

From: [Jill McLewis](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Fwd: DEMOCRACY alive & well? Fwd: How Sebastopol's ceasefire resolution disappeared from the agenda
Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 4:01:11 PM

Jill McLewis
Councilmember
City of Sebastopol

From: Angela Ford [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 3:44:06 PM
To: Neysa Hinton <NHinton@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Diana Rich <drich@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Sandi Maurer <sandimaurer@sonic.net>; Jill McLewis <jmclewis@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Stephen Zollman <szollman1@gmail.com>
Cc: Laura Hagar Rush [REDACTED]
Subject: DEMOCRACY alive & well? Fwd: How Sebastopol's ceasefire resolution disappeared from the agenda

Dear Sebastopol City Councilmembers

SO SORRY to read this article.

So many cities around our nation and world have taken on this issue, despite the emotional charge and political heat. What's so special about Sebastopol that we can't do the same?

We live in a democracy which I used to think was very much alive and well in our little corner of the world. Now I'm left wondering.

Sincerely,
Angela Ford

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:How Sebastopol's ceasefire resolution disappeared from the agenda
Date:Tue, 20 Feb 2024 22:31:05 +0000
From:From Sebastopol Times <sebastopol@substack.com>
Reply-To:From Sebastopol Times
<reply+2cgjzw&ufxgo&3efb9bbcc237e25d8b87de2805e8814f07d331a4474c5d92154d8eacc6037b61@mg1.substack.com>
To:aford1@sonic.net

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How Sebastopol's ceasefire resolution disappeared from the agenda

Impassioned letters and a concern for public safety caused a ceasefire resolution to be pulled from tonight's agenda

[Laura Hagar Rush](#)

Feb 20



READ IN APP



For the last several months, as the war in Gaza has dragged on, people have stood up during public comment at Sebastopol City Council meetings, asking that the council—as representatives of Peacetown—pass a resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza.

And for a few short days last week, it looked like such a resolution was in the offing.

Vice Mayor Stephen Zollman assembled a coalition of Jewish peace activists and Palestinian rights advocates, including former Sebastopol Mayor Una Glass, to craft a carefully worded ceasefire resolution. (See the resolution below.)

It was put on the agenda to be discussed at tonight's council meeting.

Then, on Monday afternoon, the city sent out a press release announcing that the ceasefire item had been removed from the agenda for reasons of public safety.

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The press release read as follows:

This item has received an unexpected outpouring of public attention. Comments have been received from our local constituents, as expected, but also from many outside our city boundaries, including other parts of Sonoma County and other parts of the State.

In other jurisdictions where this topic has been discussed recently, it has attracted large numbers of people and, due to the emotionally charged nature of the subject, has led in some instances to disruption and even violence.

For public safety and because of the relatively small size of the City Council venue, the Mayor and Vice Mayor, who establish the agenda for City Council meetings, have decided to drop this item from the February 20, 2024, agenda.

It may be considered for a future agenda, with consideration for allocating sufficient time to allow all those interested in the topic to provide public comment, and arranging a venue that can accommodate the number of participants expected to attend.

All those who are interested in this topic are encouraged to submit written public comment to citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov. All comments submitted are appreciated and valued by this City Council.

Any questions can be directed to Mayor Diana Rich (drich@cityofsebastopol.gov).

“It was a difficult decision to remove the proposed ceasefire resolution from the agenda for tonight’s City Council meeting,” said Mayor Diana Rich. “We’re a council that has demonstrated time and again that we value and respect public comment. It’s one of the strengths of our town and our process.”

“The spirit of the resolution was all about humanity and communicating a message of peaceful solutions to conflict,” she said. “When Vice Mayor Stephen Zollman approached me about the resolution, that was the good-hearted, positive, community-building intent.”

“What we realized is that we had done the opposite: we seemed to have ignited fear and anger and feelings that were intensely deep, painful, and personal,” she said. “We seemed to have galvanized groups of people who were speaking from very passionately held views that placed themselves in direct opposition to one another. We were aware of what has transpired in other jurisdictions when this topic has been raised, we knew we would draw a large crowd, we knew we had a small venue with limited capacity, and we knew that passions would be high. Once we went through the realities we realized that public safety and venue capacity were the primary concerns.”

Rich was at first stunned and angered by the reaction—though she said she didn’t get any direct threats. As email and telephone calls continued to pour in over the weekend, she had a change of heart.

“My personal experience in reading the dozens of emails that I received went through a major transformation over the weekend,” she said. “Initially, I was appalled and shocked at what I saw as expressions of anger and criticism for our having brought this item forward. What I came away with over the course of reading all the emails and messages was a profound feeling of inspiration and appreciation for the willingness of those who were concerned and engaged on this issue to speak their truth boldly and honestly, and to open their hearts and their feelings without holding anything back. It gave me renewed respect for the capacity of human beings to share and to try to make a difference on issues that were either personal to them or raised important principles that they felt deserved their time and attention. Ultimately, for me, it affirmed our ability as human beings to hope (and fight) for change and a better future. That was my take-away. It affirmed my appreciation for this town and the people who live here (and who I am honored to serve on the City Council). As I’ve said in the past, we are a small town just trying to do the right thing.”

Councilmember Zollman, who sponsored the resolution, agreed with the decision to delay.

“In light of the high emotion displayed by those who provided written comments, calls, etc., it was decided that we did not want to cause any more emotional distress to our local citizens and businesses at this time” he said. Zollman also expressed that he didn’t want the resolution to become a distraction from the council’s main order of business. “There is also a need to correct our growing deficit and provide better services to our community.”

That said, he plans to come back with another ceasefire resolution in the future, “after more discussions among our local citizens and businesses...I encourage all who are

able to respectfully engage in the efforts to end the killings of innocent women and children on both sides to reach out to me via email.” (His email is szollman@cityofsebastopol.gov.)

Rich expects the issue to come back as well. “I’m convinced that there is a conversation that needs to happen on this issue in our community,” she said. “We started that conversation with our proposed cease fire resolution. I am hopeful that the conversation will continue, driven by the ideas and thoughts that were raised in this process.”

Proposed Resolution of the City Council of the City of Sebastopol Calling for a Cease Fire

See the full staff report [here](#).

WHEREAS, the City of Sebastopol opposes all forms of hatred including antisemitic/anti-Jewish, anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia, bigotry, apartheid, and genocide, and advocates for the rights, dignity and safety of residents in every community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Sebastopol recognizes and mourns the lives lost on and since October 7, 2023 due to the violence in Israel and Gaza which has claimed, as of January 4, 2024, the lives of at least 1,200 Israelis and more than 25,000 Palestinians, with thousands more wounded and imprisoned; and according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, an estimated 1,900,000 Palestinians (85% of Gaza) have been internally displaced; and

WHEREAS, since October 7th, Middle Eastern and Jewish community members in Sonoma County, and across the country have been subjected to an increase in racist acts including violent physical attacks, hate speech and vandalism; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of lives are at imminent risk of death, famine and life-threatening diseases in Gaza without a sustained ceasefire and unimpeded large scale humanitarian relief; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Sebastopol joins the United Nations, Amnesty International, World Health Organization, world leaders, religious leaders, and citizens of the world everywhere in calling for an immediate and permanent CEASEFIRE, an end to all armed hostilities, and the prompt release of all hostages on both sides; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Sebastopol supports U.S. Congress Resolution HR 786 and joins other cities in calling on our Congressional Members to demand: an immediate and permanent ceasefire; release of all hostages; the unrestricted entry of humanitarian assistance into Gaza; the restoration of food, water, electricity, and medical supplies to Gaza; and respect for international law; and

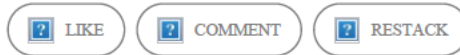
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a permanent solution to this crisis must be one of the top foreign policy priorities of the United States to reduce human suffering and promote peace in the region; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that this resolution be posted publicly and that a copy of it is sent to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Mayors and Councilmembers of each of its incorporated cities and town, the offices of Assemblymember Jim Wood, State Senator Mike McGuire, Representative Mike Thompson, Representative Jared Huffman, Senator Laphonza Butler, Senator Alex Padilla, Governor Gavin Newsom, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Vice President Kamala Harris, and President Joe Biden, urging them to take immediate action to use their position and influence to end this conflict and work towards a permanent peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

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