

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [City Council](#); [Mary Gourley](#)  
**Subject:** Budget Question for For Fire Services Meeting - Public Comment  
**Date:** Monday, September 25, 2023 1:33:53 PM

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Dear Council Members and Fire Service Ad Hoc Committee,

I have one question regarding the Fire Service:

1) 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.

Sebastopol's Fire Department has been underfunded for the last decade and only accounts for less than 11% of the general fund. This is atypical as Fire Service usually accounts for 20-25% of a City's budget.

Currently, our Fire Department needs substantial investment in equipment, more staff and money to renovate the fire station.

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.

We are in a current budget deficit and radical underfunding of all City Services because past Council did not prioritize City services, City infrastructure and City revenue.

Property owners pay property taxes with the understanding that basic City Services such as fire, police, water, sewer, sidewalks and parks are prioritized in the budget. Previous Council did not prioritize these basic and critical services. We need to make sure that future Councils uphold their fiduciary duty to fund vital, foundational City services with tax money. Previous Council was derelict in their fiduciary duties and therefore current citizens are left with many critical infrastructure and services that are in extremely poor condition (such as our roads) or staffed at minimal levels (such as police and fire departments). The City Budget should be fully funding core basic service before any funding any other Council interests.

Thank you,  
Kate Haug