

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [City Council](#)  
**Cc:** [Stephen Zollman](#); [Jill McLewis](#); [Neysa Hinton](#); [Sandra Maurer](#); [Phill Carter](#); [Mary Gourley](#); [Don Schwartz](#)  
**Subject:** SEB CC March 4, 2025 Item #16 - Vote NO  
**Date:** Monday, March 3, 2025 11:40:38 PM

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March 3, 2025

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members,

I urge you NOT to restrict press access to Council Members and City Staff, including Department Heads and employees. Communication with the Press should not be run through City Hall, meaning the City Manager, in all instances.

Our community has a long-standing tradition of prompt, open and authentic communication between the Council, City Staff, and the Press, as well as between the same and our Public.

I worked for 18.5 years as a Council Member for accessibility, transparency, and accountability in city government. During my tenure, I took great pride in directing citizens to a Department Head or a Chief, whom, I could assure them, would take their telephone call and/or answer their email to resolve their issues.

At this moment in history, it is imperative that the Press maintain that same access: its ease, responsiveness, and direct engagement. We are fortunate to have a local paper with top-notch professional journalists covering our community. They are the guardians of the public interest. They are our best publicists.

Our governance model has been one of a strong Council establishing policies and directing the City Manager to implement them in the day-to-day operations. To place the City Manager in between the Council and the Press reverses this model. I would be concerned that Council Members would be unduly influenced by the City Manager, temper their responses, and represent management's point of view rather than our citizens.

The electorate wants to know its Council Members directly, without their being schooled by the City Manager. Decisions about what to say to the Press shouldn't be made behind closed doors. Keep the doors open, wide.

Respectfully,

Sarah Glade Gurney  
Council Member, Retired (2004-2022)  
City of Sebastopol, California