

Agenda Report Reviewed by:  
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM REPORT

**Meeting Date:** March 21, 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:** Letter of Support from the City Council to the Sonoma County Library Commission for Advocacy of Library Positions by use of surplus Measure Y Funds  
**Recommendation:** Authorize Mayor to Sign Letter of Support  
**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 approve a Letter of Support from the City Council to the Sonoma County Library Commission for Advocacy of Library Positions by use of surplus Measure Y Funds.

**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 our commitment to transparency, the Sonoma County Library Commission appointed a diverse Measure Y Oversight Committee, volunteers like you who meet to review revenues and expenditures

Former Councilmember/Mayor Sarah Gurney is a newly appointed member of the Citizens’ Oversight Committee for Measure Y, and made the City aware that the Sebastopol Branch of the Regional Library is seriously understaffed: as to positions for one full-time adult Librarian and one full-time Children’s Librarian. Library Commissioner Fred Engbarth, and Branch Manager Mathew Rose also ask for support for additional staffing.

**DISCUSSION:**

Libraries are community hubs. They connect people to information and connect people to people. They are safe havens for kids, providing after-school homework help, games, and book clubs. They offer computer classes, allowing older adults to stay engaged in a digital world. By providing free access to educational, news, and

historical resources, libraries help keep the public informed with facts, rather than confused with fiction. They act as a hub of information, and their leaders, the librarians, torch bearers for facts.

Whether you're a family looking for a fun story time, an immigrant in need of language resources, an unemployed individual searching for job help, or a community member who needs help on their taxes, you can all go to one place: the library. There, communities come together to learn, share, and celebrate where they live, who they are, and what they want to become.

The City and various local public agencies and districts provide a range of public services and utilities services that are integral to providing a high quality of life for Sebastopol's residents. Our General Plan Element includes goals, policies, and actions that address the following public services and facilities such as the Library.

Our community needs the Library Staff it deserves, this additional staffing is warranted by statistics. Also, as our community looks to its future, it will need deeper and more extensive services provided by our Branch Librarians, for instance: the social services work, assembling local providers together in the Forum Room to be available to assist our public; and the art project on S. High Street to "Paint Out Hate."

Time is of the essence because the Budget Workshop for the Regional Library system is scheduled for April 4, 2023. The item tonight is to express Sebastopol's values for our community and advocate for funding to staff the under-staffed Sebastopol Library.

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.

ction 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 for Letter of Support.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council approve a Letter of Support from the City Council to the Sonoma County Library Commission for Advocacy of Library Positions by use of surplus Measure Y Funds”

Attachment:

Proposed Letter

**City Council**

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



**Agenda Item Number: 4**

**City Manager**

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**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