



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: September 16, 2025

=====

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager
Subject: Approval of Sponsorship of Membership Fees for City of Sebastopol, Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District to join California Main Street which also allows for membership to the Main Street America Program.

=====

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council authorize the City Sponsorship of Membership Fees for City of Sebastopol, Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District to join California Main Street which also allows for membership to the Main Street America Program. This membership will help to support local economic development and downtown revitalization efforts.

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 or at a time of Mayor's discretion for discussion following the process below:
 - a. Presentation of agenda item by Interim City Manager
 - b. Questions and discussion from Councilmembers
 - c. Public comment period
 - d. Council deliberation and motion

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

California Main Street and Main Street America is a State and national network that promotes downtown and neighborhood revitalization through collaboration, best practices, and technical resources. Membership provides access to training, resources, and recognition programs that can enhance Sebastopol's efforts to support small businesses, promote economic growth, and foster a vibrant downtown.

Sponsoring the membership fee for the City, Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce, and Business Improvement District will strengthen the partnership between the City and the Chamber, allowing the Chamber to leverage state and national resources and best practices for the benefit of local businesses and the community.

BACKGROUND:

The City Council heard an informational presentation from the Chamber of Commerce and a representative from the former Sebastopol Downtown Association on the Main Street America Program. At that meeting, the Council requested an agenda item be returned to the Council for consideration of sponsorship of the membership fees for the Chamber of Commerce.

DISCUSSION:

Sponsoring the California Main Street and Main Street America membership fee provides the following benefits:



- Access to State and National Best Practices: Training, technical assistance, and resources from the Main Street America network.
- Enhanced Economic Development: Programs and tools to support small business growth and sustainability.
- Partnership Strengthening: Reinforces collaboration between the City and the Chamber of Commerce in downtown and community development initiatives.
- Community Visibility: Recognition of Sebastopol as a proactive participant in national downtown revitalization programs.

City staff have met with the Chamber of Commerce as well as the California Main Street Program and discussed multiple programs and events that could be conducted with the help of the Main Street Program. Such ideas discussed are as follows:

Economic Gardening Project:

- Launch an Economic Gardening initiative tailored to Sebastopol's business environment
- Educate local business owners and stakeholders on Economic Gardening strategies
- Strengthen partnerships with regional providers such as the Sonoma County EDB
- Assess community interest and feasibility for future program development
- Position Sebastopol as a proactive, business-friendly city focused on sustainable local growth

Promotion of Business Events

- Support submission of application to Caltrans for closure of streets to be used for such events
- Recognition of Anniversary of Businesses
- Business Appreciation Day in the City

Hanging flower pots/planters on Main Street sidewalks owned by Caltrans; Volunteer Management for Watering

Beautification:

- Holiday Decorations
- Façade Improvements for businesses
- Banners for downtown poles

Business Collaboration with other Cities for networking

Below is a list of questions/answers discussed with CA Main Street representative:

- Beyond attending conferences or online webinars/trainings or connecting the City to others who have similar ideas, what concrete deliverables will the membership provide?
 - Creation of a Transformation Strategy and corresponding workplan based on the [Main Street Approach](#). This includes a site visit from Main Street America staff.
 - Main Street America [Community Level Membership](#) (\$375 value) comes with access to training library, community bulletin board "The Point", [national recognition](#) and many other benefits.
- Based on the membership support, what areas will the Chamber, SDA, and the City be collaborating on as a direct result of this purchase? Such as what activities/events/marketing will be done for the downtown businesses that we can't do on our own



- CAMS shares your highlights with our network on social media, our blog and internal communications channels.
- Discussed sending us volunteer program templates (such as the watering of the flowers volunteer program which has already been set up elsewhere)
 - We can connect you with Christine Davis from Carlsbad. They have a city program which maintains their hanging flower baskets.
 - Resource from Main Street America's knowledge hub on building a successful [volunteer program](#).
- What actions or opportunities will membership enable us to pursue that would not be available otherwise?
 - Grants and Funding Opportunities
 - Eligibility to apply for the Great American Main Street Awards and other special awards and grant programs.
 - EXAMPLE: T Mobile Grant is presented in partnership with MSA, and a recommendation letter from CAMS would bolster your chances. [Hometown Grant Program: Revitalizing Small Towns | T-Mobile](#)
- What are the specific benefits of being designated as a Main Street America District?
 - Here is more information from [Main Street America](#) on the benefits of membership.
 - Main Street Designation is a mark of distinction for your community which demonstrates intention for developing and preserving your downtown district.
 - Implementation of the Main Street Approach makes use of professional downtown managers and mobilizes volunteers, it can substantially lessen the burden on local government to "turn around downtown" or reinvigorate struggling neighborhood commercial districts.

STAFF (RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT) ANALYSIS:

Staff recommends sponsoring the Main Street America membership fee with the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce as a cost-effective way to strengthen the City's partnership with the Chamber and also demonstrates the City's commitment to supporting the local business community and enhancing Sebastopol's economic vitality.

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

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

Goal 4 – High Performance Organization

Achieving staffing/ Program targets that match best standards and efficiency/operational staffing efficiencies/baseline budgets/performance management

FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost of the membership fee, \$565.00 , can be funded through the City Manager budget and can be accommodated within the current budget. The expense is one-time for the annual membership and supports City goals related to economic growth and community engagement.

The City of Sebastopol, as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District will all have access to the tools under this membership. Main Street America membership is included in the \$1675. The \$1675 fee will be divided between the three organizations.



The Budget Committee met on August 25, 2025 to discuss this request.

Both Councilmember Carter and Councilmember Maurer (Budget Committee) supported the request.

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 any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties 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.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council authorize the City to sponsor Membership Fees for City of Sebastopol, Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District to join California Main Street which also allows for membership to the Main Street America Program. This membership will help to support local economic development and downtown revitalization efforts.

CITY COUNCIL OPTION(S):

1. Deny the recommendation for approval of sponsorship and provided direction to staff. One alternate is to approve sponsorship at a lower level than what is recommended; or deny request in total.

Membership Type	Who It's For	Annual Dues
Community Member	Accredited/Affiliate Main Street programs	\$375
General Member	Individuals, municipalities, organizations involved	\$295
Allied Member	Service provider companies/consultants	\$525
Friends of Main Street	General individuals who support the movement	\$95

ATTACHMENT:

None

APPROVALS:

Department Head Responsible for Agenda Item: Approval Date: 9-8-2025

CEQA Determination (Community Development/Planning): Approval Date: 9-8-2025

The action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: N/A

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A 9-8-2025

Account Code:

City Attorney Approval

Approval Date: N/A

City Manager Approval:

Approval Date: 9-8-2025