



June - July, 2024

The City of Sebastopol community newsletter is one way to stay in touch with what's going on in Sebastopol. Our web site, CityofSebastopol.gov is another. It's chock-full of information on City services, public meetings, and community resources. Or, stop by City offices any time we are open!

Finance Matters



Water and Sewer Rate Increases Being Considered

Water and sewer rates have not covered the costs of operating the City's systems for five years. One consequence is that our systems are in poor condition, which increases the risk of failures that would leave residents without water or sewer service for what could be hours or even days at a time.



On April 23, the Council voted to bring rates to a level that will better cover the cost of operating and maintaining these systems. The increases would be substantial for many residents and businesses. The Council is continuing to consider options to balance the integrity of the system with the impact on residents and businesses.

At press time, the City Council was scheduled to consider adopting new rates at a public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, June 18, at 6:00 p.m. at the Youth Annex on Morris Street. As with all City Council meetings, you are welcome to attend in person or via Zoom.

Find more information, FAQs, and a Water Rate Calculator on the "Water and Sewer Rate Increase 2024" page of the City website at <https://bit.ly/watersewer2024>

David Woltering Joins City of Sebastopol as Interim Planning Director

With the departure of Planning Director Kari Svanstrom, Community Planning Consultant David Woltering AICP, MCA is now serving as the City of Sebastopol's Interim Planning Director. Woltering has previously served in the Planning Departments of the Town of Ross and Town of Fairfax, California.



Council Considers Proposed Sales Tax Measure for November 5, 2024 Ballot to Help Address Budget Shortfalls



As noted in recent City Council meetings, the City of Sebastopol faces major long-term budget challenges with our General Fund, which supports most City functions including police, fire, land use, housing, maintenance of parks and facilities, support for non-profits, and administrative functions. Staff is preparing the budget for FY 24-25. We anticipate proposing significant budget cuts to achieve a balanced budget. In addition to significant budget cuts, a mix of strategies will be required to the address the budget challenges. These strategies include reducing expenses, increased revenue, economic development, and more.

Even with these additional strategies, we will continue to face financial challenges without a significant, ongoing source of additional revenue. One promising source of this revenue is an additional sales tax which would be paid by both residents and visitors. At its May 21st meeting the Council discussed placing either a quarter cent (additional projected revenue of \$760,000 annually) or half cent (additional projected revenue of \$1.5 million annually) sales tax increase on the November 5 ballot. The Council voted to conduct outreach and polling to determine if Sebastopol residents wish to pursue the ballot measure. See May 21 Agenda item on the Meetings Page of the City website at <https://bit.ly/SebCityMeetingsPage>.

Hats Off to Larry

Long-time civil servant Larry McLaughlin completes his retirement from the City of Sebastopol at the end of June. He began his career with the City as City Attorney in 1987, became Interim City Manager in 2013, and served as City Manager from 2014 to 2024, until present City Manager Don Schwartz came on board.



City Staff and Council thank Larry for his many years of dedication to the City of Sebastopol and wish him the very best as he returns to his private law practice (and hopefully enjoys at least a little bit of extra leisure time).

City Attorney Firms will be interviewed by the City Council June 4th.

Sebastopol Fire Department Consolidation with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District Moves Forward



After years of discussion and public input, at its April 16th meeting the Sebastopol City Council voted to pursue merging fire services with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.

Consolidation brings an additional \$1.1 million in annual funding through a parcel tax that currently runs at \$265/year for a typical single-family home, along with opportunities for economies of scale that would provide sufficient funding for quality fire services.

After extensive research and analysis, the Gold Ridge Fire District emerged as the best option for consolidation. It provides economies of scale, quality and depth of leadership, strategic thinking, governance advantages, and the benefits of experience in mergers.

Background: Despite the professionalism and dedication of our SFD team, response to calls for service is inadequate, either in the length of time to respond to calls, the number of qualified staff responding, or both. The key to improving response is to increase staff. Providing appropriate fire apparatus (trucks and engines) and a much-improved fire station are also essential. Even with Measure H adding \$1.1 million/year to fire services in Sebastopol, combining those funds with current City funding – which is at risk given the City's financial challenges – the level of funding is insufficient to provide an acceptable level of services. And Measure H could be overturned or at least subject to protracted litigation as the California Business Roundtable has placed a voter initiative on the November ballot that raises this possibility.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3xAnoxz>

Upcoming Meet Your Neighbors (MYN) Classes - Be Prepared Together

Classes are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm and are held in person at the Sebastopol Fire Station at 7425 Bodega Ave.

Upcoming Classes

June 19, 2024

July 17, 2024

August 21, 2024

Sign up for an upcoming MYN class **HERE**: <http://bit.ly/401YVa>

See the **SebastopolReady Calendar** at

<https://sebastopolready.org/calendar> for a complete list

of classes. Learn more about the MYN program and classes

HERE: <http://bit.ly/41hv2qa>.



Be Prepared for Wildfire Season



Now is the time to create your defensible space and harden your

home and property to better withstand wildfire. Don't forget to set up a wildfire action plan and emergency supply kit.

See readyforwildfire.org for more information.

Upcoming Community Events

Peacetown Summer Concert Series



Peacetown Summer Concert Series Returns to Ives Park

June 5 – August 28, 5pm to 8pm

The Peacetown Summer Concert Series will be returning, for the entire season,

to Ives Park with two bands each week. Visit peacetown.org to see the full lineup.

Annual July 3rd Fireworks & Music Extravaganza

Date: Wednesday, July 3, 2024

Location: Analy High School

Football Field



Program of Events

- Music Extravaganza starts at 5:45pm
- Raffle Drawing: 9:15
- Flag Ceremony: 9:20 - 9:35 - led by Uncle Sam
- Star Spangled Banner
- Fireworks BLAST OFF at approximately 9:40
- FOOD & DRINK Available
- NO ALCOHOL ALLOWED

Visit the Sebastopol Kiwanis Club's website at <https://bit.ly/kiw0703> for more information about the celebration.

Gravenstein Apple Fair



Join in the fun at the 51st Annual Gravenstein Apple Fair August 10-11 at Ragle Ranch Regional Park in Sebastopol.

Enjoy live music, all things Gravenstein, local food, art & crafts, activities for kids, farm demonstrations, craft cider,

craft beer, wine, and lots more. Advance tickets and information are available at <https://gravensteinapplefair.com>.

City of Sebastopol

7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, CA 95472 • 707-823-1153

