

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Neysa Hinton](#); [Phill Carter](#); [Sandra Maurer](#); [City Council](#); [Don Schwartz](#); [Jill McLewis](#); [Mary Gourley](#); [Stephen Zollman](#)
Subject: Opposition to Proposed Press Policy Restrictions
Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 12:42:19 PM

Hello,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed press policy that would impose unnecessary restrictions on how journalists interact with city officials.

Given the breakdown in communication on a handful of recent issues (the trash contract as well as the farmers market permit) this feels like a huge step in wrong direction in rebuilding that line of communication and creating a space where all Sebastopol residents and small business owners feel heard. This policy threatens transparency, free speech, and the ability of our community to stay informed about local government.

The new policy would require all press inquiries to go through multiple officials—including the city manager, assistant city manager, and mayor—before responses can be given. This bureaucratic hurdle will create unnecessary delays and discourage direct communication between reporters and city staff. Historically, journalists have been able to build working relationships with department heads, ensuring timely and accurate reporting. Restricting these interactions will only serve to isolate city government from public scrutiny.

Additionally, the policy prioritizes written email inquiries over other forms of communication, making it more difficult for journalists to conduct real-time interviews and obtain quick clarifications. The requirement that interview requests be submitted at least 24 hours in advance is impractical for journalists working on tight deadlines. Furthermore, the provision stating that responses will be prioritized based on the city's own assessment of which topics are important

raises serious concerns about selective transparency. Public officials should not have the power to decide which issues the press can or cannot report on.

These proposed restrictions are especially troubling in the context of our current national climate, where press freedom is already under attack. We have seen our nation's administration restrict which journalists can attend press conferences and cherry-pick which questions they will answer—fundamentally undermining free speech and the public's right to know. These are dark times for the free press, and as a community, we must reject any local policies that mirror this dangerous trend. Sebastopol has always valued open dialogue, accountability, and civic engagement, and we must not allow these freedoms to be eroded at the city level.

I urge you to reject these press restrictions and ensure that our city government remains transparent and accessible to both journalists and the public. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response on this important matter

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Warmly,
Derek and Megan



DEREK & MEGAN HARN, Owners
Lunch Box Sonoma County

