

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Mary Gourley](#); [Don Schwartz](#); [REDACTED]; [Katie Davis](#)
Subject: Include the Sebastopol Area Senior Center in your budget
Date: Thursday, March 7, 2024 10:03:33 AM

Hello Diana, Stephen, Neysa, Sandra, and Jill:

I am writing to you as both a local business person that serves almost exclusively seniors and as a Sebastopol city resident who cares about social services for our community. I to urge you to include the modest funding requested by the Sebastopol Area Senior Center in your budget.

The Sebastopol Senior Center is the flagship social services program in the City of Sebastopol. It is open daily, provides meals, classes, activities and rides to the significant senior population that Sebastopol serves. Each of these programs has a scholarship and/or low-income option available. While the real estate in Sebastopol continues to get more valuable, we know that many of our seniors that reside in and around Sebastopol live on a fixed income and have limited resources to meet their daily needs. The Senior Center helps fill in some of the gaps.

As a board member of the Senior Center, I greatly appreciate that the City of Sebastopol has provided funds to the Senior Center in the past. We recognize that Sebastopol has a budget shortfall. We intentionally made our grant request to the City in a lower amount than years past to take into account the City's budget challenges. We are trying to continue a long-standing relationship and partnership with the City of Sebastopol. While the City owns the building that houses the Senior Center, we independently fundraised and borrowed the \$1M necessary to remodel the building into the gem it is for the community today. The other senior centers in Sonoma County receive a significant portion of their funding directly from their city budgets (upwards of \$500,000 a year). We have not ever sought that level of City support.

Trying to balance the budget at the expense of supporting a vital local non-profit is shortsighted. It also seems out of touch with the significant senior population in the City. Sebastopol is 30% people over age 60.

In my practice, I spend the majority of my days working with families who are struggling to find support for an aging parent that would like to remain in their treasured Sebastopol home. They cannot do that safely without significant support. The Senior Center is one of the places that families can turn for support. I think that the City of Sebastopol is a place that seniors want to continue to "age in place" because of amenities like the Senior Center.

I hope that when you think about the kind of city Sebastopol wants to be and what you want to be providing for the citizens here, you will acknowledge that services for seniors is a top priority. To that end, I strongly encourage you to include funding for the Senior Center as a

line-item in your budget. It is a valuable partnership for the City and the Senior Center and we would love for it to continue.

Sincerely,

Tate Birnie (she/her)
Birnie Law Office, Inc.

[REDACTED]

Sebastopol, CA 95472

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]