



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: August 5, 2025

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager
Deborah Muchmore, Human Resources Consultant
Subject: Request for Proposals for Executive Recruitment Services for City Manager

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RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for executive recruitment services for the position of City Manager.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

With the departure of the former City Manager, the City Council is initiating a process to identify and select a qualified candidate to serve as the next City Manager for the City of Sebastopol. Since April 15, 2025, Mary Gourley has served as Acting City Manager and was recently appointed Interim City Manager, allowing the Council time to conduct a thorough, methodical and inclusive recruitment process. Given the importance and complexity of the role, staff recommends retaining a professional executive search firm with proven expertise in municipal recruitment.

BACKGROUND:

The City Manager serves as the chief administrative officer for the City of Sebastopol and is responsible for implementing City Council policies, overseeing City operations, and providing leadership to department heads. To ensure a robust and competitive recruitment process, including the recruitment of and assisting with the interviewing and selection of a qualified individual to serve as the next City Manager staff has prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) inviting qualified executive recruitment firms to submit proposals to assist the City in the recruitment process.

DISCUSSION:

To assist the City Council and staff in their efforts to recruit the next City Manager, staff has developed a Request for Proposals for the City Council's review and approval. Retaining a professional executive recruiting firm is advantageous to the City Council as this will broaden the scope of the City Manager search and typically provides public agencies access to highly qualified candidates.

In addition, a professional executive recruitment firm will be required to focus on the City Council's current and future needs and provide support throughout every aspect of the recruitment and hiring process. The City seeks an executive search firm that will become familiar with the City Council's and City organization's culture and will seek qualified candidates who value emotional safety, effective and honest communications, staff development, interpersonal relationships, and respect and appreciate a collaborative working relationship with the governing body.

The successful firm shall have demonstrated experience in recruiting executive-level public sector professionals, with particular emphasis on city management positions in municipalities similar in size and complexity to the City of Sebastopol.



The RFP outlines the scope of services expected, including:

- Development of a candidate profile;
- Outreach and advertising;
- Preliminary candidate screening;
- Facilitation of interview processes; and
- Support with initial reference and background checks.

The recruitment firm will also be expected to engage the City Council in establishing priorities and desired qualifications for the position. The recruitment firm will be expected to submit to the Council candidates that demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with all community members regardless of cultural differences or circumstances, including race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender identity, age, marital and familial status, sexual orientation, diverse physical and learning abilities, socioeconomic status, and other identities.

A timeline is listed below and is also contained in the request for proposal.

City Manager Executive Recruitment – Proposed RFP Timeline

Task	Proposed Date
Council Authorization to Issue RFP	August 5, 2025 (Council Meeting)
RFP Issued / Released	August 6, 2025
RFP Outreach / Distribution to Qualified Firms	August 6–August 12, 2025
Deadline to Submit Written Questions	August 15, 2025
Responses to Questions Issued	August 20, 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline	September 2, 2025 (by 5:00 PM PT)
Staff Review of Proposals	September 8–12, 2025
Interviews or Firm Presentations	Week of September 22, 2025
Council Award of Contract	October 7, 2025 (Council Meeting)
Recruitment Kickoff with Selected Firm	October 2025 (TBD)

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Recruiting a City Manager is one of the most critical responsibilities a City Council undertakes. This leadership role requires a strategic thinker with strong financial and operational expertise, as well as the ability to collaborate effectively with the Council, city staff, and the broader community.

Engaging a professional executive recruitment firm brings vital expertise and dedicated resources to support a successful search. A firm with local experience and a deep understanding of Sebastopol's unique challenges and strengths can offer objective candidate screening, proactive outreach, and a structured, transparent process.

Partnering with a recruitment firm also helps ensure that the selection process is inclusive, unbiased, and aligned with industry best practices—ultimately enabling the Council to make a well-informed decision for the direction of the future of the city.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS/PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

This agenda item supports the following City Council goal:



Goal 4 – High Performance Organization

Action Plan 1: Achieve staffing and program targets that reflect best practices in efficiency, operational standards, baseline budgeting, and performance management.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The estimated cost of professional executive recruitment services is between \$30,000 and \$40,000, depending on the scope of services provided. Funding in the amount of \$35,000 is allocated in the FY 2025–26 budget for recruitment-related expenses.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was made available for public review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date. The City has also used social media platforms to promote and advertise the City Council meeting and agenda items.

As of the writing of this report, the City has not received any public comment. Any comments received after the publication of this report will be shared with the City Council as supplemental materials before or during the meeting.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for executive recruitment services for the position of City Manager.

OPTIONS:

1. Do not approve issuance of the RFP.
2. Approve the RFP with edits/revisions and provide direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Request for Proposal

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval:

Approval Date: 7-22-2025

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:

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Account Code (if applicable)

100-11-01-4230

City Attorney Approval:

Approval Date: 7-22-2025

City Manager Approval:

Approval Date: 7-22-2025

RESOLUTION NUMBER XXXX-2025

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF A
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF THE CITY MANAGER

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WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Sebastopol recognizes the need to fill the position of the City Manager;
and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Sebastopol desires to contract with a professional executive
recruitment firm to assist with the recruitment of a permanent City Manager.

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Sebastopol resolves to approve and issue the Request for
Proposals for the Recruitment of the City Manager attached as Exhibit "A".

IN COUNCIL DULY APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 5th day of August, 2025.

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by City of Sebastopol City
Council following a roll call 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



City of Sebastopol

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Executive Recruitment Services for City Manager

Issue Date: August 6, 2025

Proposal Deadline: September 2, 2025

RFP Contact: Human Resources Consultant

Name: MuchmoreThanConsulting
Deborah Muchmore

Phone Number: (707) 707-490-0564

Email Address: deborah@muchmorethanconsulting.org

1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Sebastopol, California, is soliciting proposals from qualified executive recruitment firms to assist the City Council in the recruitment and selection of a new City Manager.

The City seeks an executive search firm that will become familiar with the City Council's and City organization's culture and will seek qualified candidates who value emotional safety, effective and honest communications, staff development, interpersonal relationships, and respect and appreciate a collaborative working relationship with the governing body.

The successful recruitment firm will also be expected to engage the City Council in establishing priorities and desired qualifications for the position. The recruitment firm will be expected to submit to the Council candidates that demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with all community members regardless of cultural differences or circumstances, including race,

EXHIBIT A TO RESOLUTION

ethnicity, religion, language, gender identity, age, marital and familial status, sexual orientation, diverse physical and learning abilities, socioeconomic status, and other identities.

The successful firm shall have demonstrated experience in recruiting executive-level public sector professionals, with particular emphasis on city management positions in municipalities similar in size and complexity to the City of Sebastopol.

2. BACKGROUND

The City of Sebastopol is a full-service, general law city with a population of approximately 7,500, located in Sonoma County. The City operates under a Council-Manager form of government, with five City Council members elected at large. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and serves as the chief administrative officer of the City.

Sebastopol is known for its strong community spirit, environmental values, and commitment to civic engagement, protection of its community and transparency in local government. The city faces both opportunities and challenges in infrastructure, staffing, and economic development.

The City currently employs 37 filled positions; and 3 temporary support positions; and two contracted positions in the following departments:

- City Manager
- Assistant City Manager/City Clerk
- Administrative Services
- Building
- City Engineer/Public Works Director
- Community Development
- Police

The City is in the process of reviewing department structures to ensure a high performing organization.

The City's Fire Department just recently merged with the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District and no longer falls under the control of the City of Sebastopol governance other than payment of services.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The selected firm will be expected to provide the following services:

1. Meet with the City Council and/or designated subcommittee to develop a candidate profile.
2. Meet with the City Council and/or Human Resources Consultant, and/or Designated Key Staff to discuss organizational needs and review the current job description.
3. Develop a recruitment plan and timeline.
4. Develop, present, and execute a successful search strategy, that actively uses a variety of current platforms and vehicles to solicit interest and applications, including original research, social media and direct in-mail and email campaigns, as well as public agency trade association and association advertising.
5. Provide clear and actionable guidance for engaging the community and soliciting input at various stages.

EXHIBIT A TO RESOLUTION

6. Attend related regular and special City Council meetings in open or closed session as appropriate to present information updates or facilitate candidate interviews.
7. Advise Council on procedural matters related to the search.
8. Conduct outreach to qualified candidates.
9. Assess candidates, screen out the least qualified candidates, conduct initial reference checks, and present a final list of the candidates that best fit the profile developed, including profiles for Council interviews and consideration. City will conduct detailed background check.
10. Assist in structuring final interviews and advisory panel(s) as desired by Council.
11. Develop interview questions and lead end of interview briefs.
12. Provide guidance throughout the negotiation and hiring process.
13. Provide transition guidance and a backup plan explaining any guarantees should a candidate not progress during the initial introductory period such as: information about the firm's approach toward either unsuccessful recruitments or the premature dismissal or resignation of the selected candidate.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

Identification of Key Personnel. The response to this Request for Proposal should include descriptions of the key person or personnel who would have primary responsibility for providing regular services under the proposal. The statement should include prior experience with executive searches and a brief description of other support personnel that may be utilized.

Description of Services. The Request For Proposal Response should clearly provide an understanding of the scope of services requested and describe the services the firm proposes to provide, the firm's overall experience with executive searches and the services listed above, any areas of service or special qualifications that are believed to distinguish it from other search firms and a list of recent successful relevant searches.

Rates and Charges. The proposed means of compensation, including hourly rates or fees to be charged for each individual named in the Request For Proposal Response, should be listed. A schedule of the rates or amounts for all fees, charges, and expenses to be billed by each staff member should also be included.

Availability and Commitment to Provide Services. The Statement of Qualifications should include an indication of the commitment to provide the services by the staff with principal responsibility for providing services to the City. In this context, the words availability and commitment should be taken in their broadest meanings, incorporating time, flexibility in scheduling, office location of key staff, and firm or personal policies and practices with regard to returning calls and meeting deadlines.

Actual or Perceived Conflicts. The proposal should disclose the names, nature of assignment, and relevant dates for any of the firm's clients who may have actual or perceived conflicts of interest with the City. Reasonable diligence to identify and disclose potential conflicts is expected of all firms submitting a response to this Request for Qualifications. The proposal should also provide a statement or description of firm policy to address how conflicts of interest between two or more clients are avoided.

EXHIBIT A TO RESOLUTION

Exceptions to the attached sample City Agreement, including Insurance Requirements. The Request For Proposal Response should disclose any exceptions requested to the attached sample Professional Services Agreement and included Insurance Requirements.

Additional Information. Statements submitted in response to the Request for Qualifications may, but are not required to, provide additional information to assist a proper evaluation of the proposal. Any discussions relating to suggested strategies to reduce costs for outside legal services are appropriate in this section.

5. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

- Firms responding to this RFP shall include the following information:
 - Cover Letter
 - Firm Qualifications and Experience
 - Key Personnel Assigned to the Project
 - Proposed Recruitment Plan and Timeline
 - Cost Proposal / Not to exceed project budget including all anticipated reimbursable expenditures.
 - References (at least three recent municipal clients)
 - Sample Work Product (optional)

6. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be submitted by September 2, 2025:

- One signed proposal submitted by email
 By Email: deborah@muchmorethanconsulting.org
 Subject Line: Proposal for City Manager Recruitment Services - [Firm Name]

Late proposals will not be considered.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Experience with city manager recruitments
- Understanding of municipal government
- Initial understanding of the uniqueness and challenges of the City of Sebastopol
- Quality of proposed recruitment approach
- Qualifications of assigned personnel
- Cost and overall value
- References and client satisfaction

8.PROCESS FOR SELECTING EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRM

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Firms understanding of the Scope of Work	35
Qualifications of Firm and its key staff	20
Local and Regional Experience and Success	15
Timeline for the Project and Services Offered	20
Fee Structure and Schedule of Charges	10

EXHIBIT A TO RESOLUTION

The City may select a firm based solely on written proposals or may request interviews with top-ranked firms. Calls to submitting firms and their references may be made to clarify material in the submittals. Following the interviews, thorough background and reference interviews may be conducted. The City Council anticipates selecting a firm or firms following a careful evaluation of all relevant information.

9. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

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10. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The City Council reserves the rights and options to:

- Reject any or all of the submittals
- Waive any of the provisions of the Request for Qualifications
- Issue subsequent Requests for Qualifications
- Cancel the Request for Qualifications process
- Waive technical error in the responses it receives
- Negotiate with any, all, or none of the respondents to this Request for Qualifications
- All materials submitted in response to this RFP become public record.

11. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Cost of Preparing and Submitting Statements. All costs incurred in preparing and submitting the Statements of Qualifications are to be borne by the submitter and not the City. In no event shall the City be liable for any cost whatsoever for the preparation or submittal of a response to this Request for Qualifications.

**The City appreciates your interest and looks forward to
receiving your proposal**