

Meeting of Tuesday – September 26, 2023

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING / TOWN HALL
FIRE AD HOC COMMITTEE

MINUTES FOR Special City Council Meeting of September 26, 2023
As Approved by the City Council at their regular meeting of October 17, 2023

Please note that minutes of meetings are not meant to be verbatim minutes and are meant to be the City's record of a summary of actions that took place at the meeting. The vote/action is the required information of the meeting actions that took place. Approved minutes are available on the City Council Meetings page.
<https://www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/Meeting-Event.aspx>

Meeting was held in Person and Virtual /Remote Participation
Zoom Link used for providing public comment/Live Stream is utilized for viewing only of Meeting

The public is advised that pursuant to Government Code section 54957.5 all writings submitted to the City and City Council are public records and will be made available for review.

6:00 pm City Council Special Meeting

Call to Order: Mayor Hinton called the Regular Meeting to Order at 6:04 p.m.

Roll Call:

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

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager/City Attorney Larry McLaughlin
Assistant City Manager/City Clerk Mary Gourley
Administrative Services Director Ana Kwong
Interim Fire Chief Jack Piccinini

SALUTE TO THE FLAG : Mayor Hinton led the salute to the flag.

STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Conflicts of interest may arise in situations where a public official deliberating towards a decision, has an actual or potential financial interest in the matter before the Council. In accordance with state law, an actual conflict of interest is one that would be to the private financial benefit of a public official, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A potential conflict of interest is one that could be to the private financial benefit of a Councilmember, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A Councilmember must publicly announce potential and actual conflicts of interest, and, in the case of actual conflict of interest, must refrain from participating in debate on the issue or from voting on the issue and must remove themselves from the dais.

There were no stated conflicts of interest by members of the City Council.

Agenda Item Number 1: Fire Ad Hoc Committee Report Out (Responsible: Fire Ad Hoc Committee)

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I want to go through the process of how this is going to go. First we are going to show the presentation which I will start out presenting, our Interim Chief will talk about the current state of the fire department and we will go through the whole presentation that has been posted online in advance. Next, we will take questions from the Council to the ad hoc committee so you can direct your questions to anyone of us and since the Council has already seen the questions from the public in advance, I would ask you to know that we will, after your questions, answer the questions we received in advance from the public. We will try not to duplicate so we can move things along. Just know, if you see it, it will be answered to the best of our ability. No need to ask again. Then we will go to the public and you will have a chance to make comments or questions about the process or what you've heard so far. We will come back and have further deliberations with the Council about everything that they've heard tonight and hopefully come up with some direction on how to move forward. That said, I will say that we've had multiple fire subcommittees over the years. I was involved in one a few years ago and other Councilmembers served on the second. This is the third, and, tonight, we are coming forward with not a consensus from the subcommittee on the direction to move forward. We spent a lot of time so we could come up with the facts and deliver the information to the public, hear from the public, and then weigh in. Currently the governing body for the Sebastopol Fire Department is the City Council so I expect we will all weigh in on deliberations as well but this is a more factual and not a presentation with a recommendation on how to move forward because we could not come up with that. I want to be really up front and blunt about it. You are going to hear multiple facts and probably some differing opinions within the presentation.

The Mayor and Interim Fire Chief made a presentation.

Mayor Hinton opened for questions of the Committee.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: My first question, when I received the individual report from our Interim Fire Chief, I was a little confused in the fact that I'd never gotten a single department head memo or paper and so, I did ask our City Attorney and Assistant City Manager how that came to be. He did provide an explanation and I'm hoping that maybe Larry or Mary can explain to the public why that was.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: The committee did give some consideration to including the Interim Fire Chief's reports that you ultimately received but the committee did not reach a consensus on attaching that to the staff report. The reason being that a number of those papers that the chief had prepared had not been discussed by the committee or reviewed by the committee as well as the committee did not necessarily adopt them or agree with what they said so it was determined not to send them out. I am unclear who sent it out to individual Councilmembers. If it was the Interim Chief, I think he just wanted you to have the materials and there was some thought on the committee's part about attachment of the materials in the first place.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I was going to go ahead and address that as well, since I sat on the committee and we received those reports at 8:30 on Friday which is a non-workday for the city. The reports were received on the 22nd, but dated on the 19th. We had earlier meetings that some of these things had been discussed but the full report in its entirety was not fully vetted and so, because our agenda was already out and this was unvetted, it seemed unfair to try to include something in a report that came to us on a day that our clerk is off and I know it was sent to the full Council. So. It was stated by the Interim Chief that this was his report only and that seemed to indicate that he knew he was doing it on his own, which is fine.

Councilmember McLewis commented as follows: During this whole process, everything we did, we wanted to do it based on data that we reviewed and looked at and vetted and had questions and because it was at the last minute, it was decided not to be included in the packet because it's important for us in whatever we do as a committee, we all needed to look at it ahead of time.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I just wanted to state an objection to the process that was followed in this case. I'm looking at a public here and we are talking about a report that only the City Councilmembers were receiving and so, if we have an ad hoc committee working as a group, and it's decided as a group to include certain information, a staff report going to be distributed to the public, I would appreciate that our department respects that process. We are now in a situation where we've received an independent report from one member of an ad hoc committee. We are looking at a public that hasn't had the opportunity to even see that report. It's very uncomfortable for me and I don't feel that it's transparent. So, I just want to make that statement. I'm uncomfortable with that.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: In the staff report, pages aren't numbered but it's closer to the bottom of page four when it states that the committee was tasked with the following in the bottom one was examination of cost recovery for EMS responses. I know that was one of the requests I had made when the workplan was devised and we probably all know that we can't ask for reimbursement, not only for non-residents that require our services but also residents themselves and they can send the bill to their medical insurance and receive reimbursement for that and it's important for me because that is a way to cut overall costs but, in everything I reviewed I didn't see that was actually covered so I have a question about that.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I can address what I know and then I am going to refer to Interim Chief Piccinini. We discussed it and I'm familiar with it because of what I do for a living. We have a lot of 911 calls and our residents do get billed by the county fire district so I'm familiar with that. When we discussed it, the chief indicated we only have a part-time current administrative person. If we were to explore this, we would have to hire and add a billing service or some person to get the bills out. I think it's a matter of what direction we are going in with our fire department and whether we are looking at a possible combining administrative services with someone else. It might already be doing this. Or if we are going it alone and if we can look at a study that shows, by hiring somebody, would we be gaining or would it be costing.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: I wanted to note two things. One is that staff did look into this a number of years ago. We determined it wasn't feasible. Unfortunately, it's been so long that I can't remember the exact details but it was a subject we did look into at one point and I will also mention the outside this committee, it's very possible for the Council to task staff with taking a look at this subject and exploring it which we would have to do under the various future models that you are talking about here this evening because you did make a valid point that we are not sure which road fire service will go down in the future and that could make a difference in our ability to recover those costs but it is something you can independently ask staff to look at.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: One question I've had and did not see an answer to, for the out of city responses we provide for fires, it seems like the questions that I posed to our staff that we are fully reimbursed for our time but the question remains about the wear and tear on the vehicles and the personnel equipment. I posted and got one response but I haven't systematically got a response from the senior staff within the office.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I will stress that I pose the same question myself and basically what we got

is that, on her was in the process of breaking it down, I know that a type three engine gets reimbursed \$128.27 per hour. So based on the number of hours it's used for the fire is the amount it's paid to the city so, with the oak fire in July 2022, the city was paid \$13,981 for 109 hours of use of our truck. Personnel costs for that fire was \$31,458.09. For 157 hours. So, I do have an answer to some of the public's questions that a large fire out of assignment is paid \$900 to a volunteer volunteering their time for every 24 hour period on the assignment. We are trying to get a little more information but because volunteer stipends are paid on a January to December, 12 month basis, and because our fiscal budget is made on a July to June schedule, it makes it a little more complicated to merge those two so we are working on that but thank you for the question.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: I am reassured from Larry that as far as the stipends were fully reimbursed for the actual time and if Ana is on the line, at some point I think she is going to work on it as far as the wear and tear on the vehicles and whether we fully get compensated. I've heard from her in the past that the city is not fully compensated. If we can verify that.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We are trying to get those numbers exact. We don't want to put misinformation out there and I would think it's not just about the fire engines but I assume they are wearing their apparatus from the department as well so it's probably that whole thing is bundled.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: Are the large animal rescue or other services that are outside the City of Sebastopol those reimbursed to the city?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: No they are not. That is just a part of the mutual aid system and us partnering with our neighbors to perform those kinds of unusual services that tend to fall in the fire department. We take it very serious and our neighbors sometimes contribute to the equipment that we need for that kind of rescue operation. When we need ropes and tripods, et cetera, sometimes our neighboring agencies will partner with us and make those purchases but we are not reimbursed otherwise.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: Has the Graton fire department expressed an interest in collaborating with Sebastopol and, if yes, what is their property tax?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We had a meeting with Graton. Both Councilmember McLewis, myself, and Jack Piccinini were present with two or three board members. Unfortunately their chief could not make that meeting but they are interested in a future meeting and I have been in touch with their leadership. Everything is on hold until this meeting happened.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: How much is the parcel tax for a single-family dwelling?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: What I might point out is those numbers just kind of give you a snapshot in terms of parcel tax specific to residential and the chart also shows \$.14 per square foot for a commercial. I would let you know that there are ordinances, Gold Ridge, Graton, Sonoma County fire, they are very complex and list a number of tax uses. It is a very complex formula. But, in general, Graton's current text tax is \$ 250 for residential.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: I would like to know more about why this ad hoc committee wasn't able to come up with consensus moving forward. Can we say something about that?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We didn't agree.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: Where was the disagreement?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I think we should wait. We are in questions. I'm happy to give it but I don't think it's appropriate right now.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: I will point out that one of the things the committee has learned in this process is a committee or similar committee's work is not yet done. We've not had any in-depth discussions with Graton fire district as was pointed out earlier. So, one impact on trying to reach a consensus is, we don't have all the information quite yet. Despite all the work this committee did, as you've seen.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I think, this committee is looking for full direction from the City Council which is a governing body.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I know that in the report, I just wanted to understand procedurally, from the report, I see that there is a request that more time be given to an ad hoc committee to answer additional questions. My initial question is, how much time does this ad hoc committee feel that they need to would address the core remaining questions? For instance, if it is consolidation or the cost of consolidation versus an independent firehouse, the cost of the and the variables related to that and each option and how does the fire tax affect that? How much time would be needed in order to answer those core questions. Are we talking six months or three? A timeframe would be helpful.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I am speaking for myself but, I would say, I would like to get to a decision sooner versus later because I think the committee could come to a consensus, we need to hear from the governing body and be pointed in a direction. We cannot go meet with the neighboring fire district, nor do we want to, behind anybody's back. It is really difficult to go into a meeting. It's like trying to decide if you were going to dance or not. We were not authorized to do that but we were authorized to try to come up with options, I believe. So, we had a task list for that and to complete the work and get it back to the Council windy direction. That is my opinion on that.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: When I look at these comparisons I appreciate the comparison chart that was part of the staff report. When I look at these comparison numbers, my first question, I think I know the answer, for the public it is attachment number three, the comparison table that was posted on the website, these numbers, under estimated cost, do they include any amount for facility improvements or apparatus needs? I am talking about the chart. It is the first line that says estimated cost for each of the categories. It talks about each category like for the fire department. There are dollar amounts that are estimated. I know they are rounded numbers at this point do they or do than that included a cost element for facilities and apparatus?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: They do not include any of the apparatus replacement.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: When we look at this a grid, the question is, when we look at these costs, what is the dollar amount? What is the reference point for cost of personnel? Associated with each of these dollar amount? I ask this in the context of the proposed fire tax, which I understand uses the MOU for Sonoma County fire district. What are the dollar amounts that we are looking for? So in the independent fire category, Chief Piccinini, it says \$1.4 million but then there are some other dollar amounts. What dollar amounts or pay amounts are we looking at?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: The \$1.4 million is the current city budget and the \$280,000 is specific to a rough budget item to expand the stipend program and then the \$515,000 would be if we were to

move forward with 24-hour career staffing and moving to two engineer positions. The total number represents the two firefighter positions and then using Graton and Gold Ridge as a reference for the position fire captain, which would be the second 24-hour position. That is an estimate.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: It is not the Sonoma County Fire District MOU?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented no.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: The Sonoma County fire district was the reference for the fire tax; the Sonoma County fire tax that is up for vote in march. There was a calculation that was used in order to come up with the percentages that would be allocated to each jurisdiction.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is correct.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: In order to provide the positions of the jurisdictions were requesting. Is the MOU the reference point?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented no. It was the same reference point that goes to the current position total comp and then estimated position based on averages.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: It sounds like it was pretty uniform, no matter what the discussions were, whether it was looking at the independent fire option or the consolidation option.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is right.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: Looking at this chart, it looks to me like the goal of each of these, and I just need to understand it thoroughly, is the goal of each of those a combination staffing method where you have two career firefighters and one volunteer on each shift 24/7?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: I cannot speak to the other agencies in terms of the stipend shift. In our case it is what you just stated.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: But the numbers that you pulled out for the consolidation options, for instance for Gold Ridge, that was from their proposal, right?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented yes as well as updated information.

Vice Mayor Rich commented so was that for a similar combination model?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented it does not include their stipend firefighters.

Vice Mayor Rich commented it does not include the dollar amounts either.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is correct.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I see some variability so we are apples and oranges. I am assuming that what you were talking about when you said either option or either plan was an independent or a consolidated firehouse. I just want to clarify that I am hoping that the ad hoc committee did in fact consider the other options -

- a contract, the JPA and other ideas that came through. I want to make sure I understand what you mean, at the very end of the bullet point it says that it is anticipated that a parcel tax might be required for either plan. Did you mean for either an plan - independent or consolidated?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented yes it is indicated in the table on first if you look at that it would require a parcel tax, even if we remained independent.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: The parcel tax, these numbers then, and the analysis are not taking into consideration the fire tax, is that correct?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Basically we know that if the fire tax passes we are going to have \$1 million but of that \$1 million, staffing could take up \$550,000 to have a career fire department.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I think we estimated about \$137,000 per firefighter?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: it depends on the position between captain and engineer. So for four engineers we made it \$550,000.

Vice Mayor Rich commented so there would be a need to adjust staff?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is correct.

Vice Mayor Rich commented that is in consideration of potentially moving the current 40 hour fire engineers into those 24 hour slot.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is correct.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: There was some debate on if we would need six or eight so, it depends on what we would decide that we need. My question is that if the information that we are being provided in the chart, which compares dollar amounts, if it includes any amount that would be received from the fire tax. Does anything in this analysis include fire tax receipts?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented no. Because we have no assurance. We feel confident but we can't count it until it is in the bank.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: My next question is, in terms of the fire tax, I do not see anything in the fire tax ordinance that specifically requires that any percentage of the fire tax be allocated specifically to retention or recruitment or even facilities. As I read the ordinance it lists items that can be funded by the fire tax. So the 1.8% of the 60 million that the city would receive what have to go to one or more of those categories but it does not state that six positions have to be funded or that \$550,000 has to go to retention.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is correct. The only thing that it states is that we have to maintain there is a maintenance clause. We have to maintain the existing budget and that would not include the capital improvement. It is determined by the fiscal year 2021-2022 and you have to maintain the same baseline as you had those previous years.

Vice Mayor Rich commented that was before we funded the position this year, correct?

Interim Chief Piccinni commented yes.

Vice Mayor Rich commented that would be the baseline?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented FY 21 22 would be the baseline.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: To be clear about it, now that we have that maintenance service provision in front of us, the fire tax would not address our current deficit in our general fund, is that correct?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented that is absolutely correct.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: I am looking at the same chart that Councilmember Rich was looking at. First of all, the City of Sebastopol, we have the status quo and it looks like that is a 24/7 option. I'm wondering if the ad hoc committee felt that the 16 hour option was off the table? It's not here.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: There a difference of opinions in the ad hoc committee. This was prepared by the chief. That is being presented today.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: In the workplan session we had a lot of discussion about that and it took a while to get the language correct. We wanted them to consider up to 24 hours so what I am hearing is that there was not consensus.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: There was not consensus and we did not lay out the numbers for the 16 hour. This is the 24 hour as presented tonight.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: Is there any reason why the 16 hour was not considered? I thought the workplan was to consider 16 hours up to 24 hours.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: No specific reason per se. That it was not considered. If the ad hoc continues, and direction is provided, I think we can focus on the 24/7 and using the tax in that way.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: My additional question is a spinoff on the service maintenance language. I listened to the maintenance service language, I read that provision. I'm thinking about consolidation. I think this is important for the purpose of the ad hoc moving forward to try to pin down with the ultimate costs are, if in fact, the ad hoc continues.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin read the language.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: If a fire tax passes, it may bring in around \$1,100,000?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented yes.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: So if there is consolidation on the parcel tax is brought over from the annexing agency, someone help me, from the Gold Ridge report, there was an estimate of the total amount. Was it one point two million if we were annexed by Gold Ridge? So that adds up to \$2.2 million in consolidation situation. So, if we have a firehouse that is going to cost let's say with facilities and apparatus, it will cost right now \$2.8 million. That is \$500,000 more over the parcel tax the comes with annexation and the fire tax, assuming it passes. That is a \$500,000 gap that needs to be filled. Right now we are funding the fire department out of the

general fund in a deficit world at \$2.5 million. If there is a consolidation and \$500,000 is needed to fill the gap that is left by parcel tax coming from the annexing agency and from fire tax that has passed, is there something in the net service language that would allow the City of Sebastopol to reduce its contribution from \$1.2 million down to the \$500,000.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented I had no part in drafting this ordinance and I do not know who draft it. Matters of interpretation often follow and sometimes even courts have to decide how an ordinance will be interpreted after the fact. So, with all of those disclaimers, I think it might be possible you can make an argument that we would get credit for the parcel tax brought over in a consolidation and we would not have to make that up.

Vice Mayor Rich commented contribution would be the \$500,000 needed to fill that gap between that is left by the parcel tax coming over and the tax?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented there is the potential.

Vice Mayor Rich commented I understand and the ordinance does include language that would support that. Correct?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented yes.

Vice Mayor Rich commented what is that language.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: it lists the different types of money sources.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Those things will be up for interpretation and I think it will be important if a sales tax initiative passes. That we need to get consensus from the oversight committee and deal with them depending on how they felt about that. I appreciate the dilemma that you are facing. But I guess I would argue using sales tax to leverage the city funding issue should not be the deciding factor here on consolidation. In my humble opinion we should be getting back to why do you want to consolidate? Do you want to improve services? Are there greater efficiencies? Why are we doing this? It is a policy decision if you move forward to leverage what you described.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I understand but, just to wrap it up, we are in a \$1.67 million deficit situation. So, thank you for clarifying that. I just wanted to make sure I understood the math and I appreciate you helping to confirm that because, maybe there is some potential help.

Mayor Hinton and Interim Chief Piccinini responded to the questions submitted in writing to the committee.

Mayor Hinton read the questions/comments submitted as of 4:00 pm today September 26, 2023.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM THE COMMUNITY PRIOR TO THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2023:

- 1) Why the Sebastopol volunteer firefighters are paid to volunteer. Not everyone seems to be paid the same and I don't understand why they are paid at all.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows:

Paid for call and drill stipend compensation
\$15.00 three hour drill
\$15.00 respond to fire station (whether go out on call or not)
Retention – split by complicated formula (based on participation – more calls more retention?)
Stipend shift pay – 8 hour period- \$200
Large fire and out of County-\$900 for every 24 hours on assignment

- 2) If firefighters can use their political & social influence to constantly beg for more money, is it possible for them to use their influence to address climate change, and universal healthcare?

There was no answer.

- 3) if the report the city paid to have done recommended consolidation in part because the overpaid “volunteers” only spent about 1/10th of their time responding to fire related calls, why aren’t you taking that seriously?

Mayor Hiton commented as follows: City is taking it seriously as medical aid is a majority of calls.

- 4) If you stop paying volunteers were they ever volunteers to begin with?

There was no answer.

- 5) How does Burbank Heights and Orchards fit into the overall fire preparedness?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We serve same way serve every other resident in town; reach out to Fire Department; urge them to contact Chief

- 6) With more than half of home insurance companies cutting coverage to California because they can’t afford to keep paying claims for all damage from climate change, how can the people of Sebastopol afford to keep paying more for everything including food, PG&E, gas, insurance, and a 40% increase to the fire budget?

Mayor Hiton commented everyone know costs are going up.

- 7) Is throwing money at fire fighters before we’re burned to the ground the most responsible way to use that money?

Mayor Hinton commented this is not a fair question.

Councilmember McLewis commented every City has a responsibility to provide fire service

- 8) Can we implement a policy that 15% of the general fund will be the minimum funding requirement for the Fire Service from this point forward if Sebastopol remains an independent fire service. This minimum funding would make sure that the Fire Service would not be underfunded in the future years. The 15% could be used toward 1) Staffing, 2) Equipment, 3) Capital Improvements, 4) Fire Service Reserves. In addition, if the County Fire Service tax passes in 2024, this would ensure that the City would keep funding the Sebastopol Fire Service at a minimum level so additional monies raised by the County Fire Service tax could be used for 1) Staffing, 2) Equipment, and other Fire Service Programs. In order to prevent future underfunding, staffing and equipment crises, I would hope that we could write a budget policy that would require a minimum funding level of 15% of the General Fund.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: This body is elected by voters; makes those decisions each and every year; have done policies in past

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: City has had a number of policies Council adopted over the years; cannot tie hands of future Councils; can change policy in future

- 9) Questions and Comments:

- a. It's my understanding that when our fire trucks are deployed within the state to assist with wildfires, the city is paid a daily rate for our fire trucks. What is that amount based on the last three years of deployment? Based on that dollar amount what percentage is given back to SFD and what is done with the rest of the dollars?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: Discussed daily rate; not have data to answer that question; Ana to provide in future
Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Over the years monies received from use of Fire Truck paid for new Type 3 purchased a few years ago; saved up and used to pay for Type 3

- b. Rohnert Park combines Police and Fire operations. This should be studied as Sebastopol is even smaller in size, and could offer many reductions in overlap.

Mayor Hinton commented the City could consider this.

- c. Sebastopol does not participate in mutual aid in the same way other communities in Sonoma and Marin do, so more resources are needed to stand up individual town services- from dispatch to records to management to operations.

Mayor Hinton commented we understand the City is short staffed.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: it is an inaccurate statement; do participate in mutual aid; regular basis separate from large wild fire assignments

- d. There are dozens of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) certified residents in Sebastopol. The Map Your Neighborhood program isn't bad but spotty, but serves a whole other purpose- more social network than emergency response.

Mayor Hinton commented this is an opinion.

- e. In Napa, where I lived before Sebastopol, CERT is a force multiplier for the first responders. We were sworn in after a certain amount of training, on a perpetual basis. I ask the City Council to ask the Interim Fire Chief to stand up and reinstate support and training of CERT. It doesn't replace MYN, but is a demonstrable way to add to the way the city can respond to fire, earthquake, toxic spills, tsunamis and (!) hurricanes. We live in "disaster playland"!

Mayor Hinton commented this is a statement and not a question.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented: The City had a CERT program; transitioned to MYN; take another look at that; not looked at it at this time

10) Comments:

- a. I am in favor of maintaining control of the governance of our Fire Department. As it now stands, our elected Council is accountable for the delivery of services and I would hope to see that continue. Sebastopol, as an incorporated city, has a distinct community of interest and we are fortunate to be able to rely on locally elected representatives to administer our affairs. At the end of the day, consolidation with another entity means ceding control. Our ability to govern ourselves is, at best, diluted. At worse, we completely lose control and influence.
- b. The Matrix Report makes it clear that challenges exist and an influx of revenue is needed to appropriately staff and maintain the Fire Department. Principally, the Matrix Report suggests hat a parcel tax of \$265 per year will be necessary, with or without consolidation. I have no quarrel with that. However, if we need to impose a tax, I'd rather pay ourselves than send money to an outside entity.
- c. A parcel tax, continued funding by the City Council and new monies accruing from the pending county-wide ballot measure may be enough to fashion a staffing scenario that fits the needs of Sebastopol.

- d. There are many nuances and details to all of this but my reading of the Matrix Report is that even with consolidation there remain significant issues relating to fire house renovations, apparatus replacement and a determination of the appropriate staffing arrangements. At this point then, consolidation doesn't seem to solve any substantive issues other than imposing a parcel tax without the need for an affirmative vote. I believe the folks of Sebastopol will favor taxing themselves to assure delivery of fire (and medical) services.
- e. The final resolution of all of this will be a heavy lift and I commend the Council for forthrightly addressing this. I am hopeful that there is a way to continuing governing ourselves when it comes to our Fire Department. Thank you for your consideration

11) Comments:

- a. I am pleased to see that the Council has put forth a comprehensive report for consideration and comment from the general public. The report components and the discussions of the past two years leave no doubt that the city must make significant changes to how fire services are delivered.
- b. The status quo is not viable or sustainable. Our current equipment, volunteers and full time staff are stretched thin, if not to the breaking point. The city, meaning we the residents and taxpayers, must demand and support changes to ensure that we are protected and served in the future.
- c. Our fire personnel have done yeoman's work and deserve our gratitude and ongoing support for that dedication.
- d. The options will all cost money and that fact must be recognized and not minimized. The bulk of financial resources for fire services ultimately come from one source and that is the taxpayer. Homeowners, residents and business owners all contribute in some fashion.
- e. Funding options include general fund revenues, property taxes, parcel taxes or a new fire services tax. All may be needed and should be soberly considered. Any chosen option must be cost effective, sustainable and equitably shared.
- f. The Comparison Table refers to "Governance Authority", shorthand for who controls the fire department and services. I believe strongly that authority should remain with the city through its administration, management and the City Council. We, as citizens and voters, must retain the ability to decide how and by whom our crucial services are delivered. Once ceded that authority might never return.

12) Question:

- a. What does the ad hoc committee's calendar look like over the coming months in light of the two major events on the horizon and a key milestone:
 - New Interim Fire Chief
 - New city manager
 - County wide sales tax measure

Mayor Hinton commented this will be determined by this Council moving forward

- b. Will there be future public report outs from our ad hoc committee after these hires and milestone on this calendar?

Mayor Hinton commented there will be future report outs if committee continued

- c. When will our fire department be in a viable condition to consider/start a merger with another local fire department in terms of staffing and equipment should that prove to be the best way forward based on verified, credible data and facts?

Mayor Hinton commented this is based on Council decision.

13) Comments: As a household that lives just down the street from our Fire Department, I am very confident and happy to be supported by this amazing service so close to home. When I read the report and saw how over 60% of calls are to assist in medical calls, this drove home the facts that our Fire Department is an integral part of our health and wellbeing in Sebastopol. We all know how critical this service is and the farther away our Fire Department is- the longer the wait and that can add time wasted during these life threatening moments. Let's use our resources to build a second floor on the department so it can function properly and get the vehicles these incredible people need to do their job well here in town. Thank you Sebastopol Fire Fighters!!

- 14) Would it be possible for the Firefighters Foundation to work with a local church to build housing for the firefighting and public safety community? As there is a shortage of middle income, family housing in Sebastopol and we need volunteer firefighters to live within City limits, could the Firefighters Foundation work with the Christian Science Church, Mount Olive Lutheran, Redwood Christian Fellowship, St. Sebastian Catholic Church or other religious organizations that have undeveloped land within City Limits to build affordable, family housing targeted at volunteer firefighters and other public safety workers? It might be easier to attract and retain volunteers if there were viable housing options available for them. Developing housing to support the community is one key goal of housing policy.
- Recently passed SB 4 allows religious organizations to fast track affordable housing, which is below 80% of area income (\$80,550 for a family of 2, \$90,600 for family of 3)
 - <https://nonprohousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Fact-Sheet-SB-4-Affordable-Housing-on-Faith-Lands-Act-4.pdf>
 - <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/incomelimits>

There was no answer.

- 15) Is there any way the City and Firefighters Foundation could support the development of affordable, family housing on church land to help support our firefighters and other public safety employees?

There was no answer.

- 16) What is the current FD coverage? Is it the 16 hour schedule?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Coverage emergency response is 2 allocated positions; every day of week (7-5:30 am); supplemented with stipend fire fighter during same period of time
Mayor Hinton commented the paid fire engineers work 4 10 hour days.

- 17) What are the arguments against the 16 hour schedule recommended by the Consolidation Study? I am looking for individual members to respond to this question.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: That hour period is not as important as 16 hour of day. Needs be 24 hour coverage.

Councilmember McLewis commented as follows: How identify 8 hours not important, agree with incrementally .

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: Can review 16 at this point with goal of long term solution as funding increases trying to expand to 24 7.

- 18) Is the city is fully reimbursed for the wear and tear on vehicles and equipment for its out of area fire assistance?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: Not have answer; process to get estimate of what reimbursed

19) How much of the out of area leasing is optional?

Mayor Hinton commented not sure of the question.

- 20) The city is allowed to seek reimbursement for operational costs for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). 60% of city's fire response are medical (EMS) calls. EMS agencies have implemented charges for:
- Non-residents which are not paying the city or parcel tax for that area/city (Rancho Adobe)
 - Calls that do not require ambulance transport (national average 21% of calls)
 - Fee for every call (Sonoma County Fire District)
 - 2nd or 3rd responses to non-life threatening calls (i.e. lift assist)
 - Has reimbursement been explored? By whom and with what recommendations?

Mayor Hinton commented this will be explored further.

21) The current fire services data is inadequate when it comes to identifying non-residents and other potential reimbursement streams. Is there a plan to improve data collected to better inform decision-making in the future?

Mayor Hinton commented this is related to reimbursement.

22) Why don't the volunteer firefighters ask people to volunteer donations rather than force a budget increase.

Mayor Hinton commented there is a fire foundation that does good work in our community .

- 23) In the In the title of the agenda, as well as in the fire ad hoc's report, it speaks of having a town hall. To me this means an ability for members of the public to be able to communicate to its government bodies with a potential back and forth as questions happen during a normal conversation. As I further read in the agenda the Town Hall is not happening and that the public will only have 2 minutes to make comments. I have many questions but do not want to ask all of them here and have limited to just a few. I am sure many of them will be answered as well as new ones will come up at the meeting. This is why having an actual town hall meeting would have been so important.
- Why is the town hall not happening?

Mayor Hinton stated the committee was not ready.

- How can the public get a space to be in conversation with its local government versus just be spoken at?

Mayor Hinton commented the public is involved.

- The matrix report only states two items were updated on its cover page, but there was a list of inaccuracies in the report and after a brief view there still are inaccuracies including the current cover page. How can you still use this document as a reference with it being inaccurate?

Mayor Hinton commented Interim Chief Piccinini worked with Matrix to get the corrections made.

- Under the Next Steps: part of the report it references at the end that the City Council needs to have a closed session for FLSA review. This does not affect a person, but people in general, so I do not see the need for a closed session. Why does this need to be a closed session?

Mayor Hinton commented this affects pay and personnel matters; not discussed in open public.

- e. In the slide show on The Why-Sebastopol Fire Dept. It states that the volunteer pool is trending down. The department has recently added 16 new volunteers. Is this information now outdated or did the statistics come from a national data base?

Mayor Hinton commented the volunteer numbers have ranged from 18 to plus or minus 30.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Added 16 since first of year; 9 still have background checks needed. We are doing better than national average; number of young volunteers going towards career; number of individuals work in community ; local home to fire; Success to comparison to watching program recently offered.

- f. Has there been time to see how these new volunteers are going to affect the statistics?

No response.

- g. In the slide show on Reorganization with neighboring fire district. Process explained Second from the bottom it speaks of Governance. What does this statement mean?

Mayor Hinton commented it means Fire District.

- h. Does the Council and the public understand if consolidation happens the city loses all authority over how the fire department is run because it falls under a different authority or board of directors?

Mayor Hinton commented it is under a different board of directors

- i. In the slide show on What are the options? It states an estimated 2.5 mil. According to the Delivery of Services Options chart the consolidation with Gold Ridge would be 2.7 mil, should this slide be updated to reflect this information?

Interim Chief Piccinini stated he does not understand the question.

- j. Since the beginning of the idea of consolidation Gold Ridge Fire has become a drastically different organization with an assumed change in its culture. Has the Ad Hoc committee, city management, or Council considered these changes in Gold Ridge's infrastructure? Is so what are those considerations?

Mayor Hinton commented we are all aware Gold Ridge expanded territory

Mayor Hinton called for a break at 8:00 pm and reconvened the meeting at 8:05 pm.

Mayor Hinton opened for public comment.

Carol commented as follows: I wanted to just make a comment about the process. I was under the impression that I was coming to a meeting where the ad hoc committee was going to present a report and then there would be a townhall meeting. It was confusing when I got my email and I read the agenda but I decided to come anyway. I wanted to say that I think there are people that are uncomfortable sending in questions to the Council and to the city and people are also uncomfortable coming to City Council meetings. I just felt like maybe it was not inclusive enough for people to have their comments and to have their voices heard. I would also like to ask if the ad hoc committee is going to report back at some point in time and if it will be in the City Council meeting or a townhall meeting. I just want to say thank you to everybody for their time.

A member of the audience commented as follows: I would just like to say that Vice Mayor Rich has stated that she is not comfortable with current committee report out and I would like to note that her reports resulted in a level of transparency that may not be considered exemplary by those directly affected.

Richard commented as follows: I am a lifelong resident of Sebastopol. I sent you all an email and I appreciate you reading the contents of that in earlier discussion. Two things are troubling me. It seems to me that there is this disagreement on the ad hoc committee. The nature of that disagreement has not been revealed and that is troubling to me. I would like to know what the facts and figures are relative to cost and those kinds of things. So what are the disagreements? I think that is important for the public to know. Apparently, there was a memo from the Interim Fire Chief that the public is not aware of and that speaks to the issue of transparency. I think we should all have the same documents in front of us if we are going to discuss this issue. I don't know how that came to pass. I am just saying that to some extent, that feels like hiding the ball and that is not comfortable for me. Beyond all of that, my overarching comment is this. Maintain custody of the fire services in Sebastopol. It has worked well for us over 120 years. There were challenges. Lots of them. But, at the end of the day, I want to be able to say that if I have a fire services issue I know who to talk to. My voice is better articulated to you than some board of directors three cities away. I want to know who is in charge of fire services and it has always been you five people and I think it should continue that way.

Linda commented as follows: We have so many wonderful people in this town. I want to thank them. I would also like to say that the mayor has repeatedly referred to fire personnel and says there is a gender issue. But not all of the firefighters are men. But she has said that several times. It speaks to her continued refusal to be educated. We also need to acknowledge the cause of the medical fields. It is the electromagnetic fields.

Glen commented as follows: This is a question that I have not heard talked about this evening. My curiosity is, since the fire department is involved with countywide, is the county weighing in one direction or another in devising the city and if so, what are their concerns? And what are they are they expressing with regard to the recommendations? And then, does Cal fire play a role in the determination? And is this to their advantage or disadvantage?

Rick commented as follows: My wife and I have lived in Sebastopol for 25 years. I have a question. What efforts are being made, if any, to find low-cost housing for volunteer firefighters with a large low-income project going in. Has the Council been able to do anything to help you mark those units or other units in town for volunteer firefighters. The comment I have, like many others, is we receive superlative service from the fire department and fire department leadership. My wife and I are grateful for all of the hard work that they put in on our behalf.

Loretta commented as follows: Lifelong Sebastopol resident . It seems to me that no decision should be made until after the election. We are talking a difference of \$1.1 million. So we could do scenarios and come up with the different scenarios like what would it cost with and without the tax measure. I don't think you can make a decision. The mayor said, you can't count the money until it is in the bank.

Oliver commented as follows: First of all, thank you to the ad hoc committee. There is so much to unpack here and it is complicated. The city manager is going to be retiring and the interim Fire Chief will be gone soon as well so there are a lot of moving parts here. We are in a terrible position financially that we could be getting money from the county next year and I would imagine there will be more financial support in the coming months and next year. What I would not like to say tonight is a bunch of premature decisions. Shotgun marriages to local fire departments. I think it is important to put our feelers out there. I think that is the key point. We need to focus on bringing more money. One other important point is it is a whole new era next year with a new city manager. The Council runs the Fire Department and in most cities it should be the city manager. I would really like to see us get back towards a more conventional model.

Kate commented as follows: I just want to say thank you to the ad hoc committee for their work. It has been a

long process with a lot of moving parts. I also want to agree with the comment that I don't think any decision can be made without knowing the results of the March tax initiative that will be doubling the budget for the fire department. I also want to reiterate that I believe that there should be multiple measures put in place that the general fund should have a dedicated permanent amount going to the fire department. In addition to any tax revenues. So that the fire department will not be underfunded in future years, as it has been over the last decade. We are looking at a fire department that has been structurally underfunded over the last 10 years and that is why we are at this tipping point now.

Kyle commented as follows: The report indicates that the ad hoc committee met multiple times. At every City Council meeting, there has been time on the agenda for reporting. I would like to know how many times the ad hoc committee use this opportunity to report out. And will the ad hoc committee release minutes from those meetings and consider making them publicly recorded in the future? Secondly, the Council gave clear directions to this committee. There is an agreement on this directive. The committee fails to consider the budgetary issues that this committee has had months to address. When can we expect to see the various options that this Council has been giving clear direction to secure?

Mayor Hinton responded to public comments as follows: The first question, were we inclusive enough in the process. I feel like we have been discussing this for a really long time. While we did not answer all of them exactly, as pointed out by another question to the ad hoc tonight, I think that we answered a lot of them. I feel like we got all of the options on the board and this is the first time all have been on board. I feel pretty successful tonight that we did our job. It took longer than expected and I believe we thought it would take longer and I think the city manager thought it would take longer but, the interim fire manager thought we could sooner. I don't know about future townhall meetings but again, I don't want to speak for the whole committee but we are really looking forward to direction from the Council on which direction to go. That is what I believe is the next step. Do you have something to add to that?

Councilmember McLewis commented as follows: If there is anything that we learned here, it is that this is all very complex and that is why it did take longer. Even if you are just marginally involved with this, you can agree with that.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We had a citizen ask the nature of the disagreement on the ad hoc. I will go into that when I have opinion time.

Councilmember McLewis commented as follows: We tried our best but there were a lot of moving pieces. In August, during this period, lots of moving parts and it was hard to come up with hard facts and figures. And just like everything, if you do budgets, you do a rough based on history and estimates and the closer you get to something the more those facts and figures come into play.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: There was a specific question about a document from the Interim Fire Chief sent to the full City Council. And, speaking frankly, I was a little surprised when it came out. It came out after our final meeting as an ad hoc committee. Some of the figures of the language was in that report. So, if I did a late report and submitted it at the 11th hour, I would not expect it to be included so, I stand by that. If we move forward we could include that. We had a discussion about maintaining the fire service and we had a member of the public said that I quoted firemen and I don't understand the difference. My sister was a lifelong police officer so I do believe in women in public safety. I say firemen because it is a default. I do operate with that old-school default so I do apologize. I don't mean any disrespect and I understand that women can do the job just as well as men can.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: EMS and Cal Fire and asked the Interim Chief to respond.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: We operate under the framework of a countywide response system. Everybody follows the standard protocols. Fire engines are dispatched in response to calls. I'm not sure I understand the root or the meat of the question. We operate countywide and it is part of the 911 system.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: Another member of the public asked about waiting until after the March tax came through so we would know how much money we have. I believe that will be addressed in deliberations and another member of the public thought that it might be interesting to put some feelers out there that maybe we should wait until a new Interim Fire Chief or city manager is in place. And then, we had people question about 16 versus 24-hour fire and why that was not addressed. We admitted was not addressed but we do our best. Public meetings, we are under ad hoc rules. Discussed the \$2.5 million and that would mean \$300,000 annually for facilities. I believe that will be part of the deliberation. Does Cal Fire have an opinion on this. We do have Cal fire as an option. I believe it is our decision. But I think we use Cal fire as an example. So if you look at that last option and consider other agencies, that is an example of a Cal fire partnership. So, that would be a decision that we would decide whether they have a role to play or not. This is clearly our jurisdiction. What efforts are made for low-income housing? I assume we are talking about housing firemen? I assume that there is nothing we are specifically doing.

City Council Discussion Deliberations, and/or Direction/Action:

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I want to understand the matrix report. I see that in this packet there is an updated report for the matrix and that includes a cover sheet that has had two changes since February. Is that the updated most current version?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: The changes also included the salary table. The other big change is that they reformatted the document and cleaned it up. But there were no changes to other data points.

Vice Mayor Rich commented was it just that the salary schedule was moved from one spot to another?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: The salary schedule that was provided in the original report was data we provided and it was not accurate. We updated that and provided a new table on page 68.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: To clarify, it was the report that was attached that was submitted with the other document for this meeting plus the scheduled salary change.

Interim Chief Piccinini stated yes.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: How do stipends for volunteers compare to other fire district? Gold Ridge for example? If you can give us a sense of that.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Our step is \$200 for an eight hour period and I believe that Gold Ridge is \$100 for eight hours. It is in that table.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I noticed in the chart a reference to emergency management and emergency operations and how a center would be operated. I don't know who this is a question for but it seems like it would be good to know what happens with emergency management if we don't have a Sebastopol fire department. In the chart it says that it would not be in the annexing entity responsibility. Is that accurate?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: Fundamentally, the fire district would not have governing responsibilities but in terms of developing any documents, that would come from the city but related to fire specific things, the district itself would cover the entire jurisdiction including the City of Sebastopol.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented the City would be running the EOC as it presently does and fire would be handled by the Fire District.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I just didn't want to see a world where we did not have that covered. And then on the 16 hour question, I didn't hear you talk about the scheduling. I know what is going on at Gold Ridge and I just want to hear your opinion if it would affect his 16 hour option.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: One of the options for 24/7 is that you can schedule a team to be there for 48 hours to cover two 24 hour shifts. That could be easier, especially on out of area guys or women. If they, they can stay at the firehouse for 48 hours. Whether they do a combination or whatever they do. That was the argument I heard against the 16 hour. The structure of the 16 hour shift would have to be flushed out. A 56 hour work week is what was calculated and that is the standard fire service shift. It meets standards and the idea is to have firefighters on the 56 hour work week. We modify that to 16 hours and then we will they come in and work a 16 hour day and calculate over time. There is a lot of time in the weeds and nuances we would have to sort through to figure out how we will staff a fire department with career staff on a 16 hour basis.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: When it came up before about examining options, if we do proceed in a direction of wanting to cover all of our bases, because we want the best for our citizens what does that entail? If we have discussions and we don't like it, what is the penalty for backing out? Or is it just a done deal?

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: You can initiate one of those and typically we would do that. But you might be consider consolidating that and if the Council decides to move forward with consolidation, that would be a first stop.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: Are there penalties? The \$10k is like an automatic thing. Do you have to watch that up front?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: First of all you can make the argument that requesting it is a little premature. You have a lot of questions that need to be answered and you need to flesh out the devil in the details with multiple agencies to decide what would be the best fit or the right fit for you. They we will move forward with the agency. The MOU requires a \$10,000 deposit to cover hard cost. We may not end up spending that much but that is the purpose of the \$10,000. You are not obligated to move forward with consolidation. It can sit there on the shelf. You can take it to the next level in terms of really doing hard-core negotiations with the agency selected. During those negotiations, the whole process could fail. Processes do fail from time to time or they extend out to three or four years. Using Gold Ridge as an example. Rancho Adobe is also an example. They got into the process and due to some financial instability, one district was not able or willing to absorb that. So the process has been suspended. Typically it will last five years before expiring. But you do not have a previous one with Gold Ridge fire protection district. The last one was the west Sonoma County. It covered all of the agencies in west Sonoma County and they giving critique of the performance of each department and it was not specific beyond that.

Councilmember Maurer commented as follows: I would ask a question about the lack of consensus and what I was told is that it was based on a need for more information. I suggest the ad hoc committee continue to gather

the needed information and continue beyond the sales tax measures this spring. I would also like to see the cause for the option for 16 hour staffing.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I have a number of comments and I think I am getting to the core of it. I see the ad hoc committee requesting more time together more information. I think the entire community is eager for some closure here. But I would be in support of further work being done. One of my main motivations for that is I look at the information that we have and I am not really very confident that all of the accurate information has been gathered. It is the numbers. The costs are estimates at the moment. I respect that but for the City Council to make a decision, we need more refined information regarding the cost, including the facilities, even if it is a cost that goes across all of those categories. We still need to know what that number is. I am also not convinced from the information that I have heard that the statement in the staff report that a \$250 parcel tax to the citizens of Sebastopol would be necessary, no matter what the plan is. I am not convinced that is the case. We have talked about if it passes there is a dollar amount that could be attached. Even though I hear concerns Councilmember Maurer, we know what the portion of \$260 million is. The potential parcel tax return from Gold Ridge or some other parcel tax the comes over through annexation -- that is a known number so I would like to see this ad hoc pull together a more detailed monetary that would take into consideration what the dollar amounts are. And what they are if the tax is passed. Our mayor has been actively involved and would like to see things go forward quickly. We have a lot of people that are concerned about this issue. I think we can trust this ad hoc committee that is putting in work, including staff, to look deeply and put the time in necessary but act in an efficient and effective way to bring reports back to the Council and I would urge regular reports back to the City Council. We can talk about what that might be. I'm thinking monthly or every two months. So that we know what is going on and to report out to the public. I think one of the frustrations, the rest of the City Councilmembers do not participate in ad hoc. We don't know what is going on at. It is really going to be the only opportunity. I see Jack Piccinini with a deep level of expertise and I see the frustration every single one of you experience when you come to deal with the City Council that is overseeing your efforts. No matter what we do we don't have the level of expertise that you have. But we are making decisions that affect you. I see that frustration from you and for me that says, consolidation. For me that says a system where firefighters are making the decisions and those who are talking about you are making decisions about apparatus, staffing, where you are not using all of your time to look at two by four schedules. I wanted to put that out there. What we want is having firefighters and because you will so hard, and your passion and your pride is in it, there is a strong argument that I would urge all of you to consider that says that the City Council should not be involved in the decision-making. And the appropriate decision-makers are people just like firefighters. I think that is an important piece to leave as an observation. As far as what I would like to see personally, in further effort to the ad hoc committee, and I would support the ad hoc committee going forward, I would like to see the information identified in the staff report in the bullet points as information that still needs to be provided. That is a summary from the ad hoc that I think is still very compelling. That includes the 16 hour piece and it includes all sorts of different options that the ad hoc feels that they do not have time to look into. I would also like to see, facility apparatus expenses included. I would like to see the cause numbers updated to be a bit more realistic. I think the personnel and staffing cost might need to be increased for the fire department. I think that will be a big challenge. I would like to see information on the impact of each option if the fire tax passes and, if it doesn't, how it will affect us. The 16 hour model is in the bullet point and I think that needs to be addressed. The pros and cons. I also think it will be important for us to see a wrap up action. I think that is super important. How are we going to engage the people in this room? And then, I would also hope that we would look at the option of exploring and administering of service contract. We have an Interim Fire Chief who is saying, I want to go into retirement. We need to have a plan. What are the administrative service contracts? Would someone else do that? And then finally, a timeline. What are we looking at? What is a realistic timeline? That is my input on this process.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I said that I would give my opinions. And again, we could not come to a full

consensus in the ad hoc. So we could not make recommendations. I'm going to start off. I did a speech for the Rotary Club on Friday. I was looking back. There was a headline in the news. In May of 2022. Merger of Sebastopol and Gold Ridge fire departments. Push back after we did talks. It was presented without feedback from firefighters and residents. Discussions will continue through December, 2022. And this was Michael I would like to take more time and get some of the questions answer before I move on to another committee to make consolidation happen. Is a three-hour discussion progressed, city leaders agreed the public should be provided with more specific information. I read that, because we are a year and a half later. And, I was on the committee before that committee. So, do I have opinions? I do. I'm going to state them tonight. I think we have to do multiple tracks. I think that we need to move forward and ask Graton, I like Graton. They are a lot like us. They are single department on one of our borders. There run with a strong volunteer program and even the chief is part volunteer. I'm not sure of his unique situation. I don't want to be talking to somebody about something that could happen. If we are not saying, or directed, by our governing body to have talks. So, that was what I would like to do. Let's do multiple tracks. Because we do not do know if we will have the money for sure. I've we know for fact that even if the sales tax measure happens, we will not have it until 2025. I am also interested in entering a joint powers authority where, we could explore how to share services. We may have enough for the fire department, and we may not. But, we need to be getting specific financial things down, so that we can offer more concrete information. We can speak into limiting contract for services. That is something we could do right away. Sharing volunteers and battalion chiefs for coverage. That is something we can do right away. I don't know how we do it. Because, I am not a career firefighter. But, I do know that we have an Interim Chief they can direct us in the right direction. I think we have to have not just push this out again, because if the fire tax does not pass, where are we? We are six months more down the line. And, we have to have response. We talked about tonight, some great responses. You rescue my daughter whose car was on fire not so long ago. And showed up in minutes. But, we also have times where we have not been able to get there, and we haven't gotten there first. We have relied on mutual aid. We have to have a reliable fire service for years to come. So, I think we need to do something and continue to talk. We need to start doing action as well as continue to talk. Maybe we don't get direction on that tonight. But, maybe we get just a little bit so we can bring forth another Council agenda item to make firm decisions about which way this Council wants to move and continue the ad hoc of trying to get more information. I don't want to go meet with people further, if this body doesn't want us to. If you want to stop, this is a decision for the five of us to make. If you want to continue, we need to be pointed in that direction.

Councilmember McLewis commented as follows: There so much being discussed. In my opinion, and my recommendation, is that we should move forward with a limited service or limited contract focal shared services agreement. Based on the information in the discussions we have had with the Interim Chief, and ad hoc committees, I would think that that would be super valuable to us in many different ways. I would like to continue investing in our department as we have in the last year. New volunteers. We have been doing all of that. And what I would like to see what happens with the fire tax? Everyone knows recently, that I made a statement about that when we were discussing the tax measure. And I would like to explore the top cost of various models. As a city, I think we have to get our house in order, if you will. Even if we were in merger talks the chief is talked about, we have to be just as strong as those around us in order to do that merger. Over the next six months, we will know more about our city budget. There is a possibility of running out of money in 2026 if we don't increase revenue. And so, with that being said, I do think it's important for us to at least consider a plan b in start exploring that. Because, we need to have multiple options given the situation we are in. And we don't want to be caught in a situation where we have learned something and explored these things. And then, we find out that our revenue is not increasing, and the where do we go? In my opinion, I would like to continue exploring the discussions. We have had one meeting with Graton. I enjoyed it but it is one meeting. I think that if we are going to start exploring, that would be my own opinion. I like to continue that and have those discussions. I think that based on what the meeting does make the meeting we had, they really value there volunteers like we do. They seem similar to us. They have in my opinion to have similar culture. I would welcome that feedback and to hear the

thoughts. If we were going to do this right, we have to have options. They are similar size. They are a close neighbor. Where we differ is in the timing of how we do this. With the path we are going down. I just wanted to say thank you to the volunteers for what you do. The fact that you show up all times, day and night, and I had your pager for six weeks. It did go off at night. I can appreciate when you are responding and what you're responding to. I heard every one of them. That is where I'm at with this. I would hope that whether tonight or another meeting, that we really need to look at the shared services agreement in addition to possibly exploring the admin as well.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: I appreciate the conversation. I think you're saying very good things. I do not have a specific disagreement. I do think that we should always be looking at potential alternatives. Moving forward, I actually tend to agree with, in terms of again, exploring all of the alternatives and everything that you have all set, I want to make a comment. I really appreciate the interest in wanting to get to closer, I think I heard the word, get this done. We owe it to the community. But, I want to echo what Councilmember McLewis indicated. And that, the City Council recent support has really strengthened and inspired the department over the last nine months. We have built up a volunteer roster. We have well trained and well-equipped volunteers. We are dealing with the need to replace apartheid. We do have a strategy that we can move forward on with regards to the fire station. These actions are helping to ensure the success regardless of whether you remain independent, or move forward with consolidation. Again, I think the main goal here should be to continue to strengthen it to meet the current demand and align with the department and neighboring churches jurisdictions industry standards. We have outlined a path or some recommendations that will help us to move forward with that. We are exploring the option. I would offer that there is a plan. A path to success, if you're really going to move forward with consolidation. I'm not going into the weeds. There are a lot of nuances that you are off track on with regards to getting to success. There is a specific path that I've exercised for so many years. I just would hope that as we move forward, I begin to examine what those components look like. I will comment on why we couldn't come to consensus at the ad hoc committee level. I don't think we were all in agreement on what the common interests are they were trying to accomplish. You hear loud and clear, we need to fix our staffing issue. We need to take care of our response times and make sure a fire truck is out the door. I get that. There's no disagreement. But I think there are a lot of other interests that need to be flushed out, and we need to kind to consensus on in terms of things like, what is the common interest with regard to governance. What is the common interest in terms of greater efficiencies? What are the common intraspecific to economy and scale? Until we can really identify those interests, that only then, can we identify the options and measure those options against how they are going to meet a specific interest. Again, it's a process. Fundamentally, I agree with all of the comments.

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I love this idea of multiple tracks going on. I think it's a useful process. I'm being asked to give direction on ideas that I don't have enough information about. This is something I have heard from you occasionally, Councilmember McLewis. My preference would be to request information be brought back to the City Council on whether Gold Ridge or Graton would be the best entity for the City Council to support. I'm not in that position. The idea of having more information from Graton so the ad hoc could provide us with a specific comparison of Gold Ridge versus Graton -- I would bet that is a mission that this ad hoc could come to agreement on the terms of which direction be best given knowledge of volunteers et cetera. I would love to see a report in a month. I'm personally not at this point convinced that one or the others the right path for this fire department. I see Chief Piccinini nodding his head. I would like specific information back on the focus question. And in terms of the other ideas, joint power authority, pursuing that in a simultaneous path, the limited contract for shared services, pursuing that. And then, the administrative services contract, these are terms that for the moment to be, do not mean much. I don't have enough information. I would like to see more information on this two potential annexing entities and would like to know more perhaps right now about these other options that I'm hearing here.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: I want to clarify, in no way did I think we were making a decision or you would be granted the ad hoc committee to move forward into a contract for shared services. It's really just a direction. We are seeing to be provided and that we would bring back the details. The contract for services would be a contract to provide administrative services to Sebastopol by another entity, possibly, or shared volunteer services. Basically we would need to flush that out. We are asking for authorization to sign the contract. We are asking for authorization to try and flush it out.

Interim Chief Piccinini commented on shared services agreements. I'm giving examples only to illustrate. We don't know whether or not the agencies would be comparable. As examples, we could have a volunteer system where the volunteers cross the boundaries and go to the different stations. We do not have a water tender, Gold Ridge does. It is possible that maybe two volunteers go up there and get their water tender to the fire. The battalion chief coverage was also brought up. We've duty captains. Over the weekend, maybe we somehow negotiate the crossover between those captains and battalion coverage. Even down to contract for shared services specific to administrative functions. Those are very specific examples of some contracts where it's for a specific item versus a contract where again, the option there is, if you just want an outside agency to come in and take over, that's a harsh word, but deliver your fire and emergency response by way of a contract, that is a different thing. There are two different things. If your interest is to continue to investigate, consolidation, I agree. We should identify the interesting go to these agencies, whatever they are, and start holding conversations about what kind of leverage can we get from consolidating with you specific to an interest that we have? And then, we begin to narrow down. We give you the information. We began to again, get the devil in the details to bubble up. Then we can decide, after all of the work we have done, Gold Ridge is good that Sonoma County is a good or quite frankly, consolidation is not a good fit for us. Let's not lose sight. And so, those are your options. If are going to tell say on the topic, then you begin to say great, let's initiate with fill in the blank and get that process going. Nobody should ever be surprised as we move forward in this process. Because of somebody's surprise, is a different emotion. It is an emotional bit already. You're hearing it from the community. You heard it from a volunteer. But, if we follow process, then we can still have a place where there can be disagreement. But, we are not adding the emotional component of being surprised, this is being forced on us. Which is a different emotion that is very difficult to manage and overcome. We've got to make sure that that path. And whether it's accepted or not, those are the steps that I have successfully used.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: It looks like what I am hearing is that we are going to continue talks with our neighboring fire districts of Gold Ridge and Graton. And we have authorization to explore how we could benefit if we teamed up. Within the department. We have discussed basically sooner versus later, to enter into limited contracts for shared services including sharing volunteers, battalion chief coverage, and possibly administrative functions. With either both or one, or one or the other. Then there's a possibility of JPA that we should flush out.

Vice Mayor Rich commented what is the advantage? Why would we look into that?

Interim Chief Piccinini commented as follows: It's an option. Based on the principle that we should research it and look at it. We can. I would submit, it is not an option that leverages any advantages to us, quite frankly. We can certainly move forward. The one advantage to a JPA, is that you get to test drive the potential consolidation. And matrix offer you an example in Texas, where they said, sometimes you want to date before you get married. I believe I have that purports here somewhere. Where the two agencies operated under the framework of a JPA for almost three years and decided it was not a right fit. And, they split up. JPA probably is actually a potential good option if you did want to consider test driving before you buy.

City Manager/Attorney McLaughlin commented as follows: I was involved in the one earlier. That was a situation where both agencies had specific needs that will be addressed through the process. I tend to agree. We are probably not looking to for a JPA. It's not there. However, I agree there are ways to explore consolidation if you wanted. So the idea of directing the ad hoc to look into which entity would be the best to consider a consolidation with? And then also, look into the administrative oversight agreement option. The limited contract for shared services. That is my question. Do you have any input on that? To direct them to look at those items?

Vice Mayor Rich commented as follows: I think all of them should be explored. I just want to make the comment to the public in general. I think this has been emphasized by the ad hoc committee members. Consolidation is not a done deal here. This is investigating options as chief pointed out. Identifying the various options. And inform yourself. But the bottom line, the final decision for my individual perspective has not been made until we get the information. Also, we want to flush out costs to stay independent.

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: This is a lot of information. There's no way we can have all of that in a month. I want to manage the expectation. I cannot say we cannot report back to having a final report in a month, it is tough to get with all the fire department and not just one person. But the meeting with the board. It is multiple people we are trying to coordinate with.

Councilmember Zollman commented as follows: Can we prioritize which one? I know that's a lot of work. I do like reporting back on a monthly basis. Can we prioritize?

Mayor Hinton commented as follows: We can get those set and give you updates. As best we can. A lot of times we don't get to our reports. If we don't get to the report, we can do a monthly status report.

The Council was in consensus for the following:

- Continuation of the ad hoc committee
- Priority: Shared Services Contract (volunteers/battalion chief coverage/administrative functions)
- Additional information on :
 - JPA
 - MSR
 - Administrative Oversight agreement
- Report back to City Council Monthly
- Additional information/talks with neighboring departments of Gold Ridge/Graton Decide which one is a better culture fit
- Fine tune budget numbers (with or without fire tax)

City Council Action: None taken. Council provided direction to the Fire Ad Hoc Committee for additional information.

Minute Order Number: 2023-209

ADJOURNMENT OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING

September 26, 2023 Meeting will be adjourned to the Regular City Council Meeting of October 2, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

October 2, 2023 Closed Session will be adjourned to the Regular City Council Meeting of October 3, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

Mayor Hinton adjourned the meeting of September 26, 2023 at 9:41 pm to the City Council Closed Session Meeting of October 2, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,


Mary C. Gourley
Assistant City Manager/City Clerk