

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [City Council](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Public Comment for 6.18.24 City Council Agenda item #7  
**Date:** Friday, June 14, 2024 12:51:19 PM

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Dear Mayor Rich and Honorable City Councilmembers,

I am writing in support of the continuation of the Sebastopol Ad Hoc Library Committee through the feasibility phase.

I am unable to attend the June 18, 2024 City Council meeting due to a scheduling conflict—we are hosting an event to share the progress we’ve made in educating and learning from our community of residents, businesses, nonprofits, and government partners about our library services, and to share an update on what lies ahead.

Because public libraries are open and accessible to everyone, people do not often consider their economic impact. Public libraries provide access to information about business planning, market research, and finance opportunities for entrepreneurs who are looking for spaces to network, conduct research, use technology, enhance staff skills, and arrange meetings. Our libraries are innovative technologically, offering access to databases, training, and other digital content that otherwise would not be available.

Today’s modern libraries are hubs of community growth, and innovative library services yield huge returns on investment, presenting leaders with an opportunity to grow their economies. The Sonoma County Library recently engaged in an economic impact study which identified a \$3.82 return on investment.

The Sebastopol Regional Library requires a new, larger building to provide an array of innovative services to the residents of Sebastopol and beyond. Examples include a makerspace for kids and teens to learn science and math skills, more meeting spaces where people can socialize and enjoy free programs that help them to learn and grow, and a larger children's area that will help them develop a love of reading.

A feasibility study is the starting point for a public library building project. Service needs, area demographics, and other related information will be used to identify future space requirements. The development of a library building program, funding sources, site considerations, and design of the selected building alternative can then follow.

I am excited at the opportunity to be on this journey with our community partners. We cannot do this without the advocacy and support of the library system and the City of Sebastopol. Most importantly, we could not do this without a community of library patrons that value lifelong learning in all its forms.

Yours sincerely,

Erika Thibault, Library Director

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