

From: [Lee Mathias](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Mary Cone](#)
Subject: Opposing Proposal to charge for Opt-Out of cellular water meters
Date: Monday, February 14, 2022 10:21:54 PM

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To: Sebastopol City Council
From: Lee Mathias, Mary Cone

You have got to be kidding.....we have gone from an entirely false claim that we could get free cellular water meters to a new proposal to extort fees from EMF sensitive individuals. The proposal to charge Opt-Out fees of \$59 and then \$18.75 per month to avoid unwanted and potentially harmful wireless transmissions in front of our homes is preposterous.

Recently the council has welcomed individuals living in RVs on Morris or in tents in the Laguna, declaring them citizens because many have lived there for a year or more. The City Council has moved forward with extraordinary actions to support this population. We believe the EMF sensitive population deserves at least as much attention and respect for their issues.

This is a population that own or rent homes in the community. They pay property taxes which support the services we all receive. They participate respectfully during Council meetings on many topics. They deserve consideration of their issues. They came to Sebastopol expecting support for limiting EMF and now find their trust is violated. The cities commitment is documented in its General Plan.

The city is attempting to extort this vulnerable population. The definition of extortion is the practice of obtaining something, usually money, through force or threats. If you suffered debilitating headaches and believed them to be the result of EMF, you would certainly feel threatened by the proposal to install 3,000 new cell phones programed to make 12,000 new calls per day in a town that probably only has 7,000 cell phones total. Certainly, the idea of making individuals pay for opting out due to concerns about the impact on their health should be a non-starter.

The city of Sebastopol should really abandon this project and consider other alternatives to getting the massive amounts of real time data you want from our meters without adding to the EMF burden in the community.

Finally, the City Council owes an apology to the EMF community and indeed many others in the community who have been disrespected by the Council who is not hearing their concerns about important issues and not seeking better solutions that create community support rather than angst and lawsuits. Citizens of Sebastopol feel like they are not being heard as described below.

By your actions, the Council has openly displayed a lack of respect for a significant population of Sebastopol who suffer from a well-documented condition related to EMF. We are not afflicted with the condition, but EMF hypersensitivity is well documented in legitimate scientific literature. The symptoms such as sleep disorders, headaches, body pains and more are severe in 10% of individuals reporting the condition. CDC acknowledges the health risks EMF poses to workers and The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health publishes guidelines to protect workers from proven and possible EMF health risks. High levels of EMF are clearly harmful to most living things including humans. Why some people experience adverse effects from lower levels is not yet well understood, however the issue is reported and recognized worldwide.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports prevalence by country ranging from 1.7% in Finland and 10.3% in Germany. Assuming a range of 1.7% to 10.3% we likely have 130 to as many as 800 taxpayers and citizens suffering from the condition in Sebastopol. Studies suggest up to 10% are likely to report severe symptoms. We may skew to the high side given that Sebastopol publicly committed to limit EMF in the community, likely attracting sufferers seeking refuge.

The decision to convert 3,000 water meters to cellular smart meters took place in the dead of night with very little public notice. It was reviewed at three meetings that we could find, and the discussion never started before 10:00 in the evening.

The first discussion we could find took place after 11:30PM on July 6. Anticipating objections from the EMF Safety Network, the Council, instead of planning for a technical review from experts on the risks and alternative systems that might not use cellular networks, chose to focus on an unscientific, statistically flawed survey to show overwhelming public support.

Perhaps the Council felt if most of the citizens of Sebastopol supported increased EMF it would justify inflicting anxiety if not potentially more pain and suffering on a relative minority of vulnerable citizens in the city.

More detailed discussion of the proposal took place at the October 9 meeting which began after 9PM with public input not beginning until 10PM. The proposal to update water meters was mixed with several other proposals to update well equipment and add solar panels to the roof of the library. Unfortunately, there are no minutes linked to that meeting, so it is not possible to confirm the discussion and vote except by watching several hours of video.

Much of the community first became aware of the issue in December when the Council reviewed a proposal to finance the purchase of the meters. The council heard a proposal that suggested that cost savings from less maintenance on new equipment and lower energy costs associated with the solar installation would pay for all the equipment including new well pumps and water meters.

At the time you agreed to finance the water meters over a 15-year term adding about 12% to the \$2.2M water meter costs for 15 years of interest payments. You accepted the assertion that the interest rate was low. There was no discussion of the \$680,855 in interest that would be paid to finance all proposed projects.

No one on the Council asked about the expected life of the new cellular meters. Given that the units are plastic and use a lithium battery with limited life and cellular technology which changes quickly, we would be surprised if the units will be serviceable in 7 years. Future taxpayers, however, will be paying for them as the lease payments extend for 15 years.

Our final issue with this is, like others recently, the way it has been handled. The council seemingly recognizing the likely concerns of the community for certain issues seems to put off discussions until late into the evening. At best interested public will wait patiently to hear the facts and contribute their point of view. At worst many drop off-line. It does seem that the Council is disrespecting the citizens who have an interest by making them wait hours to get information on important topics.

This topic was handled later than 10 PM each time it came up. At one meeting it was deferred to the next meeting. That decision was not announced until after 10:30 pm that night. The following week it was the last item on the agenda after a long discussion on new parking ordinances.

This is not the way a functional and fiscally responsible council acts.

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Sent from my iPad