Budget Committee

Councilmember Phill Carter
Councilmember Sandra Maurer

City Manager
Don Schwartz
dschwartz@cityofsebastopol.gov
Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC
Mary Gourley
mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov
Administrative Services Director
Ana Kwong
akwong@cityofsebastopol.gov

**City of Sebastopol**

Date:		March 3, 2025

To:		Budget Committee

From:		Ana Kwong – Administrative Services Director

Subject:		OpenGov Budget System

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**Background**: Since July 2017, Administrative Services has been using Springbrook and continuously integrating technology into our department's processes to enhance efficiency and transparency. Through Springbrook, we have a budget module that staff utilizes annually to compile the budget. At the recent California Society of Municipal Finance Officers (CSMFO) conference, staff learned more about another platform's potential to provide greater transparency and effectively communicate our budget to the public. This platform will allow Councilmembers, staff, and the public the ability to access the City's budget online in a user-friendly format, rather than a PDF document, with the ability to drill down into the details. The year to date data will be updated daily, integrated with our financial software, to ensure the most current and accurate information.

The budget is the largest and most complex document published by the Administrative Services (Finance) Department each year. Compiling and building this document is a team effort involving multiple departments with long hours spanning multiple months. The Administrative Services Department uses the current budget module but continues to rely on multiple Excel spreadsheets to ultimately create the budget document. We are seeking improvements and ways to streamline the process.

Additionally, Permitting, Licensing, and Code Enforcement functions use SmartGov to process permits for Planning, Building, and Engineering. However, SmartGov is not integrated with our current financial software.

**Staff Analysis**: Staff is in the early stages of evaluating the cost of either working with our financial software partner to explore the OpenGov platform or directly engaging with OpenGov to integrate it with our financial software. Staff wanted to inform the Budget Committee about the potential to enhance the budget component, making it accessible to the public for greater transparency. There are mixed reviews about OpenGov from other agencies; some praise it, while others claim it doesn't work. Therefore, before embarking on a major change, it is essential to ensure that adequate staff time and resources are allocated for a smooth setup and transition if and when the City decides to move forward.