



December, 2024 - January, 2025

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!

Measure U (City) and Measure I (County) Sales Tax Measures Pass - City's Financial Outlook Strengthened



Measure U, the half-cent sales tax measure, has passed, providing a critical boost to Sebastopol's finances. The new tax, which could generate around \$1.5 million per year, will help fund essential community services like public safety, improved roads, parks maintenance, and emergency response. The sales tax will apply to purchases made within the city, with exemptions for most groceries, prescription medicines, and certain other items. This measure allows both residents and visitors to contribute to the city's financial stability.

However, with the passage of Sonoma County's Measure I, which adds a 0.25% countywide sales tax for expanded childcare access, Sebastopol's sales tax rate may be limited to a ¼-cent increase due to uncertainties about the state's cap on local sales taxes. The City is working with the state to resolve this issue before the new tax takes effect in April 2025. We'll keep the community updated as we navigate this challenge.

Thank you for your continued support as we prioritize essential services and fiscal responsibility.

City Council News

The 2024 election brings changes to the Sebastopol City Council. While final election results will be announced after press time, initial returns indicate that Neysa Hinton has been re-elected to council and newcomer Phill Carter has won the second open seat. Councilmember Hinton was first elected to council in 2016 and has served as mayor twice. Mr. Carter is a former business owner and consultant for social enterprises, an independent business consultant, and the founder of a nonprofit open-source database of environmental projects and organizations. He holds an MBA in Finance and Marketing. Vice Mayor Stephen Zollman will step into the role of Mayor, with Councilmember Jill McLewis serving as Vice Mayor.

City Staff News



Farewell to Public Works Superintendent Dante Del Prete

After over 28 years with the City of Sebastopol Public Works Department, including serving as its superintendent since March of 2017, Dante Del Prete is retiring at the end of 2024.

Originally hired in 1996, Mr. Del Prete worked his way up the ranks from maintenance

supervisor to assistant superintendent of public works, and finally superintendent of public works. He also served as a Volunteer Fire Fighter with the Sebastopol Fire Department from 1997 to 2003.

The City of Sebastopol thanks Dante for his hard work and dedication and wishes him the best of luck in his retirement.

Welcome Back (for a while, anyway) Interim Police Chief Ron Nelson



Retired Police Chief Ron Nelson has returned to the Sebastopol Police Department to serve as Interim Police Chief. Interim Chief Nelson is allowed to serve in this capacity under strict rules governing the CalPers retirement system which limits the total number of hours he can work in a fiscal

year. Interim Chief Nelson is committed to staying on while the city completes the recruitment and selection process and identifies and hires the next police chief for the City of Sebastopol or until his hourly allotment is exhausted (projected to be early April if working a full-time schedule). We're grateful for his willingness to step back into service.

2024: Year in Review

Highlights

• Progress on the Budget:

- * Adopted a budget with half the deficit of the prior year due to cuts in contracts, maintenance, and increased revenue from building fees.
- * Set aside funds to invest in our infrastructure and facilities.
- * Increased water and sewer rates so we can fund much-needed improvements to the system and reduce the risks of major failures.
- * Passed Measure U (half-cent sales tax).



- **Fire Department Consolidation:** Approved moving the Sebastopol Fire Department toward consolidation with Gold Ridge to improve fire and emergency response and maximize efficiency.

• Public Works Projects:

- * Replaced Libby Park duck pond fencing in collaboration with Sebastopol Rotary Clubs.
- * Completed major upgrades to Morris Street sewer pump station.

- **Community Engagement:** Launched the 'Coffee with a Councilmember' monthly series connecting local citizens with City Councilmembers for coffee and conversation.

- **Sustainability:** Hosted two free organic compost giveaways for Sebastopol residents.

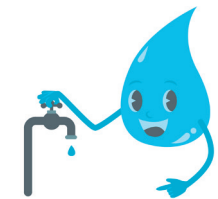
Looking Ahead to 2025: A Year of Progress and Engagement



As we enter 2025, the City will continue to focus on financial stability, service delivery, and community engagement. We remain

committed to listening to our residents and working collaboratively to maintain Sebastopol as a vibrant, thriving community.

Special Insert: Managing Your Water and Wastewater Use



Be sure to check out the flyer included with this newsletter or visit the **Water & Sewer** section of our website, for tips on managing your water and wastewater use. We've provided resources to help you save money, reduce your environmental footprint, and gain better control over your water usage year-round.

Keep it Small and Local...Especially During the Holiday Season

The holiday season is the perfect time to support Sebastopol's local shops and restaurants. Whether you're looking for unique gifts, festive dining options, or a memorable outing, there's no need to travel far. Keeping your spending close to home boosts the local economy and helps ensure the long-term health of our businesses.



According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, local spending strengthens communities in many ways, from creating jobs to supporting local causes. This holiday season, make it a priority to shop small and shop local!

Supporting Downtown Businesses During the Holidays

To support Sebastopol's downtown businesses during the busy holiday season, the City has enacted a holiday construction moratorium for non-emergency construction projects within the downtown corridor from November 20, 2024, to January 5, 2025. This moratorium will help ensure that construction doesn't disrupt holiday shopping or activities.



For a map showing the area included in the downtown corridor, visit: <https://bit.ly/4eciV3E>

Farmers Market Update

There have been numerous conversations on social media regarding the Sebastopol Farmers Market. We'd like to note that we highly value the Farmers Market and want them to succeed and thrive for years to come. At the same time, the Market has acknowledged violating their permit with the City and not taking action to address those violations months after the City informed them.

We require compliance with permits to ensure the public's health and safety, such as preventing traffic problems and risks. We don't establish arbitrary bureaucratic requirements. The Farmers Market agreed to the permit requirements long ago.

We are talking with them and local businesses in a very collaborative spirit and anticipate reviewing their permit with the Planning Commission in January; the public is most welcome to attend and share their thoughts. Visit the **Meetings** page on the City website for meeting dates, times, and agendas.