

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in regards to item 11 - Mid Year Budget Adjustment and Staffing review.

I found the RGS report to be very informative and well-done. Their recommendations seem to be practical and aimed toward giving the public a high level of service and also defining City jobs so they have a sustainable and effective workload.

It is clear that most City departments are understaffed. It is clear that the City needs to raise at minimum 10% more revenue to make sure staffing levels are appropriate for both citizens and City employees.

#### Budget Questions Regarding Water and Sewer Infrastructure

The Midyear Budget Review indicates a negative reserve on both Water and Sewer Infrastructure funding.

The Water Fund Reserve is at -16.7%.

The Sewer Fund is at -27.1%.

In addition, on page 2 the RSG report recommends that within the first 3 months of their staffing strategy that public works should hire: *"2.0 FTE maintenance staff to address deferred mandated maintenance*

*Add two (2.0) Maintenance Workers (one for Water System Treatment; one for Sewer Systems) to allow the department to address mandated maintenance projects and processes."*

**Question for Council: What is the deferred mandated maintenance? And how does it relate to these negative reserves?**

The RGS report indicates that there is a backlog of maintenance in water, sewer and parks.

#### *"Current Staffing Challenges*

*RGS learned from interviews with Public Works Department staff that deferred maintenance in both infrastructure and equipment due to past years' budget constraints has put strain on the already aging sewer and water systems and can be seen in the condition of City parks. Staff is grateful that the City has reserves and revenues available this year to fund several capital projects which will address deterioration experienced in parks, sewer, and water systems. These projects are listed in the Capital Improvement Plan."*

**Question for Council and Staff:** Is there a list of what maintenance and upgrades are needed for our Sewer and Water Funds? What is the total outstanding need for these critical infrastructure systems? What is the total outstanding need for our parks to bring them up to a high-quality experience for the general public? Sebastopol's roads are rated in the worst category for the Bay Area.

Can the public see a clear document of all the outstanding public infrastructure needs that shows the costs associated with the following:

1. Upgrading and maintaining the Water System;
2. Upgrading and maintaining the Sewer System;
3. Capital Improvements needed in City Parks and Public Lands so they are ADA compliant, have accessible trails, have clean and well-maintained buildings and bathrooms, are physically appealing for the public;
4. Funding necessary to make Sebastopol's roads into "Good" condition as determined by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission ranked Sebastopol with a "poor" rating - "meaning the MTC has determined these roads require "major rehabilitation or reconstruction." Sebastopol is one of 5 locations within the Bay Area with a Poor Rating.

[https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11/PCI\\_table-2020\\_data%20%2800F%29.pdf](https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-11/PCI_table-2020_data%20%2800F%29.pdf)

<https://www.sfgate.com/local/article/bay-area-street-pavement-quality-17559104.php>

5. If we need to do a bond for the fire station, should we also include funding for water sewer systems, parks and roads?

Previous Council seems to have left a legacy of understaffing and significant infrastructure needs.

It would be ideal if the new Council could produce some very simple documents to show how much money will be needed to bring our infrastructure back to good and solid condition.

Is it possible to have a document that outlines all the outstanding maintenance and upgrades to Water, Sewer, Parks and Roads so that the public can see what will need to be funded over the next 1-10 years?

#### Appropriate Work Loads for Planning Staff and Non-Traditional Obligations

At the February 7, 2023 Council meeting, there were questions about how much time the Planning Director spent on the Climate Action Committee and Public Arts Committee.

The Planning Director responded that she spent 2 hours per week on the Climate Action Committee and did not respond to how much time per week she spent on the Public Arts Committee. It was noted in the RGS report on page 23 that the Public Arts Committee was included as additional duties by the Planning Director:

Page 23:

*"For several years, the department has also assumed 'non-traditional' planning roles such as park planning projects and staffing the Public Art Committee. The Director stated that these changes have caused staffing challenges that need to be addressed."*

If the Planning Director spends 3 hours per week on the Public Arts Committee and spends 2 hours per week on the Climate Action Committee, that's 5 hours per week on non-essential work. 5 hours per week is 250 hours per year (working a 50 week year). This cumulative total is 6.25 weeks per year spent on non-essential, non-traditional work.

#### Question for Consultant re: Planning Department

If the Planning Department no longer has committee responsibilities for the Climate Action Committee, the Public Arts Committee and the Liaison for the Unhoused, how many hours per year does that free up for essential planning work?

Sebastopol has a significant amount of public space and parks. What does RGS recommend in terms of giving more staff time to Sebastopol's public spaces and parks?

How would eliminating the Planning Director's participation in this non-essential work support the goal stated in the RGS report on page 4? The RSG goal is to "increase its capacity to undertake and perform more complex professional planning work."

*"Reclassify the Associate Planner to a Senior Planner - retain both classifications, filling only one classification title at a time (allows training and career development opportunities)  
The upgraded Senior Planner would allow the department to increase its capacity to undertake and perform more complex professional planning work. The workload over the last two years sustains this recommendation."*

#### What to do with the Workload from the PAC and CAC?

1) The PAC has been in existence for 12 years and has completed 2 installed projects and has one completed commission that has yet to be installed. If the Planning Director contributes 3 hours per week that is 150 hours per year. In a 12 year period, that is 1800 hours of staff time, the equivalent of 45 working weeks - almost a year's worth of Planning Department time.

In addition, the Public Works Department must spend time to install work and do site visits.

Council needs to evaluate if this is a good use of taxpayer money and resources given our severe understaffing and extremely limited budget.

My suggestion would be to eliminate the PAC. Keep the remaining funds in reserve for maintenance of existing commissions and to commission permanent pieces for the Ives Park sculpture garden. This would immediately free up 150 hours of planning time.

2) The Climate Action Committee consists of a majority of members who do not live within the City Limits of Sebastopol. Climate change is a global issue that impacts all communities and is not contained by artificial boundaries such as City Limits. Given the nature of climate change and the membership of the CAC, the CAC should be untethered from the City of Sebastopol and be supported by the County as environmental policies should be coordinated at the County level to have the most impact and address the interconnected nature of our environment from waterways, transportation, trash, energy sources, water strategies. It makes no sense to locate the CAC within the tiny, 7500 person town of Sebastopol where policies have very little broader impact and are not being designed in tandem with the County.

The CAC should not be the responsibility of the City of Sebastopol's Planning Department and Administrative Services. It should be an organization that receives its support from the County.

#### Can Council ask the Consultants how to restructure the CAC so that it is a County committee with support from the County?

#### Litigation and Costs to Taxpayers

On Page 7, there is a breakdown of outside attorney costs:

"City Attorney: This is a request for an \$85,000 increase for pending cases. When the FY 22-23 budget was approved, the City was not in litigation with the ACLU. The City has been sued by the ACLU over the parking ordinance. The cost of the defense to date is \$77,823. The estimated cost through June 30th is an additional \$100,000 (all inclusive of outside legal counsel support). This expense can be partially absorbed by the amount originally budgeted for the City Attorney. The additional amount needed is the requested \$85,000."

Is it possible to get reimbursement from the County to cover our litigation costs? As Sebastopol has hosted Horizon's Shine as an experimental pilot project for SAVS, it seems egregious and unfair to the residents of Sebastopol that we are now having to pay for litigation costs that are being catalyzed by residents of Horizon's Shine.

Some of the Plaintiffs in the case are Horizon Shine residents. They have been given free housing, utilities, medical and social services since February 2022. All these have been paid for with tax dollars. The Planning Director, Council and many others have spent hundreds of hours setting up and establishing this location and service. It has been a significant investment of Sebastopol's time and money. SAVS has received close to \$1,000,000 in funding. Sebastopol has not received any money to offset costs associated with this project including Council time, administrative time, Planning Department time.

Question to Council and Staff: Can Sebastopol receive reimbursement from the County to help offset these costs associated with sheltering the unhoused? If SAVS has a budget of \$1,000,000 for the project and Transit Occupation Tax is 12%, can the City of Sebastopol receive \$120,000 to reimburse the citizens and offset the costs associated with this project. If Horizon's Shine was any other temporary lodging, the City would receive TOT.

In reviewing these documents, I hope Council will start to craft a plan to reduce staff time on non-essential services, to gather the necessary information so we have a complete financial picture on what money will be necessary to rebuild our infrastructure and will seek 12% TOT from the County for the City's hosting of temporary housing for the unhoused.

Kate Haug