

Dear Council Members,

The idea of a vacancy tax is circulating as a possible way to generate revenue.

I believe this will be unduly cumbersome to administer and collect. It is also a dead end in terms of creating a positive relationship with property owners.

As an alternative, I would suggest working with landlords to A) redevelop their parcel to residential and/or mixed use or B) work with the Chamber and Commercial Real Estate Agents to fill the space.

To collect a tax, you would have to contact the property owner. If the City is spending the time to contact the property owner, the outcome should yield a positive result for the City which would be property occupancy or redevelopment.

In contacting the property owner, the City can emphasize that it wants to bring more residents and more business to Sebastopol and start a productive conversation.

If the Property Owner is contacted, the City can also emphasize that all properties must be maintained for the health and safety of the community and also to support our local businesses so any vacant properties don't contribute to visual blight.

It also might be relevant to ask Property Owners what the City can do to make their properties more attractive for occupancy or for redevelopment.

Best,
Kate Haug