


Agenda Report Reviewed by:  
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM REPORT

**Meeting Date:** June 20, 2023

**To:** Honorable Mayor and Honorable City Councilmembers

**From:** Councilmember Zollman (City Council Liaison to the Library Advisory Board for Sebastopol Regional Branch)  
City Administration

**Subject:** Consideration of Authorization to Mayor to Sign Response Letter to Erika Thibault, Library Director of the Sonoma County Library and to the Sonoma County Library Commission, through its Chair Deborah Doyle; Consideration of the Creation of City Council Ad Hoc Committee; and City Council Liaison Appointment (if committee created)

**Recommendation:** That the City Council:

1. Authorize Mayor to Sign Response Letter
2. Consideration of City Council Ad Hoc Committee
3. Appointment of City Council Liaison(s) if Committee Created

**Funding:** Currently Budgeted: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  X  N/A  
Net General Fund Cost:  
Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

**PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION:**

This item requests that the City Council Consider Authorization to the Mayor to Sign a Response Letter to Erika Thibault, Library Director of the Sonoma County Library, and to the Sonoma County Library Commission, through its Chair Deborah Doyle, and Consideration of the Creation of City Council Ad Hoc Committee and City Council Liaison Appointment (if committee created).

**BACKGROUND:**

In November 2016, 72 percent of Sonoma County voters approved Measure Y, a one-eighth of a cent sales tax to support the 14-branch Sonoma County Library system. The funds are being used to:

- Increase hours
- Increase access
- Expand collections
- Expand programs and services
- Maintain library facilities

As part of the commitment to transparency, each Sonoma County Library Commissioner has the responsibility to appoint one Member to a diverse Citizens’ Measure Y Oversight Committee. Sebastopol’s Library Commissioner Fred Engarth has appointed former City Council Member Sarah Gurney to this body.

At the March 21, 2023 City Council Meeting, the City Council sent a letter to the Library Director requesting an increase in staff at the Sebastopol Branch using Measure Y and other available funds. A copy of that letter is attached (Exhibit A).

**DISCUSSION:**

The City of Sebastopol received a responsive letter from Library Director Erika Thibault and Commission Chair Deborah Doyle, dated April 3, 2023, indicating that the Library Commission cannot support more staff due to inadequacies of the Sebastopol facilities.

Tonight's item is to authorize the Mayor to send a response to the Library Director and Commission Chair requesting the City and Library collaborate, through a City-led Ad Hoc Committee, on ways to increase staffing while researching ways to enlarge Sebastopol's current Library Facilities.

Further, tonight's item requests the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to explore future possibilities for Sebastopol's Branch, including but not limited to the issues of increased staffing and adequate facilities. The local Ad Hoc Committee would convene to discuss the issues, then, when prepared, invite representatives from the Regional Headquarters.

It is proposed that the new Ad Hoc Committee be comprised of: one Council Member; Sebastopol's Library Commissioner; Sebastopol's Representative on the Citizens' Oversight Committee; the Branch Manager; the City Manager or Assistance City Manager; assigned designees from the Department of Public Works, Library Advisory Board, Friends of the Library, the former non-profit community organization LANTERN, and the Library Foundation; and such other Stakeholder Members from the local community, per Council discussion. It would meet at least monthly and report back to the Council within one year of its progress and need to continue.

Once underway and prepared, the Committee would invite the Library Director, the Chair of the Commission or a designee; the Facilities Manager, and other relevant Regional Staff to participate. This larger group would work in a collaborative attempt to expand Sebastopol's current Branch into the "library that our community deserves."

Years earlier, a community-based non-profit called LANTERN explored ways in which to expand/remodel/build a new our Library facility, work that could be foundational to the new Ad Hoc Committee. LANTERN did not have the official participation of the City as landlord and the Council representing the community's political will. It is critical now to correct that lack of official involvement, by the Council creating the Ad Hoc Committee, in order to engage the SCL Commission and Regional Headquarters. Hence, the proposed composition of the Ad Hoc Committee and the suggested process.

Lastly, if the Council decides to create an Ad Hoc Committee, the Council would appoint a Council Member to chair it at tonight's meeting.

**CITY COUNCIL AND/OR GENERAL PLAN GOALS:**

Goal 5: Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

5.3.3. Encourage and increase public awareness of City Policies, decisions, programs and all public processes and meetings, by investigating effective methods of communication and obtaining feedback from the community.

Action CHW 5c: Practice an open-door policy in City programs, and actively engage and encourage participation from all individuals regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender.

Goal CSF 6: Enhance the Quality of Life for all City Residents Through the Provision of Cultural and Social Resources Including Quality Schools, Libraries, and Other Community Services and Facilities

Policy CSF 6-9: Support efforts by Sonoma County to provide library services that meet the evolving educational and social needs of Sebastopol residents.

Action CSF 6c: Work collaboratively with the County library system and community volunteers to identify opportunities to expand and provide library services that meet the educational and social needs of all residents, including possible replacement or expansion of the Sebastopol branch library.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no cost associated with this item tonight.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council:

1. Authorize Mayor to Sign Response Letter Erika Thibault, Library Director, and Deborah Doyle, Chair of the Library Commission;
2. Consider Creation of City Council Ad Hoc Committee;
3. Consider City Council Liaison Appointment to Ad Hoc Committee (if committee created).

Attachment:

Exhibit A: City Letter to Library March 22, 203  
Exhibit B: Library Response Letter to City April 3, 2023  
Exhibit C: Draft Letter from City in Response to April 3, 2023 Letter

**City Council**

Mayor Patrick Slayter  
Vice Mayor Una Glass  
Michael Carnacchi  
Sarah Glade Gurney  
Neysa Hinton



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**City Manager**

Larry McLaughlin  
lmclaughlin@cityofsebastopol.org  
**Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC**  
Mary Gourley  
mgourley@cityofsebastopol.org

**City of Sebastopol**

March 22, 2023

Library Director Erica Thibault  
Sonoma County Library Commissioners  
6135 State Farm Drive  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

RE: Budget Workshop, April 4, 2023

Dear Director Thibault and Library Commissioners,

On behalf of the City Council of Sebastopol, I am writing to recommend adding at least 2 FTE Librarian positions to the Sebastopol Regional Library Staff in the 2023-2024 budget cycle utilizing Measure Y funds or property tax funds.

The First Amended and Restated Joint Powers Agreement for the County-Wide Provision of Library Services by the Sonoma County Library ("JPA"), Part X, Services, Resources and Facilities, (b) provided, in part, that:

The Library shall distribute its personnel, financial and technical resources among the various regional library branches in an equitable fashion, unless such distribution is expressly restricted (such as conditions in a gift or bequest).

As a signatory to the JPA, the Council has reviewed the staffing allocations distributed across all regional library locations. It is apparent to us that the Sebastopol Regional Library does not have the personnel levels necessary to provide services needed in the Sebastopol Library's service community, a shortage that requires correction.

The Sebastopol Library has long been recognized as the most visited public building in town. It is a beloved and well-used institution, treasured by dedicated patrons residing in and outside the City limits. This patronage continues to grow, despite the well-known inadequacy of the physical building.

To date, Sebastopol stands third in circulation of all library branches after Santa Rosa Central and Petaluma, despite its much smaller population and small building. Yet professional staff levels at each of these branches are not equitable: Central (12), Petaluma (9), Sebastopol (5.5). Two other branches have more professional staff, yet less circulation.

The Sebastopol Library has a robust programming slate, yet less professional staff than other branches with fewer events. The Sebastopol Library's service area has more schools than many other library service areas, yet the lowest number of professional staff per school of all the libraries in the Sonoma County system.

Of the many measures of activity, the Sebastopol Library is very near the top in terms of deliverables, yet only has the median number of professional staff among Sonoma County Libraries. This is not an equitable distribution of personnel.

In these challenging circumstances, the Sebastopol Library Staff strives to deliver stellar professional public service. However, the current staffing levels for Sebastopol are not on a par with other branches in the Sonoma County Library system.

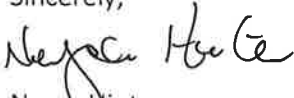
Inadequate staffing impacts service to patrons as well as adversely limits the Staff's ability to perform outreach to groups within the community, such as schools, and through participation in community events. Inadequate staffing restricts the ability for schools to come to the Library for class visits. Inadequate staffing adds wait times for help at the reference desk. Inadequate staffing means the Library cannot offer technology assistance / computer classes to community members struggling with the digital divide and limits the availability for the Library to be networked within the community.

These inadequacies are preventing our Library Staff and our community from reaching our potential. The Sebastopol Library and our public need and deserve two more full-time librarians: one adult librarian and one children's librarian.

While there is a clearly identified need for a larger library facility, the pressing need is for staffing levels for our Branch to be increased until such time the building can be rightsized to the services the Staff here provides and our community deserves.

The City Council of Sebastopol strongly recommends adding at least 2 FTE allocations to the Sebastopol Regional Library and prioritizing this recommendation to meet the obligations of the JPA and Measure Y.

Sincerely,



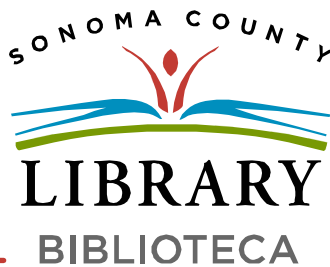
Neysa Hinton

Mayor

City of Sebastopol

**Erika Thibault**  
*Library Director*  
ethibault@sonomalibrary.org

6135 State Farm Drive  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928  
(707) 545-0831



**LIBRARY COMMISSION**  
**Agenda Item Number: 7**

Deborah Doyle - <i>Chair</i>	Thomas Haeuser - <i>Vice-Chair</i>
Paul Heavenridge	David Cahill
Sarah Laggos	Andy Elkind
Barbara Mackenzie	Fred Engbarth
Brooke Greene	Eve Goldberg

April 3, 2023

City of Sebastopol  
7120 Bodega Avenue  
Sebastopol, CA 95473

Dear Mayor Hinton and Councilmembers,

I am writing to add context to a letter you received from Sebastopol Library Commissioner Fred Engbarth. The matter of adding staff at the Sebastopol Regional Library is more complicated than just hiring more people.

As a governing body for a small city, I'm sure you're aware of the complexities of hiring new staff when there are physical space and budget constraints. The Sebastopol branch is known for its innovation and dedication to service, as the foot traffic in the branch demonstrates. It's also a small and inadequate space for what your community needs and expects from a regional library.

The Library uses a variety of factors to determine staffing levels for our branches. Circulation is one of them, but we also consider the size of the facility, the total population served, as well as other equity-based factors, including service to underserved and marginalized populations and the goals of our Reimagining Plan.

Noting the physical limitations of the branch, the assertion that we are not abiding by the requirements of the JPA is simply not true. Sebastopol has the fourth-largest staff in our entire countywide system, despite being seventh in size and ninth in terms of total population served. Branches with a staff larger than Sebastopol are at least 2.5 times larger and 2-4 times the population. For comparison, Petaluma Regional Library is 26,400 square feet and serves a population that is four times larger than Sebastopol's.

The only practical way to add as many staff as Commissioner Engbarth and Branch Manager Rose suggest is to spend considerable funds to remodel the existing space, which would **reduce** the square footage allotted to the public, a solution that, in my opinion, is a step backward. Plus, those funds do not currently exist.

I have listened and heard the request for more staff, but the building simply cannot support it. Our recent Facilities Master Plan, which we provided to the City in 2022, states: "Given the

inadequacies of the existing building, it is strongly recommended that it be replaced with a larger branch of at least 20,000 square feet.” This is compared to 10,000 square feet now in use.

I confess to being surprised that Commissioner Engbarth took the step of sending his letter without discussing his concerns with the Library Commission Chair or with me; I can imagine how a City Council might feel if the shoe was on the other foot. No one proactively reached out to us to better understand our decision-making process for staffing levels. I appreciate hearing his passion for the community, and we will discuss improving our internal communication.

As you are aware, library leaders have discussed the facility issue many times over the past few years with various Sebastopol Library Commissioners, City Councilmembers, and community members. I urge you to consider our shared responsibility as part of the JPA to provide comprehensive library services to the community with adequate branch facilities, and let’s produce a practical plan together which expands or replaces this well-loved, but inadequate, branch facility for all of our library lovers.


If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me at (707) 545-0831 ext. 1505.

Sincerely,



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Erika Thibault  
Library Director



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Deborah Doyle  
Library Commission Chair

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**City Council**

Mayor Neysa Hinton  
Vice Mayor Diana Rich  
Sandra Maurer  
Jill McLewis  
Stephen Zollman



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**City Manager**

Larry McLaughlin

[lmclaughlin@Cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:lmclaughlin@Cityofsebastopol.org)

**Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC**

Mary Gourley

[mgourley@Cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:mgourley@Cityofsebastopol.org)

June 21, 2023

Erica Thibault, Library Director  
Deborah Doyle, Library Commission Chair  
Sonoma County Library Commissioners  
6135 State Farm Drive  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

Re: The Future of the Sebastopol Regional Library

Dear Director Thibault, Chair Doyle, and Library Commissioners:

The Sebastopol City Council acknowledges your letter dated April 3, 2023, as discussed at our regularly scheduled meeting on June 20, 2023. This letter is motivated by our discussion and also by Public Comments from patrons of our local Branch Library received at our Council meeting on June 6, 2023.

Given the Council's goal to provide our residents, and those in our greater metropolitan area, enhanced cultural and social resources, we value the services of our dedicated Library Commissioner and our professional Branch Manager and his Staff.

The Council recognizes the exemplary community services offered at our Branch and hopes that our Branch can even more fully reach its potential. The Final Draft of the Library's Facilities Master Plan, (2022 "Plan ") observes about the Sebastopol Branch:

- It was the third highest circulating branch in Sonoma County that year, just behind Central Santa Rosa and Petaluma. It also offered more programs than any other SCL branch and attracted the second-highest number of teen program attendees.
- The Sebastopol Regional Library is an important stop for residents of Bodega Bay and other coastal communities as well as from inland areas of Sonoma County.

As a charter member of the Joint Powers Agreement ("JPA"), the Council takes, most seriously, our commitment to collaborate and work cooperatively with our fellow partners in good faith to ensure the provision of library services to Sonoma County citizens across the county-wide library system, including the equitable distribution of personnel, financial, and technological resources. Our commitment includes the adequate staffing for and the replacement or expansion of the Sebastopol Branch Library. We anticipate that, with adequate support and space, our Branch can continue to excel.

The Council has decided to convene an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the future of our Branch. It is our intent that it be comprised of local officials, staff, and stakeholders. Once underway, its Chair is directed to invite Director Thibault, Commissioner Doyle or her designee, and the appropriate Regional Staff to join the meetings and develop the issues further: to explore ways to renovate and/or replace the current library facility and to enhance

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**City Council Meeting Packet of: June 20, 2023**

7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol, California 95472 Tel. 707.823.1153 Fax. 707.823.1135

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the level of personnel, financial and technological resources that the Sebastopol Branch offers to all of Sonoma County as part of our regional system. This invitation is in response to your April 3 suggestion that we meet collaboratively to discuss the future of the Sebastopol Regional Library.

We look forward to working with you in a collaborative effort to provide a 21st Century Branch Library in Sebastopol to the residents and taxpayers of Sonoma County.

Yours sincerely,

Mayor Neysa Hinton

cc: Lisa Davison-Library Commission Administrative Specialist  
Fred Engbarth, SCL Commissioner Appointed by the City of Sebastopol  
Mathew Rose, Branch Manager, Sebastopol Library  
Sarah Glade Gurney, Measure Y Citizens' Oversight Committee