

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Diana Rich](#); [Neysa Hinton](#); [Sandra Maurer](#); [Jill McLewis](#); [Stephen Zollman](#)
Cc: [Mary Gourley](#); [Lawrence McLaughlin](#)
Subject: Sales Tax Measure
Date: Tuesday, August 08, 2023 7:02:52 AM

Mayor and City Council-

Although I am a Board member of the Sebastopol Community and Cultural Center, I am speaking as an individual member of the community.

I am writing in support of the concept of a 0.25% sales tax measure.

Diverse sources of income are necessary to support core City services. A sales tax, while not a perfect instrument, draws income not only from City residents, but also from our greater community —unincorporated Sebastopol, and visitors to Sebastopol. A 0.25% tax will begin to address the City's structural fiscal challenges.

However, I do have concerns with the draft measure as set forth in your staff report. It targets several service areas which are not core City responsibilities, leaves out key community organizations, and could be expressed more simply and have greater voter appeal.

Under California's division of local government responsibilities, social services such as mental and behavioral programs are primarily the responsibility of counties, not cities. While certainly these areas may merit some City funding, specifically targeting these areas in a special tax measure strays from core City responsibilities. In addition, inclusion of these areas may over-promise to the voters, since the needs of core City services are great, and the measure will not raise enough funds to make a significant impact in all the areas listed.

Likewise, the Sonoma County Library is an independent government agency with its own funding sources. Again, while some City support may be appropriate, dedicating a portion of this special tax measure to the library, when the needs of core City services are challenging, seems inappropriate.

It is also striking that while the Senior Center and Ives Pool are specifically listed as eligible for funding, the Community Center and Center for the Arts, two of the other major community non-profits are not listed. Why? Alternative, more broad wording that would provide flexibility for future City Councils is set forth below. The ballot argument could provide more detail for voters. If a broader wording is not desired, the Community Center and Center for the Arts should be specifically listed.

Issues around fire services have been critical in recent years, and the measure would have greater appeal if support for fire services leads in the measure's wording. In addition, given the City's fiscal challenges, it also seems unrealistic to state that fire services will be 'enhanced.'

Lastly, a more simple expression of the measure would also increase chances of approval.

Below is the draft measure proposed in the staff report, and an alternative.

Draft Proposal in staff report: "Shall the measure (Ordinance (#)) to maintain Sebastopol's parks, senior center, pool, library and mental and behavioral programs, and other City funded community services, and to enhance and provide continued support for Sebastopol's fire services, by establishing a 0.25% transaction and use (sales) tax, for 10 years, providing approximately \$750,000 annually, subject to an annual audit, be adopted?"

Alternative proposal: "Shall the ordinance (#) to support Sebastopol's fire services, parks, and community services, by establishing a 0.25% transaction and use (sales) tax, for 10 years, providing approximately \$750,000 annually, subject to an annual audit, be adopted?"

Thank you for dedicated service and for your consideration.

-Kenyon Webster