falbo commented as follows:

- It's been a while since we heard about the \$1 million stolen from our coffers as a result of cyber fraud
- It's been some time, there's been claims of deflection of blame towards the County.
- We have yet to see the accountability of our own City for the loss of \$1.2 million of property tax money as a result of cyber fraud, and I'm hoping that tonight maybe we can get an update on any of the potential recovery from insurance that we will likely be seeing increased premiums as a result of these claims as well as any sort of deductible that is tied to those insurance claims and any sort of gains that we received as a result of that.

Mayor Slayter responded to public comment as follows:

- There were a few questions that came up during public comment for non-agenda items, and I will lead and request an update on the Woodmark project.
- I assume that our City Manager/Attorney will provide that update, and he also will understand the bounds of that update, and if it goes beyond a certain point, there are two Councilmembers who will need to recuse, so that is stated.
- So what's the status of that with the SB 35 process?
- Also if you can tie into that the Bodega Avenue road repair schedule for phase 1.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- On Woodmark, when I say "we," I mean the City. In this case it would be in the Planning Department.
- We are in the 60-day review period for the application that was received by the City on April 4, so we're nearing the end of that process.
- We have not officially responded yet, so I will not be able to make any comment beyond the fact that we are formulating our response to that application.
- We have endeavored to put information about the Woodmark project on our Website.
- We heard a comment, I believe, a few days ago asking that it be updated, and I believe we have updated it with the most recent information, so that would be on the City's Website.
- On the cyber-fraud so far we have, out of the \$1.2 million that was stolen from the County and the City, we have recovered back \$850,000.



- There has been no effects thus far, obviously, on the City's insurance premiums through those recoveries because those were recoveries from two insurance policies which are held by the County.
- We continue to pursue two claims.
- Our attorneys are working in negotiation with the two insurance companies.
- We don't have any further current information on any results of that, but they have been directed to negotiate directly with the two insurance companies on the policies that the City carries.
- In addition, we have had current discussions with the County concerning responsibility for the theft, and those discussions are continuing.
- They are, however, at this point in time, confidential.
- At such time as we're able to report more fully on the results of those, we certainly will do so at the earliest opportunity.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- There was one other comment about traffic in our downtown and during the most unfortunate evacuation that we all suffered through a few years ago.
- Not to minimize the terrible thing that that was and the lack of planning on the part of the County as far as regionally what that looked like, so I'm not saying this to minimize it in any way.
- It was terrible and it needed to have a better plan, and it does now.
- I would encourage everybody to sign up for SoCo alerts and if to familiarize yourself with which evacuation zone within the City you are local for so you receive the most Up-to-Date information.
- The most minor correction was a 7.5-hour trip to Petaluma. Perhaps that was the case for somebody, it wasn't the case for most.
- I think people probably had a two to three-hour trip to Petaluma, which is pretty darn awful of itself, but it wasn't quite the 7.5 hours noted with anyone that I've communicated with about that.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- We thank all the callers who this evening who talked to us about the Caltrans grant.
- We have already got staff and our engineering firm, the City Engineer, working on that grant application, so that is underway and we do appreciate all the public interest in that grant.

**STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** Conflicts of interest may arise in situations where a public official deliberating towards a decision, has an actual or potential financial interest in the matter before the Council. In accordance with state law, an actual conflict of interest is one that would be to the private financial benefit of a public official, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A potential conflict of interest is one that could be to the private financial benefit of a Councilmember, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A Councilmember must publicly announce potential and actual conflicts of interest, and, in the case of actual conflict of interest, must refrain from participating in debate on the issue or from voting on the issue and must remove themselves from the dais.

There were no statements of conflict of interest noted.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:** The consent agenda consists of items that are routine in nature and do not require additional discussion by the City Council or have been reviewed by the City Council previously. These items may be approved by one motion without discussion unless a member of the City Council requests that the item be taken off the consent calendar.

The Mayor will read the consent calendar items; ask if a Councilmember wishes to remove one or more items from the consent calendar; and then open public comment to the members of the public in attendance. At this time, a member of the public may speak for up to three minutes on the entire consent calendar and request at that time that an agenda item or items be removed for discussion.

If an item or items are removed from the consent calendar, the item shall be placed at the end of the regular agenda items unless otherwise determined by the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tern.

Councilmembers may comment on Consent Calendar items or ask for minor clarifications without the need for pulling the item for separate consideration. Items requiring deliberation should be pulled for separate consideration and shall be placed at the end of the regular agenda items unless otherwise determined by the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem.

Mayor Slayter read the consent calendar.

Mayor Slayter opened for public comment on the consent calendar. There was none.

Mayor Slayter asked if any Councilmember wanted to remove a consent calendar item. Councilmember Gurney requested a separate vote for consent calendar item number 5.

Mayor Slayter called for a motion.

**MOTION:**

Councilmember Gurney moved and Vice Mayor Hinton seconded the motion to approve Consent Calendar Item(s) Number(s) 1, 2, 3, and 4 and Item Number 5 was pulled for a separate vote.

Mayor Slayter called for a roll call vote. City staff conducted a roll call vote.

**VOTE:**

Ayes: Councilmembers Gurney, Rich, Vice Mayor Hinton and Mayor Slayter  
Noes: None  
Absent: Councilmember Glass  
Abstain: None

1. Approval of Minutes of May 2, 2022 City Council Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session (Responsible Department: City Administration)

City Council Action: Approved Minutes of May 2, 2022 City Council Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session  
Minute Order Number: 2022-169

2. Approval of Minutes of May 3, 2022 City Council Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session (Responsible Department: City Administration)

City Council Action: Approved Minutes of May 3, 2022 City Council Special Meeting Minutes – Closed Session  
Minute Order Number: 2022-170

3. Approval of Minutes of May 3, 2022 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes (Responsible Department: City Administration)

City Council Action: Approved Minutes of May 3, 2022 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes  
Minute Order Number: 2022-171

4. Resolution Authorizing Continued Use of Teleconference Meetings Based on Circumstances of the COVID-19 state of emergency and that the following circumstances exist:

- a. The state of emergency as a result of COVID-19 continues to directly impact the ability of the members of City Council and the members of the City’s subordinate Committee’s, Commission’s, and Boards to meet safely in person; and
- b. The State of California and the City of Sebastopol continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing.

Continuation of Virtual Meetings: First Approved: September 21, 2021

Approved for Continuation:

- a. October 19, 2021
- b. November 16, 2021
- c. December 7, 2021
- d. January 4, 2022
- e. February 1, 2022

- f. March 1, 2022
- g. March 15th 2022
- h. April 5, 2022
- i. May 3, 2022
- j. Proposed for Approval: May 17, 2022 (Resolution needs to be submitted to Council every 30 days. Last approval: May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022. June 7<sup>th</sup> would be too late for the 30 day requirement).

City Council Action: Approved Authorizing Continued Use of Teleconference Meetings Based on Circumstances of the COVID-19 state of emergency and that the following circumstances exist:

- a. The state of emergency as a result of COVID-19 continues to directly impact the ability of the members of City Council and the members of the City’s subordinate Committee’s, Commission’s, and Boards to meet safely in person; and
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- f. March 1, 2022
- g. March 15th 2022
- h. April 5, 2022
- i. May 3, 2022
- j. Proposed for Approval: May 17, 2022 (Resolution needs to be submitted to Council every 30 days. Last approval: May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022. June 7<sup>th</sup> would be too late for the 30 day requirement).

Minute Order Number: 2022-172

Resolution Number: 6430-2022

**MOTION:**

Mayor Slayter moved and Vice Mayor Hinton seconded the motion to approve Consent Calendar Item(s) Number(s) 5.

Mayor Slayter called for a roll call vote. City staff conducted a roll call vote.

**VOTE:**

- Ayes: Councilmember Rich, Vice Mayor Hinton and Mayor Slayter
- Noes: Councilmember Gurney
- Absent: Councilmember Glass
- Abstain: None

- 5. Approval of Second Reading, Waiving of Further Reading and Adoption of Ordinance –Planning Commission (Responsible Department: Planning Department)

City Council Action: Approved Second Reading, Waiving of Further Reading and Adoption of Ordinance –Planning Commission

Minute Order Number: 2022-173

Ordinance Number: 1141

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS:** *(Please Note: Although informational/presentations items are routinely informational in nature, some informational items may contain request for actions such as support, direction to staff, follow up, or receipt of item based on the presentation/information provided.)*

**NONE**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS: NONE**

**REGULAR CALENDAR AGENDA ITEMS (DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION):**

6. Consideration of Request from Mayors and Councilmembers for funding of Clerk Position for Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers Association (Vice Mayor Hinton/City Administration) (This item was continued from the May 3<sup>rd</sup> City Council Meeting)

Vice Mayor Hinton presented the agenda item recommending the City Council support the creation of a part-time contract Association Clerk for the Mayors and Councilmembers Association and by motion authorize the City to support the same and direct the City Manager/Attorney to budget for the City's contribution to the costs, which will be shared amongst all Sonoma County Cities.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- The only thing I could add would be one, there's been a need for this for some time.
- So I'm glad that this has finally come to a decision.
- I think there's a real need for it.
- It's a difficult thing for the individual cities to have to take up the clerking duties every time their name comes around in the Alphabet.
- I will say it's a bit too bad that the cost is so high.
- I wish it was less.
- I don't think there's anything to be done about that.
- I think the cost is a bit more than what some of our City Manager/Attorneys would have liked to have think.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- Polled other similar roles and that is where the cost estimates came from.
- We do know that Marin County is watching Sonoma's mayor and Councilmembers, and they are likely going to move to the same sort of model depending on what happens with this moving forward.

Mayor Slayter asked for questions of the presenter.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I appreciate the author report from the Vice Mayor and also the comments from the City Manager/Attorney.
- I'm just wondering, is the part-time clerk going to create the Website, is that the idea?
- Is the part-time clerk also going to take over the programming and the scheduling?

Vice Mayor Hint6on commented as follows:

- In response to that, you might have noticed in the staff report that the part-time clerk, it would be a separate Website, company building Website.
- But the part-time clerk would learn how to upload the minutes and make minor changes to the Website as needed.
- Also, it -- the proposal is that as I mentioned, that we would separate off the mayor's meetings, or the executive board.

- So the part-time clerk would not only do minutes and postings for the general meeting, but also for the mayor's meeting.
- Which the plan would be to meet more frequently like the mayors did during COVID.
- So the clerk would be responsible for attending those meetings and posting agendas for that, as well.
- So that's going to be a lot more than five meetings a year kind of thing is what the thinking is.

Councilmember Gurney commented will the vice chair continue to do the programs or is that responsibility going to go to this new clerk?

Vice Mayor Hinton commented they're going to envision that the mayor's group that meets monthly would do it.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- I can see efficiencies this that model when I was chair of this association.
- I had a vice chair City that was kind of -- I'm not sure how much help we had.
- The City clerk and I, to do all the work of all of that.
- So to have an administration person who can make the phone calls, run down the individual people that are suggested, all that kind of thing, would -- there's certainly some efficiencies there.

Mayor Slayter opened for public comment.

Omar Figueroa commented as follows:

- My comment is that this organization seems to be a chummy club of mayors and Councilmembers, and I don't really see what the governmental purpose is of not working for these public officials.
- So for us to spend \$5,000 a year on top of that to pay for a clerk for this, I don't know if it's -- , I would like to hear more about what the justification for this association is at public expense, whether it's subject to the California public records act and is a public entity, what level of oversight there is by the public, and I don't want to be a party pooper, but we have infrastructure needs in Sebastopol that we are going to be addressing later on today.
- Our budget is something that we have to guard preciously.
- These are precious public dollars and should not be spent on a chummy club for mayors to get together and network with each other.
- If there are issues that need to be addressed, they should be addressed with task forces but not just with having a chummy club.

City Council Discussion and/or Deliberations:

Mayor Slayter commented the Association is governed under the California public records act law, this is an organization that is subject to that and subject to other requirements, as well.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- I just wanted to address the chummy -- I've never heard it called that.
- So I invite the public, these meetings are open to the public to attend one.
- We have hosted in Sebastopol in the past and will be hosting again in Sebastopol I believe this October.
- I also am the representative from the City Council that does monthly meetings to the mayor and Councilmembers legislative committee that with years pending legislation in the state of California and brings that information back to our Council and many times we vote or take positions on that.
- So just had to add that for the record.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- Topics that this group discusses at our most recent meeting, last month, the topic was an update on efforts in the County and the continuum of care.
- And we had a significant and lengthy update on that, how that is being approached regionally, which I think most of us agree needs to be taken at a real approach.
- For all of us to be able to discuss it, or to get an update on it and ask questions, that's the kind of thing that happens at these meetings.
- It is not -- it's not a smoke-filled room with a bunch of guys smoking cigars in any way, shape, or form.
- I think this is a reasonable request.
- I agree with the City Manager/Attorney that I wish the ask was less.
- Where I'm having difficulty with this is probably the same difficulty that I would say many other cities will have is where we're busy trying to work on our City budget for the next fiscal year, and for us to pre-approve something is problematic, at least for me.
- So I'm in favor of it, but I also want to defer any final decision until we see the draft budget.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I understand the perception that this is a chummy club.
- I think there's some validity to that in my experience.
- But I know our intentional City clerk has mentored almost every City Clerk who has worked each year, and explained to them their responsibilities and offered extensive support, if not done the job herself, helping them.
- So I want to honor our City clerk for all her extra volunteer effort each year for mayors and Councilmembers and recognize perhaps it will be a helpful expense.
- I agree with the mayor, it seems a little premature to approve this when we don't know the full context of our budget or our draft budget coming up next month, I hope.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- I think the plan for this is to present it to City Councils within the process in front of our budgets, because it will impact every City's budget if it goes ahead and goes forward.
- I wanted to bring it forth to the full Council to then either get approval tonight or some sort of direction so we can put it in as a place holder for a final vote when we process our budget.
- Will go to general membership I believe sometime at the August meeting.
- I believe it has to be voted on first at the mayor's meeting then at the general membership.
- So to make that happen, I believe the schedule is that they would vote on it at the mayor's meeting in August, it would go to general membership in October, and we would be hiring for this position next year.
- So for budgeting purposes And reality, only about half of this would be spent in our fiscal year next year.
- Let me also remind this is a subcontractor position.
- When you look at the position, although it looks a little high, there's no benefits, retirement, or anything on that.
- They have to pay their own taxes, et cetera.
- So, again, this is -- the range we did some research and thought we would need to pay to get somebody that does this work and to do it on their home, some of the cities are not taking it to full Council.
- City Managers at this rate, some cities feel confident that their Councils are approving it.
- I wanted to bring it out to the full Council.
- That's why it's on the agenda tonight.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- All of the City Managers have been asked to report on this on Thursday.
- So I would like to bring some support to the concept, if not approval of the amount on Thursday.
- As the Vice Mayor indicated in some cities, the amount is within the spending authority of the City Manager
- They're not taking it to their Councils but treating it as a regular budget item.
- It will be nice to get some direction.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I'm completely in support of the request from a consensual perspective.
- My support would be subject to review of the budget by this whole Council when the budget comes before the Council.
- I would ask Vice Mayor Hinton what specific vote of support she would need from the City Council today in order to satisfy her needs.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- I think just a thumbs up with direction.
- We have a number of items that are new items that we're keeping a list of.
- I would say this will be in the more item list in our way we're going to bring forth the City budget for the full Council.
- If this sounds like a thumbs up, sounds good in concept that I think satisfies the City Manager's need to report back
- It will also be on the Budget Committee list of items to discuss
- We know we're also looking at a City wide assessment on those things.
- So I just wanted to inform everybody they'll see it again as an option.
- Just knowing this is where I believe the Mayor and Councilmembers is moving towards.
- I believe it will have enough support to move forward. I'm hoping Sebastopol will support it, as well.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I was going to say, that would all be subject to discussion with the draft budget
- Let's make sure we understand that it has to go in that context, and I would support that concept at this point, subject to that later review.
- So it goes into the place holder and what the mayor called the new items category.

Vice Mayor Hinton stated that is correct.

Council was in consensus to support inclusion of this item into the DRAFT budget as a placeholder for full City Council discussion and consensus for support of creation of a part-time contract Association Clerk for the Mayors and Councilmembers Association .

**City Council Action:** City Council supported the creation of a part-time contract Association Clerk for the Mayors and Councilmembers Association and by motion authorize the City to support the same and direct the City Manager/Attorney to budget for the City's contribution to the costs, which will be shared amongst all Sonoma County Cities.

**Minute Order Number:** 2022-174

7. Report out – Fire Ad Hoc Committee (Requestor: Fire Ad Hoc Committee)

Fire Ad Hoc Committee members Mayor Slayter and Councilmember Rich provided the agenda item recommending the City Council :

1. Support of Contract for continued City support of the consolidated Fire District
2. Creation of Ad Hoc Committee for Purpose of Negotiations Only. Stated term of the new Ad Hoc Committee to be one year. Items to discuss, but not be limited to, are:
  - a. Interim Contract with GRFD
  - b. Finances/Budgeting
  - c. Ownership of Fire Station
  - d. Maintenance of Building/Remodel
  - e. Vehicle Maintenance/Replacement
  - f. Staffing and service level
  - g. Education and outreach
  - h. Leadership/command staff
  - i. Impact on current volunteers/Employee
  - j. Board of Directors positions for the City
  - k. Retirement/PERS
  - l. Fire Marshall duties
  - m. Interim Chief
  - n. Station identity – branding, logos and name
3. Authorization to begin the LAFCO Process at the same time negotiations are being discussed.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- This is a committee that was started in 2017 although the initial committee was in the form of two different ad hoc committees.
- The first was to look at the emergency management plans and develop a better version than the version that we had in our red binder and didn't exist digitally.
- So the County has gone through a lot of that work, and it's just right over there for us to finish that.
- So that half of the two committees was disbanded and it continued on with the future of the Fire Department ad hoc committee and to study for that.
- The committee has existed now through a couple of iterations.
- The first iteration, it was Vice Mayor Hinton and Councilmember Glass on that part of it.
- Then we had an election and a changeover of Council personnel, and then it became Councilmember Rich and myself along with staff, which includes the City Manager/Attorney, the Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, the Administrative Services Director as needed for data information, and the Fire Chief.
- So all of us have been equal and very active members of the committee to research all options of what the future of fire and emergency services provision within the City of Sebastopol could look like.
- The staff report goes through a number of items that we looked at, and I won't recite all of them.
- The first was to look at the current budget and review current fundings and we've done all these things.
- We considered all kinds of different options for the future of the Fire Department and fire emergency services, and that could include a wide variety of models that different municipalities around the country use.
- Some are joint powers authorities, some are contractor services. Others are just maintaining municipal department. Some are special districts. We looked at all those.
- We discussed funding possibilities, parcel taxes or sales taxes.
- We talked with the local agency formation commission.



- They are the County body that is independent and they take a look at land use and special districts and in some ways act as something akin to a grand jury where they will do studies into different governmental entities, and do analysis and provide suggestions and so that's what the agency does.
- They've been a little bit more in the news these days with some of the other district consolidations, as well as the health care district work that was done here locally a couple of years ago.
- We looked at long-term capital projects. We looked at apparatus.
- We visited the vehicle replacement schedule with great regularity and frequency.
- So we did an awful lot of different things and looked at a lot of different ideas.
- We talked with other districts in the area. We talked with Sonoma County Fire. We talked with fire protection district. We talked with Graton fire district.
- Those were the ones that we probably had the most substantive communications with.
- We also discussed kind of in broad terms the future of fire services with other folks who retired fire personnel from cities and the County and the former Department of Emergency services at the County and current fire inspectors and there were a lot of conversations that were had with a lot of different people.
- I'll stop there with the introductions to what the committee did and turn it over now to my Council counterpart, and/or staff counterparts on this ad hoc.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I am going to just give some factual information, if I could, in response to some questions that we've seen the public asking.
- Predictable questions, because their prior service is important to us in this little town, and we also value all of the service of the firefighters, if I could recognize one of the firefighters, I know you have your hand up.
- We will be getting to public comment, so we won't lose track of you.
- But running through the questions, because I think it is important, that we provide you with as much accurate and factual information as we can moving into this meeting.
- So you have heard who the ad hoc committee is.
- You have been informed of what the history has been here.
- I would like to start out with what's being recommended.
- I know the staff report is out there. But I also know that sometimes not all of us read thoroughly through these big documents.
- So the ad hoc fire committee is recommending that the City Council be in the process to consolidate with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.
- So that's important, to begin the process to consolidate.
- Discussed the list of questions submitted to the Council through public comment emails.

1. Question: What is being recommended by the Ad Hoc Fire Committee?

Answer: The Ad Hoc Fire Committee is recommending that the City Council begin the process to consolidate with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District (GRFPD). This includes: continued City financial support of a consolidated fire district; support for an Interim Contract with Gold Ridge to provide the continuation of high quality fire services for our community during the period that the terms of the Consolidation is being negotiated with GRFPD; creation of Ad Hoc Committee for purpose of negotiations only, appointment of two Councilmembers to this newly created Ad Hoc Committee (if creation of a committee is supported); and authorization to begin the LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) process at the same time negotiations are being discussed.

2. Question: Who is on the "Ad Hoc Fire Committee?"

Answer: The current Committee (which has been in place since December of 2020) consists of two City Council appointed Liaisons: Mayor Patrick Slayter and Councilmember Diana Rich, plus City staff: City Manager/Attorney Larry McLaughlin, Asst City Manager/Attorney Mary Gourley, and Fire Chief Bill Braga.

3. Question: Is this the first time the Ad Hoc Committee has reported on its activities?

Answer: The Ad Hoc Fire Committee provided a progress report at the May 18, 2021 Council meeting. The full City Council approved continuing the process and directed the Ad Hoc Committee to consider all available options. The Committee informed the City Council that it expected its inquiry would be broad and would include the consideration of a variety of options, including among them continued operation of the Fire Department by the City and possible consolidation with another fire district. The Ad Hoc Committee then moved forward to investigate the options as directed by the Council.

4. Question: Has the Fire Department been represented or involved in the meetings that have been held so far?

Answer: Yes, the Sebastopol Fire Department was represented by the Fire Chief, who has been and continues to be an active and involved contributor to the Committee's process.

5. Question: How much time has the Ad Hoc Committee spent investigating the options for the Fire Department? Has this been a thorough process?

Answer: Meetings have been ongoing since early 2020. The current Ad Hoc Fire Committee has made a thorough inquiry into the options for the continued stability of the Fire Department. Just since February of 2021, the calendar shows sixteen meetings, including meetings of the full Ad Hoc Committee, focused outreach meetings with other fire districts and with LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) and meetings specifically with our Sebastopol volunteer firefighters. In addition to these meetings, the Committee has engaged in research and analysis, with all efforts dedicated to determining the very best course to recommend for the continuation of services to the community.

6. Question: Why weren't individual firefighters included in the Ad Hoc Committee meetings?

Answer: Each department head is responsible for representing their department in City matters and is authorized to speak on their behalf. The head of the Fire Department is the Fire Chief. He has been and continues to actively contribute to the discussion and decision-making and is supportive of the recommendations of this Committee.

7. Question: Was the Ad Hoc Committee informed of the concerns of the firefighters? If so, why is the Ad Hoc recommending consolidation?

Answer: Yes, the Ad Hoc Committee for Fire Department Long Term Staffing Goals and Solution first met with the volunteers in 2018 to discuss long term planning for the Fire Department. This Committee was redefined and a new Fire Ad Hoc Committee was created in 2020 and is fully aware of the concerns of the firefighters. Mayor Slayter and Councilmember Rich met with a group of volunteer firefighters in April 2021 and again on Thursday, May 12, 2022 to present the staff report and listen to their comments, and their level of concern was as expected. The Ad Hoc Committee recognizes that consolidation has the potential for disruption in the Fire Department, but firmly supports that consolidation is best for the community at large.

8. Question: Did the Ad Hoc Committee meet with the firefighters as a group? Why weren't there more meetings with the firefighters as a group?

Answer: In addition to having the benefit of the Fire Chief's presence, the Ad Hoc Committee had two formal meetings with the firefighters as a group. The first was at the launch of the current Ad Hoc Committee, in April of 2021. The second was on May 12, 2022, after the Staff Report was published. The Ad Hoc Committee did not meet further with the firefighters because the Fire Chief had been involved in every meeting and was forthright in conveying both his perspective as well as that of the volunteer firefighters.

9. Question: Why is the Ad Hoc Committee recommending consolidation?

Answer: The Staff Report explains the logic involved in recommending consolidation. After much research, it is the Ad Hoc Committee's conclusion that our City fire services needs an infusion of funding and the support of an infrastructure that will provide efficient 24/7 staffing. The goal is to improve response times to meet the community's needs and to ensure financial and staffing stability into the future. Consolidation with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District can provide that service.

10. Question: What's wrong with the current funding and staffing model at the Fire Department?

Answer: Our response times are increasing, our community's needs are increasing, and our funding is insufficient to cover the ever-higher costs of the Department. The response time of emergency service is important since it is considered as the main aspect for the success of the prehospital care and therefore, for the survival of the victims. The response times have increased because on site staffing at the fire station is limited. During most of the hours in any 24 hour span the fire station has no personnel on site. A call comes in, most firefighters respond from home to the fire station, and are deployed from there. This creates a longer response time, during which our community member in need waits for assistance. As to the increased community needs, it is well known that we have an aging population with more frequent and severity of medical calls. As to funding, the City has currently allocated over \$1 million this fiscal year to the Fire Department, and more than \$1 million more is needed to provide a 24/7 staffing model and to maintain equipment and fund facility improvements. In summary, our fire service needs are double what is currently allocated and available through the City budget. That money is not available in our City budget, nor to any other Department within the City.

11. Question: Why is the May 17, 2022 meeting the first time the public has been made aware of the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation?

Answer: The Ad Hoc Fire Committee has only recently completed its investigation into options. May 17th was the earliest possible date that the Ad Hoc Committee could provide the City Council and the public its recommendations.

12. Question: Is it true that the firefighters receive no compensation?

Answer: It is inaccurate to say that firefighters receive no compensation. They do receive compensation. The City of Sebastopol compensates firefighters in the form of stipends as well as on a per-call-out basis. When a volunteer responds to a call, the volunteer gets paid for the response and if that call comes during a stipend shift, the volunteer gets paid for the response, plus the stipend shift. When firefighters attend regular Thursday trainings or any special trainings they also receive a stipend. There is also a "retention pay" amount (currently \$80,000) that is shared among all firefighters each year. Firefighters also receive compensation for their work with the California Office of Emergency Services. Transparent California provides firefighter pay information.

www.transparentcalifornia.com. Under “Salaries” on the landing page, select “Cities,” then “Sebastopol.” Enter “firefighter” in the search bar to indicate the position category. The most recent data available on the site is for 2020, but prior years are also available.

13. Question: Why is Gold Ridge Fire Protection District considered the best option recommended by the Ad Committee?

Answer: From the information the Ad Hoc Committee collected from the investigation, as well as the input provided by the Fire Chief, the Ad Hoc Committee concluded that Gold Ridge Fire Protection District can provide the infrastructure needed to efficiently and effectively implement a 24/7 model in Sebastopol. The Gold Ridge FPD has a culture that values volunteers, already has an existing relationship with our Fire Department and our community, and has declared a willingness to work with us to negotiate a consolidation that will accommodate our town's needs. In addition, Gold Ridge FPD can provide Sebastopol Fire Department with interim leadership to bridge the gap between our Fire Chief's retirement in December and the finalization of negotiations for consolidation. Finally, Gold Ridge FPD has already indicated an openness (subject to negotiation of course) to providing Sebastopol a position on its Board, which would provide Sebastopol with a means to participate in decisions affecting Sebastopol fire services into the future.

14. Question: What is the process going forward?

The City Council will provide direction at the May 17 meeting and, if the City Council supports the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, a new Ad Hoc Committee will be appointed for the purposes of negotiations only. The new Ad Hoc would be tasked with negotiating an interim contract with Gold Ridge FPD, and then negotiate the final contract for the full terms of the consolidation. The steps leading up to final consolidation would include involvement from LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission) which must approve the consolidation in order for it to move forward, and the opportunity for landowners to weigh in on a parcel tax levied in order to cover the additional funding our Fire Department needs. We expect the entire process to be completed within a year.

15. Question: Why do we need a parcel tax to fund our Fire Department?

Answer: Our Fire Department needs additional funding to pay for 24/7 staffing and to cover equipment and facility expenses. The funds available from the City (and would commit to continuing under the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee) is insufficient to meet those needs.

16. Question: How much of a parcel tax would Sebastopol landowners be facing if consolidation moves forward?

Answer: If Sebastopol consolidates with Gold Ridge FPD, the existing parcel tax for all Gold Ridge FPD parcels would apply to Sebastopol. The current parcel tax for residential landowners is \$265 per parcel, plus \$100 for each additional unit on that parcel. There would be a process for landowners to contest the new parcel tax. Please see the Staff Report for details.

17. Question: Would it be less expensive to continue our own Fire Department rather than consolidate?

Answer: No, it would not be less expensive to continue to operate our Fire Department independently. The Fire Department needs more funding, no matter what happens with consolidation, for both 24/7 staffing and for equipment replacement and facility upgrades. Sebastopol Fire Department also benefits financially from shared

administrative and management services, and gives Sebastopol access to many additional resources that Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has because of its size and prior consolidations.

18. Question: Why does this decision need to be made now?

Answer: Our Fire Chief has announced his retirement, effective December of this year. Our Fire Department requires, and deserves, a plan for continued leadership. This recent development hastened the timeline and the need to move forward immediately.

19. Question: What impact would the proposed consolidation have on my homeowner insurance rates?

Answer: Insurance companies use data provided by a variety of sources to set insurance rates. As we have seen recently statewide, property owners in areas with high fire risks have seen increases in insurance rates, requiring the State Insurance Commission to take action. Sebastopol has enjoyed very positive ratings by these independent rating entities (some are non-profit, others are for-profit) and insurance companies have recognized the quality of Sebastopol's fire protection services evidenced by low fire insurance rates. The proposed consolidation would change nothing about the existing infrastructure that the rating companies analyze: the centrally-located fire station would not move (it would actually be improved) and the comprehensive hydrant network would remain in place, fed by Sebastopol's reliable water delivery system. The changes would likely improve Sebastopol's ratings due to the faster response allowed by 24/7 firehouse staffing and the additional resources devoted to equipment and apparatus improvements.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I wanted to emphasize that although I presented these questions and answers, every single one was vetted, reviewed, and approved by every single member of this ad hoc committee.
- That means our City Manager/Attorney, our Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, me, Mayor Slayter, and our Fire Chief Bill Braga.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- Just emphasize a couple of high points.
- I think one important thing to remember is we, and this can't be emphasized enough, I think we are at the beginning of the process. Tonight is not the end of the process.
- We're not here looking to finish it and get approval of something. We are here at the beginning of the process.
- All the due diligence that went before was to try and determine what process makes the most sense for this City at this point in time. But we are in the beginning of that process.
- There still has to be a lengthy negotiation that would take place between the City and the board of the fire district.
- Hopefully through a committee that would meet together and discuss the points of a potential agreement.
- There has to be a rather elaborate two-part process that is going through with LAFCO, as described in the staff report.
- Finally as Councilmember Rich discussed, we would go to the public for a protest hearing.
- If a sufficient protest were lodged, then potentially an election.
- So there's a whole lot of process, all of it, in fact, to take place in the future with regular reports out in public.
- As to the progress of that work and the process would take most likely a year to complete.
- The other thing I would like to propose or mention is, why are we talking about this at this point in time?

- We are at a crossroads. Our long-time Fire Chief, Bill Braga, who I have worked with for years and years, has announced his retirement.
- We have to determine in the near term what is the future of our Fire Department?
- Are we going to recruit a Fire Chief to replace Bill?
- Are we going to go a different direction.
- This committee is reporting that they believe we should go in a different direction.
- But we are at a crossroads where a decision has to be made.
- Why are we so concerned?
- Well, a few years ago, the Fire Chief brought a chart to my office and I couldn't believe what I was looking at.
- This chart showed the increases in calls per service per year, and it was a dramatic bar graph going straight up in terms of the amount of calls that our Fire Department were receiving on a yearly basis.
- With the same staff, the same number of volunteers. The same apparatus. Everything the same.
- Fire calls were going up dramatically, and that has increased every year since Fire Chief Braga showed me that graph.
- Those calls have increased every year.
- Discussed response times with the existing personnel that we have, with our list of fine volunteers, there is no way for this to go except our response times have been increasing.
- We have been taking longer to get to the scene, and that has been increasing along with the bar graph showing the increase in number of calls.
- If you consolidate with a fire district the size of Gold Ridge, you are taking advantage of all their volunteering.
- You are taking advantage of their various types of equipment.
- They have a vast amount of equipment far more than we have.
- We're taking advantage of their paid employees and volunteers.
- It enhanced opportunities, because they will be able to volunteer wherever Gold Ridge serves.
- So these are more opportunities for our volunteers.
- But at the same time, our citizens can take advantage of what Gold Ridge brings to that service in our City, which will greatly reduce response times, make better use of equipment, have the right equipment show up in less time, with more staff to drive it and service it and use it.
- I can't see anything negative about it, except that, frankly, it will cost a bit more to have this service.
- That's why there will be a protest hearing near the end of the process where our citizens will be asked to approve a parcel tax.
- But we will have an advantage, as well.
- Each year we budget about the same amount of money or more for our Fire Department.
- We will be able to negotiate an agreement with the Gold Ridge fire board, which will allow us a safety net in the event our revenues decreased.
- There are a number of imaginative things we can do with our budget to safeguard our citizens against declining revenue like we did experience during the pandemic and yet keep our service 100% top notch.
- So we have more opportunity for our imaginative budgeting on our end.
- We have more resources. We have faster response times.
- Yes, there will be a price to pay for that.
- But we're here, asking the City Council to approve going forward, beginning that process, and continuing that process hopefully to a combination or consolidation with this district.
- Consolidation is the future, the future is now. This is what is happening. It's happening because it makes sense.

- It's happening now because of the challenges and budgeting that we have faced across fire service up and down the entire state.
- We need to address it.
- That's why we're here with a sense of urgency, asking the Council to give the green light to go ahead and begin this process.

Fire Chief Braga commented as follows:

- I am going to share a different perspective.
- You heard a good report. You heard statistics.
- You heard the City Manager and I meeting together and working together over the years.
- But I need to share with everyone that this has not been an easy task for any of us. Including myself.
- I have given over half of my life to the Sebastopol Fire Department. I'm approaching 38 years before I retire.
- I wanted to be involved.
- I'm very passionate with the department.
- I reached out to the City Manager when I submitted my letter of resignation. I informed him I want to stay on. I want to help transition wherever we go, whatever decision is made. I want to be a part of that.
- This has been my life, and my first recommendation to the City was to replace me. It was to go out, recruit, interview, and hire a traditional Fire Chief like myself.
- I felt that that was the best and, and a level of service, I truly felt that was the way to go.
- But I also mentioned, and committed to the City Manager that if the committee decides to go on another route, another avenue, another decision point, that I would like to stay on and help that.
- I feel that I have the rapport with the volunteers, as I was a volunteer forever.
- I felt that I could work with the volunteers and work with whatever decision the committee came up with.
- I still feel that today. I still feel strongly on that today.
- Are we pursuing replacing my position with the City Fire Chief? No.
- That was not the decision of the committee. I still committed to the committee and to Larry that I wanted to stay on
- I guess I could pull up my retirement and leave early. But that's not me. That's not my personality. That's not my style. I want to remain involved.
- I'm sure there are some firefighters within my own organization that are not happy tonight.
- They weren't happy last Thursday night. I get that the. I understand that.
- I want to be there for them, and I want to work with them through this transition.
- If that means to bring out a couple of my senior officers to join our team, to join our committee, to work with Gold Ridge, to work with their team for a smooth transition, then that's what we need to do.
- That's what I'm going to be doing hard for, from this day on.
- We need to pull in representation from the volunteer rank, so they know that they're being represented.
- There will be no question that in their minds whatever milestone we reach, or whatever decision we make, it also included the representation within our Fire Department.
- That is so important.
- I did want to share with you my personal feelings, and I think we can make this happen, I think we can make this work.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- Thank you, Chief.
- Your perspective is unique, and deeply, deeply appreciated.

- Not only tonight, but through the work of the committee over the past, well, several years honestly.
- The process the City Manager/Attorney I think alluded to Councilmember Rich, sort of briefly discussed the process. The way that the nuts and bolts of a potential consolidation often times the question is, well, what happens to the apparatus?
- What happens to the equipment? What happens to the firehouse? Those are all extremely important questions.
- It calls into question ownership. It calls into question control. All of those things are extremely important.
- We do not have answer to those questions this evening because what will potentially be undertaken is a negotiation.
- It's the same process that we have seen reported in the Press Democrat over the past couple of years, there the County's process of consolidating small fire districts for effectiveness reasons given the state of our dry world these days.
- So that negotiation as Councilmember Rich began to introduce, would be through the formation of a Council ad hoc with a different path than the committee that's providing this report tonight.
- That is up for discussion with the Council, once we get to discussion.
- I wanted to make sure I mentioned it at this point for everybody who is in attendance to have a sense of what that looks like.
- That's something that happens in parallel to the County process with LAFCO and with anything that might land on a ballot.
- Councilmember Rich described it. That process is laid out in detail in the staff report and I encourage anybody with a question about that process to look at the staff report and learn what the step by step requirements of that are.
- As the Fire Chief said, we are incredibly indebted to the experience of our volunteers.
- We enjoy incredible depth of knowledge in the volunteer ranks here in Sebastopol.
- We have centuries of experience in fire services there. For the committee to not be able to lean on that experience would be a mistake.
- That's kind of where we as a committee, are sitting.
- I would like to do actually now is ask Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary like to give a brief introduction ever about what Gold Ridge fire district is all about.

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- I want to refer to my memo.
- I think the closing statement is something we all need to keep in mind here.
- I'll just acknowledge the working relationship that Sebastopol Fire Department and Gold Ridge fire district already have and what we're exploring is the opportunity to expand on that.
- I acknowledge that just the conversation alone warrants and has a strong emotional response.
- I think it's a testament to the pride and accomplishment of the Sebastopol firefighters.
- It's natural to respond in that way.
- The reason we're pursuing or even having this conversation is because we seek mutual benefit to both the City of Sebastopol and the Gold Ridge fire district and we see of an opportunity to strengthen the volunteer corps.
- The guiding principle is the use and value of the volunteers but acknowledge difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers and the change in our community, the need for more service.
- We also experience the growth in call volume.
- It's ultimately acknowledging that there is going to be a challenge ahead of us to make this work and understanding the emotional response to it.



- We also believe that it's a worthy undertaking.
- Ultimately most important outcome ever consolidation is that both fire agencies are strengthened and ultimately we look forward to being able to provide a better level of service to our community.
- Also acknowledge that I see Sebastopol as my community subpoenas the outlying areas that Gold Ridge serves.
- That's our interest and where we're coming from and entertaining this conversation.
- One other point it's been acknowledge a number of things I've shared with you is ultimately the importance of the inclusive conversation and having a consensus.
- We can't be successful without the input of the members of Sebastopol Fire Department.
- We need to lean heavily on the years of that experience and the retiring Fire Chief.
- These plans and next steps will not be made in a vacuum without input.
- I won't entertain the idea of moving forward without the inclusion of the members of the Sebastopol Fire Department.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- Thank you, Chief.
- So at this time since a lot of folks don't necessarily understand the geography and the way a special district works I'm going to ask our City Clerk to share screen with the Gold Ridge fire district map boundaries.
- I think this will help sort of make more clear what the district looks like geographically.
- What we're looking at is you can see the City of Sebastopol is up there underneath the arrow just about.
- The yellow area is the region of the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.
- The way that the district surrounds the City, more than half the bounds of the City are adjacent to the Gold Ridge district.
- It was a really good reason for us to identify Gold Ridge for all the other reasons, this is yet another one -- the geographic adjacency.
- The need for mutual aid and the support of each other's fire suppression efforts between the City of Sebastopol and Gold Ridge as the chief just noted, that's something that has gone on forever, for decades.
- Relationships that already exist.
- The way a special district works is it mass a boundary and everybody within the boundary is responsible for the operation of the district.
- It's the same as school districts, where if you think about, say West County High School district, that's not a part of the government of the City of Sebastopol.
- All the small school districts are governmental entities unto themselves and that's the same with a fire district.
- Almost always you end up with districts that are school districts that are different than fire protection districts are different from water treatment districts, are different from health care districts.
- So it's a matter of overlay and boundaries.
- So in this case we are looking at the boundary of the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.
- If you look at the map of Sonoma County Fire that's much larger.
- For folks who may not understand Sonoma County Fire is a special district it's not the County of Sonoma.
- That was part of the efforts that the County undertook following the fire storms that we have experienced recently.
- I think that that is probably enough introduction, that's probably too much introduction.

Mayor Slayter asked for questions of the presenters/staff.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I want to thank you for such a lengthy report on what you've been doing.
- It's been a very diligent effort for the last year.
- I appreciate your leadership coming forward with the recommendation that I think takes quite a lot of courage in in community to suggest change, because we so easily offer resistance to any idea in our community.
- But I do have this concern. We are a four-member Council tonight.
- This is a significant shift in our priorities, in our way of living, in our community values.
- I'm wondering if there is some sense of urgency about tonight and the proposed time line that means we cannot wait two weeks or a month for Councilmember Glass to be present to have a full Council discussion?
- I understand the Chief's commitment to become involved and that he has a time line.
- We have the time line of the process that's been suggested.
- But I don't see anything that says that timing is vulnerable to a two-week or four-week delay to include all Councilmembers and also to allow the public to digest this information further.
- Can somebody help me understand that better?

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- For agenda setting this was a meeting that appeared and is due to the design to have a good space for this item.
- The fact that we are not a body of five is unfortunate but it's also something that could not be avoided.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- Councilmember Glass was aware of this upcoming issue that this City Council would address.
- There is nothing that indicates to me that she could not have attended.
- She has access to our City Manager/Attorney and to our assistant City Manager/City Clerk
- I have not heard any hesitation through them.
- I asked them to please let us know if they have heard any concerns from Councilmember Glass.
- We are moving forward with an effort that benefits in community at a pace that benefits this community.
- If I were not present at this meeting or at any other meeting where this City Council was taking on an important issue, I would not want our City Council to delay.
- I think that our Councilmember Glass has the same ethical commitment, has the same expectation.
- I do not feel any hesitation, to be perfectly, in moving forward as a City Council on this issue tonight.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- Thank you for your responses.
- That didn't answer my question was about urgency.
- What is two weeks or four weeks but I appreciate the remarks.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I'm happy to respond to the urgency question.
- There is a time line for every process.
- There is a decision-making time line.
- We have been presented with cogent, complete recommendations.
- We have the Fire Chief from Gold Ridge Fire Protection District present in our meeting here.

- We have many members of the public who are prepared to comment and to provide their input and to get our decision.
- So the urgency is a matter of moving forward on a time line that has already been established to benefit our commune.
- I see no benefit in waiting for a month or for any period of time.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- The only thing I was going to comment on and what I might have heard this already is that our upcoming agendas are packed.
- They are packed just like the agendas we were experiencing prior to this City Council meeting.
- For some reason this meeting had ended up with enough room for in item.
- Frankly, I was surprised and glad to see that this item could be added this evening without too much worry about the 10:30 time line appearing.
- But the next agenda is packed, following which we anticipate bringing the budget to the City Council.
- We are also trying to schedule closed sessions with the City Council because of ongoing labor negotiation.
- Frankly I don't know of a better meeting agenda wise to deal with this than the meeting we're sitting at right now.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- What are the budgets for both departments
- How are Board of directors assign by previous fire districts prior to merger and areas related to them, similar to any kind of other district elections like with our high school district
- I'm curious about if we go down the path of merger with negotiations and we don't get along, what our path to get off the train would be.
- Because we're going to want certain things.
- Maybe we don't want to merge if they don't want to grant us those things.
- I'd like to know why a consultant wasn't retained when we had budgeted \$60,000 in budget for a fire consultant that could possibly help us from a professional viewpoint of answer some of the questions in moving forward.
- Is that a possibility if we go in this direction to have some assistance with vetting this concept?

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- So starting off with number one, you stated the Sebastopol Fire Department budget.
- We know that number.
- The Gold Ridge budget is noted on the Gold Ridge website.
- But I will also ask the chief to jump in if he can help answer that question and as well as answer the question about the board of directors and the makeup of that.

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- We're going through our preliminary budget right now.
- We're running close to \$5 million just slightly over \$5 million.
- So if you look at it as per staff station it's roughly \$2.5 million to staff.
- Then third station of course supporting volunteers.
- The proposal initially presented it would bring nearly a similar amount to staff Sebastopol.
- So the board of directors, they are elected at large throughout the district.
- I'll have to do some research in regards to the consolidation and how the seven board members are formed and get back to you.

Vice Mayor Hinton questioned what's their term for board members?

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented four years.

Mayor Slayter commented I'll go to the City Manager for the question about what happens if we want to get off the bus halfway through negotiations and also expand on the question and say what if five years down the road the City of Sebastopol decides they don't want to be part of the district any more and can you help us understand what did he attaching from the district might entail?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- Chief Schroth-Cary may know since he dealt with LAFCO better than we do.
- But it would probably require some other new additional reorganization of some sort, what would be the legalities of that to unconsolidate?
- I've never looked into that.
- I don't know offhand but I imagine it's a LAFCO process.
- The probably the word would be to detach Sebastopol from the district boundaries?

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- I briefly discussed the option or ability to undo a consolidates.
- In the case ever special districts it's much more difficult in the case of a City there is an exception on rule that basically allows that to happen and we'd have to refer to Mark Brandt at LAFCO to get a better answer.
- But it is possible. Uncommon but possible.
- It's unique to cities and districts consolidates.
- Whereas two special districts it would be much more difficult.
- But there is that option for a City.
- The original question of what if we get halfway down the route towards a consolidation and come to loggerheads and can't agree on something.
- That would certainly be a simpler process to reverse from than should the consolidation be approved and go forward five or ten years down the road trying to detach if we're not consolidated yet that would be a much easier reversal, I assume.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- I keep emphasizing this is the beginning of the process.
- We have had some conversations obviously as the staff report alludes to with Gold Ridge about them providing interim services with the retirement of Chief Braga.
- Depending where things go apart whether the negotiations or agreement fell through or there was some other issues that developed, I imagine we would have to work with Gold Ridge on some transition.
- If I had to do it today, I think the plan would be to recruit a Fire Chief and continue with operation of our Fire Department, because, frankly, only consolidation with Gold Ridge really made any sense, which is what the committee has mentioned several times.
- We don't really have a plan B to that.
- I think it would be plan B would be to go back to full operation of our Fire Department per present day.

Mayor Slayter commented the final question from the Vice Mayor that there was a line item for a consultant and I thought it was less than the \$60,000 figure.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I want to recognize that the Vice Mayor certainly respects the need to not aspen money unless it's necessary.
- So, yes, there was money budgeted for a consultant for this purpose.
- What we discovered as we started through the process was that in order to do our City Council work diligently we ended up having to do a deep dive ourselves into all the various issues in order to inform ourselves.
- There was a certain point where we realized we were basically gathering with the assistance of Chief Braga and of course City staff, our City Manager, we were in effect gathering all the information that we would need to be pulling from a consultant anyway.
- So that was our conclusion. We gathered the information. Were able to do the analysis and the comparison with our existing resources. Came up with the recommendation that you see before us.
- That was the only reason.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- Did you guys consult with other neighboring Fire Departments?
- I know that when myself and Councilmember Glass made up the original committee that I might want to add for the public, it was originally called the Fire Department long-term staffing goals and solutions subcommittee.
- So we got a number of calls from the public that said, whoa, where did this come from?
- I'm like from 2017.
- I had to say that out loud.
- At that time we had and so another little follow-up is have we talked to other neighboring departments at all to see if there is any other appetite to do this with somebody else as well as us

Mayor Slater commented as follows:

- We did have meetings with Sonoma County fire protection district.
- There were specific conversations that one or more of the ad hoc committee members had with that fire protection district in terms of the other fire protection districts that might have been candidates for consolidation we relied on the information of our Fire Chief Bill Braga, who we felt was fully aware of what those fire districts might offer to us and how they might compare to the two we specifically gathered information from.
- I think that's my summary of where we went with that topic.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- We were fortunate that we had Bill Braga on the ad hoc committee.
- Because he was a voice for the needs of the volunteer firefighters.
- As he said, he spent half of his life doing fire service in Sonoma County.
- So we relied on him and screened our ideas on that topic and narrowed the fire districts with whom we directly spoke based on that information.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- The only thing I was going to add to what Councilmember Rich just said was in these meetings we had extensive documentation from the people we were meeting with, especially from Sonoma County fire district about the situation throughout the entire County, the situation and staffing, and governance and budgeting of all the other fire districts consolidation, consolidated or not or in the process of being

consolidated, as Councilmember Rich also alluded to, this was basically the information we would have received from undoubtedly an expensive consultant.

- We got it free of charge through spending hours receiving reports and asking questions of the experts in this County who know fire service throughout the County and are aware and were aware of the situation in all these other fire districts.
- We got that information through them. It was a lot of information
- I think it's probably better or at least as good as anything, in my opinion that we would have gotten from a consultant.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I appreciate the questions that have come in because they somewhat handle my concerns somewhat.
- The one that the Vice Mayor asked was about the off ramp if we're going down this road and it doesn't work out, what is the off-ramp.
- I'm understanding that better also.
- The remarks from our City Manager, getting to the volume of information and there sort of is no plan B I'm going to make in comment and see how it may have been a question.
- I want to ask sort of in a parallel scenario, if we had a fire ad committee coming back and we may some day a staffing ad hoc committee coming back talking about reorganizing staff of the City.
- Reorganizing City Hall moving people around changing facilities, I would expect to see some specific financial analysis.
- I mean spreadsheets are something hard I could look at and question line items on.
- But what does this mean compared to whatever this is here?
- I would want that spreadsheet to have option one plan A, plan B, plan C, plan D, so there was the whole play of information on the choices considered so I could understand the fiscal impact of a crisis.
- Because the Council is being recommended to go down a road without really knowing for certain what the financial impact might be.
- So I guess the question is about where is the workup on plan B, plan C, plan D?
- Our City Manager has just said there is a whole lot of information.
- But I don't see it. But I can't share it with the public and I can't point to something and say this is why it's a good idea or bad idea or why it costs too much or money we don't have.
- I was a little startled by the report that it didn't have a workup from Administrative Services or some kind of what might be the budget subcommittee or some kind of budget analysis to the different options in front of us.
- I understand and I do respect the committee for doing the work it's done.
- I'm just a little uncomfortable with the work product that's made public right here.
- So help me understand how it is that we're missing plan B and C and that financial analysis?
- Maybe you'll answer the question by saying what you did and the numbers you crunched.
- I would like it in the public record so it doesn't be behind the curtain on or whatever is the expression.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- One of the things that I subsequently appointed committee would do would be to start addressing the very questions you are answering.
- To what extent would we be spending City budget money for the support of this consolidated prior district in the future?
- The figures you're talking about this committee is actually supposed to develop and negotiate and develop those figures and also potential procedures in the event City finances take a reverse in upcoming

years, what happens in knows circumstances, because the consolidated fire district has to be supported not just by a parcel tax.

- It has to be supported and would be supported by continuing City expenditures and budgeting yearly and expenditures for support of this consolidated fire district.
- We have the actual figures. I got a pile of figures over here.
- But we cannot presuppose or prejudge where those negotiations would take us in terms of the financial support.
- That has to be developed in the committee.
- It's possible the committee won't end up liking where it ended up and might return and say there are budget consequences to the City that then the committee feels uncomfortable.
- Or you'd be returning with a success story and showing that actually City budgeting process in the future is going to benefit from this relationship which is where we think it's going to go.
- But we can't forecast those things because they are a matter of negotiation.
- Because at the same time you are negotiating future financial support for the district, you're also negotiating a long list of things such as who owns the fire building, who pays to maintain the fire building.
- Who owns the fire engine X who pays to maintain fire engine X, et cetera.
- So you actually have to develop these through negotiations.
- That's why at the onset I said the most important thing to remember in in my view is we are at the beginning of a long process we're not at the end.
- We're not giving you the final chapter of the story.
- We're asking to you begin at the beginning.
- We have a lot of dollar figures we really do but I don't know that they could have been displayed meaningfully to the Council without knowing what is negotiated in the future.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I appreciate that answer from the City Manager.
- It's good to have that as part of our public meeting.
- So our public when they have a chance to speak can comment on this expansion of the information.
- I have another concern and that is this shift in community culture and apparent shift in community values.
- We have heard I would say almost exclusively from people resistant to this exploration.
- I want to adhere to the existing model.
- I may be misinterpreting their remarks but it seems to me that is the passion and emotion in our community.
- Both of our Chiefs present this evening have spoken to this proposal being an emotional issue, and also spoken to their respective commitments to working with the volunteers to makes this successful.
- I just have to say were I volunteer I would be feeling like I was going to get counseled into accepting something whether I wanted it or not.
- It's a little difficult for me to understand that's not true because I know your hearts and minds are in the right place, both chiefs.
- The message seems to be we'll bring you onboard regardless your feelings right now.
- I don't think that is a successful approach.
- I wonder if there is a process that can include more involvement by our volunteer firefighters, our public and the people sending us long e-mails and detailed e-mails.
- What does the ad hoc committee think about opening up this public process to include more like of a townhall format or some outreach in addition to what's happened?

- Because it's a concern I hear. This is emotional.
- But you just can't talk people around into what you want to do.
- They have to come there with their own heart and commitment on their own volition.
- I'm worried about that. I'm worried about that for us.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- As was the ad hoc concerned
- Format of bringing this agenda item versus having townhalls online, with is less than ideal, and just about every way.
- I don't think anybody would argue with that.
- The ad hoc we did sort of struggle with that as to what should our process look like?
- In so many ways this is an emotional decision but it's also a data decision.
- As the City Manager just spoke about there is nothing hard and fast about it at this point.
- So it's difficult to share the data that we have, because it almost invariably is somewhat inaccurate.
- That's not fair to anybody either.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- What I'd like to say is that we all recognized Mayor Slayter and I we when met the volunteers and prior to that last Thursday night we all recognized the need moving forward for the volunteers -- and you hear it from the Gold Ridge Fire Chief here tonight -- the need for the volunteers to be part of the process moving forward.
- The consolidation recommendation, it remains a solid recommendation from the ad hoc committee.
- You asked earlier about what is the need for urgency?
- I figure in May having faced all of us various fire seasons and various emergency seasons, knowing that our response times are increasing, knowing that our medical calls are increasing, and I feel a need after spending so much time looking into this deeply to move forward and to have this process serve the people of our town.
- The way I align the volunteer interest with that goal is by recognizing as the Gold Ridge chief recognized, that the volunteers have got to be involved somehow in a formal way with the process moving forward now that the consolidation discussions would be if supported tonight, actually continuing in a concrete way.
- So that's my answer to the hard piece.
- The hard piece and the emotional piece is let's hear the volunteers, their request.
- Let's respect Gold Ridge's commitment to engaging the volunteers given his knowledge of this group, and make it a success story going forward.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- I heard Chief Schroth-Cary say that they would offer us some support. I didn't know exactly where he was going with that.
- Obviously if we're going to become partners that makes sense.
- But with Chief Braga's comment of I want to stay involved. Obviously Chief Braga doesn't retire until the end of the year and Gold Ridge providing support, is that a vision that people would see as an overlap?
- Or and see a solution that in the year long process our Chief retires that they would have an interim chief possibly to help us in the process.
- I wanted to ask that question it wasn't fully vetted so I didn't fully understand it.
- Discussed school merges: They did a study when my kids went to Parkside with possibly a merger and I recall the study everybody got paid a different things thing.



- Maybe there is different volunteer stipends and differentials and all that.
- Is there someone or should we be considering hiring someone
- We didn't have to spend the money on the consultant yet.
- Maybe we should somebody analyze that kind of stuff for us moving into this process.
- I'm curious what more the fire people or the people that have been through this in the room would say to that.
- Because it does seem like a complicated process. To get everybody kind of on the same page.
- So how is it normally done

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- This has been only really briefly discussed in regards to how we could support Sebastopol through this transition, and I'd utilize one of my battalion chiefs.
- But this cannot be done without the tremendous amount of talent and expertise resides in Sebastopol.
- My thought is that it has to be inclusive of the leadership at Sebastopol Fire Department and a consultant or a member of the Sebastopol Fire Department that could help in that manner would be invited to do so.
- But this is not an undertaking that is just something we can facilitate alone.
- It has to be inclusive of the talent that resides within Sebastopol Fire Department, including Chief Bill Braga, Jack, Steve and the list goes on
- I'm not meaning to leave anybody out.
- It's worth acknowledging that expertise which you have tonight.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- The second part of the question relates to stipends and how you recognize and reconcile the differences between the districts our volunteer firefighters here and knows firefighters at Gold Ridge
- I don't know whether there are large differences, small differences only, or no differences.
- But that's one of the first things you have to explore, I'm sure, in in negotiation that takes place.
- You have to find a way to reconcile that.
- But I look at that as one of the long list of duties, jobs challenges, whatever you want to call it that have to be addressed.
- We're talking about consolidating with a fire district that's been through the process before.
- We're fallout talking about consolidating with somebody for which this would be brand-new.
- So I'm sure we can address those. But we have not examined whether there is an extensive amount of differences to be reconciled or not.
- I mean, it's a small fire fighting world out there. I'll bet the differences aren't that great given we are literally surrounded by Gold Ridge, as you saw in the map.

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- Everybody is acutely aware of the differences at least in the labor force.
- These are all things that need to be negotiated.
- But I want to point out it part of the LAFCO process specifically to labor and the effects on labor.
- S that would be vetted and identified in the plan of service that would go to the LAFCO application process.
- We can't get past a number of these steps and a number of these questions without going through that process and vetting all these questions.
- The LAFCO won't allow us nor should we. It's, again, important to remember this is a process and a lot of the questions are conceptual at this point.

Mayor Slayter called for a break at 8:45 pm and reconvened the meeting at 8:56.

Mayor Slayter opened for public comment.

Lucas Myers commented as follows:

- I'm a firefighter with Sebastopol Fire Department.
- The ad hoc committee is telling you that the firefighters were represented in the negotiations thus far.
- The firefighters are telling you that we have not been represented.
- That's not just me speaking.
- I would point to the memo released by Mike Simpson, the of the of the Sebastopol firefighters foundation. In it he states that we were not represented.
- The feeling was at the meeting on Thursday we found out four hours prior that the ad hoc committee was going to be recommending that we consolidate with Gold Ridge.
- That was when the membership of the Sebastopol Fire Department found out.
- So needless to say that was a tense meeting because we were basically blindsided with that.
- The ad hoc committee is willing to thus far alienate the membership of the Sebastopol Fire Department, which as several people mentioned has centuries of cumulative experience.
- We're talking about over three hundred years of cumulative experience.
- We are telling you thus far we feel alienated and are asking to be represented in the negotiations moving forward, the membership of the Sebastopol Fire Department, and if you don't do you risk alienating the experience putting the public safety of the citizens of Sebastopol at risk.
- At the end of the meeting, on Thursday, we specifically asked Mayor Slayter and Councilmember Rich if we could be represented moving forward in the negotiations to which they both said that we would not be represented in the negotiations moving forward.
- That's on video. I would ask the public to petition that that video be released and you can see for yourselves.

Kyle Falbo commented as follows:

- I'd like to recommend that our public and this ad hoc committee in particular look into the 2010, 2011 Santa Clara County civil grand jury report titled I'll be really clear about this so I it can gets in the minutes correctly "Fighting Fire or Fighting Change? Rethinking Fire Department Response Protocol and Consolidation Opportunities
- So in this document there is great discussions how shifting resources, changing skill mix and adopting other reforms can improve service, reduce costs and enable stations to remain open in spite of strained budgets.
- In this is conversation City Managers and Fire Chiefs agreed that fire department operations as currently configured are unsustainable. All agreed, in principle, that fire departments should rethink their response protocols—which are based on an historically fire-oriented model that does not match today's overwhelmingly medical-based demand for emergency services.
- City managers and Fire Chiefs generally agree that Fire Department operations has currently configured all agreed in principle that Fire Departments should rethink their response protocols which are based historically on fire-oriented model that don't match today's overwhelmingly medical-based demand for emergency services where firefighters are the first responders to a non-police emergency, providing paramedic support is needed and calling in ambulance for transporting patients to hospitals.
- So, in this, Sunnyvale, Palo Alto have slightly different service models.

- Imagine the cost savings there under a public safety department that operates under a single administrative structure.
- The department dual trains personnel in police and fire disciplines such that staff is functionally interchangeable rotation between police and fire duty is mandated on a periodic basis.
- All Sunnyvale are trained in basic life support and rely on counter-provided medical services, paramedic for advanced life and transportation.
- The City funds its own EMR staff and ambulance service which is operated on a fee recovery basis.
- Take a look at this document, look at the findings and recommendations before you provide and try reinventing the wheel just because it's the flavor of the month in consolidating fire districts.

Tina commented as follows:

- I came in tonight with not really a clear picture.
- So thank you for really explaining all your points of view.
- I'm a new resident. I didn't know you were working on this since 2015. That's a long time.
- So I came to say that out of deference to their experience and respect for their service, volunteer firefighters deserve a place at the negotiations table.
- All stakeholders do including a member of the public, especially if you need public approval for parcel tax.
- You need happy firefighters and public.
- There were lots of questions that you guys were asking the Councilmembers were asking, so it's no surprise that the public is a little confused.
- I go along with what Kyle just said, exploring other ideas. I'm not against the idea that you said.
- I think it's something that you do need to put on the table that everyone can discuss.
- But what about keeping them independent and having cooperation between the two?
- I saw the map and the rural area is very different, much bigger than the concentrated City area.
- But you could have a per incident compensation for another department like Gold Ridge to come in when there are major events.
- The calls that have been increasing for the Fire Department is because other social services budgets have been diminished and that doesn't come as any surprise to any of us.
- Just like Kyle said, use the people that you have, have cooperation.
- If someone needs to call the Fire Department because they need to get their cat out of a tree, that's ridiculous.
- We need other options. Mental health has skyrocketed.
- What about those people instead of firefighters coming as first responders?
- Those are my inputs. Thank you so much for listening. I appreciate it.

Jeanne Fernandes commented as follows :

- I'm a community member in the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.
- The reason I am listening to this tonight is because I'm wondering how it's going to affect me and how it's going to affect my neighbors with regards to response times if now we have added the Sebastopol City area into the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District, diluting the staff, I don't know if that's actually a good idea because I think it will dilute the response times as well.
- What does consolidating look like for current Gold Ridge fire services community members?
- If there's a parcel tax, it's going to be floated, are we in the Gold Ridge fire service area going to have to be expected to pay for that?
- What's the name going to be if we're going to decide that?
- Who's going to decide on that name?

- I really would like you to rethink your process here and consider taking a little bit of a step back just like Councilmember Gurney said and doing a little bit more work on this and looking into possibly a town hall so that you actually really involve members of both communities and members of both fire service.
- We have volunteers in both of those areas.
- This happened to be pretty big shock to a lot of people just at a very short time ago.
- Also, Councilmember Sarah Gurney, I really appreciate your comments with regards to a financial plan.
- I don't know how you could possibly put together this option and consolidate without having listed the financial impact that this would incur to the City and to Gold Ridge as well.

Omar Figueroa commented as follows:

- I'm a resident and business owner and parent all within City limits.
- I am heartened that members of the ad hoc committee have said that this is the beginning of the process.
- I believe we need to have public deliberations before we rush forward with anything.
- It's not a foregone conclusion that consolidation with Gold Ridge is the optimal solution.
- I would like to register my protest right now because it seems we're at a crossroads.
- What we need now is an interim Fire Chief in the year it would take for the LAFCO to complete the consolidation process.
- It's not automatic that consolidation is going to be better in every respect.
- There's a price to pay for consolidation, and that's autonomy.
- Are we not consolidate law enforcement next, like the City of Windsor, so that the sheriff is now providing policing for the City of Sebastopol? Because that's also more efficient?
- I don't really like not having our own Fire Department in Sebastopol the way we have.
- I think we need to support our volunteers, take their advice and their 300 years of experience into our deliberations.
- I also believe that Chief Braga wants to stay on and remain involved and create a smooth transition.
- The volunteer firefighters, they want to serve.
- There's a lot of questions that need to be addressed before a decision is made.
- What's going to happen to the fire house?
- We really need to figure out what is the urgency here.
- Why do we need to rush things right now when Councilmember Glass is not even here?
- This, to me, seems like top-down decision-making and really what we need is collaborative solutions.
- So I do support us having a town hall and having the community and the volunteer firefighters involved so that there's community buy-in for whatever the decision is.
- But I don't like the concept of basically telling us consolidation is the only way forward and there's no other solution, and we know better than you.

Mr. Marks commented as follows:

- there's a lot of talk about this ad hoc which has apparently been going for so long it's almost a standing committee, obviously working in concert with the outgoing Fire Chief.
- I would really urge people to read the public memo, which has been published on the Council website.
- I fully support that.
- I think it's incredibly important that we work closely with our volunteer firemen.
- of course it's very important for people to understand volunteer doesn't mean people that work at McDonald's and stop making French fries and get in a fire engine.
- These are highly experienced people who are currently being ignored to pursue this agenda.

- As far as the actual report out which supposedly didn't need any kind of consultants or professional help, it's probably been given as a very clumsy sketch of something or other, which isn't really backed up with any kind of data.
- For example, the City Manager was mentioning a report that he was shown by the Fire Chief months ago, where is it? I'd love to see that.
- What we really have is a very slick sales job and justification.
- One other thing I'd really like to say about the fire districts is that Gold Ridge and Santa Rosa and Sebastopol all work very, very closely together.
- some of our volunteer firemen actually work in those districts as well.
- So it's not as if we have these sort of unique little pockets of people in Sebastopol working in isolation.
- I think my last point while I've got some time is why are we having this mystery Council meetings where suddenly something pops up which we know nothing about which has been worked on for months?
- It makes me very, very angry.
- The City manager mentioned earlier that we have a packed agenda coming up in the future.
- I'd love to see future agendas so we can actually all do our prep work and actually be on the same page as the Council as they basically unpack all of these things and everybody doesn't have to drop everything and react.
- It's a very, very weird way of working.

Angela Ford commented as follows:

- I'm new to the topic. I just heard about it this morning.
- I'm sort of aghast, and yet I'm not surprised.
- Having been well ensconced in the six months just finding out about smart water meters emitting EMFs throughout our entire community just in October basically, it's the same kind of thing.
- It's sort of behind the curtain processes and obscurity and non-inclusion of citizen process and involvement.
- That is saddening to me.
- It saddens me tonight for the firefighters who serve us so well to have been so dissed in this way by our community.
- I understand Councilmember Rich's desire to get on with it, we've got to get on with it.
- But it's like there's also heart of our community, and we need to keep it.

Jill commented as follows:

- There's so much to unpack here.
- One thing as a community, I know that we all believe in science and data and we make decisions based on that.
- But yet where is the data tonight? We're told that there is so much data and it's just too hard to give to us.
- Where's the chart that City Manager McLaughlin and Chief Braga discussed - where's that information for the community?
- Just pulling us down the path is not the way to do this in a community.
- Furthermore, neither of the Councilmembers on that ad hoc committee are insurance experts.
- I know that for a fact. We all know that.
- So, to give advice to say that our insurance rates would not be impacted I think is way out of your lane in providing advice. It's just out of your scope of practice.
- I am not an insurance expert, but I have listened to insurance experts over the last month in a multitude of lectures, and every home buyer is now advised to call an insurance company and make certain that

they can actually insure their home all over Sonoma County right now because so many companies have left the County or are not writing policies.

- People in Bodega have actually had their policies cancelled because of the changes that happened with that Fire Department.
- The Gold Ridge ISO is 4 for response time. Sebastopol's is three.
- That is a figure that is utilized to determine premiums.
- I do not think anyone here is an expert to tell us that that won't impact it, and I think to say that you chose to do the work that a consultant would do is just disingenuous and it's not fair to any of the citizens here.
- Neither of you are fire fighting experts, nor are you insurance experts.
- I believe that we need to have a consultant, someone to come in and tell us what the options are.
- I think that what Councilmember Gurney mentioned was having options A, B, and C is important.
- I also think that it's important to respect our firemen.
- I watched the video and I did see where they were told that they would not have representation.
- You all know me and my integrity, and I saw it.

Linda Berg commented as follows:

- I'm very pleased that the public comments are many of them so far.
- Kyle, excellent points.
- I would like to see the data on the calls about how many of those calls on the graph on the line that went straight up are medical calls.
- So, good point in Omar and many of you are making very good points.
- I'd just like to say that the thing about the sheriff's department coming in and trying to contract with the City of Sebastopol for police services has already been done about eight years ago or so, they had the nerve to come here and actually pitch the idea of the sheriff's department as anybody that's really had much to do with them, practice systemization and coming over and taking over our wonderful law enforcement services.
- So, it's the same kind of a thing where people are trying to tell us what we need and what we want.
- Councilmember Rich, I'm sorry to say, I lack a little bit of confidence in your services, so to speak, or your choices, especially you've done nothing, you said that you were going to get to the bottom of the thing about the wireless water meters.
- You have not, that I know of, have done anything to put the brakes on this \$2.2 million boondoggle that's going to cost us a lot more when we have to replace them because they're not going to work and they're hazards to our health.
- So, let's explore the other options.
- I'd like to see the Fire Department remain independent.

Lee commented as follows:

- Several people suggested that we take a step back.
- I think that the public would benefit greatly from an outreach effort to understand the proposals that were a part of this decision-making and some of the rationale for how we ended up at Gold Ridge.
- I understand, for example, that one of our issues is an aging population with a lot of medical calls.
- The Sonoma County fire district has a different model than Gold Ridge where they actually put ambulances into the fire houses.
- I understand they also have a contract now with reach or will shortly have a contract with reach for helicopter evacuations which might be attractive to people in Sebastopol who are quite a ways from a trauma center.

- I think Chief Braga proposed a go-it alone proposal that gets to much the same goals at a lower cost in large part because we have a very effective volunteer effort here now.
- So that would be interesting, I think, to people as well.
- There are other facets to this that might change in discussions with the public and with the volunteers themselves.
- I think there's also an elephant in the room, which is equipment and station repair costs, which have been ignored for years now.
- We've got aging equipment. We've got this station that needs quite a bit of repair.
- There's nothing I've seen that explains where that money is going to come from and where how we're going to fund it.
- Gold Ridge is now about to embark on providing administrative support to 15 fire companies throughout West County, I believe.
- Do they really have the administrative capacity to also take on this consolidation effort at this point? Or is that going to be a challenge?
- Where is the Chief's salary going to go if in fact we need to take a step back or this takes longer and we need to fund a chief or we have anything in the budget.

Michael Carnacchi commented as follows:

- This gives up our 100% of the City's Fire Department to become one board member of eight that will govern the affairs of fire protection in our community.
- Fire protection for the citizenry of Sebastopol is now governed by five seats on the City Council.
- Why trade five seats as a whole body to become one of eight?
- With consolidation, Sebastopol's control of fire protection for her citizens will be reduced from 100% to 12.5%.
- Then the issue of rushing this through.
- How does it sound to say that an issue as important as fire protection was rushed through without facts, data, or input from the volunteers because it does not fit in the agenda of our leaders.
- I mean, that just sounds like crap. It's terrible.
- I am with Councilmember Gurney and hopefully Vice Mayor Hinton on this in that you're going to vote no so that way it delays it and that we have the opportunity for our citizens to have some public meetings on this.
- If we're going to have a property tax, there should be the option, do you want a property tax and retain our Fire Department or do you want a property tax and join with Gold Ridge?
- I'm really hoping that we get two no votes on this and that will postpone this and that you will find time in your agenda, and that I am, number one, a member of the public that encourages the release of the video of the Thursday night meeting at the fire house with a transcript so that the citizens can see what transpired during that meeting.

Odie commented as follows:

- Councilmember Gurney questioned the transparency and urgency.
- I also want to only speak to that part of the transparency and the process and lack of transparency.
- Ad hoc committee met with the Fire Department. It was not until after the decision was made and posted to the public
- Councilmember Rich stated we wanted to keep it internal and not ask a lot of questions, so it was hard to get info.
- Mayor Slayter stated our data is inaccurate.
- These are both very concerning statements.

- Later on during Thursday night's Councilmember, by using Gold Ridge, we don't have to do administrative And responsibilities.
- At the end of the night asked many questions.
- The fire member asked are all of our questions concerning?
- Councilmember Rich stated, it's not concerning.
- As a firefighter and citizen, I ask the Council to say no to the vote tonight until better and thorough analysis has been completed or at least until full Council can attend.
- How can we say agenda schedule is the reason why we should vote tonight.
- I ask patience and a full analysis and conclusion of the public that can change the way we do business, change the way we protect our citizens and the way we support our community.

Rachel commented as follows:

- I'm coming in late to this because of some family commitments and driving the kids around.
- But from what I've read so far on the comments and read about online by going to the City's Website, this seems like a really bad decision, frankly, to consolidate Fire Departments and to maybe not replace the Fire Chief's position.
- It's really kind of crazy when fires are getting worse and worse every year, we know we're in a drought, we know how dangerous things are, that we're actually talking about shrinking our Fire Department by getting rid of the Fire Chief's position, and making things smaller.
- It seems like we should be expanding our money into the fire fighting services and expanding the head count of the people helping.
- I also can't believe they haven't reached out to the firefighters.
- It seems so disrespectful and get more info from them who put their lives on the line.
- So I hope that they certainly will not consolidate until they get more information and show more respect to the people who protect our community and who we all are so very thankful for.

Vail Bello commented as follows:

- I'd like to point out that I am married to a very former board of directors member of the Gold Ridge Fire Department and I've been a member of the Gold Ridge Fire Department since 1995.
- I understand there's divisiveness and hurt feelings, and I'm not going to pretend to speak for the other firefighters that I work with.
- But I will say this. In the 25 plus years that I've been exposed to the men and women of the Sebastopol Fire Department, not one of them has been anything but professional and an outstanding firefighter.
- I think that we've worked very, very closely with them.
- That said, I think it's important to know that Gold Ridge, in my opinion, this is just my opinion, hasn't gone after Sebastopol, hasn't made it a thing where we want to take them over where we want to just jump on and be involved in this thing.
- I think as somebody who's been on the front lines a lot with these guys, it's important for the citizens of this community that you understand what's at risk and response times and the involvement that goes along with that.
- This is an opportunity, and it's also the beginning of a discussion, not the end of it.
- For people who are reading from scripts, and I'm not, I'm talking from my heart.
- If you're scripted and you think that this is just going to be the end-all and catch-all, you're wrong and you should rethink this and let it be a process that goes on.
- I think it's important, again, to involve all the entities including the volunteers, especially the volunteers.
- They have a buy into it.
- To not do that is a mistake.



- If that hasn't happened, then it should be rectified.
- I thank you all for listening to me, and I wish you luck on this.
- We've moved to Montana, but we still care about the community and I've paid a lot of taxes there so I hope you guys do well.
- Good luck.

Mayor Slayter responded to public comments as follows:

- As Councilmember Rich and I have noted, the comment that the volunteer firefighters were not represented, Councilmember Rich responded to that, pre-responded in a lot of ways, that we did meet with the volunteer firefighters and they were also represented in every single ad hoc committee meeting through the chief, who is the department head.
- The comments regarding a shared public safety format and locally or regionally we have a model of that in Rohnert Park and the difficulty that the City of Sebastopol has with a model like that is size.
- Not saying that it wouldn't work, it would be for a City the size of us, it would be a pretty large lift given the difficulty that we're having recruiting even for one of these types of positions instead of two areas of expertise in two different areas.
- I had to chuckle about the cat removal from a tree. I agree that that is probably something that does not require fire services, but it always you see those pictures from time to time, and it always makes my heart smile just a little bit to see that.
- Question about how a potential consolidation would impact existing Gold Ridge district members, and is this a dilution of staff and would there be a change to the existing parcel tax.
- The first of those is the impact to the existing district members.
- There would be virtually no impact to existing district members with the exception of being able to have a greater pool of volunteers available to the district as a whole and the additional opportunities to existing volunteers and staff members at Gold Ridge Fire Department.
- Is it a dilution of staff? No.
- There would actually be additional hires needed to cover a potential consolidation and the coverage for the Sebastopol house.
- Any changes to the existing parcel tax?
- That is nothing that is part of this discussion.
- The existing parcel tax that Gold Ridge has is the existing parcel tax and the way that that would work is that it's up to the voters to say yea or nay and the staff report as I noted before outlines the protest vote and the process for that, if the protest vote rises to 25%, then it goes on a ballot and we all get to vote on it.
- But the actual amount, that would be another legal process to change that parcel tax amount.
- So that is something that is set and cannot be changed easily.
- That's nothing that's part of any of these discussions at all.
- A name of department or district, that is on our list.
- It shows up a couple of times in the staff report that branding and logos and name would be part of negotiations.
- There was a comment regarding hiring an interim chief now.
- We already have a Fire Chief, and it's not a good idea to have more than one person in charge.
- So, we have a Fire Chief, and the Fire Chief will be here until his retirement at the end of the year.
- There were a couple of comments about other consolidations that were potentially envisioned.
- The largest one, of course, would be that was mentioned is something that this Council has stated and previous Councils have stated repeatedly time and again over years and years.

- One of the very, very, very, very last things this community would ever want is a consolidation of our police department or a contract for services with some other entity to provide policing service in the City.
- That is not part of this proposal. I can say with certainty this Council would never even want to even think about. So that is not part of this. That is not something we're looking at. That is nothing we're interested in.
- There was a comment about insurance.
- The member of the public who discussed that was completely accurate that neither Councilmember Rich nor I, nor the member of the public, self-admittedly, is an expert in insurance.
- That's absolutely true.
- But that does not mean that I cannot learn and read and talk with folks and get educated about it.
- So, the way that ISO rating works is that the ISO is a for-profit company that provides ratings of Fire Departments for the use of those Fire Departments as proprietary information, and it's released only to the agencies that that rating is for.
- So, the statement that Gold Ridge is a 4 and Sebastopol is a 3, that is accurate, that is the current state of things.
- A little background about what the ISO rating actually is or what it contains.
- So there are a number of overall categories, emergency communications. That's basically, in shorthand, that's dispatch.
- The actual Fire Department which includes engine companies, pumpers, reserve pumpers, ladder service, ladder companies, personnel, training, operational consideration, so there is all those things that are in the Fire Department category.
- The first one, emergency communications or dispatch is a total of up to ten points on their rating system.
- Fire Department is up to 50 points of that.
- Water supply, which is available water supply at representative community locations, in other words, at the hydrants, flow testing and all that stuff.
- So water supply is up to 40 points, which is only ten points less than the actual operation of the equipment and the personnel and their training.
- Then community risk reduction is things like fire education, fire code, adoption, and enforcement and fire investigations.
- That is a total of 5.5 points.
- So the total, if some department scored 100% on all these, they could get 105.5 points.
- To break that down just a little bit more if you'll bear with me, is the personnel department or a category, which is an interesting one for me, because it looks at personnel and where they are and whether or not they are on call or on staff at the fire house full time.
- They look at time need for notification, travel and assembly at the fire location.
- That's up to 15 points.
- So, having a staff department is a big component to this.
- Then the other one that's important is the water supply system.
- So, the ISO's requirement is 250 gallons per minute for a minimum of two hours at a location.
- In our case that would be anywhere in the City.
- The lowest hydrant that we have is that it can flow 450 gallons per minute.
- So almost twice the requirement to max out those points.
- So we have approximately seven days of storage and supply at all times, as far as water goes.
- So, the change to the ISO rating after a conversation with the Western region government rep for ISO is, while at this point it isn't hard and fast facts because they haven't done their analysis and their rating, but

the likelihood is that going to a 24/7 staff department would actually improve our rating, not decrease our rating.

- So, apologies for the long explanation of ISO, but I felt that that was an important point about insurance that came up in a number of e-mails.
- I'll turn to the chief to talk about ambulance service and other potential benefits that would come with a consolidation to Gold Ridge.

Fire Chief Shepley Schroth-Cary commented as follows:

- Topic is one that's ever changing in the current environment.
- Currently Sebastopol and the bulk of Gold Ridge fire district sit within the exclusive operating area or franchise area that the County awards a contract for ambulance service.
- So, our ability to dive into transport services is debatable if we even have the legal authority to do that.
- But, otherwise, we fall under the company or agency that's awarded the exclusive operating area.
- So, we at Gold Ridge have enhanced the level of service through a contract with the exclusive operating awardee, AMR, but that contract is currently likely going to be extended.
- But then ultimately go out to bid in the next couple years.
- So it's a changing environment.
- The other option is to expand our level of service to include first responder paramedics, which is an option and something we've considered at Gold Ridge.
- But there's a number of challenges to that.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- Thank you for that.
- There was a question about existing Fire Department budget and what happens to the chief's salary.
- That is part of the total line item for the Sebastopol Fire Department, and the staff report has stated that the level of support that the general fund of Sebastopol that would need to be contributed to the operations of the Fire Department, or the fire house here in town, would remain the same, which would include the salary of the chief and that you can think of as still funding somebody to sit in the big chair, a battalion chief the City of Sebastopol station.
- The comment was regarding if this was a shrinking of the Fire Department and why aren't we expanding due to the current fire climate.
- That's exactly what we are proposing is an expansion of opportunities for the volunteers, opportunities for paid staff, and opportunities to better protect this community through a paid or through a 24/7 staffed fire house in its current location in downtown Sebastopol.
- So, it is in no way a shrinking of fire services.
- It is only an expansion of fire and emergency service provision.
- So those were the questions that I noted through public comment.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I'm going to step into the video questions and the video comments.
- I want to make this absolutely clear to the public.
- Mayor Slayter and I did not know we were being recorded.
- Now, this isn't my first rodeo. I'm a grownup, I don't mind being recorded.
- But I do absolutely mind being put in a position where individuals quote specific portions of a video and take those quotes out of context and do what we have seen others doing in a very unacceptable way.
- So let me address the couple of comments made here.

- In terms of our openness to having volunteers involved, and, by the way, those in the public who apparently have access to this video, which should be a two-hour video, I would invite them to send them to the City because we have not received that video.
- I would hope that the video would be a full two-hour video.
- In terms of the couple of items raised here.
- The one was that we indicated that we were not open to volunteers being involved in future discussions.
- Well, Mayor Slayter and I repeated many times that the idea of volunteer voices being involved moving forward was a really interesting idea to us.
- We said, of course, that that was not within our authority or power because we have not been appointed as the ad hoc committee that the City Council might select to move forward with negotiations.
- I'm sure that I expressed hesitation and that I may have at some point within that video, said, no, I don't see how that could happen.
- We did also say that we did confirm, and I will confirm here as a City Councilmember, that we were very interested in having the benefit of the expertise and the comments of the volunteer firefighters.
- As to the comment that we stated or that I stated specifically that I was not concerned after the comments had been shared with us, I did expand and say that it does not shake my confidence in the ad hoc's recommendation.
- But it does give us information to think about.
- So, please, to the extent that there's a video out there, everyone please make sure it's a two-hour video and make sure that you look at it in the context of the entire comments and the two hours that Patrick Slayter and I spent listening very actively to the volunteer firefighters who honestly we really value and respect.
- So that's the first piece on the video. Please, someone send me the link. I'd love to see the entire thing.
- As to the other comments that we've heard, I want to say first that they are really wonderful to hear.
- But what we're hearing from our community is the need to have more information, the need to have many, many questions answered, and our answer here to that is that this is the beginning of a process, that everything that everyone has said in this meeting today, the request that volunteers be included, the questions about insurance, the questions about volunteer issues, the facilities question, the parcel tax question, the naming, the branding, that is all of the issues that will be a package moving forward.
- All of those issues need to be addressed and sorted out.
- That's why this would just be the beginning, beginning of a consolidation discussion moving forward with a fire district that has committed to engaging with our volunteers and to making sure that they are engaged and that their voices are heard.
- You've heard the chief say that he doesn't see how this can work without the volunteers being involved and ready to move forward with the plan.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- I agree I'm a grownup, like you just stated and I understand the way things work.
- But, honestly, the lack of truth about the reason for that electronic device, I'll leave it there.

Fire Chief Braga commented as follows:

- This is not the time to debate or argue a point, but I must say that the very first thing that I asked the Mayor and the Councilmember was that we have firefighters that were zooming in, and I asked your permission before you made entry into the conference room, I asked specifically for your permission to have this videotaped through the Zoom, recorded through Zoom so it could be shared with the firefighters that were not available to attend.
- I'm sorry if there was a misunderstanding, but you acknowledged it and said absolutely you can do that.

- That was important for the firefighters to know that it was okay to do that, and it was important for it to be recorded so the firefighters would be able to watch it either that evening or the next day.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- Yes, thank you for clarifying that, Chief Braga.
- That's actually very reassuring. I did misunderstand completely. I don't recall your saying that it was going to be recorded.
- I did recall that you specifically said that there were two firefighters who weren't in attendance, and we definitely wanted to make sure that they could observe the meeting.
- As I said, I don't have a problem being videotaped. I would like to see the full video, and I completely trust your integrity, and if you are saying that that's what you said to us, then I absolutely believe it and I accept it, and thank you, thank you for clarifying that.
- I have to say it makes me feel a lot better about the situation and gives me a better sense of trust in the firefighter group. Again, someone please send me the link.
- Thank you, Chief Braga, for speaking up.

City Council Discussion and/or Deliberations:

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- I'm just going to go out on this one with some thoughts, and it might not be all my thoughts.
- But, first I want to thank my colleagues on the Council that have done this committee.
- They are certainly on the hot seat tonight. This is not an easy situation.
- We all live in this town.
- I also find it very disrespectful the screen that I'm watching when people are doing thumbs down, when people are speaking.
- I think that when you say you want respect, you also have to give respect.
- It's really difficult to be sitting on this City Council, which I'm a fourth generation here, I volunteer my time.
- I certainly don't make what I see many others in the City do.
- I don't even take health insurance. I make \$300 a month for my time here. So, I just have to say that out loud.
- There's a lot of people on this call.
- We all want what's best for our City.
- We have to be respectful and be able to voice different opinions and feel comfortable in that.
- Just because we're sitting in the elected seats doesn't mean we're higher or lower than anyone else on this phone call.
- So, I want to go out with that because it's been frustrating to sit here for the last two hours and not be able to say some of the things that I've been thinking.
- I also need to say, again, and I pointed out that I was on the original long-term staffing committee that started in 2017.
- We sat with volunteers. In fact, I took many meetings with volunteers from Sebastopol fire, everyone that wanted to meet with me, I took one-on-one meetings.
- I sat with volunteer members that had feedback at the time that weren't in favor of consolidation.
- Some were in favor of consolidation.
- These were the topics we were discussing back before COVID.
- So I know that when the public comes in, sometimes they're, like, I hadn't heard anything about that.
- Before I sat on City Council, that was me. I didn't follow the City Council that closely until it impacted me directly, and then all of a sudden I was, like, why didn't I know?

- So, I also want to say that.
- There's volunteers on this call that know and that spoke with me about consolidation as a topic back in 2018.
- So, this is not a new topic. We have been discussing it.
- A member of the public said, oh, my gosh, we're going to give up control. I don't really see it as we either give control or we retain control.
- I think that it is the beginning of the discussion. I think that we're just starting here. I'm not in a rush.
- There's a catalyst that's driving this that's our chief retiring.
- That's why the discussion is back here at the Council level in forefront.
- Gold Ridge is our neighbor.
- We obviously have borders.
- We have supplied mutual aid as vail said there.
- I know you guys all know each other, all the volunteers.
- I think absolutely the volunteers should be involved in some way.
- I don't even know what that is.
- I am going to say I think I would be in favor about using that consultancy money and getting some assistance money here on next steps.
- I don't even know what that is, but this is a big move, and I think we need somebody that's neutral that doesn't have a lot of skin in the game one way or the other that's going to help advise this process for the public and for our community.
- We're not doing this to save money. The budget I'm previewing and I am on the budget subcommittee is actually higher proposed than it was last year.
- The chief's salary is still in the budget line item. So this is not about saving money.
- It's about really what I think I believe my colleagues, I believe the ad hoc committee, they're talking about providing stronger services, faster response times, consolidations happening all around us, not just with Fire Departments but with schools, with banks.
- I want to see those figures as well.
- That's why I feel like we might need to spend some consultant money on this.
- That's just what I wanted to come out with right now.
- I really need to thank my colleagues here for doing this base work and getting us at least to this point where we can start the conversation.
- As far as I'm concerned, that is what we're doing tonight is getting it, once again, started, not that it didn't start back in 2017 and '18, because it did.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I appreciate the Vice Mayor's comments.
- I agree with many of them, just to be briefer here, I have a question from those comments.
- It's just a question of timing.
- If the chief is retiring at the end of December and this year, how can we get through the LAFCO process by then?
- I don't think there's any way that we can.
- That itself might take a year, I would think.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- Perhaps that could have been worded a little bit better or it certainly could've been worded better.
- I won't even equivocate on that.

- The offer from Gold Ridge would be to basically provide interim chief or interim battalion chief to assist with the Day-to-Day operations of the department during that bridge period.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- We don't know how long that might last if it starts January 1st, 2023.
- Is that right? Am I understanding the time line?

Councilmember Rich commented it would begin long before the chief's retirement so that it was as smooth a transition as possible.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- What does long before mean?
- Two months overlap?
- What are we thinking here?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- Again, this is one of those items that needs to be negotiated if the City Council goes forward with the recommendation by whatever ad hoc committee is appointed to negotiate these factors.
- It's an excellent question, but a lot of it depends on the needs of the department, what works better for Chief Braga, what the experience is from Gold Ridge.
- A lot of variables. But the plan is to bridge that period of time.
- That's the proposal, part of it is the contract and Gold Ridge's willingness to do that.

Mayor Slayer commented that is the idea of the interim services, maybe our City Manager might have a better idea of how long LAFCO would take with this kind of question, this kind of issue before us.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- I did research that.
- It's in the staff report three to four months for the first part of the process, which is done by Gold Ridge and approximately six months, five to six months for the second part of the process, which is done by Gold Ridge but also requires a supporting resolution of the City Council.
- So you're sort of looking at best-case scenario time-wise might be eight to nine months. I said a year to be safe.
- So if the Council gave direction, for example, in this meeting, then we'd be looking at six months with our current chief.
- We'd be looking at doing a transition as we got into the late fall, early winter.
- I'm sure we'd be in a transition there as Bill stopped working every day and started doing good-bye parties.
- Then in the near future after that in the first of the year, we'd be looking at Gold Ridge providing those interim services probably the battalion chief level administrating from our fire house.
- We'd still be the Sebastopol Fire Department.
- Still at that point in time we'd have five or six months of process to go or more.
- But not a full year necessarily.
- If Gold Ridge started right away with the LAFCO process, the first step takes three to four months.

Councilmember Gurney commented I just thought you meant after that first phase one and phase two were done, it would take additional time. Am I wrong?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- No. But there are other factors you have to kind of hedge your time estimate there.
- Because if there's sufficient protest, there would have to be an election.
- So I assume the election would add further time to the process.
- We don't know obviously whether that would be necessary or not.
- So we're looking, to be safe, I estimate a year from whenever Gold Ridge begins the process and my understanding is they won't begin the process unless they have a commitment from the City Council that we can take the first step.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I have a follow-up question.
- If Gold Ridge starts the process, as you said, is our ad hoc committee participating in that process?
- In other words, are we represented through our ad hoc members in that process that Gold Ridge initiates with LAFCO?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- I don't think we're officially like a part of the process as far as LAFCO is concerned.
- We would be talking to Gold Ridge and meeting with them regularly, the ad hoc committee would.
- I'm sure that we would be following the LAFCO process closely.
- But the real purpose of the ad hoc committee is to negotiate all the various things on page 5 of 7 of the staff report and more.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- We don't know what we don't know.
- LAFCO, they've got three main reasons to exist, and it's to encourage the orderly formation of local government, agencies and districts, and through that to promote efficient provision of public services.
- So that's the one that we're interested in here.
- The other two anecdotally are to preserve agricultural land and open space resources and to promote orderly growth and discourage urban sprawl.
- That's the reason for LAFCO oversight are those three reasons.
- We all probably could've said that, but there we go.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- This is in negotiation so we're going to want things out of the negotiation.
- I wouldn't even know what to ask for because I'm not a fireperson.
- Our volunteers might want our name retained in some way.
- We have a lot of history in our Fire Department.
- Our volunteers might understand more about stipends.
- We might want to see if we can somehow get two seats instead of one seat on the board of eight.
- Where I'm kind of coming from and we're missing a Councilmember tonight, which does, Councilmember Gurney brought that up.
- It is a concern of mine.
- I knew that I don't think it wasn't planned that she would miss tonight when this agenda item, I don't believe, was set.
- I just wish she was here.



- I'm just wondering if there's a way that the subcommittee here could advise us or maybe we extend their work to get us to another spot where we can revisit this in July and get some more questions answered, get some more feedback from our volunteers in a respectful and kind of sharing information way on what we maybe should be negotiating for that's important to them.
- I do not think they are all opposed to consolidation.
- That's my take over just years of chatting with people at the grocery store.
- It doesn't feel good to me with the feedback we've gotten from the public since this is the first time we've been able to introduce this due to Brown act, which makes perfect sense in our world that we have to operate in, but I would like to maybe take some more time, get some of the questions answered before we just move off into another committee to make consolidation happen.
- I know agendas are full this month and June, it doesn't have to be June, it could be late July and when we all can also all five of us can weigh in.
- I think Councilmember Glass has a lot of feedback to the situation.
- She was involved in the first subcommittee
- I'm going to put that out there right at this point because I want to kind see where everybody else is weighing in.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- Thank you for that.
- What I am hearing over time is, and this came through with our meetings with the volunteer group, that additional resources are needed at the Sebastopol Fire Department.
- That's something I think everyone here, everyone there can agree on.
- Additional resources for fire protection are needed in the City of Sebastopol.
- I'll include that to emergency response.
- There was a question about what the call volumes are.
- I've pulled up the level of service report, which it's available on the City Website, just go there and in the search box type in "level of service." Then you can pick one from a number of years.
- I'm looking at the level of service report from, the most current one, which is 2021.
- In 2013, total calls for service at the Fire Department, 861.
- Then 1,055.
- Then 1,071.
- Then 1,150.
- Then 1,190.
- Then 1,306.
- So, that's the trajectory through the years. So, the increase in calls is hard data.
- We know how many calls have come in, how many calls have been responded to.
- We can also see that the overwhelming amount of them are medical and vehicle responses.
- So it's provision of emergency services, it's not just fire.
- That said, we all know that additional resources are needed.
- That's something we can all agree on.
- I think the other thing that we can all agree on is that the City of Sebastopol and the residents of Sebastopol would be better served, same group of volunteers, enhanced with a staffed 24/7 department with people always on duty at the fire house.
- It's difficult for me to imagine that we don't all agree on that, but maybe we don't.
- What I'm hearing from my colleagues, what I'm hearing from the community is more data.
- Let's see if that's actually something that makes sense.

- So, as a member of the ad hoc, I will float this idea that we use some of that budgeted money per the Vice Mayor's suggestion, that we try again, we tried to find a consultant, and they're not super easy to find.
- So, the need for additional consultancy to put together some of those data points, that may not be a bad idea.
- I mean, to me, it actually sounds like a pretty good idea.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I want to make sure I understand what is going on here.
- But first I'll express my opinion after having heard all of these comments and after having spent more than a year doing our inquiries.
- My thought in hearing Vice Mayor Hinton's suggestion was that we use this, I love the idea of using, of actually getting some money to apply to a consultant.
- My thought is why lose the benefit of the work we've already done.
- We do see a generalized support even from our volunteer firefighters for consolidation.
- There is a consistent message of we need to be involved, we need to be involved, we need to be part of the equation, we need to have our voices heard.
- Mayor Slayter and I both agreed after the Thursday meeting that there's expertise that the City needs to take advantage of.
- So, there seems to be a general agreement support for consolidation.
- There's a general recognition of the need to get more money in in order to do what we need to do, which is increase our responsiveness to the community, take care of equipment, take care of firefighters.
- We're now hearing this idea of a consultant.
- My thought would be go forward with what we know would be the beginning of a process.
- As we've said over and over, it's the beginning of a discussion about consolidation.
- Use consultant money in order to make sure that the City's interests are adequately represented in those negotiations, allowing the new ad hoc committee the access to those resources.
- Then make sure that that new committee reports back to the City Council on a regular basis.
- Because I see kind of a need for that, too, moving forward.
- So that's what I did like to see.
- Go ahead with the consolidation, but incorporate a consultant and require reports back to the City Council on a regular basis and require that the volunteers be engaged in a formal way, that takes advantage of their expertise and engages them in the process and doesn't leave them in the situation that they're feeling right now.

Chief Braga commented as follows:

- This is definitely going to be stepping outside of my box, stepping outside of my comfort zone.
- I have heard too many inconsistencies tonight during this presentation.
- I am no longer comfortable with this presentation.
- I am no longer comfortable with what we are trying to do for the volunteers.
- I have to speak my mind and my feelings.
- But I've heard way, way too many inconsistencies that does not bode well with me.
- I am respectfully stating that I am against this proposal tonight.
- We have so much more work to do, and you have highlighted some of those, and thank you.
- But our volunteer base, their voice needs to be heard.
- If I failed on that, then I need to correct that tonight.

- That is my correction to the volunteers.
- That is my statement to the volunteers.
- I am not supporting this proposal.
- I would vote no on this proposal.
- We are not ready to move forward on this proposal.
- When we do get back together again, we need that representation, the senior officers sitting on this committee and move forward and make the right decisions.

Councilmember Gurney commented as follows:

- I very much appreciate your candor right there and your heartfelt expression.
- That's really significant to me to witness your experiencing And remarking upon a change of view.
- So thank you for saying that.
- I'm going to add a new perspective that I think is going to be familiar from my earlier comments.
- This is a really big decision, and I think there's a threshold concern that only four of us are hearing this for the first time through in a public meeting with public information off a staff report.
- I'm not comfortable with that part of our process.
- Also, I am concerned with our civic process in general right now just wondering if we're doing right by our public and in this case our volunteers.
- Personally, I have to ask myself like the chief did can we live with what we're doing?
- Is this process one that's going to sit well with me for my performance as a Councilmember?
- I see three troublesome issues that we've been through.
- This is the third one, that I don't think we've done well by our public on the first was the smart water meters.
- We had a constituency, a particular constituency speak up to us, and they're returning every meeting we have with the same concerns, and we didn't address them, I don't think, with respect in the one time in the short discussion of the water meters that I think went too fast.
- We then went on with the RV village.
- We had considerable opposition from the public who felt it was the first time they had heard of it, which is often how people feel when they come to us.
- We rushed through that because money was on the table and we had to make a decision based on our public having a fuller discussion and more time to adjust to the ideas we were deciding for them from the top down.
- Now we have a real big culture shift in our community from being our very own independent autonomous Fire Department to being part of something bigger.
- We're having discussions tonight about people being left out of that or not adequately represented.
- So, I'm very worried that Council is losing our way somehow in our process.
- We are working really hard, harder than any group I have been together with in almost 18 years, this group is working really hard.
- The ad hoc has dedicated time and done, I think, very trustworthy work.
- I don't mean my comments in any way to question their efforts.
- But to simply question our process.
- For me, I think we need to realize we just can't go this fast.
- Yes, it's hard to have long agendas, it's hard to have long meetings, and I think what we're doing is giving too brief a public discussion to items of great significance.
- I appreciate the Vice Mayor's suggestion that perhaps we can get some more answers, perhaps we can spend some of the consultant money and look to this in July if we have to wait that long.

- I don't control the agendas, but maybe we need a special meeting on this topic only. Maybe we need a town hall.
- In any event, I don't see, there is a reason to decide with certainty tonight, and I want to add this comment.
- I think overall consolidation is the answer from all that I've heard in this limited situation, I think consolidation is very likely the answer.
- But I want us to do a better job in our process and listen more carefully and involve the key people in the decision-making.
- Maybe there is more research that we can do on plans B, C, and D.
- I don't even know what they are to name them.
- But one of our speakers this evening suggested we do some further reading.
- So, I think we've got to pull together in our next comments what we might do as next steps and see if we can resolve our minds and our actions in some way tonight that is agreeable.
- I don't have the answers.
- I appreciate the other suggestions.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- So I will do my best here to make a suggestion that takes into account comments from my colleagues, comments from the members of the public, members of the ad hoc, as well as comments from, well, both chiefs, one of whom was part of our ad hoc.
- And that would be that the current ad hoc committee continue and that we put the line in the consultant water again and see if we can get somebody who would be an appropriate neutral third party to help us with the analysis, to help us with the data.
- And, I mean, it's been stated many times about the expertise that is contained within the senior ranks of our volunteers.
- That's kind of the crux of what I have heard.
- Also I heard that there is a certain level of concern that we are missing a member who was a former member of the fire ad hoc.
- So perhaps there would be additional perspective there.
- The current membership, or at least I know I reviewed the information that was available in printed form, the way that ad hocs can keep records, sometimes people kind of keep records in different ways and I've got pages and pages of hand-written notes that I wouldn't necessarily be even intelligible to anybody else.
- That's what I'm hearing.
- I think that that's what the general consensus of the Council and the community would be is that we get more data, and I agree with Councilmember Gurney as well as Councilmember Rich.
- I saw a nod from Vice Mayor Hinton that consolidation may very well be the path to those things that I just stated that I think we all can agree on is that we want better fire and emergency service protection in the City of Sebastopol for our residents.
- Why would we want anything less? We want to improve the level of service to our community.
- All the ad hoc's work to state has indicated consolidation with Gold Ridge, our neighbor, that we are very familiar with and I am comfortable with.
- Made a lot of sense and I also hear that folks feel that this may be a little too speedy.
- I get that. I hear that.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I'd like to say that having heard all of the comments in this room from all of the people who took their valuable time to stay here until 10:30, I agree with your recommendation.

- I also want to commend our chief, Chief Braga, for stepping up with honesty and sharing his opinion.
- He's been a very, very important part of our ad hoc process, and his comments, for me, are ultimately compelling.
- They're the final note in a long conversation.
- So thank you, Chief Braga, for being blunt.
- I'm in support of the proposal that you've laid out, Mayor Slayter.

**MOTION:**

MOTION:

Vice Mayor Hinton moved and Councilmember Gurney seconded the motion to extend committee to: September 30, 2022

**Discussion:**

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- My question is whether we need a formal motion regarding allocation of funds for the consultant.
- I believe Vice Mayor Hinton can help me with this.
- The money may already be in the budget

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- It's already in the budget.
- \$40,000 is already in the budget.

Mayor Slayter called for a roll call vote. City staff conducted a roll call vote.

**VOTE:**

Ayes: Councilmembers Gurney, Rich, Vice Mayor Hinton and Mayor Slayter  
Noes: None  
Absent: Councilmember Glass  
Abstain: None

**City Council Action: City Council extended committee to: September 30, 2022**

**Minute Order Number: 2022-175**

8. Approval of Job Description and Approval of Resolution, Pay Rates and Ranges for Police Officer Trainee (Responsible Department: Police)

Chief Kilgore provided the agenda item recommending the City Council Approve Job Description and Approve Resolution Amending the Related Pay Rates and Ranges for Police Officer Trainee effective May 17, 2022.

Mayor Slayter asked for questions of the presenter.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- I do have three quick questions.
- I'll just note them all here in a row.
- What happens if the recruit changes course and decides halfway through to not finish the training?
- Number two would be what are the entrance requirements for the program?
- Are there background checks?
- Are there basic boxes that need to be looked into and checked?

- And then what if there's a problem with a potential recruit or with a recruit and a termination is required?
- How would that be handled?

Chief Kilgore commented as follows:

- So the quick answers to all of those is that a recruit going into the academy is not likely to quit on their own because they have a desire to be in this position and that's why they are looking for this hiring.
- So, it is a very rare occasion.
- I have spent a significant amount of my career in hiring, and I cannot recall any recruit who has decided to just leave the job because they just wanted to leave the job.
- It has been as a result of some other matter typically because they were not able to pass the training within the academy.
- All processes for hiring a police recruit stand as the same as what it would be for a police officer.
- They have to go through the background battery as they normally would.
- They are required to take the state test to get into the academy.
- They are required to pass the academy in its entirety.
- Should they fail to do that, they would be terminated and cut loose.
- They are a probationary employee and an employee who is not a member of a bargaining unit until they become full-time.

Mayor Slayter commented so if there is a need to terminate somebody while probably what I'm hearing would be extremely rare should something go completely sideways.

Chief Kilgore commented it's present and available for us to do that and that's part of the thing that they are made aware of, too, when they come into the position.

Mayor Slayter commented one final thing follow-up on that is that there would be no recompense for the City.

Chief Kilgore commented that funds would be expended as it would be with any probationary employee, yes.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- Is this coming forth because we have somebody targeted that we would want to put through the academy?
- We would like to open it up to police officer recruits.

Chief Kilgore commented anybody who wants to apply to go through an academy or anybody who is in an academy and not hired by another department already, it would be something that we would be able to target as well.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented that would be a yes.

Chief Kilgore commented the answer is it's another avenue for us to be able to hire and it would be open to anyone who meets the criteria to apply.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented if somebody has interest now, then they can make an application?

Chief Kilgore commented as follows:

- If someone has an interest in being a police officer right now and they are not certified, meaning they have not gone through an academy, at this point in time, we do not have the ability to hire them because we do not have that job description.
- This adds the ability to add that job description so that we can hire those who have not been through an academy and can be put through an academy.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented it feels like it didn't completely answer my question, but I question, if we approve this tonight, when do you anticipate we would make a hire in this category?

Chief Kilgore commented as follows:

- We have a position that is being held at the academy for the July academy.
- So we would open the hiring process immediately and go through the process and the background check if we were to select anybody from that with the intent of putting them into the July academy.

Mayor Slayter opened for public comment.

Kyle Falbo commented as follows:

- Alternatives to traditional policing are proven effective and economical.
- Two years ago this body saw massive turnout regarding police reform, oversight and budgeting.
- The City actively stalled its presentation of its contractor report for months, and voted on commitment to a phase two plan to place in place citizen oversight.
- As of yet the City has failed to provide a fiscal audit called for by multiple Councilmembers that sit here tonight.
- Instead we see a police budget that continues to increase its overall police budget.
- Higher than any other municipality in Sonoma County.
- Tonight we see a continuation of this practice has presented masking the real cost.
- Two weeks ago we saw the same by handing the police tools to criminalize those living in vehicles in ways that put this Council in a position to pride them with more economic resources when our City's budget has run a deficit for such a time that precedes the pandemic.
- I would like staff and Council to address the following questions and an explanation as to why these details were not included in the fiscal impact of this item.
- The agenda states the trainee will be provided a comparable benefit panel.
- What's the general cost in dollars associated with these benefits for the entirety of the five months of this position?
- This is a vacancy position one might claim would ease the workload of current officers.
- This trainee would not be contributing to that workload as their focus would be on their education.
- For multiple years the police department budget has spent quite a lot on overtime that is said would be reduced.
- Overtime that one would assume would continue to take place as this position would no longer be filled.
- So the question here is what reduction in overtime measured in dollars would likely occur if instead this vacancy were to be filled?

Linda Berg commented as follows:

- I would just like to thank, again, Chief Kilgore for his service.
- Thank God we got you, and thank goodness you were selected by our City Manager.
- But, anyway, thank goodness we've got you.

- I'd recommend to the City Council that they just roll over and give them whatever he wants because they deserve it.
- He's not asking for something that they don't need, I'm sure.
- You have no idea the stress and stuff that I'm sure that they have gone through in dealing with some of these unsheltered people whom I have met and who are now my neighbors.
- They have got to be saints, I'll tell you and psychologists and way beyond what they're being paid for.
- Thank God we've got a little bit of a truth left in this town, speaking truth to power, and we need to get this City Council so that they can better understand what they're supposed to be doing, this is Sebastopol.
- This is not Santa Rosa, this is not L.A., this is not other places, this is Sebastopol.
- You are supposed to be listening and responding to your citizens, the public.
- So, thank you again, you're all in my prayers

Mr. Marks commented as follows:

- Full support.
- I think this is very important and an interesting juxtaposition with what we heard about the five volunteers earlier who had been shut out of the conversations.
- This is clearly running a lot more efficiently and a lot more respectful of the police who are working really hard, as Mary just said, in very, very difficult circumstances.

Mayor Slayter responded to public comments as follows:

- I will ask the chief if he can address the questions raised by a member of the public about the comparable benefit package cost.
- Question about the reduction in overtime if a reduction in overtime that could potentially be realized through this position.

Chief Kilgore commented as follows:

- As far as the benefits go, any employee would receive the same benefits as any employee would in whatever capacity they are hired, they are a full-time employee and they reap those same benefits.
- As far as the realization of the overtime, if I had more people who were applying as lateral police officers and could complete a field training program in appropriate time, then I wouldn't be asking for this position.
- But I don't have enough people who are applying for the job to fill the job.
- So I've got to be able to expand avenues to hire people and the academy lasts for approximately just shy of six months.
- So this person would be out in the field on the FTO program at the beginning of the year or around that time, and then coming off of training, then they would have realized the full-time position without any training officer with them, and we would be fully staffed at that point in time.
- Should we hire a new officer recruit who we'd put through the academy or if we hire a lateral officer off of the process, then that time would be realized much sooner.
- But they still have a field training program to go through and they can't work as a solo officer until they complete that program, which is a minimum of ten weeks long and typically more along the lines of 12 to 16 weeks.

City Council Discussion and/or Deliberations:

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- To me this feels like a good decision, and it is, in my research, I have found that this is something that's common around the state.



- It also seems for us like a really, really proactive way to be able to make a hire, get that person through training and into service serving the public as a police officer in parallel with the ability to do all those things at the same time as getting a potential hire that is what we like to call in alignment with our community values, whatever those somewhat undefinable things are.
- It's a way to get a police officer that fits Sebastopol.
- That's something that we've talked about in a lot of different context over the years.
- I'm in favor of this. I think it's a great way to go.

Vice Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

- It sounds like a really creative way to get new hires, especially in times that are tight right now with employment issues.
- I do have a longer-range concern that this is just going to become our norm that we put people through school and pay for their schooling and put them in and having, I guess, worked through many highs and lows of hiring people and knowing that that goes up and down, I know that it's really difficult right now to hire in a lot of sectors including the one I hire doing my job.
- But I also know that then the ebbs and flows, it may not be the same situation three, five years from now.
- So, I'm in favor of this today, and maybe for the next few years as a trial period.
- But I'm not sure I'm in favor of it just being a permanent always an option opportunity.
- So I wanted to ask a little bit more about that from the City manager.
- Are you asking is this intended to be permanent?
- Is this going to be an open classification that we will be able to hire if we approve it tonight from now till forever in the future?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows:

- Normally that would be decided by the chief in consultation with the City Manager in days to come.
- It depends on recruiting efforts in the more traditional way, whether the program is still needed it also would require seeing who is hired through that program and how well it worked with that individual or individuals.
- So that would normally be decided by the chief with the consultation with the City Manager.
- So we can't answer that question right now.
- Because as the chief says this is something he needs to do now because he's having difficulty recruiting.
- We'll continue to monitor that.

Chief Kilgore commented as follows:

- I would like just to say they are not exclusive of one another.
- We can run a lateral officer process.
- We can run a non-lateral entry level process.
- We can run those processes together.
- Our goal is always to get somebody out on the street as quickly as possible.
- We just have to have the applicants to do that.
- Unfortunately, we, like every other police agency, suffers from a lack of applicants and these are different avenues that become accessible to us that would continue to be an ongoing conversation with the City manager any time we run one of these processes.

**MOTION:**

Councilmember Gurney moved and Councilmember Rich seconded the motion to Approve Job Description and Approve Resolution Amending the Related Pay Rates and Ranges for Police Officer Trainee effective May 17, 2022.

Mayor Slayter called for a roll call vote. City staff conducted a roll call vote.

**VOTE:**

Ayes: Councilmembers Gurney, Rich, Vice Mayor Hinton and Mayor Slayter

Noes: None

Absent: Councilmember Glass

Abstain: None

**City Council Action: Approve Job Description and Approve Resolution Amending the Related Pay Rates and Ranges for Police Officer Trainee effective May 17, 2022.**

**Minute Order Number: 2022-176**

**Resolution Number: 6431-2022 and 6432-2022**

Councilmember Gurney departed the meeting at 10:49 pm

**CITY COUNCIL/CITY STAFF REPORTS/COMMUNICATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/FUTURE MEETINGS:**

**9. City Manager/Attorney-Attorney/City Clerk Reports**

The following was reported out on:

- A. BayRen Report
- B. Relaunch Sebastopol Report

**10. City Council Reports/Committee/Sub-Committee Meeting Reports: (Reports by Mayor/City Councilmembers Regarding Various Agency Meetings/Committee Meetings/Sub-Committee Meeting /Conferences Attended and Possible Direction to its Representatives (If Needed) on Pending issues before such Boards)(This will be either verbal or written reports provided at the meeting)**

Councilmember Rich reported out as follows:

- I'd like to make sure that everyone places on their calendar the town hall that the committee for the unhoused has scheduled.
- It is currently scheduled for the evening of June 30 from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.
- We'll put out an official announcement. But I wanted to make sure that everyone here knew the date and would set aside on their calendars because it will not be a City Council meeting, but you will obviously be invited to the town hall. It will be by Zoom.

Vice Mayor Hinton reported out as follows:

- I will just say that Councilmember Rich and I have scheduled another six budget subcommittee meetings.
- We might even need another one.
- If I didn't think I spent enough time on last year's budget, we're spending just as much time on this year's budget.
- Hopefully it'll help us move through it faster at the full Council level.
- That's what we've been spending all our extra time on in addition to these meetings and other subcommittees.

Councilmember Rich reported out as follows:

- Discussed the legislative committee

- I do have the report that I think I'd like to forward through City staff of the various positions that the legislative committee is taking on some outstanding bills Senate and house bills.
- I think it would be useful for the full City Council to take a look at.

Mayor Slayter commented as follows:

- I don't have a whole lot to report other than regarding my liaison position with Sebastopol World Friends.
- That organization continues to do just remarkable things in support of Ukraine and our Sister City and the relationships that have been built over decades and the connections that have been made to get people out of Ukraine and into neighboring countries solely through this person who knows that person, who lives in that City and that person knows somebody else who lives in some other City.
- It is a remarkable sort of underground railroad of connections.
- None of that would be available to these innocent victims without citizen diplomacy and adherence to world peace one friend at a time.

Councilmember Rich reported out as follows:

- What I forgot to mention is that the summit 2022 is scheduled for June 14 at 4:30 P.M.
- You'll start seeing signs around town.
- Mark your calendars June 14, 4:30 P.M. at the high school cafeteria
- It'll be a volunteer focus.

11. Council Communications Received. There were none.

12. Future City Meeting Dates/Events (Informational Only): (See City Web Site for Up-to-Date Meeting Dates/Times)

#### **ADJOURNMENT OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

May 17, 2022 City Council Regular Meeting will be adjourned to the June 7, 2022 City Council Meeting, 6:00 pm, Zoom Virtual Meeting Format

Mayor Slayter adjourned the May 17, 2022 City Council meeting at 10:55 pm to the June 7, 2022 City Council Meeting, 6:00 pm, Zoom Virtual Meeting Format

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Gourley  
Assistant City Manager/Attorney/City Clerk