



## City of Sebastopol Planning Department

TO: Sebastopol Climate Action Committee  
FROM: Sebastopol Planning Department  
DATE: October 8, 2024  
SUBJECT: Continued discussion of ongoing staff support for CAC

At their meeting of September 10, 2024, the Sebastopol Climate Action Committee received a staff presentation about how the City's budget situation may impact the CAC's ongoing work in terms of staff support for meetings and projects. The presentation included several options for reducing the Planning Department's hours spent in support of the CAC while still allowing their important work to continue. The Options included (1) reforming the CAC as a non-appointed, ad-hoc committee; (2) allowing the committee to meet its current Brown Act (aka open meeting law) requirements without staff support; (3) assigning the CAC a monthly "hours budget" for planning staff; (4) reducing the number of meetings that the CAC holds; or a combination of these options.

After receiving the presentation and options, the CAC held a discussion and provided the following feedback to staff:

There is no support on the CAC for Options 1 and 2. The CAC felt strongly that Option 1 would diminish their role during a time that members felt that their role should be increasing. There were some suggestions made by members regarding how the hours spent in or running meetings could be reduced by limiting participation to in-person only with webcasts available. While there was no clear consensus about how meeting participation might be changed, there was support for some combination of Options 3 and 4 (budgeting for planning staff hours, reducing meeting length or frequency).

Staff will be returning to the City Council with recommendations for ways to reduce the CAC's reliance on planning staff hours. In recognition the feedback received from the CAC, staff intends to recommend the following actions to reduce staff hours while strengthening the CAC's role where feasible:

- 1) Monthly budget of 10 planning staff hours. These hours can be spent in meetings or staff time requests made by individual members but would be limited to 10 hours per month. Hours not used in any month could be "rolled over" to the following month if needed.
- 2) Implementation Plan. In order to best make use of limited staff time resources, the CAC needs to create and cost out a plan to implement the Climate Action Framework. Staff resources can then be better planned to accommodate CAC-related work that we know is upcoming. There may be some limited assistance from the RCPA available for this purpose.

- 3) Departmental Reports. In order to keep the CAC apprised of upcoming projects that they may wish to participate in, the CAC will receive the same Department Reports that the City Council receives.
- 4) Voluntary project referrals. Staff will recommend establishment of a program whereby a planning applicant can voluntarily present their project to the CAC to gain endorsement. Projects would be scheduled by the CAC to be presented during a regularly scheduled CAC meeting and would be presented by the applicant only (not planning staff). The CAC can ask questions of the applicants, make suggestions for changes to increase sustainability, and determine whether or not the project can be endorsed by the CAC. The CAC would then make their recommendations to the planning staff and to the Planning Commission or City Council, as appropriate, in either letter form or by attending the meeting and speaking during public comment.

Staff is hopeful that these recommendations will be helpful to the CAC, and encourages their participation when the CAC reviews this item in November as well as when the City Council engages in goal-setting in February 2025.