

City Council, Staff, and Members of the Public,

I want to take a moment to express my strong support for Mary Gourley in her role as Assistant City Manager and City Clerk. Her commitment, professionalism, and responsiveness have made her a highly valued figure within our city government. Over her eight years of service, Mary has shown a steadfast dedication to transparency, efficiency, and respect in her interactions, serving as a vital bridge between city administration and the public.

However, I am deeply concerned about the broader financial management priorities of the City Council, particularly regarding the significant increases in department management salaries over recent years. My criticism here is directed at the unchecked expansion of top management salaries, which has happened at the expense of essential services and public programs.

While the table below represents the overall department budgets rather than manager salaries specifically, it reflects the broader trend of escalating costs in departments overseen by high-salaried leaders. The data demonstrates a concerning shift in budget priorities, with significant increases in areas under senior management, signaling an emphasis on expanding managerial costs rather than on strengthening critical services for residents.

Department	2019-2020	2024-25 Approved	Percent Increase/Decrease
City Council	\$295,065	\$198,625	-32.68%
City Manager	\$271,300	\$698,885	+157.61%
City Clerk	\$330,425	\$430,771	+30.37%
City Attorney	\$147,500	\$647,900	+339.25%
Finance	\$1,010,825	\$1,436,923	+42.15%
Planning	\$591,551	\$616,426	+4.21%
Police	\$4,231,475	\$5,366,490	+26.82%
Fire	\$1,107,651	\$1,535,910	+38.66%
Building	\$320,400	\$302,220	-5.67%
Engineering	\$318,700	\$553,020	+73.52%
Corporation Yard Admin	\$460,450	\$486,005	+5.55%
Gov. Buildings	\$131,125	\$266,903	+103.55%
Streets	\$500,075	\$347,855	-30.44%
Parking Lots	\$110,975	\$145,987	+31.55%
Parks	\$418,380	\$522,331	+24.85%
Ives	\$126,390	\$297,306	+135.23%
Non-Departmental	\$1,457,200	\$191,645	-86.85%
Community Center	\$265,515	\$169,726	-36.08%
Senior Center	\$65,325	\$41,038	-37.18%

The figures show sharp increases in overall department budgets for those under high-salaried management, such as the City Manager's department, with a 157% increase, and the City Attorney's department, which has risen over 339%. Meanwhile, key public service areas, including Streets, Community Center, and Senior Center, have faced budget cuts. The non-departmental budget—often critical for cross-functional community services—has been slashed by nearly 87%.

While I fully support Mary Gourley's contributions and believe she serves the city well, I strongly urge the City Council to reconsider its budget priorities. Shifting funds away from inflated managerial budgets and toward public-serving departments is essential to restoring balance and ensuring that Sebastopol's resources benefit all residents equitably. Transparent and prudent financial management is vital for public trust and for a city government that truly serves its community's needs.

- Kyle Falbo