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By Email Only

June 20, 2022

Mayor Neysa Hinton
Council Members
City of Sebastopol
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Re: Agenda Item # 8 FY 2023-24 Budget
Funding for the STEP Newsletter

Dear Honorable Mayor Hinton and Council Members:

I urge you to continue funding the print-version of the STEP Newsletter as a key component and indicator of the environmental and climate consciousness of the Sebastopol community.

STEP is a long-standing outreach effort of our local government. This community-based effort has a 23-year-long record of citizen activism, initiated by an earlier version of yourselves, our City Council in the year 2000.

STEP is a volunteer effort, in its greatest measure. Patricia Dines has generously led this publication, with her researching, writing, and editorial skills. She has been joined by myriad others committed to the cause of protecting our community's health for more than two decades.

STEP costs very little when compared to its benefits. The Newsletter was designed to be low cost: in addition to being produced by volunteers, it rides on the postage stamp of the already outgoing water bills. Through the mail, the Newsletter reaches all account holders, not just those people already involved in a toxic-free life or interested in reducing their use of toxins. The outreach factor potentially motivates changes in more behavior.

Limiting STEP to an online presence on the City's website would diminish its

readership substantially. Our community lives in the digital divide; we already know that we include an inordinate number of citizens who do not rely on electronic devices. Those who use computers would have to go to the City's website, knowing about STEP to search for it, so only those folks who already know about it would read an updated version. The outreach effort would collapse to nothing.

STEP is genuinely appreciated by its current readership, as demonstrated by an 85-90% approval rating. That appreciation turns into actions that change our world for the better. I speak from firsthand experience, having adopted many of the recommendations proposed in STEP: from container lids to laundry products. Read some of the comments.

STEP role models the collaborative approach between electeds, City Staff, and our citizenry. For 23 years, it has been an impressive example of how to work together. Who would ever want to work with the Council in our future if you end this productive joint effort after 23 years of consistent delivery?

Saving a few hours of Staff time and a few dollars isn't worth the damage such action would cause to our community. Instead, consider your higher responsibility to the well-being of your constituents and to our planet and keep the STEP Newsletter in its print version.

Respectfully,

Sarah Glade Gurney