

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Diana Rich](#); [Stephen Zollman](#); [Neysa Hinton](#); [Sandra Maurer](#); [Jill McLewis](#); [Don Schwartz](#); [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Sebastopol Senior Center
Date: Thursday, March 7, 2024 8:24:19 AM

Good morning:

I understand that the City of Sebastopol faces a huge budget shortage, and that painful cuts must be made. But I learned, with dismay, that the Sebastopol Senior Center is on the chopping block, and that proposals are being made to slash its support to *zero*.

Really??? It's not like there are many (or even any) similar programs; especially those serving Sebastopol and the West County. In fact, the Senior Center's traffic (some 21,000 visits in the last year alone, I understand) indicates that it provides a wide-reaching, invaluable series of services (not just one program!) to seniors who need all kinds of support; from connecting volunteer drivers to seniors with medical appointments who reside in rural places where public transit is non-existent to providing delicious, affordable meals at the Center for seniors who otherwise might snack on a box of crackers without company at home, alone.

Sebastopol is made up of over 30% people over the age of 60. This statistic doesn't begin to address Sonoma County's aging population—those who are approaching sixty who depend on and increasingly need the Senior Center's many invaluable services.

I did caretaking for my elderly husband for over a decade. The Center helped us with volunteer drivers to bring him to some of his many appointments, and we participated in their meal program (until he became bedridden) for not just nourishing food, but getting out of the house and enjoying company, both of which helped him want to eat.

The Center is a vital part of the community and a force in helping seniors remain healthy, active, and engaged in the community rather than isolated and struggling to find support resources. I don't know how we'd have managed without them.

I feel strongly that the Center deserves ongoing support rather than less, or nothing. Were it to struggle or close, Sebastopol's senior community would be heavily impacted and would be forced to rely on the few public assistance programs available, likely overwhelming programs already seeing increased volume as Sebastopol's community ages.

Why not cut support for children's meals, or transport to school? Oh, that's politically incorrect??? Well, so is cutting services to an equally needy population which resides at the other end of the age scale.

Cutting support to the Senior Center would be a huge blow to elders already facing the rigors of aging and income limitations. Let's consider cuts which do not pinpoint vulnerable community members who already have few resources to call upon.

Slashing support to children and elders is not just bad fiscal management. It's morally and ethically reprehensible.

Sincerely,

Diane Donovan

Age 68, and counting upwards...