

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING – STUDY SESSION

MINUTES FOR Meeting of March 10, 2021

As Approved by the City Council at their regular meeting of April 6, 2021.

The public is advised that pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.5 all writings submitted to the City Council are public records and will be made available for review.

Please note that minutes are not verbatim minutes and are meant to be the City’s record of a summary of actions that took place at the meeting. City Council video recording are kept for a period of one year from date of meeting.

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Notice: All resolutions and ordinances introduced and/or adopted under this agenda are waived of all reading of entire resolution(s) and ordinance(s).

The Sebastopol City Council welcomes you to its meetings that are generally scheduled for the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. Your interest and participation are encouraged and appreciated.

SIMULTANEOUS MEETING COMPENSATION DISCLOSURE (Government Code § 54952.3): Members of the City Council receive no additional compensation as a result of convening a joint meeting of the City Council and Successor Agency to the Former Community Development Agency.

SB 751 Legislative bodies of local agencies must publicly report: (1) any action taken and (2) the vote or abstention on each action taken by each member present for the action at a meeting.

****[GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20](#)****

RE CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

CITY COUNCL MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOVERNOR’S EXECUTIVE ORDERS WHICH SUSPENDS CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS OF THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT.

This meeting complies with the Sonoma County Health Officer’s COVID-19 Order to Shelter in Place issued on March 17, 2020, and pursuant to California Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-29-20 issued on March 17, 2020.

Government Code Section 54953.

(a) All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the legislative body of a local agency may use teleconferencing for the benefit of the public and the legislative body of a local agency in connection with any meeting or proceeding authorized by law. The teleconferenced meeting or proceeding shall comply

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with all requirements of this chapter and all otherwise applicable provisions of law relating to a specific type of meeting or proceeding.

(2) Teleconferencing, as authorized by this section, may be used for all purposes in connection with any meeting within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. All votes taken during a teleconferenced meeting shall be by rollcall.

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) ADVISORY

To protect our constituents, City officials and City staff, the City requests all members of the public to follow the California Department of Health Services’ guidance and the County of Sonoma’s Public Health Officer Order for the Control of COVID-19 restricting group events and gatherings and maintaining social distancing.

Consistent with Executive Order N-29-20, in-person participation by the public will not be permitted and no physical location from which the public may observe the meeting will be available. Remote public participation information is available on the City website.

NOTICE: All Resolutions and Ordinances introduced and/or adopted under this agenda are waived of all reading of entire resolution(s) and ordinance(s).

The Sebastopol City Council welcomes you remotely to its meetings that are generally scheduled for the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. Your interest and participation are encouraged and appreciated.

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City Council Regular Meetings are available in real time and archived on Livestream. Important Notice The City of Sebastopol shows both live broadcasts and Video Archive of City Council Meetings over the Internet. Your attendance at this public meeting may result in the recording and broadcast of your image and/or voice.

Here is the link: <http://bit.ly/sebcctv>

There are times that the meetings may not be live streamed due to technical issues; if that is the case, the meeting will be video-taped and uploaded as soon as possible to the City Web Site.

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 and removed from the meeting.

8:30 am Convene Regular City Council Meeting (ZOOM VIRTUAL FORMAT)

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Glass called the regular meeting to order at 8:30 am.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Una Glass – By video teleconference
Vice Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney – By video teleconference
Councilmember Neysa Hinton – By video teleconference
Councilmember Diana Rich – By video teleconference

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Absent: Councilmember Patrick Slayter – By video teleconference
None
Staff: City Manager/City Attorney Larry McLaughlin
Assistant City Manager/City Clerk Mary Gourley
Administrative Services Director Ana Kwong
Fire Chief Bill Braga
Planning Director Kari Svanstrom
Police Chief Kevin Kilgore
Public Works Superintendent Dante Del Prete

SALUTE TO THE FLAG: Mayor Glass led the salute to the flag.
Mayor Glass read protocols for the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT (for items not on the agenda). There was none.

1. STUDY SESSION – Sebastopol Community Vitality Project: Report on Accomplishments; Current Actions; and Discussion of Future Actions

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin presented the agenda item with the following comments:

- The reason this item comes before you in the study session format is that it was very difficult for the Agenda Review Committee to figure out an upcoming agenda where we could have the time to thoroughly examine CoMission’s work past, present and future.
- The item before you today is a study session.
- As a study session, we do not expect the Council to take action but staff is looking for direction from the Council in two general areas.
- With such direction, this would return on a subsequent agenda for action.
- As you’re going to find out, there is not quite enough budget left in the CoMission budget line item to finish out the full fiscal year through June 30th.
- We will be asking the Council for direction to complete their work this fiscal year.
- Assuming we get such direction, it would be our intention to bring back a subsequent agenda item to ask for funding to work through the end of the fiscal year.
- Budget for next year begins next week for fiscal year beginning July 1st.
- We would like further Council direction on actions which may take place in the next fiscal year so that a budget can be prepared and submitted through the budget committee for next year’s budget.
- Staff is looking to get direction this morning in those two areas but Council cannot take action or make a final decision this morning.

Craig Litwin and Johnny Nolen, CoMission, made a presentation to the City Council.

The Council discussed the following:

CBOs:

Mayor Glass made the following comments:

- Vice Mayor Gurney is the official representative to the Council.
- I’m wearing my hat as the co-leader of a non-profit.
- Co-leader (Catherine/Center for the Arts) has been attending those meetings.

- They have been really useful for our organization having this Community Council.
- A very clear outcome for us has been collaborating with the Laguna Foundation.
- We had a meeting with the Executive Director of the Laguna Foundation and their staff to talk about how we can collaborate.
- The Center for the Art's art theme this year is climate and environment.
- That theme runs throughout our online exhibitions and activities that we're doing through the Center for the Arts.
- That dovetails really well with the Laguna Foundation.
- We are working to co-promote the things that we're doing with the things they are doing.
- That is a very important outcome for us.
- The other thing that I know is that we will probably be talking about the notion of getting more people, or more organizations involved with using the community calendar which is really important to get people engaging with the non-profits in town.
- Discussed soliciting volunteers.
- The survey shows a lot of information about what the non-profits need from the Community Council.
- The non-profits need donors.
- They need volunteers, and they need publicity.
- Out of this Community Council I think we are gaining on those needs.

Vice Mayor Gurney made the following comments:

- Commented about the CBO Council with several points.
- It creates a place for people to be introduced.
- In years past, people did not really know everyone and everyone was in their own silo doing their work right here.
- Getting to meet the other Executive Directors, the name of the organization, and a face to go with it was one of the first key accomplishments.
- CoMission created a place where leaders of the CBOs could actually share and discuss, not just regular topics, but immediately the impact of the pandemic because everyone felt that, it was a hard strike to the heart and core of their business.
- I think it was key to be able to mention the confusion and that sense of fear and realize that the Executive Director and the CBO was not alone in the experience of having these discussions.
- Another point is that the organizations realized all of their commonalities because each representative from the group is committed to the service and making us a warm, rich, deeply sort of experiential community on so many levels
- Then there is the mechanics to it.
- Everyone felt threatened in their fund base, in donors, and we are trying to pivot and figure out a new activity.
- They have from these conversations these new perceptions, they realize they can work together, this is a new future for us.
- A future where we're getting out of the little silos and people are seeing that we can actually work together.
- We're a small community that's big in term of its wealth of CBOs.
- The group is expanding from the core people.
- At the end of every meeting, I'm in touch with Herman, and Herman's in touch with me.

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- We'll think of more people we can reach out to as this core group is expanding its circle to include what I think Craig Litwin touched on.
- This is people's real yearning in our community, our yearning to come together and our yearning to take some action, particularly now, as we've gone through a year of isolation.
- Councilmember Rich and I are seeing that commitment and also that real energy in the Zero Waste Committee that's just come together, and the Climate Action Committee that is new.
- Everybody's ready to engage for our community.
- The CBO Council has really deepened that interest in being together, in being a community bigger than our little silos.
- I'm very grateful that we've had the CBO Council.

Sandra Bodley commented as follows:

- I really want to echo what the Mayor and Vice Mayor have said.
- I'm the president of the Gravenstein Health Coalition.
- For us to engage with other non-profits, there's such an overlap in regard to health, it encompasses all of our well-being and there's so many dimensions of that.
- Coming to CoMission has just been a really positive experience and I cannot say enough about Herman and his communication skills, and his follow up.
- I send him things about the coalition, and he gets them into the newsletter, and I get responses.
- I am a very grateful member.
- I think it serves a very vital purpose in our community.

Vice Mayor Gurney made the following comments:

- I wanted to say one more thing about the CBO Council, which I think is an important thing to realize.
- I think our identity centers around our businesses, particularly our downtown core.
- I think it's a realization of this group that we're much bigger than our businesses.
- A lot of people don't experience town or community by just being downtown on Main Street.
- They experience belonging in so many other ways.
- I think the great focus here is on the community benefit organization because that's the part of the community that people really find heartwarming.
- It's not always about spending the dollar locally, which is one of the strong values of our community.
- It's about how do I plug in here, where are my people, how is my group doing, and what can I do in service to our community?
- I think that's a real key point that the CBO Council has impressed upon me.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- The CBO Council is about engaging our community and being a more vital and engaged community.
- That's what the CBOs are about.
- We're really trying to get the community together to engage, rather than engaging just with Netflix or Prime Video.
- We need to be engaged with each other, and that's been more important than ever in this past year of isolation, sitting in front of a screen.

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- As we come out of the pandemic, how do we engage our community back with the CBOs and have a community that's actually more engaged than ever because we are communicating with all our CBOs?
- I think that's a really important aspect of what's being done here.

Councilmember Hinton commented as follows:

- Did we ever get a recap on the Sebastopol City loan program where we give out the \$150K?
- I'm thinking of the people that received them, the businesses, and how much they received.
- I've never seen a recap.
- I'd be very interested in seeing that.

Mr. Nolen commented as follows:

- Everybody that got into the program went through and the reports were getting are that people were grateful for it.
- We haven't heard any real complaints other than it was a personal loan instead of a business loan, which is how the community credit union had to structure it.
- That was something we had to navigate.
- That was a great program that came out at a wonderful time, for the City to dig deep and commit those funds really helped a lot of businesses.

Councilmember Hinton commented as follows:

- Asked CoMission to prepare a recap and send it off to Councilmembers
- It would be especially important since I sit on the subcommittee for the budget, which will be starting next week.

No public comment on CBOs.

CoMission discussed Public Surveys:

Vice Mayor Gurney commented as follows:

- I'm going to say very briefly, I appreciate that staff has moved right into action here.
- This is really important for us.
- I really appreciate that all of this work by staff as well as all the Community Councils are taking place.
- I think a lot of the time we don't hear the results of things.
- We go to meetings and we hear Mr. Litwin, Mr. Nolen, or someone else talk about these big concepts, but it's not clear how much work is being done.
- This is really helpful, the staff report of the actions taken is very helpful and shows us that the result of this is that we are all working together, that we're all, instead of randomly wandering around, we're working more on specific things so that we're working in coalition and in alliance on specific things.
- We will get more accomplished this way.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- I wanted to bring up two things in response to a couple of the comments here.
- Commented on the need for more non-electronic communication.
- In light of that, your survey came up with 200-some-odd people who want to volunteer for things.

- I'm thinking that we might want to build a walk and drop team for our volunteers in the city that are interested in taking a nice stroll or a more vigorous walk, that we develop a team of volunteers that can, for example, deliver our newsletter maybe every other month and that it be done in person, if we are concerned that we are not getting across to people.
- That is a less expensive way to deliver. We wouldn't have to pay for the snail mail.
- People will actually look at things that are dropped on their front doorstep.
- Another idea I had was that we have these great councils.
- We have the CBOs and now there's work being done with the service clubs and the businesses.
- The part that I think is missing, that we keep talking about, is that we're not communicating with enough people, is to create a forum that's kind of an equity council and that the equity council be a space where people can get together that are interested in equity issues.
- This would have to be not during business hours.
- Welcome people that are maybe primarily a different language speaking, people that are interested in food equity issues, people that are involved with environmental groups, and people that are involved with unions.
- We are representing the business community.
- We're bringing them in.
- We're bringing in the people that are capable of giving service, but we haven't created a platform or a place where the people that are marginalized can be part of the process.
- That can't be during business hours, and obviously many of those people don't have time.
- Can we think about creating a space for people that are interested in equity?
- That's equity for people and equity for the planet.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- I just wanted to make a couple of big picture comments and observations, and then offer some suggestions, since this is a study session and we're looking at ideas for the future.
- Just as a general big picture observation, having been the executive director of the Community Center, I'm well aware of what can happen when ideas are put out there.
- There is a mechanism for taking them beyond that.
- You get people together, they have really interesting concepts and ideas, they're energized, and then it goes flat.
- It's often not a lack of interest. It's a lack of the infrastructure that allows the listing of the contacts, the sharing of the Google sheet, the identification of action items, someone to follow-up on those action items, and a person who allows space for everyone to be heard, and for the rest of us to listen.
- That's been my experience at the non-profit level.
- We had a lot of efforts while I was there to bring people together, all the non-profit directors who were incredibly overworked would get together and want to collaborate and want to get things done, then we went back and were overwhelmed by our day-to-day work.
- I haven't been participating in the community benefit organization work that CoMission has been facilitating but I have been on the service orgs group.
- It's not just the opportunity to collaborate and cooperate, it's also the opportunity to connect, not just on a people basis but also in terms of action and memorialization and moving forward.
- That is very time intensive work, and I want to say that I have really appreciated that the benefits of that.

- We already see that moving forward.
- That is hard work to be that facilitator.
- I think it's getting us huge benefits.
- I completely, and fully endorse the idea of something that is taken to people's doors, a door hanger.
- I did that, and I had amazing volunteers and we all got out in the sunshine.
- We spent hours walking up to people's doors and putting the door hangers on their doorknobs.
- We did not leave them on doorsteps.
- That was really useful, and meaningful to people.
- I think that's a fabulous idea.
- It engages volunteers in the community.
- It gets people out.
- If you want collaboration and cooperation and connection and bridges, that is an incredible opportunity.
- I think there needs to be more outreach.
- I know you're trying to do that, and I know it's a challenge in this world of COVID-19.
- That information needs to get out on a broader basis.
- The community benefits organization newsletter, which is brilliant, and I bet most people in the community have not seen it, that needs to be distributed more fully.
- The rest of the public, people in this room, and others need to see that, to really experience the benefit.
- For you to share with all the community these great listings that I'm looking at, the library, the chamber of commerce, the conservationist, the newsletter has a great layout, great content, and is very visually appealing.
- Getting that out on a broader basis is important.
- Applauding the complete and consistent focus on inclusion, and on expansion to as many people as possible.
- I see that happening with this group, and listening, I think that is very important.
- I would urge people to take a look at the full report that has been summarized and recognized here.
- I don't know if you've seen word clouds.
- If you look at this from a word cloud perspective, all of it is about web expansion, about getting information out, about communicating, about understanding resources, about increases to social media, web page content, platform-based development program, and getting people access to software.
- These are things that CoMission has demonstrated.
- They're absolute experts at it.
- During COVID-19 we need that.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- What I'm noticing, and I think it's health, as you have ideas, and this goes for the public as well, say them succinctly as we just heard, as you have the opportunity.
- We're all jotting notes down and integrating them as we can.
- Once we get through the presentation, we'll open it up to even more brainstorming.

Vice Mayor Gurney commented as follows:

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- I was reminded by Councilmember Rich's comments on the door hanger that Councilmember Slayter put one out with information on COVID-19.
- That was a complete volunteer effort.
- We had his great example of taking information out to our public, and having our volunteers doing that work.
- That was a number one success right there.

Public comment on COBs:

Natalie Timm commented as follows:

- Great presentation, lots of work, very appreciative.
- I just would like to say that I got my survey twice because I'm probably on some different lists.
- I'm sure that we don't want duplicates in citywide surveys.
- In terms of the big picture, I personally like a lot of outreach online. It decreases paper, let's not forget that.
- I just bring that up as a point of balance.
- There's another thing that's on my mind.
- Maybe this isn't the place, but I just want to remember back that the release of helium balloons is prohibited in Sebastopol.
- For many years we couldn't even buy helium balloons in very many places and now they're making a big comeback.
- They're still bad for birds, and bad for electric wires.
- Maybe that could be included in some information that goes out to the public?

David Mark Raymond commented as follows:

- President-elect of the Rotary Club of Sebastopol Sunrise.
- I sent a letter for City Councilmembers to have a look at.
- I hope that's part of your record.
- Two months ago the sixth president in line for leadership in Rotary, the current ones, and the future ones, were getting together and talking about how we could get together with the City of Sebastopol on prioritizing our grants, our fundraising efforts, and what could we do in these challenging times to help out best.
- Soon the conversation turned to why don't we get out of our silos and start reaching out to the other service delivering organizations, the other non-profits, the other service clubs like Kiwanis, Lions, and everybody who's out there to see if we couldn't collaborate and build something bigger.
- Fortunately for us, somebody mentioned it to Councilmember Rich who contacted at least me, and I think the others to say that we might have a little bit of a social problem as the Rotary is the big organization and we tend to dominate here in town.
- Are smaller organizations going to want to cooperate with you and sign on to your project?
- Rather than putting us at the head of the table, she suggested that we bring in some facilitation.
- I was skeptical, I don't need that, I have a lot of experience with bringing people together.
- After the first meeting I was converted because it made total sense.
- It's working well.
- We went from two months ago at a start to now we're about to put out a survey and we're cooperating.
- We have 11 service organizations currently involved, active, and meeting on a regular basis.

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- We're still doing the heavy lifting of our work.
- The scaffolding provided through CoMission and the vitality project is really the difference.
- I have great hope for us in the future, and I believe this may serve as an example when we are successful for other communities to look at for ways for citizens, non-governmental citizens to pull together, work together, and build ourselves into the future.
- I'm very, very excited about what we're doing now, and I'm very, very excited about the prospect of what we will see in the future.
- I'm grateful to all of you for your support, and for bringing this to us.
- We could not have done it on our own nearly so well as we are doing it with the support that you have furnished to us through the vitality project.
- Thank you, I'm grateful.

Public Comment on Business Section:

Jill McLewis commented as follows:

- The Downtown Association worked with the Chamber, and we covered over 50 businesses within a few hours going door-to-door taking surveys from all the different business owners with a variety of questions.
- Many businesses were not aware of CoMission, or really understood what their role was.
- Many of them were shocked to hear that they were actually there.
- I'm not sure where that breakdown is at.
- It is very easy to go door-to-door.
- Four of us volunteered for three hours and we were able to accomplish over 50 businesses from the north to the south side of the city.
- Coming from a business perspective, I would like to see a better delineation of the KPIs.
- I haven't seen anything put out by the City ever.
- I would really like to see a true analysis.
- I think the conservation we're having are great and I can see the benefit with CBOs.
- With the businesses, I'm just not sure I'm seeing the results that some of the business owners would expect, especially with the city spending 100k.
- That's a lot of money for a cash strapped City.
- The feedback that we received from the businesses was a little disappointing.
- I'm not sure where the deviation has occurred.
- It seems as though CoMission has been more concentrated on non-profits and service organizations, perhaps that's the way that this role is supposed to go?
- It's hard to tell that because we haven't really seen the delineation of what exactly is expected by the City for CoMission to do.
- We would like to see more information from the City, and more information from CoMission.
- If they are brought on for the future, what is their vision for helping businesses because right now businesses are saying that they would rather see the money invested in grants for businesses versus investing more money into consultants that they've not heard of.
- I'm encouraging everyone to understand that we're all discussing this year, but there's a big wide city out there with a lot of people who do not understand these roles, but yet we're talking about how we're going to help them.
- I think that there needs to be more discussions surrounding the businesses.

Rei Blaser commented as follows:

- Reaching out to city-wide businesses and the CoMission statement under the current work plan for 2021.
- They speak to support a unified town in look and feel.
- That's beyond the downtown, beyond the Chamber members.
- Grateful for what they're sharing with Linda Collins to facilitate her reaching out to her members.
- That's a number-based organization just as the SDA is.
- How the business council is serving the greater business population is still a mystery to me.
- I attend the meetings, but they have very grandiose ideas.
- I think that needs to get a little more rooted and grounded, connected with even the CBOs or the non-profits and utilize this idea about volunteers going door-to-door, utilize volunteer's door-to-door to talk to the businesses that they frequent, or their service businesses, or if there's a bigger collective in town.
- Secondly is the Façade Improvement Program.
- I know they assisted with conversation of opening up the moneys to 75%.
- The businesses that I spoke with when I did the walk-around are still feeling that it's too cumbersome, and that the time frame is too huge to only be able to look at an application every quarter.
- Would be curious if somebody on the Design Review Board could be chosen that would look at applications as they come in and assist the businesses quicker and have a quicker turn around for those façade improvements.
- That also goes with the idea of helping beautify the town if that is the goal of the City.
- To direct CoMission to expand on that element under the business council where they're asking their associates to go out and visually look at businesses, look at who might need assistance, and to engage with the businesses and ask them what they need.
- Do they know about the Façade Improvement program?
- Have they filled out the application?
- Go out and look at them.
- I'm hearing that it's all great, that CBO is fabulous.
- It's a great idea in the service organization as it's coming forward.
- Don't start going beyond that. Let's look at how we can back up and revisit everything that's already been done.
- There's a lot to share and a lot to engage with here.
- Three minutes on this kind of conversation is limiting for everyone.

Current Programming:

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- It's been a great experience.
- It's really amazing to see this combined effort.
- It's not just on the service club's part to see the parallel activities with the non-profits and the opportunity to bring them all together.
- It really has created a real opportunity to bring these people together, let them drive the idea of collaborating in order to benefit the community in a much greater way than they could have individually.
- These are people who want to volunteer, who want to help our community.
- We have churches, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Rotary Clubs, the Masons, 2030 Club, and all sorts of people.

- They're actively participating.
- We spent about an hour yesterday putting together an entire outreach list of probably 50 or more organizations that we want to reach out to in order to ask them what their needs are.
- Instead of sitting back here and saying we're the service club orgs and we know what people need, this is an opportunity to engage the community and ask the community what they need.
- As a group they can voice their needs.
- As a group the service clubs can bring the needs to fruition and do something with them.
- The amount of collaboration and engagement, and the fact this is a bridge to action, these are action-oriented groups.
- They don't like to just process.
- The potential for benefit to the community, it is not just potential, it is going to happen.
- It is really amazing, and it could not have happened without that space being created by CoMission.
- That's been the process, everyone is engaged, everyone has a voice, and everyone is contributing.
- As a result, we can hardly wait for the outcome.
- Having the action list, the Google sheets, and all of those pieces have been really incredible.
- I see ideas.
- For instance, we want to do outreach.
- We want to get volunteers engaged.
- We're talking about the time bank engagement, the community calendar engagement.
- Instead of just talking, this is going to be one of those things that actually happens.
- We have not just the initiative but someone who's willing to make sure that those action items are checked off.
- Great experience.
- Really looking forward to seeing where these service organizations take this and the benefits that we're going to see here in our great little town.

Public Comment on Current Programming:

Luke Lindenbusch commented as follows:

- I've been watching this process.
- I'm on the Planning Commission as well as the Climate Action Committee.
- Today, I am commenting exclusively for myself.
- I also applied for this position when it first came up.
- It was originally intended as a part-time, \$40,000 position with the City.
- I was really disappointed to see it balloon to the larger sum of \$100,000, I think it is up to \$120,000 at this point.
- It's not because I disagree with any of the work that happened.
- I think that a lot that was in my application was similar to the work that's been carried out.
- I am really disappointed that this has not been the staff position, that we haven't understood the long-term importance of some of this work and really made sure it's part of our City infrastructure because we really are not in the fiscal picture to be continually expanding the budgets of consultant fees without really tangible benefit.
- I have had some issues with the work of CoMission.
- I think the survey wasn't as broad reaching as it needed to be.

- I have more emails, and more phone numbers than I can count and I didn't receive the survey in any form, and I talked to many residents who felt the same way.
- The business community is really disappointed from everyone I've talked to.
- I think a lot of the outreach that has been done is reaching a lot of the people who normally would have been reached anyway.
- I think there's a lot of work to be done.
- I don't want to diminish any of the work that CoMission has done either because I think this is really important.
- I think we need to be really prudent about how we use our financial resources at this time.
- If this is important work for the community, I think we've gotten a lot out of these materials as noted in some places.
- I would like to see more details.
- I would like to see where the \$150,000 to businesses went.
- I feel like I haven't really seen that much detail in terms of what has been accomplished with this in the past year.
- I really support this work.
- I want to support this work.
- I think that if the Council and the City Manager want to continue in this direction, \$120,000 could go toward a FTE in the Planning Department, which currently doesn't have the bandwidth to focus on economic development.
- If there were someone in the City full-time working on this, it could really be helpful for the City.
- I'm a little concerned about the fact that the selection of this consultant wasn't a very broad RFQ.
- There were minimal applications.
- I put mine together at the last minute because I hadn't really heard about it until it was coming up.
- I just really think that there's an opportunity, if we want to continue with this work, to have it be a staff position, to post it, and to be more transparent about who we get in here because I just think that having a group that's really led by people who are insiders in our community, who are really active, really engaged, and leading this work might be missing the full potential of what we could be accomplishing here.
- Happy to continue this conversation.
- Thank you for your consideration.

Rei Blaser commented as follows:

- I wish to echo Mr. Lindenbusch's comments from beginning to end.
- Thank you, Mr. Lindenbusch.
- You're a much clearer and more concise speaker than I could have pulled together myself.
- I really hope that everyone will take everything that Mr. Lindenbusch shared into really deep consideration.
- I thought that the RFQ was going to come back in a year and go back out again, that this was just a one-year trial and then review and go forward.
- Like Mr. Lindenbusch said, a staff position would be much more economically responsible than the direction that this is going.
- CoMission laid the groundwork, got organizations talking, and got service groups and the community benefit group going.
- Now that they are gelled, we can let them go, take away the facilitator, and then money put toward that.

Next Steps:

Mr. Litwin commented as follows:

- If you look at the conclusion page, what we're working for today is to understand if you would like us to come back, to bring an additional scope to complete this fiscal year.
- We need to increase the funding if we're going to be able to do this work for May and June.
- You may recall, back in September, when we were approved for the work through the end of the year, the Council asked us specifically to see if we could stretch the dollars and take them longer than just the end of the calendar year, which we've done.
- We're going to be able to do that through April.
- We've done that by prioritizing, basically triaging where we can put the limited dollars.
- We're looking for that direction from the Council as far as what you would like to see.
- If you would like to see us come back with that scope for May and June, and also for next fiscal year?
- Would you like us to prepare a work plan and scope to bring back for the following fiscal year?
- That conversation is interwoven with ideas and inspirations and what you would like to see for next year because we're very clear in that if we continue with the Council work and we keep facilitating and serving as the administrative hub for the different community councils and maybe even look at an equity council as a fourth one, that's something that we can metabolize.
- We can predict the time.
- We can keep that going and give each council an appropriate amount of energy.
- The variables are the surveys and at what degree you want us to do those surveys.
- There are also new projects like an equity council or a volunteer core to deliver things.
- Looking for some direction here.
- Maybe we could start with what you would like to see us do next for this fiscal year?

City Manager McLaughlin commented as follows:

- I would like to mention again to the City Council that this being a study session, we weren't looking for the Council to actually direct specific action today, but what we would like from the Council is direction in two areas.
- The first area, as Mr. Litwin alluded to, is to continue the work that's ongoing, especially with the three councils, through the end of the fiscal year.
- We have not used up the full budget for the year, but there is not quite enough money left in the budget to complete that work.
- We propose to bring back an agenda item at the first City Council meeting in April, probably on the Consent Calendar, to fund the work that's ongoing through the end of fiscal year.
- That would be somewhere in the range of \$15,000 to \$20,000 to cover through the end of the fiscal year.
- The second direction we would like is to bring to the budget committee a request for the Council to look at funding the CoMission's work for the next fiscal year.
- Again, this would be a budget request through the budget committee.
- The budget committee would have the first look at it, the first review and analysis of it.
- Then it would come to the Council as part of the budget public hearing process probably in May, potentially early June.
- I want to re-emphasize one thing.
- You saw from the attachments that the theme here is that what CoMission can start and then let be carried forward by others is the ultimate goal.
- You saw that in the staff work that was done.

- We didn't say thanks for the list, CoMission, now you go do these things.
- Instead, staff said, thanks for the list, CoMission and then staff went and accomplished a number of things, which Mr. Litwin kind of summarized and which is in the report for this agenda item.
- It's the same thing with these councils.
- The whole idea for CBOs is to let these matters become kind of self-perpetuating, self-motivating, to self-move on their own steam, to begin something and let it go forward.
- That's been our constant goal as a staff as well.
- We do agree that enhanced staff would be useful in the Planning Department.
- We are considering budgeting for that.
- However, we could not possibly have hired enough staff to do the work that CoMission has done.
- The thing about CoMission is that they have highly specialized people in CoMission who are the experts in what they do, and there are several of these people.
- We don't have enough budget, frankly, to hire enough people to do the work that CoMission did.
- We didn't anticipate a pandemic, but we reacted to a pandemic.
- That required the work that was done and required the bandwidth and expertise that CoMission brought to it.
- My view is that we're fortunate that they were here, very fortunate.
- We were able to better react to the challenges of the pandemic thanks to having them here.
- We're constantly working to carry this forth with existing resources.
- We are reactive to changing events.
- We plan on bringing two agenda items, one through the budget for next fiscal year and one to fund CoMission through the end of this fiscal year.

Councilmember Hinton commented as follows:

- Question for the City Manager.
- If we're asking for \$15,000 to \$20,000 more for the year, he never did recap what was spent in total so far.
- I would like to know that.
- Then second, I feel like especially with how much discussion we've had today and with people in the community, I don't feel comfortable having it come back on the Consent Calendar when we can't really do anything but discuss thoughts.
- I think that it needs to come back as a full agenda item if we're going to be spending additional money this year.

City Manager McLaughlin commented as follows:

- For the present fiscal year, CoMission was budgeted at the \$100,000 level.
- Through February we have spent just a little bit above \$81,000.
- To continue the work that is presently ongoing with the Council, the average is somewhere between, on the low side, stripped down as much as possible, \$7,500 a month to on the higher side, to do a bit more, or to meet some eventualities that we don't anticipate, \$10,000 a month.
- Since we are budgeted through probably two more months of the fiscal year, I was anticipating bringing back an agenda item to fund them, we're talking March, the month we're in, and then April, May, and June.
- Two months are budgeted already with enough money to cover them.
- I was anticipating bringing back a budget request to fund the additional two months through the end of the fiscal year.

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- That would be the area of \$7,500 a month to \$10,000 a month, somewhere in that range.

Councilmember Hinton commented as follows:

- Is any of this reimbursable?
- We talked a lot about that for COVID-19.

Director Kwong commented as follows:

- We would need to discuss whether that money should go to paying of CoMission or if that should go to cover other COVID-19 issues.
- The first CARES money that we received from was about \$95,000 and it's just going to the General Fund, it wasn't for any specific projects.
- As far as the second wave of COVID-19 relief funds, I don't have any information for that yet.
- There isn't a place where we can just signal to when we have these disasters, where we can just send invoices to get reimbursed, it's not like that.
- The answer is no, there isn't a place to send CoMission costs to get State or Federal reimbursement.

Councilmember Hinton stated it is not the case with the Federal funding that if we spend more we don't get more. Staff stated that is correct.

Vice Mayor Gurney commented as follows:

- A couple of big picture comments here.
- Our public has mentioned several times over the last several meetings this issue of tension between full-time employee positions and consultants, and our use of consultants.
- I'm kind of directing this to the City Manager and also the budget subcommittee because in addition to that concern, we have a historic one of support for our City Manager and Assistant City Manager, there is another demand for our budget.
- I have heard that we need the person officially replacing the former Engineering Manager as a full-time employee of the City, so we have a SPOC (specific person of contact) who is an employee.
- We have also talked historically, coming out of the work of Cittaslow, about having a vitality position online.
- You see what that overall tension that the public is mentioning about consultant versus full-time employee and this history of proposals for full-time employee positions.
- We have to grapple with this, I think, right now in our upcoming budget.
- I would very much welcome the budget subcommittee to chew this over and try to come to some recommendation and an analysis of why you are recommending that.
- Particularly on this point of full-time employee versus consultant.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- I think our City Manager and staff have explained to us several times about the issue regarding the Engineering position.
- We did go out and try to hire a staff based engineer.
- It's very hard to hire somebody for that position right now.
- However, we are using a consulting firm to the point where they are like a specific person of content.
- They are on site with us.

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- This is the sum of a different consultant every week kind of person.
- We do have that in place.
- As I recall, the reason we did it was because we weren't able to find somebody with the skill set that we require as a full-time employee.

City Manager McLaughlin commented as follows:

- Thank you for mentioning all that.
- Most cities, in fact, use City attorneys who are members of large law firms and they get a full service law firm.
- We use outside counsel.
- I am the City Attorney.
- Many of them use outside law firms that provide a multitude of different specialized attorney work where that City needs it in particular, beyond the skills of the person who is the designated City Attorney.
- Nobody calls that attorney firm the dreaded word, "consultant." Our engineering firm, in my view, is not a consultant.
- We have staff from the engineering firm that provides the work that we need that would, in other cities, larger cities, be done potentially by a staff member.
- Many cities have engineering firms providing their professional engineering services.
- We don't consult with them.
- They actually provide the expertise and work that an individual engineer would have provided if we paid an engineer a monthly salary.
- Same person, same work.
- We have a broader spectrum of specialized services to draw on, if need be, from that engineering firm because like the attorney firm I was talking about, they have multiple specialties within their firm.
- I actually wanted to try this again, if need be, and it needed to be because we were not able to hire an employee, as the Mayor indicated.
- I wanted to try it again because at a point in time in the past we had an engineering firm providing our professional services.
- We had an engineer attend every single one of our staff meetings.
- There was no difference between that person being an employee of the City or being an employee of the engineering firm.
- Same person, same expertise, same work load, same attendance at our staff meetings.
- As I see it, there's some evident confusion on the part of staff potentially because we're no different than a number of other cities that operate in the exact same way.
- Apparently, they don't have any questions being raised.
- I think there must be some misunderstanding over there, which we hope to clear up.

Vice Mayor Gurney commented offline from the meeting that she was going to propose that we have a staff meeting with SCTA staff which will be coming to you in an email later today.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- I would like to make a comment as a member of the budget subcommittee.
- I am hearing everybody's comments regarding expense, having staff, et cetera.
- As a member of the budget subcommittee, I'm not talking about the current fiscal year.
- I'm talking about the upcoming fiscal year.

- I am interested in figuring out how we can provide more in-house support, particularly to our management staff and that those people be available to work with CoMission and take the information that CoMission has been supplying to us to work more on implementing what needs to be done.
- I agree, it's hard when you look at the hourly billing rate of using an organization that's outside us, that gets to be pretty expensive.
- However, there are certain aspects of what CoMission has been doing that we couldn't have done.
- We're not going to hire somebody full-time that has their expertise at doing surveys and some of the technology work that they're doing.
- We can't afford to hire somebody on our staff full-time that's got that level of expertise.
- However, there are some things that they're doing, I believe, that we could be saving a lot of money if we did some of the implementation work in-house.
- Maybe we can look at how we could do things more efficiently and more cost effectively if we look at that for our next year's budget.
- I'm saying to my fellow budget subcommittee person that I think we need to take a look at that.
- We could do some cost savings as well as be more effective.
- The other thing I would like to say is that we have some members of the community saying things like they contacted people in our business community that were never contacted by CoMission, et cetera, and I think what we tend to do in these meetings is when people make these criticisms, we're not really entirely responding to them.
- I think we could respond to them more specifically.
- We do need to do a hard stop here today.
- When we bring this forward as a budget item, as an agenda item to talk about this again in the next few weeks, I'd really like to hear Mr. Litwin and Mr. Nolen talk about their methodology for reaching out to the business community specifically.
- As I recall, what you did was you used our business license database and perhaps information from the Chamber.
- I don't know exactly what it is, but I think that as these criticisms come out, they get this kind of urban myth status where, oh no, they didn't reach out to people.
- You're not really responding to these criticisms.
- I think we would all be better off if we could hear specific responses to some of these criticisms.
- I think that the public would like to hear that.
- I think as a Council we need to understand exactly what the response is to these criticisms.

Councilmember Rich commented as follows:

- In terms of the extension of funding through the end of this fiscal year, I am 100% in support of that funding.
- As I look at the history of the services that we provided and the building benefit that we've heard about from many, many people, not just here but also in emails we've received, it's pretty clear to me that we're coming to a culmination point with the summit that's planned in May.
- I see a lot of substantial progress being made with the service organizations council and that would be lost unless we continue this funding through the end of June.
- Whether or not anyone has any concerns or hesitation about the money that's been spent so far given the investment at this point, I think it would be really, really sad if but for an additional \$20,000, which let me tell you, \$20,000 means a lot to me.
- This is our town, and it sounds like \$100,000 has been allocated so far.

- I am fully in support despite my particular election against spending our City's money.
- I am fully in support of making sure that we maximize the benefit here.
- As a separate comment, and one of the reasons that I feel this way, I have incredible trust in our City Manager and Assistant City Manager's ability to assess the value of services like this.
- I hear a very clear voice from our staff, from our administrative personnel, that this has been a worthwhile effort.
- I am confident that they've been keeping a very close eye on the activities of CoMission.
- They know the isolation, the need for hope for the future.
- They know how hard-pressed the staff is to be doing any of this work.
- They know how important it is to our community on a bigger picture level.
- I just want everyone to know here that my personal experience with CoMission has been that their use of time is incredibly efficient.
- They have demonstrated that they allocate their lower hourly paid people as much time as possible.
- I will tell you that those lower paid hourly people are excellent.
- We're getting our money's worth there.
- I know that they provide no bill time because I've experienced the benefit of that.
- From my experience, they are cognizant of the need to spend the City's money in a very efficient manner.
- I think that that's one of the benefits that we get from using a well-connected group that knows our community.
- They have a reputation here and they value that reputation.
- We see that.
- They are not an outside consultant from some outside city.
- They are our people here.
- Finally, I would reiterate what I think CoMission and all of us are hearing over and over, which is that it's time for boots on the ground.
- It's time for going door-to-door.
- It's time for going business-to-business.
- They can't do that alone, which means it's time for us to engage, as I see the service organizations doing.
- It's time for us to engage our broader community, our volunteers, get them out of their houses, and get them to help us.
- That's a direction that CoMission and the service organizations council is going, trying to address the community calendar, all those efforts.
- In term of next year's funding, I honestly just don't have enough information.
- I will tell you that every single thing that CoMission has done has been with the expectation that they are memorializing all of the work that has been done, that it has been documented so we can move into the future without them having to be in the room.

Vice Mayor Gurney commented as follows:

- In order to save time, looking at our time window expiring, I'll second every remark Councilmember Rich has made, I appreciate your summary.
- I appreciate the Mayor mentioning these criticisms.
- I think it's very valuable feedback and I would like to ask of the people who did the survey, number one, can you please get in contact with CoMission on these points?

- What were your questions?
- What specifically did you ask?
- The dialed in questions, not the ho-hum we kind of talked about question.
- I'd like to know what was the nature of that survey.
- Who did you talk to?
- Was it an employee, a business owner, the real property owner?
- Please give that list of contacts, all of that information, email, phone number, and address to CoMission.
- Thirdly, I'd like to know what kind of business was it so we can see who wasn't mentioned because it's really important now that all this effort come together.
- This is what Councilmember Rich was saying about action.
- Let's pull this together.
- Let's use those criticisms in a really helpful way.
- Call it feedback and weave it into our future efforts.
- We really need to know those specifics from people who did that survey, the four volunteers need to release that information to CoMission.
- That would be a really important next step for me, and for the volunteer effort.
- Please plug your work into CoMission so we can all see the benefit together.
- That's really the whole point of all of this over last year.

Councilmember Slayter commented as follows:

- The community vitality project is something that honestly, I'm going to go ahead and take credit for that title.
- Historically, the position was much narrower in focus and it was called economic development or economic vitality.
- You still see that in most other communities where this kind of work is being done.
- It was really important for me to title it community vitality because all these independent systems are so interconnected.
- The non-profits, service organizations, the business community.
- I don't mean just Main Street.
- I mean people who do what I do in spare bedrooms, in back rooms, in outbuildings, and doctors and service providers that are not in retail.
- Honestly, those type of businesses I would venture greatly outnumber retail.
- The interconnectedness of all of this is so vital.
- A little historical perspective for everybody, we funded this pre-pandemic.
- It took six months to go through the RFP, RFQ, interviews, and all of that work.
- The determination was made by the City Manager whose decision it was, by the way, to go with the local group, CoMission.
- I think it was less than 30 days later when the initial shelter-in-place order came down.
- The then Vice Mayor and myself as Mayor, we met an awful lot trying to figure out how to pivot.
- The ability of CoMission to make that pivot when PPP came out, nobody even knew what it stood for.
- Now these are things that we all know intimately.
- The ability of CoMission to pivot and be much more than just what we thought was initially the community vitality position in doing that work.
- Yes, it is easy to criticize.

- Yes, there are things that need criticism.
- That doesn't mean that it cannot be constructive and that we can't figure out how to have this money, this public money, go to the public benefit.
- It will never be perfect.
- There will always be the ability for people to criticize.
- There will always be things worthy of criticism, but that doesn't mean that we can't learn from it and do this properly.
- The other final thought is that the numbers are just being released about the stimulus package that Washington is deep in today.
- It looks like, for Sebastopol, the stimulus money is going to be about 1.444 million.
- That is money that will help make us whole, help make up our losses.
- This isn't new money that's a bonus, this is to make us whole.
- At the same time we had budgeted for a community vitality position.
- The contract has ballooned.
- That's no secret.
- It's not as dire as it once seemed, I think, going into the budget.
- The knowledge of that stimulus money couldn't have come at a better time. Knowing how much that was going to be before the budget work has started.
- Thanks, Mr. Litwin.
- Thanks, Mr. Nolen.
- Thanks to your entire team.
- Please pass along to them my gratitude because I know that it's down to people who answer the phone and respond to emails, that are logistical and not super high level.
- Every one of those people does great work, thank you.

Councilmember Hinton departed the meeting at 10:30 am.

Vice Mayor Gurney commented as follows:

- I would like to echo the comments of all of my colleagues.
- CoMission has done an incredible and great job.
- I can also attest to Councilmember Slayter's comment, I was there when he came up with the name.
- We were standing in the parking lot behind City Hall thinking about what we should call it.
- Councilmember Slayter came up with community vitality and I said, yes, you are right.
- We had a lot more discussions about it when we were at League of Cities meetings and listening to League of Cities economic development meetings, et cetera.
- We kept coming back to Sebastopol being more than just an economic engine.
- We're about the sum of the parts.
- The sum of the parts is non-profits, it's the people that live here, it's the businesses that are here, it's the retail downtown, it's the restaurants that are all over, it's the schools. We need to pull all these parts together.
- That's what's so important about the work that Mr. Litwin, Mr. Nolen, and their colleagues have done.
- This gives us a basis to move forward.
- We need to continue the work, as Councilmember Rich said, we need to pull it all together.

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- Then, we need to continue to act on it and implement on it, not just let it sit on a shelf, as has also been discussed here.
- Thank you to our City staff, who has actually taken a lot of this feedback and is acting on it.
- The report showing what City staff has actually done to act on this information has been very, very critical to our understanding that this is money well invested.

Rei Blaser commented as follows:

- I want to speak directly to the excess use of the word "criticism" throughout the last few speakers' comments.
- It would be a lot more proactive to directly say, please engage with CoMission and share feedback about who you spoke with.
- Further, my concern is, if CoMission's work was to connect with the businesses in the city of Sebastopol and there is well over 150, I don't even know that it's our task to know that when the City has the information.
- 150 businesses do not provide scope or reflection of what the business community needs.
- That's all that we were trying to express.
- We saw 50 businesses in our afternoon together.
- It wasn't criticism on their work.
- We are sharing the feedback of what we learned from those businesses when they shared with us that they hadn't heard from CoMission.
- It wasn't a judgment.
- We were sharing information about who are they speaking with.
- I'll gladly share the names of the businesses that we reached out to and to find out from CoMission whether they also reached out to them and to see if there was a cross of communication.
- I personally spoke with all the business owners.
- I did have direct communication with knowing whether or not they had connected with CoMission.
- Thank you.
- That was not criticism.
- Please, please, do not devalue our efforts as a volunteer organization.
- CoMission is being paid and yes, they have the ability to extend themselves more than our volunteers, and our organizations.
- That's all.
- I'm just asking for some respect rather than the comments that were made.
- Thank you.

Mayor Glass commented as follows:

- I would urge everybody to communicate with CoMission, and let's get every person's input to CoMission.
- Let's move forward.

City Council Action: No formal action. Study Session

Minute Order Number: 2021-049

ADJOURNMENT OF CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING – STUDY SESSION

Meeting will be adjourned to the City Council Regular City Council Meeting scheduled for Tuesday April 6, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

Mayor Glass adjourned the Regular City Council Meeting at 10:45 am.

Respectfully Submitted:

Mary C. Gourley
Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC