



March 18, 2024

Dear Sebastopol City Council:

It has come to our attention you have been inundated with letters from our Senior Center Members concerning the proposed cutting of our funding to zero. While we are pleased to be recognized as such a valuable resource by our members, we understand that undue pressure is being put on the City Council at a time of fiscal crisis.

Budget shortfalls are not something any organization serving a community wants to contend with. We realize that many of our members are under the impression the lack of funding from the City will close the Senior Center. This is not the case. The requested amount of \$38K is a small but significant part of our overall budget, which is made up of many small dollar amounts. In the absence of City funding support, we will need to either work to make up the amount through other sources or make cuts. We run a very lean organization with a very limited paid staff and 150 volunteers.

Even though we are an independent entity, we are in fact, a part of Sebastopol, serving over 30% of the population; we save the City close to \$500K a year if comparable city senior centers' budgets are considered. Some council members point to the existing lease for the building set at \$1 per year, however, fail to acknowledge the building was gifted to the City with stipulations it would be used as a Senior Center. It is also worth noting the Center raised over \$1.4 million to refurbish the original building and another \$150K to establish a commercial kitchen that is available to others for use.

We want the City to feel strongly enough about the value of the services we provide, and the community we serve, to consider us essential. We also want the City to understand we need a financially healthy City as our home.

We ask the City Council to allow us to work together in coming up with a solution that helps alleviate the City's budget shortfall and at the same time, shows the City's commitment to our Center. You might be surprised at what potential solutions might be considered from a Board of Directors made up of current and retired business leaders from companies such as AT&T, Oracle, Cisco and Google.

With Respect,

Gary Bachelor
Board President
On behalf of Sebastopol Area Senior Center, Board of Directors

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