

City Council
Mayor Stephen Zollman
Vice Mayor Jill McLewis
Councilmember Phill Carter
Councilmember Neysa Hinton
Councilmember Sandra Maurer



City of Sebastopol

Agenda Item Number: 3
Interim City Manager
Mary Gourley
mgourley@Cityofsebastopol.gov

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MINUTES FOR CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING –MEETING OF August 26, 2025

As Approved by the City Council at their regular meeting of September 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Zollman called the meeting to order 6:00 pm

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Stephen Zollman
Vice Mayor McLewis
Councilmember Phill Carter
Councilmember Neysa Hinton
Councilmember Sandra Maurer

Absent: None
Staff: Interim City Manager Mary Gourley
City Attorney Alex Mog

SALUTE TO THE FLAG : Mayor Zollman led the salute to the flag.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION UNDER AB 2449 (IF NEEDED): To consider and take action on any request from a Council Member to participate in a meeting remotely due to Just Cause or Emergency Circumstances pursuant to AB 2449 (Government Code Section 549539(f)). Assembly Bill 2302 (2024) ("AB 2302") revises rules for when members of local legislative bodies may participate in meetings remotely. Specifically, it amends the number of meetings that may be attended remotely for just cause and under emergency circumstances and clarifies the definition of the term "meeting," for purposes of remote attendance. AB 2302 caps the number of remote meetings a member can attend each year based on the frequency of a legislative body's meetings: Five meetings per year for those meeting twice a month.

STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Conflicts of interest may arise in situations where a public official deliberating towards a decision, has an actual or potential financial interest in the matter before the Council. In accordance with state law, an actual conflict of interest is one that would be to the private financial benefit of a public official, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A potential conflict of interest is one that could be to the private financial benefit of a Councilmember, a relative or a business with which the Councilmember is associated. A Councilmember must publicly announce potential and actual conflicts of interest, and, in the case of actual conflict of interest, must refrain from participating in debate on the issue or from voting on the issue and must remove themselves from the dais.

Vice Mayor McLewis stated she had a conflict of interest with Item Number 1 on the agenda and would be abstaining from the vote.

REGULAR CALENDAR AGENDA ITEMS (DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION):

1. Consideration of Request from Vice Mayor McLewis for Excused Absence. Approval of Resolution would approve the absences for Vice Mayor McLewis due to medical reasons. This resolution will authorize the Vice Mayor's continued service despite exceeding the 60-day consecutive absence limit outlined in Government Code section 36513 which states: A councilmember's office becomes vacant if they are absent for 60 consecutive days without permission.

Responsible Department: City Attorney/Interim City Manager

Fiscal Impact: There is no fiscal impact with approval of this item.

Interim City Manager Gourley presented the agenda item recommending the City Council consider the request from Vice Mayor McLewis for excused absence. Approval of Resolution would approve the absences for Vice Mayor McLewis due to medical reasons. This resolution will authorize the Vice Mayor's continued service despite exceeding the 60-day consecutive absence limit outlined in Government Code section 36513 which states: A councilmember's office becomes vacant if they are absent for 60 consecutive days without permission.

Mayor Zollman asked for questions of the requestor and/or staff. Council asked various questions of staff.

Vice Mayor McLewis read a prepared statement.

Mayor Zollman opened the public comment. The following member(s) of the public provided public comment:

- Steve
- Linda
- Rick
- Mary
- Oliver
- Philena
- Tessa
- Robert
- Brian
- Alexa
- Angelika
- Sam

City Council Discussion/Deliberations/Direction:

The Council further discussed the request.

MOTION:

Mayor Zollman moved and Councilmember Carter seconded the motion to approve the resolution authorizing excused absences for Vice Mayor McLewis due to medical reasons, consistent with Government Code Section 36513 with the following amendment:

Removal of September 2 and September 16th dates from the resolution

Mayor Zollman called for a roll call vote. City staff conducted a roll call vote.

VOTE:

Ayes:	Councilmembers Carter, Hinton, Maurer and Mayor Zollman
Noes:	None
Absent:	None
Abstain:	Vice Mayor McLewis

City Council Action: Approved resolution authorizing excused absences for Vice Mayor McLewis due to medical reasons, consistent with Government Code Section 36513.

Minute Order Number: 2025-254

Resolution Number: 6692-2025

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR CLOSED SESSION AGENDA ITEM:

This public comment time is provided for members of the public to address the City Council regarding matters of municipal concern for the item listed below (maximum of three minutes per speaker) prior to adjournment into Closed Session.

There was none.

City Council Adjourn Into Closed Session on the Following Matter(s):

Mayor Zollman adjourned the open session meeting into the closed session at 6:25 pm.

City Council Adjourn Into Closed Session on the Following Matter(s):

CLOSED SESSION AGENDA ITEM(S):

2. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNCIL - ANTICIPATED LITIGATION

One (1) Case

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2)

City Council Action: Unanimous vote to approve resignation agreement.

Minute Order Number: 2025-255

Adjournment of Closed Session: Mayor Zollman adjourned the closed session portion of meeting at 6:45 pm

Convene Open Session of the Special City Council Meeting: Mayor Zollman reconvened the regular portion of the meeting at 6:48 pm.

Report out of Closed Session: Mayor Zollman announced that the Council accepted the separation agreement with Emi Theriault.

ADJOURNMENT OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor Zollman adjourned the August 26, 2025 Special City Council Meeting at 6:49 pm to the next Regular City Council Meeting of Tuesday, September 2, 2025 at **6:00 pm**, Sebastopol Youth Annex, 425 Morris Street, Sebastopol, CA.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary C. Gourley

Interim City Manager/City Clerk

Attachment: Zoom Transcript

Special City Council Meeting - August 26, 2025

I HAD A ROUTINE MAMMOGRAM AND THEY CALLED ME BACK IMMEDIATELY THE NEXT DAY AND SAID THEY HAD FOUND SOMETHING VERY TROUBLING. THAT'S WHEN IT ALL BEGAN FOR ME. SO I HAD PLANNED A FAMILY VACATION WITH MY SON WHO JUST GRADUATED BEFORE COLLEGE STARTED BEGINNING ON JULY 15th. BUT EVERYTHING BASICALLY STOPPED BECAUSE AT THAT TIME AFTER THEY TOOK THE SAMPLES, THEY CONFIRMED THEY HAD FOUND CANCER. AND SO THEN YOU CAN IMAGINE AFTER THAT I WENT INTO A TAILSPIN. MANY APPOINTMENTS AND FOLLOW-UPS AND MEETINGS AND YOU KNOW, AT THAT TIME I INFORMED THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER THAT MY VACATION WAS CANCELED DUE TO A MEDICAL CONCERN. AND AFTER EVERYTHING THEY DETERMINED THAT I HAD STAGE ONE AND STAGE TWO BREAST CANCER. AND ADVISED THAT I WOULD NEED SURGERY IMMEDIATELY. WE INITIALLY THOUGHT THAT SURGERY WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TOWARD THE END OF JULY. BUT IT GOT PUSHED OUT UNTIL AUGUST. SO I WENT INTO THE O.R. AND HAD A BILATERAL MASTECTOMY WITHIN THREE WEEKS. IT WAS A LOT. THEN I HAD COMPLICATIONS AND THEY TOLD ME I WOULD BE DISCHARGED THE NEXT DAY BUT I HAD A LOT OF COMPLICATIONS AND ENDED UP BEING IN THE HOSPITAL THAT WEEK. I EVEN TOLD THE SURGEON THAT I HAD A COUNCIL MEETING THAT I NEEDED TO GET TO ON AUGUST 5th AND THEY SORT OF LAUGHED AT ME AND SAID WE WILL SEE HOW THAT GOES. AND IT DIDN'T HAPPEN BUT I HAD EVERY INTENTION OF TRYING TO ATTEND BECAUSE I KNEW ABOUT THE 60 DAYS AND I AM VERY PROUD TO BE A COUNCIL MEMBER. I DIDN'T WANT TO MISS OUT ON THAT. SO AFTER THAT I WAS FINALLY, I LET OUR INTERIM CITY MANAGER NO, I WAS SO IN AND OUT OF IT. BUT WE NOTIFIED THAT THERE WAS JUST NO WAY I WAS GOING TO GET ON. I COULD HARDLY WALK. SO I WAS RELEASED LATER THAT WEEK AND I'VE BEEN RECUPERATING. AND UNFORTUNATELY AFTER GETTING ALL OF THE RESULTS I LEARNED THAT I'M GOING TO NEED FOLLOW-UP TREATMENT. BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS BECAUSE I'VE BEEN SO DILIGENT WITH MY SCREENINGS AND WE CAUGHT THIS EARLY AND I ACTED SO QUICKLY THAT MY PROGNOSIS IS EXCELLENT. THEY SAID I JUST NEED TO MAKE IT TO

THE TREATMENT AND THAT'S GOING TO BE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND I DON'T HAVE ALL THE DETAILS FOR THAT YET. I AM BEING TREATED AT STANFORD. SO THERE'S A LOT OF DRIVING. BUT I AM COMMITTED TO THIS COUNSEL AND COMMUNITY AND I REALLY AM PROUD TO BE A COUNCIL MEMBER SO I'M GOING TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO BE PRESENT IS MUCH AS I CAN WHETHER IT IS HERE OR ON ZOOM DEPENDING ON WHAT THE DOCTORS TELL ME. THE CANCER DOES NOT AFFECT MY COGNITIVE SKILLS. IT'S JUST ABOUT MANAGING ALL OF THE TREATMENT AND HOW IT IMPACTS ME. I ALSO PROVIDED A DOCTORS NOTE TO THE CITY ATTORNEY SO THAT HE KNEW FOR SURE THAT ALL OF THIS HAD BEEN HAPPENING. JUST BASED ON ALL THE QUESTIONS I SAW I STARTED TO THINK PEOPLE DIDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS REPORTING. THIS HAS BEEN A REALLY DIFFICULT AND PERSONAL TIME FOR ME AND MY FAMILY. I HAVEN'T REALLY SPOKEN PUBLICLY ABOUT THIS EXCEPT FOR WITH MY CLOSEST FRIENDS. SO SOME OF THEM ARE HERE. And the prognosis is excellent. They just told me that yesterday. They were super excited about that and they said I should be too. And so I just wanted to end this on a note of gratitude for everyone who showed up to support me over the last Thanks to all my friends who supported me, lending me either ear, tending to my wounds, even a friend who is a nurse in the middle of the day when I thought I was in a crisis and offering support I never imagined I would ever need. This has been really shocking for me and I think my colleague for understanding and having compassion for me here. This was never on my radar. I have no family genetics or history with this. So to get this diagnosis like this was shocking to me. And so I learned one in eight women will have breast cancer and if it hadn't been for my diligence in all of my follow-ups it would be a much different story. So I'm just asking everyone for their compassion tonight and to understand that I had every intention of attending that meeting but I just simply couldn't. So thank you.

Thank you vice Mayor. Opening it up to my colleagues. Questions or comments?

How does this affect the duties of the vice Mayor in particular the agenda review? I am asking staff.

Until such time that it impacts the agenda review committee once we know there is going to be an impact, if the vice Mayor will be out on extended leave or cannot attend those duties we would need to bring that policy back.

I have a question for either Mary or the attorney. How many meetings can be attended by zoom and for what reasons in a

single year by a Council member? I do know there are some allowances.

It depends on the basis for it. Someone can attend a meeting remotely as A.D.A. accommodation for unlimited number of meetings as long as the accommodation is still necessary.

Are you saying you consider this an A.D.A. issue? That didn't really answer the question.

As an A.D.A. accommodation there is in unlimited number of meetings. Posting your address and doing the traditional, that is also done an unlimited amount of time. And then under 2449 there is a set amount, it's two for emergency circumstances and then I believe is equal to 25% of the Council regular meetings for just cause which would include healthcare needs is one of the definitions. But I can confirm that number right now.

Additional questions? Before we go to public comment.

Thank you, Mayor. This is public comment on the agenda item requesting approval of the more than 60 day absence. I welcome the chambers first. Then I will go out to zoom. If there is anyone in chambers that would like to make a public comment.

Hi, I'm Steve. I've been in Sebastopol now two years. I spent almost 95% of your meetings. I certainly and wholeheartedly would recommend unanimous yes vote to allow the vice Mayor to miss the meeting to be appropriate at this time. Obviously for medical reasons. Also situations in the past that have been ignored and that comes up in discussion. I think you might want to just rethink whatever you were thinking. And say yes based on the fact that she has a medical condition and we are trying to be helpful. And she'll get through this and do more for the city. Give her a chance. There's other people who have been on the Council for many years. I'd like you to rethink what your thoughts are and say yes. Thank you.

Thank you for your public comment. Next I will go out to zoom. Can you hold on just for a second? I have to go back and forth. That's okay. I will go one in the chambers than one to zoom, one back in chambers and one back out to zoom. Linda. Can you see the timer?

All I can say is my heart goes out to you and it's difficult not to cry. God bless you and we will be thinking of you.

Thank you Linda for your public comment. Next I will come back into chambers. Rick.

Good evening members of the Council. My name is Rick Brody. My wife and I have lived in Sebastopol for 27 years now. Jill and I met when both hours were in elementary school, we served on the board, so we know each other well. One of the things we always talk about is why our families moved to Sebastopol. One of the big reasons is it's a small town. When we celebrate, we celebrate together. And when people need help and people need care, we help them out. That's part of what we do. That's part of what makes us special. Jill is going

through a big struggle right now. And she will get better. But she needs all of our support and especially meteor votes and hopefully unanimous vote tonight to make sure that she can continue her recovery because she needs as many good wishes and support as possible. We want her to get better which she will and continue to serve the people of Sebastopol but more important that she gets well for herself so that she can be back with her family in a normal situation again. So please do the right thing tonight and vote unanimously to approve the resolution.

Next I will go out to zoom. Mary.

Yes.

Thank you. Can you see the timer?

Yes. I won't take that long. I wish to support a yes vote on this as well. I think that. I am probably going to cry too. I think that Jill has done a lot for the city. But the other part of me knows that this is what happens in committees and commissions. This happens all the time. I don't think there needs to be any questions about it. This probably should have been over in two minutes. It should have been a yes vote by everybody. And I really hope you all vote yes. That's it. Thank you.

Thank you Mary for your public comment. I will go back to chambers.

Obviously I'm going to say you should all vote yes but more importantly, this could happen to any of you. Just out of the blue as it does with other friends of mine. One minute you are full steam ahead doing all kinds of stuff, the next minute it all breaks loose. Challenges and schedules don't matter at all, you lose track. All of this is a snowball of disasters. So it sounds like Jill is coming out of the other side of it. Frankly, nobody brought any flowers or anything? I know it's kind of formal but this room, we spent an awful lot of time worrying about homeless people and God knows who and people that don't think chicken should be farmed and on and on. It's a remarkably cold meeting so I hope the mood gets more compassionate. Everybody should look after themselves and be mindful. Be thankful you are here now. Thank you.

Next I will go to zoom weird. Can you see the timer?

I can. Thank you. Hello. My name is Philena and I am here to speak in favor of Jill allowed to remain in her role. Having worked with Jill during a very challenging time at the community center I can say without hesitation that her work ethic is beyond reproach. Based on my personal experience with her I believe her when she says she can't continue-- can continue to serve the committee and hope the Council will vote to support her during her recovery. That's it.

Thank you Philena for your public comment. Next I will come back to public chambers.

Height-- I lived in Sebastopol for over 20 years. I think Jill is many different things to many different people. She is a

neighbor, critical member of our community, small business owner. She's an active participant in our schools as a parent and volunteer. She is also a public servant and many of us feel deep gratitude for that service. But what I'd like to talk about is what I expect of the city Council today. I expect your leadership. I expect your empathy. And I expect some humanity in this situation. I don't expect you will always agree with each other. But I do expect that you will show a model of how a community should come together. We need this for our country right now so please do what's right is a public servant and show that level of humanity.

Thank you for your public comment. Next I will go out to zoom. Robert can you unmute yourself please? Thank you. Go ahead please.

I think it's really unfortunate that Jill has to come to a meeting like this in a public situation and disclose to the world her personal health issues and history. And defend herself to the extent that she has to provide a letter from her doctor to the city attorney in order to appease members of the Council I assume. That didn't actually believe that she had breast cancer and surgery. I think Jill has done a lot for the city, even before she became a councilmember. On the city council she has been very active on some of the biggest issue the city has faced and to be honest, past councils have kicked the count down the road. She took them on. And brought issues to resolutions that had been going on for years. The work that she's done has been important. And the work that she is going to do going forward will be important equally. So I hope that all of you are going to find compassion and vote unanimously. Thank you.

Thank you for your public comment. Next I will go to chambers.

Hello counsel, my name is Brian. I've been a resident in Sebastopol for over two decades. I'd like to recommend and encourage you all to provide a unanimous vote in support of Jill staying on the Council. I'd like you also to remember that Jill is an elected member of the Council and we don't want to disenfranchise the voters who placed her in this position. So we would expect that you respect their decisions and do the right thing. Be ethical. Be professional.

Thank you for your public comment. Next I will go out to zoom if there is anyone that would like to make a public comment on this item. Please raise your hand virtually. I will come back to chambers.

My name is Alexis. I have lived in Sebastopol for nine years. I am one of her constituents and I've known her for many years. We also worked together on the school board. And Jill is one of the hardest work people I know. I was revisiting some of our past emails and she works around the clock. I can imagine that even in a reduced capacity she is still putting in more hours than many people would in this position. Even though I don't

come to Council meetings regularly I do follow them on zoom and sometimes I don't always agree with things that councilmember says but I know she has always arrived at those decisions thoughtfully and careful deliberation. I am being represented by someone that deliberate and respectful of public servant, I think she deserves every opportunity to continue to represent me and our community in that respect. It's an important sign of inclusion which our community ostensibly stands for. Thank you for this consideration.

Next I will go out to zoom. Can you see the timer?

I am also a 20 year resident of Sebastopol and I just want to say I don't know anybody that works harder for this town than Jill. And I am a little awful that it's even come to the table that she may not keep her job because of a health crisis. And I think small towns really need to come together and support the people that work their butts off for us. So I think we should all support Jill for this.

Thank you for your public comment. Next to chambers.

I'd like to say I am councilmember Mc Lewis is fun. I like to say that this has been the most trying time for our family. My mom and my dad are the only family members that I have talked to and seen within the past five years or so. And when we got this diagnosis we were hopeful but it was a little bleak. Current news is excellent. I just like to say that imagine this is you or your mother or your sister. I don't know the family relations of all the councilmembers but imagine it's a female family members of yours having to go watch her go into surgery and be delirious for multiple days, not even able to lift up a cup. I'd encourage you to do a unanimous vote. Because this has been the most trying time in my entire family. As any of you could imagine. Just think of your family when you make this vote and how you would like to treat them or see them be treated by their coworkers, their friends. Thank you.

Thank you for your public comment. Next I will go out to zoom. Please raise your hand virtually. Seeing then, I will come back to chambers if there is anyone in chambers. Public comment is closed on this item.

Comments, motion.

I guess I'm going to go ahead and make some comments because I think that I appreciate everybody coming to support. This is a very difficult situation but we did hear from a lot of members and I can say I was one of the ones with questions. Partly because there was a whole debate about taking the month of July off and it was never mentioned that was for anything but staff. There was no question about vacations. And so to ask more questions we are elected officials. That is what we do to make a vote. Many people said what if it was you? It was me. I have had medical issues and I have been absent from this counsel. And I didn't disclose that. I continued to do my job. So I just want to let people know that as we sit up here, this is the

role be filled and there is a law to ask for absences in advance. Not after the fact. When we first heard about the request it was not disclosed up front necessarily. As has been mentioned tonight. So to make an educated decision tonight. I just feel like as statements have been made it's my job to respond to the public on that. So it has been many of us. Not necessarily making an assumption there is always a bad situation. So that's my comments. And we would not be discussing this if the absences had been requested. Which is the rule and the law.

Cancer sucks and it happens to too many people and I'm really sorry we have to do all of this. But if anything comes out of this you heard as such. We are grateful. At some point we have work to do. So kick it. Okay?

There is a state law that says you cannot miss 60 days of meetings without getting counsel permission. So that's why it is here in front of the Council tonight. So I have no problem excusing the previous absences. And but I am concerned about the agenda review committee and the duties that especially that committee duty. We are being asked to excuse September meetings. Council meetings. That could be special meetings, it could be closed sessions. It could be regular meetings. Correct?

This would be for regular meetings.

This is only concerning nighttime meetings.

That's my understanding.

The proposed resolution specifically lists the September 2nd and 16th.

I guess I'm confused as to why those are being asked to be excused. I am more comfortable giving a leave if she needed to take some time off. And then somebody could fill her vice Mayor duties and she can retain her vice Mayor position. But to give her the time off. I would be more comfortable doing that then excusing the two meetings.

We have other meetings on the agenda.

We have a closed session and agenda review meetings in addition. If people need time off, I'm comfortable with medical leave as well. Excusing to get healthy is what we should do. I'm happy to excuse the past absences and the month of September if that is requested. But the resolution was written I think without before the closed session was scheduled. I'm for a medical absence as well.

The closed session today which has nothing to do.

The additional closed session which we have a save the date on in September.

That is correct.

I a couple things, I know and I haven't had time to confer because some of this has just been happening today. I do know that I can attend the September 2nd meeting and closed session just based on appointments and discussions today. With my team of providers. So I don't know how those changes, Alex, but I am able to attend those meetings.

We could strike that meeting from the date and also if you are at that meeting, then the 60 day clock would be reset anyways so if you wanted we could strike September 2nd and 16th from the resolution. If the Council wanted.

Okay. And I just wanted to say, I'm not interested in tit for tat. I did say this was for a medical reason. The interim city manager at some point set that out. I just appreciate people's support today. I'm just so grateful for everyone coming here and for all of your kind words. Some people I haven't seen in a while. And other people who have been right here in the trenches with me. So I'm just really taken aback and I've shed so many tears and I feel like I could shed just as many tonight just grateful for everybody and people showing up for me.

I'm going to weigh in as well. And just second what councilmember said. It could happen to any of us. Very sad. My mother passed as well so I will be definitely supporting and making a motion to grant the resolution with the changes. But Alex has agreed to as far as striking the dates.

So moved by the mayor and seconded by councilmember Carter to approve the resolution authorizing the excused absences due to medical reasons consistent with government code with the following amendment that the meetings will be removed from the resolution. The motion passes with vice Mayor McLewis abstaining.

Thank you. That concludes the meeting. We will be going into closed session. Now is the time to open for public comment for the closed session only. Seeing none, the Council will adjourn into closed session and we will be meeting in the front room.

Thank you Mayor. [Event Concluded]