

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
 AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: March 19, 2024

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Kari Svanstrom, Planning Director
Subject: Annual Peace Wall Honorees

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends the Council accept the Peace Wall Honorees as nominated by the Sebastopol Living Peace Wall Selection Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Sebastopol Living Peace Wall began in 2015 and involves honoring selected individuals for their commitment towards peace. It is located on city property across from the Town Plaza, at the southeast corner of McKinley Avenue and Petaluma Avenue. Per Mr. Ghilotti, the founder of the Living Peace Wall, "In a nutshell, the purpose of the Living Peace Wall is to promote the cause of peace and justice by honoring the peacemakers among us. The item tonight is to review the nominees and approve their names to be inscribed on the Peace Wall.

BACKGROUND:

Each year, a selection committee convenes a meeting to review and provide nominations for the City Council to consider for addition to the Peace Wall Monument. The persons proposed to be honored on the Peace Wall are required to be reviewed by the City Council, since the Wall is located on public property. Upon Council approval their names will be inscribed onto the Living Peace Wall and added to the roll of honorees on the Peace Wall website, www.sebastopolivingpeacewall.com.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The Sebastopol Living Peace Wall Selection Committee was convened on February 1, 2024. This item brought forward by the Sebastopol Living Peace Wall Selection Committee is to review the nominees and approve their names to be inscribed on the Peace Wall. The committee members present were: Michael Gillotti, Chairman, Alice Waco from the Sonoma County Peace and Justice Center, Stephen Zollman, Charles Prickett. Alecia Sanchez. After a thorough review and discussion of the nominees, the following four persons were selected to be honored:

1. Bob Alpern
2. Steve Einstein
3. Carole Ellis
4. David Walls
5. Alternate, Gerry Condon (should one of the above four decline their nomination)

The attached submittal provides information about each proposed honoree.

Upon Council approval their names will be inscribed onto the Living Peace Wall and added to the roll of honorees on the peace wall web site, www.sebastopolivingpeacewall.com.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item. The Living Peace Wall Committee covers all associated costs with the ceremony and engraving.

OPTIONS: If the City Council does not approve the Peace Wall Honorees as submitted, the Council can:

1. Approve some but not all of the nominees, and provide direction to the committee as to whether to proceed with those approved or to provide further nominations; or
2. Decline to approve nominees, and provide direction to the Committee regarding nominations.

If the Council chooses to discuss Option Number 1 or 2 above, the item will need to be pulled from the consent calendar for discussion.

ATTACHMENTS:

Proposed Peace Wall Honorees

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Approval Date: 3/6/2024

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: 3/6/2024

The proposed action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Administrative Services (Financial) Approval Date: _____

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Account Code (f applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 3/7/2024

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 3/7/2024

2/8/24

The City of Sebastopol

Att: Kara Svanstrom

ksvanstrom@cityofsebastopol.org

RE: Sebastopol Living Peace Wall
2024 Honorees

The Sebastopol Living Peace Wall Selection Committee was convened on February 1, 2024. The committee members present were: Michael Gillotti, Chairman, Alice Waco from the Sonoma County Peace and Justice Center, Stephen Zollman, Charles Prickett, Alecia Sanchez.

After a thorough review and discussion of the nominees, the following four persons were selected to be honored. Upon your approval their names will be inscribed onto the Living Peace Wall and added to the roll of honorees on the peace wall web site, www.sebastopolivingpeacewall.com.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support in promoting the cause of peace and justice by honoring those who have dedicated their lives to this cause.

Sincerely,
Michael Gillotti, Chairman
Sebastopol Living Peace Wall Committee
magill@sonic.net
707 481 3742

1. Bob Alpern
2. Steve Einstein
3. Carole Ellis
4. David Walls
5. Alternate, Gerry Condon

BIOS:

1. Bob Alpern

After the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, Bob came an active member of SANE, which was an advocate for banning nuclear testing and for nuclear disarmament. Later, during the Vietnam War, he joined Father Philip Berrigan and the Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission opposing the war.

From 1975 to 1995 he served as Director of the Unitarian Universalist Association Washington Office of Social Justice as a lobbyist to Congress. There he worked to normalize Israeli-Palestinian relations and advocated for Palestinian statehood.

Finally, from 2014 to 2018, Bob participated in four non-violent direct actions at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory to protest its nuclear research for developing new nuclear weapons.

2. Steve Einstein

Soon after the attack by Hamas on Israel, Steve was so appalled and shocked by the death of so many on both sides, he felt the need to gather people together to mourn the loss of all lives lost. So he initiated the Sebastopol Peace Vigil, a non-partisan effort meant as a means to express solidarity with all victims of the violence, as a way to support each other during this distressing period. No speeches or ranting, just standing in silence at the Living Peace Wall site. In addition for the past 20 years Steve has regularly help facilitate in the Friday noon peace vigils at Sebastopol's main intersection.

Steve was born in the U.S. but spent 10 years living in Israel. While there, he worked with Palestinians to find common ground. He continues this effort by visiting local schools with his Palestinian American friend where they attempt to explain both the Palestinian and Israeli perspectives around this complex conflict, while trying to create a vision for coexistence and mutual respect..

3. Carole Ellis

Carole was an activist and educator who taught at several Santa Rosa elementary schools and was principal at Ursuline High School. Ms. Ellis was just 16 when she graduated from high school in her hometown of Jacksonville, Florida. She was studying at the historically Black Tuskegee University of Alabama in 1956 when she first met civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. She

shared later, “I worked with him during my adult life, so I decided for his birthday, I wanted to do something special.”

In 1981, she and her pastor, the Rev. James E. Coffee of Santa Rosa’s Community Baptist Church, along with west Sonoma County peace and justice activist Mary Moore, founded the first MLK Jr. birthday celebration in Sonoma County. This preceded his birthday becoming a national holiday.

All her life, Ms. Ellis worked to demonstrate that what people have in common is greater than what makes them different. Through her love and kindness she helped others find that common ground

4. David Walls

David started his activism in the coal mining region of Appalachian where he helped organized campaigns for welfare rights, workmen’s compensation for Black Lung disease victims and in opposition to strip mining in coal communities in Kentucky and West Virginia. He later completed his Ph.D in Sociology at the University of Kentucky and helped establish the Univ. of Kentucky Appalachian Center and interdisciplinary Appalachian Studies program from 1974 - 1981.

As a Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Sonoma State he continued his approach as an “activist academic”, organizing a three day Labor and Social Action Summer School and was one of the founders of the Sonoma County North Bay Organizing Project, a grassroots, multiracial, and multi- issue organization comprised of 22 faith, labor, environmental, immigrant and community-based organizations.

Wall’s last publication, community Organizing: Fanning the Flame of Democracy 2015, was based upon his scholarship and direct participation in social movements.

5. Alternate: Gerry Condon

While training as an Army Special Forces medic in 1968, Gerry refused orders to deploy to Vietnam and began speaking out against the war and the draft. He escaped from Fort Bragg N. Carolina and fled to Montreal, Canada. In 1969 he was court martialled and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor and a Dishonorable Discharge. He then fled to Stockholm, Sweden and, a few years later moved back to Canada.

In 1977, Jimmy Carters first act as president was to pardon draft resisters. When Gerry returned to the U.S., he organized two Veterans for Peace delegations to Nicaragua opposing Reagan’s support for the “Contras”, who, at that point had killed 50,000 Nicaraguans. He later coordinated a Veteran’s Peace Convoy to Nicaragua with 39 trucks of humanitarian aid.

He became an active member of Veterans for Peace and served as President of Greater Seattle Veterans for Peace 2007-2009 and later served on the Board of Directors of Veterans for Peace, 2012-2020. His involvement in Veterans for Peace continues to this day.