



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF:

August 5, 2025

City of Sebastopol

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Police Chief McDonagh
Responsible Department: Police
Subject: First Reading and Introduction of Ordinance: Ordinance XXXX amending the Sebastopol Municipal Code – Reassignment of Director of Emergency Services from Fire Chief to Police Chief

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council introduce and waive the first reading of an ordinance amending the Sebastopol Municipal Code to designate the Chief of Police, rather than the Fire Chief, as the City's Director of Emergency Services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This agenda item recommends a revision to the Sebastopol Municipal Code to reflect current operational realities in the City's emergency services structure. Specifically, the amendment would designate the Police Chief as the City's Director of Emergency Services, replacing the Fire Chief—a role that is now functionally obsolete following the merger of the City's Fire Department with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. This role was informally transferred when Gold Ridge contracted with the City for fire services.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM:

1. If item remains on consent, no presentation of item is required. Item would be approved as a consent calendar item.
2. If item is removed from the consent calendar; item would be placed at the end of the regular agenda items for discussion following the process below:
 - a. Presentation of agenda item by Police Chief
 - b. Questions and discussion from Councilmembers
 - c. Public comment period
 - d. Council deliberation and motion

BACKGROUND:

Under the existing municipal code, the Fire Chief is designated as the Director of Emergency Services. This designation dates back to a time when the City operated its own City volunteer fire department. Since the transition to contracting fire services with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District, the City has no longer had a full-time, in-house Fire Chief. At that time, the position was informally transferred to the Police Chief who is a full-time City department director with the capacity and infrastructure to manage citywide emergency planning, coordination, and response. This amendment would align the municipal code with current practice and clarify the chain of command during emergencies.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed ordinance amendment provides administrative clarity and enhances the City's ability to respond effectively to emergencies by ensuring that the designated Director of Emergency Services is a full-time department head who will coordinate with the Sonoma County Office of Emergency Management and local and regional partners in emergency preparedness and response, making this a logical and seamless transition.

Should this amendment be approved, all references in the Municipal Code will be updated to reflect this change.

STAFF (RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT) ANALYSIS:

The City Manager's Office and Police Chief, in consultation with the City Attorney, have reviewed the proposed ordinance amendment and determined that the change is both appropriate and necessary to reflect the City's current organizational structure. The Police Chief will be responsible for the leadership and operational readiness required to oversee emergency services.

The reassignment will not alter the delivery of fire protection or emergency medical services, which remain under the professional oversight of the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. Rather, this change addresses internal City leadership during declared emergencies and disaster response coordination.

This amendment will also assist with compliance in federal and state emergency management frameworks that require a clear and locally designated Director of Emergency Services.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS/PRIORITIES; AND/OR GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

This agenda item represents the City Council goals/priorities as follows:

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Goal 2: PUBLIC SAFETY

Strengthen the public's safety and improve the quality of life. Includes supporting our first responders (police, fire, public works), responding to emergencies, protecting people, property, and businesses, and engaging in emergency preparedness community outreach, public education and prevention activities.

Goal 4: HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION

Restoring public trust

Improve Public Communications

This agenda item represents the General Plan as follows:

Goal SA 3: Protect the Safety of Life and Property by Ensuring Emergency Preparedness

Policy SA 3-5: Clearly communicate to the public the City's plans, procedures, and responsibilities in the event of a disaster or emergency.

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 schedule meeting date. The City has also used social media to promote and advertise the City Council Meeting Agenda Items.

As of the writing of this agenda item report, the City has not received public comment. If staff receives public comments following the publication and distribution of this agenda item report, such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting and will be posted to the city website.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact with approval of this item.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council introduce and waive the first reading of an ordinance amending the Sebastopol Municipal Code to designate the Chief of Police, rather than the Fire Chief, as the City's Director of Emergency Services.

OPTIONS:

1. Deny the ordinance amendment and provide further direction to staff. If item is removed from the consent calendar; item would be placed at the end of the regular agenda items for discussion.

ATTACHMENTS:

2. Ordinance for First Reading

3. Ordinance for First Reading Red Lined

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Police Chief Approval Date: 7/16/2025

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: 7-22-2025

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: 7-22-2025

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
Account Code (if applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 7/17/2025

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 7-22-2025

ORDINANCE NO. [XXXX]

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL AMENDING THE SEBASTOPOL MUNICIPAL CODE 2.36.050
TO DESIGNATE THE POLICE CHIEF AS THE DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

WHEREAS, the Sebastopol Municipal Code currently designates the Fire Chief as the Director of Emergency Services for the City of Sebastopol; and

WHEREAS, the City of Sebastopol no longer maintains a municipal fire department and has contracted with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District for the provision of fire and emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, the City no longer employs a full-time, in-house Fire Chief, and this role within the emergency management structure has been informally fulfilled by the City's Police Chief; and

WHEREAS, the Police Chief is a full-time department head with 24/7 operational readiness and has demonstrated the capacity to oversee emergency planning, coordination, and response in collaboration with the Sonoma County Office of Emergency Management and other partner agencies; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to update the Municipal Code to reflect the current emergency management structure and formally designate the Police Chief as the City's Director of Emergency Services.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. RECITALS.

The above recitals are true, correct, and incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT TO CODE

Section 2.36.050(A) of the Sebastopol Municipal Code A shall be amended as follows:

There is hereby created the office of Director of Emergency Services. "The Police Chief shall be the Director of Emergency Services who shall have the authority and responsibility for the City's emergency management operations, including disaster preparedness, coordination of emergency response efforts, and liaison with other governmental agencies, subject to the direction and control of the City Manager and City Council." All references in the Sebastopol Municipal Code to the Fire Chief as Director of Emergency Services shall be references to the Police Chief.

SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance. The City Council declares that it would have passed this Ordinance and each section, subsection, clause, or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall take effect thirty (30) days after its adoption.

SECTION 4. PUBLICATION

This Ordinance shall be published once within fifteen (15) days of its adoption in a newspaper of general circulation published and circulated within the City of Sebastopol, in accordance with Government Code Section 36933.

APPROVED FOR WAIVING OF FIRST READING AND INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE at the Regular City Council Meeting of August 5, 2025.

SCHEDULED FOR WAIVING OF SECOND READING AND ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE at the Regular City Council Meeting of September 2, 2025.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the City Council on August 5, 2025, by the following vote:

VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

APPROVED: _____
Mayor Stephen Zollman

ATTEST: _____
Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager
City Clerk, MMC

APPROVED AS TO FORM: _____
Alex Mog, City Attorney

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SECTION 1. RECITALS.

The above recitals are true, correct, and incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 21. AMENDMENT TO CODE

Chapter 2.36 — EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE

Section 2.36.050(A) of the Sebastopol Municipal Code A shall be amended as follows (with deletions in strikethrough and additions underlined):

- A.—There is hereby created the office of Director of Emergency Services. "The ~~Fire Chief~~ Police Chief shall be the Director of Emergency Services who shall have the authority and responsibility for the City's emergency management operations, including disaster preparedness, coordination of emergency response efforts, and liaison with other governmental agencies, subject to the direction and control of the City Manager and City Council." All references in the Sebastopol Municipal Code to the Fire Chief as Director of Emergency Services shall be references to the Police Chief.

All references in the Sebastopol Municipal Code to the "Fire Chief" as Director of Emergency Services shall be replaced with "Chief of Police."

SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY

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City Clerk, MMC

APPROVED AS TO FORM: _____
Alex Mog, City Attorney