

Dear Council Members and City Staff,

In an article published today in the Sebastopol Times, the publishers attributed my name to posts by an anonymous commenter, NYT.

This is a dangerous practice known as doxing, in which groups try to silence critics by threatening to expose people.

In addition, it is unclear if Laura Hagar Rush and Dale Dougherty are using personal information from their subscriber data base or simply attributing the comments to me without verification.

In any regard, their actions violate all basic standards of journalistic integrity and most likely privacy laws regarding the use of a subscription data base. I will have to contact Substack to see if there is any formal violation.

As you know, I wrote a cease and desist email to Mr. Dougherty and Ms. Rush earlier today asking that they remove my name and publish a formal apology. They have not done so. The City and City Council were copied on my original cease and desist email.

I have given regular public comment for over the last 4 years.

The Sebastopol Times interviewed me for an article on Measure U.
https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/measure-u-was-a-long-time-in-coming?utm_source=publication-search

I will copy my full response to Ms. Rush's questions at the end of this email.

It is clear that Dale Dougherty and Laura Hagar Rush have zero journalistic integrity and tittering moral compasses. It remains unclear what they hoped to gain by attributing my name to the blog comments except they wanted to threaten me.

As we move forward, I hope you will recognize that the Sebastopol Times is personal blog which not only biased but dangerously unprofessional.

Best,
Kate Haug

Here are my answers to Laura Hagar Rush's Measure U questions.

1) What are your top three reasons for opposing Measure U?

A) Sales tax only works if you have sales increasing or remaining steady; sales have declined three years in a row. If sales keep declining, the sales tax will not solve the financial crisis;

B) Increasing sales in existing businesses by 20% would bring in \$907,000 annually

without increasing prices. This would be a win for the citizens, the City and local businesses. Council's #1 job should be working with businesses to increase sales. At this point, the Council and the City do not even understand why sales are declining. The proposed tax increase raises the prices of goods and services for everyone and Sebastopol would have the highest sales tax in Sonoma County. As Sebastopol would have the highest tax rate, there is the chance that local sales would decline further as people look for cheaper options, which would harm revenues and also harm local businesses.

c) The fiscal crisis was caused by bad financial decisions by Council not by lack of money. A new tax does not fix the problem of the Council making bad financial decisions. There are minimal requirements for people to become elected to Council. Council Members enter the position with a variety of skill levels and aptitudes and different motives to hold elected office. Operating a city is a complex financial system and Council members still have issues telling the difference between the general fund and the water and sewer enterprise funds, which was demonstrated by Council Member Rich saying Measure U funds could be used to fix a sewer line: "What would we do in an emergency, like a leaking sewer line in one of our neighborhoods?" <https://www.dianarich.com/news/sales-tax-support-it-if-you-love-sebastopol>

The money to fix the sewer line actually comes from the Sewer Enterprise fund not the general fund, which is where Measure U funds would go. The fact that Mayor Rich doesn't know the different funding streams is a bit alarming given the huge water and sewer increases that residents and businesses have been asked to pay.

2) Absent the passage of Measure U, what would you have the city do to prevent itself from falling into bankruptcy and state receivership in the next few years?

A) The only way out of the financial crisis is to work with businesses to increase sales, attract new business and fill our commercial vacancy. With or without the sales tax, these root issues need to be addressed for the City to remain solvent. If sales keep declining and vacancy increases, the sales tax will not solve the problem.

B) Diana Rich, Sarah Gurney, and Una Glass - all people who have paid for Yes on U mailers - supported the County's takeover of the Sebastopol Inn, which permanently removed TOT, sales tax and tourist revenue from the City's revenue stream and from citizens despite the fact that citizens pointed out that the loss of these funds would have an impact on the City's budget. At this point, citizens have lost over \$1,600,000 in revenue from that single decision. Clearly, the City needs at least one hotel to replace this lost revenue. There is a hotel in the pipeline. If the developer is able to build it, the revenue for the City and its citizens would help alleviate the financial crisis in the general fund. The other issues such as the \$18,000,000 in road repair and the \$13,000,000 in water and sewer infrastructure repair aren't really covered by Measure U and would most likely be solved most effectively through a parcel tax.

C) There has been much discussion of an EFID. Yet, Sebastopol already exists in an EFID with the rest of West County. The only part that is missing is the reimbursement from the County. Sebastopol supports the highest number of homeless people with housing per capita of any City in Sonoma County through Park Village, Elderberry Commons and Gravenstein Commons. The City should be reimbursed by the County

for these housing projects as they serve a countywide need for homeless housing. The Senior Center, Community Cultural Center and Ives pool all serve residents from West County. Sebastopol has many affordable housing projects including Woodmark, Burbank Housing, Burbank Senior Housing. The City should be reimbursed by the County for these projects as they add to affordable housing within the County. If you read the information on the EFID, it is based on providing amenities and affordable housing for the greater region. Sebastopol already does this and should be getting reimbursement from the County.

Do you support unincorporation for the city of the Sebastopol? Namely, returning it to the governance of the county?

A significant portion of the Budget goes towards City administration. Past Councils have not focused on the basics of running a City which is to fund public safety (the police and fire departments have been underfunded for at least a decade), maintain roads (there is currently a backlog of \$18 million of repair work needed), and keep the water and sewer supply safe and functional (there is currently a backlog of \$13 million in water/sewer infrastructure needs and Well #4 could fail at any time). If Council members cannot focus on the core issues of public safety, roads and sidewalks and water, life within City limits becomes risky and potentially harmful. What will happen if Well 4 goes out and residents don't have access to water?

Council is a full time job that involves a lot of complex decision making; yet, it only pays \$300 per month. Supervisors, like Lynda Hopkins, make over \$200,000 per year. If you can't find competent people to serve on Council - because it is almost impossible for a person to volunteer full time on Council, work full time and have a family - then you either need to raise Council pay to a living wage or have the City become absorbed by the County where the elected officials are paid for their work and have the support staff to help them research issues and develop policies.

At this point, Sebastopol, with its tiny budget and limited staff, is absorbing a lion's share of Permanent Supportive Homekey Housing and affordable housing without any County resources. It is simply not sustainable.