

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM**

Meeting Date: January 16, 2024
To: Honorable City Councilmembers
From: Agenda Review Committee
Subject: Sponsorship of Sebastopol Walks
Recommendation: Approval of Sponsorship of the 2024 Sebastopol Walks Program
Funding: Currently Budgeted: Yes No Not Applicable
Account Code: N/A

INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE:

This item is to request that the City Council Approve City Sponsorship for the Sebastopol Walks Program (for its 16th Year) 2024 and Request for Assistance with Publicity.

BACKGROUND:

For 12 of the last 16 years, local volunteers have organized and conducted once-monthly, docent-led walks around town. More than 3,000 people have participated in more than 130 walk events. These statistics are best estimates only.

The program, known as Sebastopol Walks, has introduced people to the fun of exploring town on foot, learning about the social/cultural/political history of the community, and discovering what makes Sebastopol a great place to live and visit. Locals, locals with out-of-town guests, residents from other Sonoma County cities, out-of-county and international visitors have enjoyed the walks. Intended as a community-building experience, the walks became a tourist attraction.

The inspiration for the walks was a booklet called Sebastopol Walks written by local activist Richard Nichols, its first edition funded by the City. For the second edition, then Mayor and Former City Councilmember Sarah Gurney organized three progressive dinner walks, featuring local restaurants, and raised enough money for the booklet's second printing. Funding for the third edition came from the sales of the book, including at Copperfields Books. The local store has sold over 1000 copies. The booklet has been the number one holiday best seller for several years. It has served inexpensive gift and/or souvenir and has been presented to many Sister City/other visitors to City Hall.

Originally, a four-member core group of volunteers assumed leadership for all of the walks. Soon community leaders were recruited to share the responsibilities, expanding the core group. Later, the current Mayor and Former Council Members were invited to create and lead new routes, often highlighting City governance, service delivery, and opportunities for the future.

The WALKS Program has emphasized the value of exercise for good health. Already in existence when Sonoma County Health Action started the iWALK campaign (in 2013), Sebastopol WALKS was highlighted as the

demonstration program. It has inspired several other local walking programs: for example, one at the Senior Center; iMOSEY through an earlier Health Action Chapter; at least one private women's group; and a sister program in Novato. It is the only Health Action iWALK activity still in existence.

The 2024 Walks Program welcomes new organizational leadership. Experienced volunteer Simon Lowings has rekindled interest in the program amongst long-timers and encouraged new local volunteer leaders. Mr. Lowings has also recruited a replacement for the graphic designer, Kathy Oetinger: Gary Morgret, who is a designer, artist, photographer for Pepperwood, and Coastwalker, has agreed and has been doing the Walks flyer.

DISCUSSION:

Former City Councilmember Gurney had requested sponsorship of this program in past years, and currently the Agenda Review Committee is sponsoring this agenda item for sponsorship for another season of walks for 2024.

The group proposes 10 walks, February through November. As before, Walk events will be held on the last Saturday of each month, meeting at The Plaza at 9 AM, departing at 9:15 AM, and returning around noon. Each walk will have a leader and a sweep. Participants will sign a Release of Liability. Visitors and residents alike are welcome at these guided and themed walks. Walks are easy and mostly flat on good surfaces, with a few mild climbs. Please consult with your doctor before starting a new exercise regimen. Walking or hiking shoes are recommended. Dress in layers. Bring water, snacks (or lunch if noted), sunscreen and a hat. Walks may be modified by the leader. Walkers may leave the group after notifying the walk leader.

The anticipated 2024 calendar of events is attached. The events will vary in focus, length, and difficulty, based upon the routes chosen by the morning's leaders.

Some walks will be mainly for exercise to show participants how to connect places in town by foot and others will be informational. Some are new routes and new subject matter; others are updated versions of favorites.

The WALKS will build interest in Sebastopol as a health-oriented community and help people experience the connectivity of our network of streets, sidewalks, paths, trails and alleys. Participants will learn that they can get around town without driving their car and that they can enjoy the outdoors on foot. They will learn about Sebastopol's social, cultural, and political history as well as its municipal functions.

The group seeks City sponsorship, in part in order to secure insurance coverage. The City has served as sponsor for each prior year. The group requests minimal help with publicity: posting on the City's Facebook page, website and community newsletter; placing flyers in the lobby at City Hall; installing the banner on the Gazebo at The Plaza one week in advance; etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The proposed action is exempt Yes No from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

GOALS:

This item relates to City Council Goal 5: Provide open and responsive Municipal Government Leadership; Goal 4 - Maintain and Enhance the City of Sebastopol as a Walkable/Bike-able Community and Enhance the City's Commitment to Promotion of our public's health by Creating and Participating in City and Community Programs, Services and Policies; 4.2. Foster a Sense of Community by Providing and Encouraging Participation in Community

Events, Volunteering, and working with Non Profits to Support Local Events; 5.2. - Promote and enhance utilization of community energy and skills by creating opportunities for volunteer service.

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 the scheduled meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the recommended action tonight other than staff time for publicity efforts through the City's social media avenues and City Website. This staff time, estimated at 7 to 8 hours per year, can be accommodated within the existing outreach budget.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the City Council Approve Continued City Sponsorship of the Sebastopol Walks Program 2024 and Assist with Publicity for all 2024 events as requested. If Councilmembers have any questions on this request, this item would need to be pulled from the consent calendar for further discussion and deliberations.

Attachment:

Schedule for 2024

Approvals:

Department Head Approval:

LMC

Approval Date: 1-10-2024

CEQA Determination (Planning):

LMC

Approval Date: 1-10-2024

Administrative Services/Financial Approval:

AS

Approval Date: 1-10-24

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: Yes No N/A

City Attorney Approval:

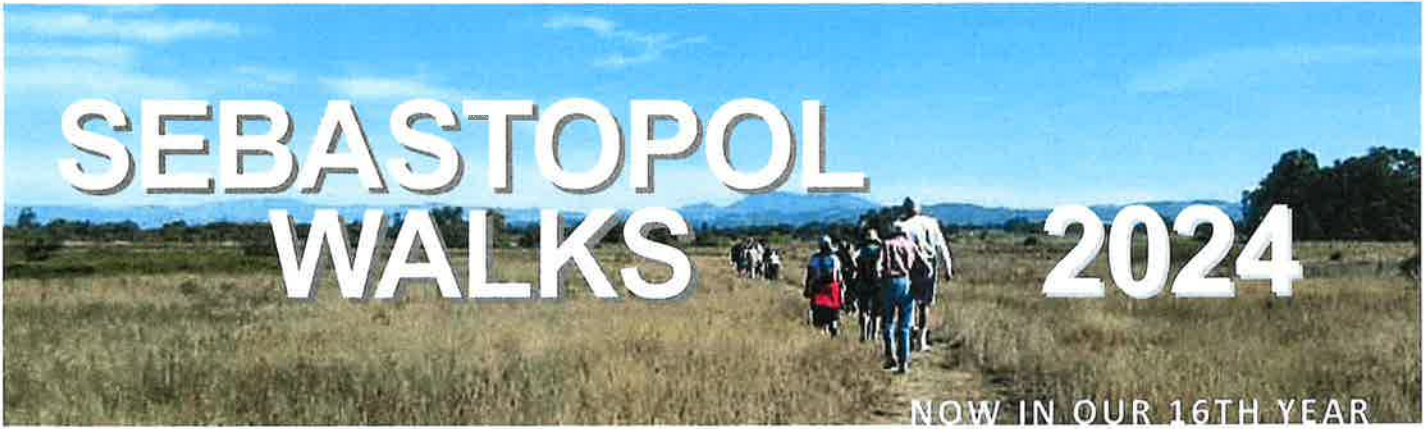
LMC

Approval Date: 1-11-24

City Manager Approval:

LMC

Approval Date: 1/10/24



Saturday, February 24, 2024
Climb the Hills of Sebastopol

Saturday, 9:00 am Meet at the downtown plaza
 Leader: Sarah Gurney

Walk details

FEBRUARY 24 Saturday, 10AM

Climb the hills of Sebastopol
 Leader: Sarah Gurney

MARCH 30 Saturday, 9AM

Businesses Behind the Scenes
 Leader: Diana Rich

APRIL 20 Saturday, 9AM

To be determined
 Leader: Paul Fritz

MAY 25 Saturday, 9AM

Music Sebastopol
 Leader: Scott King

JUNE 29 Saturday, 9AM

Walk to a winery
 Leaders: Anne & Simon Lowings

JULY 27 Saturday, 9AM

Climate Victory Gardens
 Leader: Tor Allen

AUGUST 31 Saturday, 9AM

To Be Determined
 Leaders: Joan Schwan & Geoffrey Skinner

SEPTEMBER 28 Saturday, 9AM

iWalk iEat local in Sebastopol
 Leader: Neysa Hinton

OCTOBER 26 Saturday, 9AM

Ragle Ranch Oaks Walk
 Leader: April Lynch

NOVEMBER 30 Saturday, 9AM

Non Profits Sebastopol
 Leader: Stephen Zollman

