

Dear Don Schwartz,

Happy 2024 and welcome to Sebastopol. As an active community member, I am excited to have you working for our City.

I have been attending City Council meetings regularly since 2020. All of my written public comments are available as part of the public record.

As a citizen, I would love to see the City turns its attention and resources toward a few key City functions.

1) Water and Sewer:

- a. The City oversees and manages the infrastructure for water and sewer. I would like to see a comprehensive list of the water and sewer infrastructure in terms of replacement and costs timeline.
- b. I would like to see the allocation of General Fund costs to the Water and Sewer funds revisited so they meet Prop. 218 compliance. Currently the Finance Department allocates \$1,003,261 of their \$1,401,180 budget (71% of their total budget) to water and sewer. Page 73 of 2023/2024 budget.

2) Public Spaces:

- a. The City has many great community amenities and public spaces such as Ives Park, the Town Square, Libby Park, Tomogachi Park. I urge you to visit all of our public spaces and take note of their condition and needs. Many of the spaces could be made much more attractive with simple, low cost upgrades. Ives Park needs new fencing and ADA compliant paving. Walter Libby Park needs new fencing. I urge you to work with Public Works to identify “low hanging fruit” to upgrade our parks.
- b. The City’s roads are in “poor” condition according to the MTC. I urge you to walk on Washington Street where the road turns to rubble and on First Street and Leland and other areas of high pavement need. I would like to see a pavement plan enacted to address the urgent need of Sebastopol’s roads:
https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/PCI_table-2021_data.pdf
- c. The City has many sidewalks that are in disrepair and not contiguous. I would like to see a plan to improve pedestrian access and safety by making sure that sidewalks do not have tripping hazards and sidewalks are made contiguous where possible. For instance, Palm Avenue has two large crosswalks at Main Streets and Petaluma Avenue. Yet, there is no contiguous sidewalk on the half block of Palm between the two crosswalks, making it not safe for pedestrians. I ask you to look at this section and fund sidewalks. I would ask that the City do a sidewalk survey and ask Citizens to map out sidewalk areas that could be improved and connected.

3) Commercial Spaces and Local Businesses

- a. The City has a very hard working small business community. Yet, the City has not been a good partner with our local businesses and often implements policies and

programs that actively harm the business community. The loss of the only downtown hotel is one example. Limiting the washing of storefronts is another example. I hope the City will take a more active role with supporting our business community by having business owners and the Chamber regularly present at Council meetings. It would be wonderful if business owners and the Chamber gave monthly 10 minute reports and updates to the Council regarding the state of Main Street.

- b. The City needs to support local business by keeping commercial areas clean and tidy. Main Street could be vastly improved by simply removing stickers, graffiti, trash and old news stand boxes. Keeping commercial areas and parking lots clean and attractive will help support our local businesses and our town. I urge you to regularly walk Main Street and Sebastopol's commercial corridors. Please talk to our business owners and see how things are going for them. Let them know the City cares.
 - c. Better partnerships with commercial landlords should be developed to avoid blight and squatters on commercial lots. I have been in contact with several land owners of lots in Sebastopol to encourage them to be good community partners by keeping their property free of garbage and illegal squatters. I believe the City can form better partnerships with commercial landlords. Many are LLCs and do not have direct tie to Sebastopol and thus need to be informed on the condition of their properties and the City's expectations. If landlords don't comply, I suggest the City institute fines for blight as poor and unsightly conditions impact all the businesses. In addition, illegal squatters posed health and safety issues in regard to trash, fire and human waste.
- 4) Essential City Services
- a. Fire Department: As you are aware, the fire department has been chronically underfunded and is now in a transitional moment. Whatever direction the structure of the fire department takes, I hope the City keeps fire service at the forefront of its focus as this is a crucial function of any city.
 - b. Police Department: The Police Department has also been underfunded for at least a decade. Currently, we need more police presence after school as there is a huge influx of Analy High School students each school day. There have been fights, muggings and drug dealing, which could be curtailed if there was a police presence, letting students know that there are adults around who will intervene to preserve their health and safety. In addition, many store owners are dealing with an increase of shoplifting, which is detrimental to small businesses.
 - c. Public Works: The Public Works department has had a significant work load increase due to the increased amount of homeless people in Sebastopol. Sebastopol has the highest per capita number in Sonoma County of homeless people and also homeless beds and services. I would ask that you meet with the Public Works Department to see how much of their time is spent on cleaning and repairing public space that has been impacted by homeless people. The City should be getting reimbursed for this amount due to the fact that we lost the income from the hotel and Supervisor Hopkins uses Sebastopol as a site to dump

homeless people and projects. She places homeless people here but the City ends up paying for increased levels of service from all City Departments including Police, Fire, Public Works, Planning and Council.

5) Focus of City Staff Time on Essential Services

- a. Currently, staff time is taken up by work that is not within the scope of essential City Services, which overburdens staff and makes the City less efficient at delivering core services. As a person who has observed the City Staff and Council hundreds of hours on non-essential services, I would make the following recommendations:
 - i. Climate Action Committee be transferred to a County wide endeavor, not staffed by City of Sebastopol staff. Outside of Council, this committee only has one Sebastopol resident. While the mission of this Committee is admirable, it needs to be a countywide effort as Sebastopol is less than 2 square miles within a much larger district and County. If Council members want to volunteer for this Committee, they could do so as private citizens.
 - ii. Public Arts Committee should be dissolved and remaining funds should be set aside for the maintenance of current pieces and completion of Ives Sculpture garden. As Sebastopol has a major budget deficit, it does not have the ability to maintain a public arts collection, which require regular maintenance and upkeep. To this effect, the PAC has not even been able to install the Ned Khan artwork, which cost over \$40,000 and has been in discussion for over 3 years. Public Arts Committee volunteers should be directed toward the Sebastopol Arts Center or the Community Cultural Center. In addition, the developer fee associated with the PAC should be eliminated as well. If the developer fee continues, it should be directed toward park maintenance and upgrades such as much needed fencing and walkway repairs.
 - iii. Library Ad Hoc Committee should be a county wide committee as the Library is a County Organization. We should not be spending staff time on the library if it is funded by the County.
 - iv. Homeless Liaison should be eliminated. Sebastopol has spent an extraordinary amount of resources, Staff and Council time on homeless services including paying for an outreach coordinator, having staff spend time on homeless issues and Council spending at least 1000 hours on homeless issues. Sebastopol is too small and too under resourced to solve the billion dollar problem of homelessness. Sebastopol should work with County programs to help move people off the streets of Sebastopol and into County funded programs.
 - v. I would suggest a review of committees and eliminate those which do not directly address water, sewer, roads, parks, sidewalks, fire and police.
- b. Planning Department should be focused on business licenses, working with developers to build a hotel, market rate and moderate rate family housing, creating a short-term vacation rental policy that preserves housing. Sebastopol

was lucky to have Head West Marketplace at the Barlow. This event brings thousands of visitors to Sebastopol without any work or advertising need by the City. There was a problem with the Planning Department getting the vendors licenses. This should have been a straightforward process as we already have the farmer's market and Head West exists in several Californian cities. I would suggest that short term rentals be based on lottery and every address should be able to rent out their house for 4 out of 20 years and that the rental provision last the entire 20 year period regardless of ownership transfer. The lottery should be open to 1% of the total housing units and not be permissible in multi-unit buildings or duplexes. The Planning Department is often asked to do work outside of a traditional planning department. The focus and scope of the Planning Department should be reviewed toward its essential function.

- c. City needs moderate and market rate family housing. The City has more extremely low and low income housing than what is necessary per the RHNA numbers. The RHNA numbers represent a balanced economy which is why there are housing targets in each category. We need to develop housing for families, which are leaving the County and are crucial for economic and social viability. We need moderate rate and market rate housing for families as a priority. I would suggest any development that has over 9 units be required to have at least 30% family housing (3/4 bedroom, 2 baths, parking) at either moderate or market rate. Many of family sized homes are occupied by retired people. They do not move because of high interest rates and Prop. 13 benefits.
- 6) Focus Council Meetings on Essential Services
- a. All departments including fire, police, public works, planning, water and sewer, engineering, and parks should be giving quarterly 15 minute public updates in regards to issues, progress on goals, staffing needs, and quarterly targets. Citizens do not hear enough from our department heads to know what their goals are and if they are being met.
 - b. Quarterly infrastructure updates would be helpful in terms of water and sewer, roads, capital improvements in parks, and other major infrastructure.
 - c. Council and the public should hear monthly from our business community and nonprofits. The public should hear from business owners, the chamber and nonprofit directors on a regular basis to hear about events and how to support businesses and local nonprofits.
 - d. Council Meetings often get hijacked by activists who use Sebastopol to fortify their specific causes which have no relevance to the essential services of the City. Many Council hours have been spent on "cause du jour" issues that do not relate to residents and business owners. Meetings should be focused on essential City Services.
- 7) Homeless Services and Accommodations
- a. Sebastopol has the highest number of homeless beds (Park Village, Horizon Shine, Elderberry Commons, Sebastopol Community Church) per capita of any city within Sonoma County (possibly within California). The City has taken on far

too much in terms of homeless services and accommodations given the City's size and budget.

- b. Sebastopol has also spent an inordinate amount of staff and Council time on homeless issues.
- c. Due to an increase of the homeless population that are housed here and are drawn here by a variety of free meals, showers, and laundry, there is a significant impact on our Police, Fire and Public Works departments. It would be fair to say that police and public works probably spend at least 20% of their time on homeless related work. In recent years, there were several fires started by homeless people. This is a huge drain on the very small City budget. It would be safe to assume that at over \$1,000,000 is spent on homeless related issues that are addressed by Sebastopol's Fire, Police, and Public Works Departments. I would ask that you get exact figures from each department head.
- d. When the land for Park Village was purchased, it was supposed to be a public park. Without any vote, Council decided to let it remain as extremely low/ homeless housing. Currently, the citizens of Sebastopol pay the mortgage, insurance, repairs and other costs associated with Park Village. West Community County Services runs Park Village and collects rent from residents. Given the fact that Sebastopol is in a budget crisis and has declared a fiscal emergency and WCCS is a nonprofit that can collect donations from across the state, it seems that Sebastopol should not be using its limited revenue to fund this housing project which has zero public access. It seems somewhat fraudulent that citizens were told that they were buying a park and ended up funding a housing project.
- e. ACLU lawsuit. As you are aware, Sebastopol is being sued by 4 individuals and one nonprofit. They are being represented by the ACLU. The ACLU is not a plaintiff. The ACLU is an organization with over \$200,000,000 in revenue and teams of ambitious, well-educated attorneys. Sebastopol will never be able to fight the ACLU in court. I have been following this issue closely for the last 4 years. Sebastopol should look to Sausalito who settled with Plaintiffs as a model. <https://pacificsun.com/sausalito-settles-with-homeless-union/>

In closing, I hope that the City and Council starts to focus on the needs of citizens and business owners rather than niche groups and outside interests. When I pay my property tax bill, I want to see the money going toward water, sewer, roads, sidewalks, parks, fire, police and public works. Sebastopol is a very small town with and very small budget and extremely limited revenue sources. The City Staff and Council should be squarely focused on the basics. Sebastopol has a lot of wonderful amenities and could really shine as a town if the City concentrated on vital services.

Welcome to Sebastopol!

Best,
Kate Haug