


Agenda Report Reviewed by:  
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM

**Meeting Date:** August 1, 2023  
**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers  
**From:** Ad Hoc Committee for Ballot Measure Question/Polling of Community  
Mayor Hinton/Councilmember Zollman  
Polling Consultant: Denny Rosatti  
**Subject:** Consideration of Placement of Ballot Measure on a Special Election to be Held  
November 7, 2023 in the County of Sonoma, City of Sebastopol

**Items Include:**

1. Receipt and Discussion of Results of Polling Conducted
2. Discussion of Council to Call or Not Call a Special Election for November 7, 2023
3. If Consensus to call election, Discussion of Ballot Question to be Submitted to the Voters
4. Confirmation of Date/Time for Special City Council Meeting to:
  - i. Approve Resolution Calling for Special Election
  - ii. Approve Ordinance for Ballot Measure
  - iii. Approve Funding for:
    1. \$55,000 - Election Costs (Sonoma County Registrar of Voters) (budget amendment will be required)
    2. \$30,000 – Writing of Ballot Question/Ordinance
    3. \$30,000 – Outreach

**Recommendation:** That the City Council Receive the Results of the Polling and Consider Placement of Ballot Measure on a Special Election to be Held November 7, 2023 in the County of Sonoma, City of Sebastopol and Direct Consultant and Staff to Prepare all Documents Required for Special Election

**Funding:** Currently Budgeted:  Yes  No  Not Applicable

Account Code: 100-14-01-4210 (\$60,000) & 124-13-01-4210 (\$40,000)

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget:  Yes (Finance Initialed AK)  No (Finance Exempt)

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**INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:**

This item is to request that the City Council Receive the Results of the Polling and Consider Placement of Ballot Measure on a Special Election to be Held November 7, 2023 in the County of Sonoma, City of Sebastopol and Direct Consultant and Staff to Prepare all Documents Required for Special Election.

**BACKGROUND:**

At the July 18, 2023 City Council Meeting, the City Council received a request for consideration of placement of a ballot measure on the November 7, 2023 Special Election. At this meeting, the Council approved an Ad Hoc Council committee of Mayor Hinton and Councilmember Zollman and authorized the City Manager to enter into a contract with Rosatti Consulting for polling with an amount not to exceed \$10,000.

**DISCUSSION:**

Per direction by the City Council, the Ad Hoc Committee met and finalized a list of polling questions to be conducted by phone calls or text to gain the community's input regarding a potential measure for the November 2023 special election. A copy of the polling questions is attached to this report for reference.

Polling questions are included as an attachment. The poll is still active in the community as of the time of this posting. The polling results summary will be presented at the City Council meeting on August 1, 2023. The polling firm that was hired to perform the polling is Smart Voter Contact from Portland, Oregon.

The City Council will receive this information to assist in the decision making for the City's consideration for placement of a ballot measure on the November 7, 2023 special election.

Based upon the results and following discussion, the City Council is requested to provide direction as to whether or not to submit a measure to the voters in the November 2023 election; and if so, to approve a ballot question for submittal to the voters.

**CITY COUNCIL AND/OR GENERAL PLAN GOALS:**

Goal 5 - Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

Goal 1 - Maintain the long term financial stability and sustainability of the City of Sebastopol and Operate City government in a fiscally responsible and responsive manner

1.1 Develop and Implement Sound Financial Management Policies and Procedures

Goal EV 7: Maintain a Stable and Self-Sustaining Fiscal Base in Order to Generate the Resources Necessary to Provide Desired City Services and Support New Growth that is Consistent with the City's Values and Goals

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:**

This action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and no further environmental review is required.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

As of the writing of this staff report, the city has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff

report, such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Funding has been allocated in the approved FY 23-24 City Operating Budget as follows.

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Ballot Measure (Ballot Question and Ordinance) | \$30,000        |
| 2. Strategist /Marketing, Education and Outreach  | \$30,000        |
| 3. County Election Costs                          | <u>\$40,000</u> |
| Total   | \$100,000       |

The proposed fiscal impact is proposed as follows:

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ballot Measure (Ballot Question and Ordinance) | \$30,000                    |
| 2. Strategist /Marketing, Education and Outreach  | \$10,000 *                  |
| 3. County Election Costs                          | <u>\$55,000</u> (Estimated) |
| Total   | \$95,000                    |

\*A not to exceed amount of \$10,000 was approved at the July 18<sup>th</sup> 2023 to Dennis Rosatti, Rosatti Consulting for Polling Services.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council Discuss and Consider a Ballot Measure for the November 7, 2023 Special Election and Consider Approval of Consultant to Prepare Ballot Question and Ordinance as well as Public Outreach and Education.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Note: A Budget Amendment Resolution would be returned to the Special Meeting if Measure is to be placed on November 2023 Election.

Attachment 1: Polling Questions

**11Q Poll to the Voter on Record**

**CA – City of Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole]**

07/20/2023

Return Number: 707-xxx-xxxx

**[OPENING]** Hi is **[INSERT VOTERS NAME FROM DATA]** there?

*(Only speak with and continue call if speaking with voter listed in the data)*

**Observe and Document participant gender**

1. Male
2. Female

**[OPENING]** Hi, it's **[AGENT NAME]** calling on behalf of the City of Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] with a few quick questions about upcoming local issues and your opinion matters. Here's the first question. **[GO TO Q1]**

**Q1:** If the city of Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] places a special tax measure on the November 2023 ballot, how likely are you to cast a vote on that measure?

1. Definitely will vote **[GO TO Q2]**
2. Likely will vote **[GO TO Q2]**
3. Uncertain **[GO TO Q2]**
4. Not likely to Vote **[GO TO Q2]**
5. Definitely will not vote **[GO TO CLOSE]**
6. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

*Lead in statement:* [READ] The City of Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] is working to find ways to become financially sustainable and viable into the future. Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] has relied on financial reserves the past three years to balance the city budget, and has a projected \$1.67 Million deficit this year. The City has been told by expert financial planners that if it continues this way, the City will be out of money within five years.

The City has recently added back a police sergeant to bring the City closer to full staffing, they've added a fire engineer to improve response times, and they have also funded critical positions to help deal with homelessness and other vital community needs.

There are a variety of opportunities the city could take to raise revenue, including a special sales tax. **[GO TO Q2]**

**Q2:** A special sales tax of one half percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$1,500,000 or most of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a half percent sales tax? Would you definitely vote in favor, likely will vote in favor, likely will vote against, definitely will vote against or are you neutral?

1. Definitely vote in favor **[GO TO Q3]**
2. Likely will vote in favor **[GO TO Q3]**
3. Likely will vote against **[GO TO Q3]**
4. Definitely will vote against **[GO TO Q3]**
5. Neutral **[GO TO Q3]**
6. Uncertain **[GO TO Q3]**
7. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q3:** As an alternative, a special sales tax of one quarter percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$750,000 or roughly half of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a quarter percent sales tax? Would you definitely vote in favor, likely will vote in favor, likely will vote against, definitely will vote against or are you neutral?

1. Definitely vote in favor **[GO TO Q4]**
2. Likely will vote in favor **[GO TO Q4]**
3. Likely will vote against **[GO TO Q4]**
4. Definitely will vote against **[GO TO Q4]**
5. Neutral **[GO TO Q4]**
6. Uncertain **[GO TO Q4]**
7. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q4:** Considering that the city needs to reduce reliance on the use of reserve funds, I am going to read you a list of specific city programs and I ask that you select which program you feel is most important to *MAINTAIN* in the budget [READ LIST and RECORD RESPONSE]

1. Continue funding one police position **[GO TO Q5]**
2. Continue funding one fire position **[GO TO Q5]**

3. Continue funding a homeless outreach coordinator **[GO TO Q5]**
4. Continue to support wrap-around prevention and social services through the Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] Library **[GO TO Q5]**
5. Continue to prioritize public safety and crime reduction **[GO TO Q5]**
6. Continue to support Community programming such as a public pool, senior center, drug and alcohol prevention services, and youth leadership programs **[GO TO Q5]**
7. None **[GO TO Q5]**
8. Uncertain **[GO TO Q5]**
9. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q5:** Now, given that same list of programs, which would you feel is the first area to *CUT* in the budget to reduce reliance on reserve funds? **[READ LIST and RECORD RESPONSE]**

1. Eliminate one police position **[GO TO Q6]**
2. Eliminate one fire position **[GO TO Q6]**
3. Eliminate a homeless outreach coordinator **[GO TO Q6]**
4. Cut wrap-around prevention and social services through the Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] library **[GO TO Q6]**
5. Deemphasize public safety and crime reduction **[GO TO Q6]**
6. Reduce community programming such as a public pool, senior center, drug and alcohol prevention services, and youth leadership programs **[GO TO Q6]**
7. None **[GO TO Q6]**
8. Uncertain **[GO TO Q6]**
9. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q6:** Looking at the priorities of city budgeting regarding prevention services, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into expanding the preventive services provided by the Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] Police Department for people experiencing and at risk of mental and behavioral health challenges? Would you definitely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, definitely disagree or neutral?

1. Definitely agree **[GO TO Q7]**
2. Somewhat agree **[GO TO Q7]**

3. Somewhat disagree [GO TO Q7]
4. Definitely disagree [GO TO Q7]
5. Neutral [GO TO Q7]
6. Refused [GO TO CLOSE]

**Q7:** Looking again at the priorities of city budgeting regarding prevention services, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into the preventive services operated through the Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] Library for people experiencing and at risk of mental and behavioral health challenges? Would you definitely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, definitely disagree or neutral?

1. Definitely agree [GO TO Q8]
2. Somewhat agree [GO TO Q8]
3. Somewhat disagree [GO TO Q8]
4. Definitely disagree [GO TO Q8]
5. Neutral [GO TO Q8]
6. Refused [GO TO CLOSE]

**Q8:** Looking at the priorities of city budgeting regarding parks, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into maintenance and programming for the City of Sebastopol [Seh-BAS-tah-pole] Parks? Would you definitely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, definitely disagree or neutral?

1. Definitely agree [GO TO Q9]
2. Somewhat agree [GO TO Q9]
3. Somewhat disagree [GO TO Q9]
4. Definitely disagree [GO TO Q9]
5. Neutral [GO TO Q9]
6. Refused [GO TO CLOSE]

*Lead in statement:* [READ] Lastly, I will now read the language for the special sales tax again, as sometimes people's opinions change after they hear more about how the tax money will be used. [GO TO Q9]

**Q9:** A special sales tax of one half percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$1,500,000 or most of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a half percent sales tax? Would you definitely vote in favor, likely will vote in favor, likely will vote against, definitely will vote against or are you neutral?

1. Definitely vote in favor **[GO TO Q10]**
2. Likely will vote in favor **[GO TO Q10]**
3. Likely will vote against **[GO TO Q10]**
4. Definitely will vote against **[GO TO Q10]**
5. Neutral **[GO TO Q10]**
6. Uncertain **[GO TO Q10]**
7. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q10:** As an alternative, a special sales tax of one quarter percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$750,000 or roughly half of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a quarter percent sales tax? Would you definitely vote in favor, likely will vote in favor, likely will vote against, definitely will vote against or are you neutral?

1. Definitely vote in favor **[GO TO Q11]**
2. Likely will vote in favor **[GO TO Q11]**
3. Likely will vote against **[GO TO Q11]**
4. Definitely will vote against **[GO TO Q11]**
5. Neutral **[GO TO Q11]**
6. Uncertain **[GO TO Q11]**
7. Refused **[GO TO CLOSE]**

**Q11:** Finally, the city has the option of proposing this special tax as a permanent tax until repealed, or build in a sunset clause to automatically end the tax after a certain period of time. Would you prefer: no sunset clause, a ten year sunset clause, a twenty year sunset clause or does it make no difference?

1. No sunset clause **[GO TO CLOSE]**
2. A ten year sunset clause **[GO TO CLOSE]**



- 3. A twenty year sunset clause [GO TO CLOSE]**
- 4. Makes no difference [GO TO CLOSE]**
- 5. Uncertain [GO TO CLOSE]**
- 6. Refused [GO TO CLOSE]**

**[CLOSE]** Thank you very much for your time and for participating in our poll. Have a good evening.