

**From:** [Kate Haug](#)  
**To:** [Mary Gourley](#)  
**Subject:** Please Don't Call 6/30 Ad Campaign a Town Hall - Public Comment 7/19/22  
**Date:** Friday, July 15, 2022 5:01:57 PM

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Dear Council Members,

I would like the Council to acknowledge that the Committee on the Unhoused presentation on June 30, 2022 was not a Town Hall. A Town Hall is supposed to include the town. The 6/30/22 event was the opposite.

The event promoted a set of vendors, who rely on public tax money, in a narrow and tightly controlled format.

It was not a live discussion. In no way did it reflect the variety of experiences that transients have had on our community, on our local businesses, on our public institutions, and our economy. There were no speakers from our business community, no interviews with business owners who have been impacted by the transition of the Sebastopol Inn to Permanent Supportive housing, no interviews with Public Works employees who were taking care of sanitation issues while people illegally lived on Morris Street, no cost analysis of outside attorneys or the cost to repair the community cultural center, no perspectives from our fire and police departments. Huge swaths of the community were not represented and were not allowed to speak at the event.

In addition, there was no actual financial information given in regards to the amount of money being spent on transient programs. There was no detailed information of the taxpayer funding of the Sebastopol Inn and the SAVS RV program. Taxpayers pay \$3,451,100.63 annually to fund the Sebastopol Inn. Our tax dollars fund over \$680,000 for the SAVS RV Park on Gravenstein Highway. The total annual spend on transients in Sebastopol is over \$4,100,000 in taxpayer money. This services around 65 individuals.

There was no discussion of the environmental impacts of transients on the Laguna or the fire danger of having people illegally camp in the dry brush.

There was no financial accounting of outside attorney costs, repair to public property, police time, public works time, and the countless other costs which the citizens of Sebastopol have paid with their property taxes and businesses have paid through sales tax. How much did last summer's sweep of the Laguna cost? No one knows.

The event was an excellent promotional plug for SAVS, DEMA, West County Community Services and of course, Councilors Rich and Glass. I hope that the City is getting paid for providing such excellent advertising for these organizations and no doubt, SAVS will be using the City produced video of this to raise money for other projects.

It is entirely unethical to say the event was a town hall when in no way, shape or form did it have any robust debate, a variety of positions and voices, or reflect any sort of democratic process. It should be called an advertisement for SAVS, DEMA, West County Community Services and of course, Councilors Rich and Glass.

I hope Council will review its practices and appropriately name their events. Town Halls serve the purpose of bringing together diverse voices and opinions in a real time public dialogue so that the community can hear from a range of voices. They are not a unified, single-voiced championing of a set of vendors, who provide a service and are running businesses, which are reliant on tax dollars.

Thank you for your work.

Kate Haug