



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: September 16, 2025

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Council members

From: Deborah Muchmore, Human Resources, Muchmore Than Consulting
Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager

Subject: Re-establish the City's Planning Department, Revise the Planning Director Class Specification, and Authorize the Interim City Manager to recruit and take all necessary actions to effect the changes.

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RECOMMENDATION(S):

Staff recommends the City Council take the following actions:

1. Re-establish the City's Planning Department in place of the existing Community Development Department.
2. Approve the revised Planning Director classification specification.
3. Authorize Interim City Manager to recruit for the position and make any necessary changes to documents, schedules, and staff assignments to effect the changes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Community Development Director position is vacant as of September 2, 2025. Approval of this item replaces the Community Development Department by re-establishing the City's Planning Department and retaining the City's Building Department. Approval of the item also revises the City's current Planning Director classification, bringing it into the City's current format for class specifications and making the classification and position "at will". By approval, the City Council provides the Interim City Manager authority to recruit for the Planning Director position and make all necessary changes to documents, schedules, and staff assignments to effect the changes. Recruiting for the Planning Director rather than the Community Development Director will reduce the Department's burden on the budget in future years beginning in FY 2027. For 2026, the cost of separation and interim consultant support will cancel any potential savings. The Planning Director's salary is about 15% lower than the Community Development Director's salary. Future year savings, calculated at the top step of the positions, could amount to a little over \$27,000 after benefit costs are included. Staff intend to hire a Planning Director at a salary below the top step, which may increase future year savings in the early years of the new employee.

BACKGROUND:

The Community Development Director position was established by the City Council on April 23, 2024, as part of a plan to combine building, planning, and economic development under one department. Since then, economic and property development in Sebastopol has been overseen, primarily by the Interim City Manager. The Interim City Manager has initiated the Council goals of downtown beautification; collaboration with Sebastopol Area Chamber of Commerce/Business Improvement District for Holiday Events; working with Councilmembers on Business Initiatives, and submitted grants to Sonoma County Tourism to help address economic development. The Interim City Manager will also be working with the City consultant on creating a vibrancy plan for the City. Additionally, consolidation of the Building Department into the Community Development Department was never affected. Currently, the Interim City Manager and consultants from 4Leaf continue to carry out the duties of the vacant position. The need for consultant assistance in planning will diminish once this role is filled. City planning is located in City Hall and consists of three positions: the Director, an Associate Planner, and a Permit Technician. The public



counter in City Hall will also be supported by a Building Department position, an Administrative Technician currently in the recruitment process.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Sebastopol recognizes the value in recruiting and retaining a well-qualified workforce toward promoting long-term stability of the City's workforce and ensuring the City has qualified staff working to provide services to serve and protect the residents, visitors, and businesses of this community. Every vacancy offers the opportunity to review City needs and the duties, responsibilities, and requirements of each position. It is appropriate to review and amend job descriptions before opening a recruitment. The Planning Director class specification has not been revised since 2/7/2006.

To ensure that the requirements for entry into the position of Planning Director, as outlined in the classification specification, clearly and accurately reflect the minimum qualifications for new hires, staff recommends revising the specification to clarify the essential duties, knowledge, skills, and abilities for the position. This includes aligning the position with other municipalities by increasing the required planning experience from 3 years to 5 years and making possession of a certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) or an equivalent professional recognition desirable. These changes should increase the likelihood of attracting a more qualified applicant pool. Additionally, staff recommends aligning the classification with other Department Heads by designating it as "at will".

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The Planning Director's salary range is included in the City's approved Publicly Available Pay Schedule on the City's website, as shown below:

Engineering Director	Unrepresented	A	\$ 65.39	\$ 5,231	\$ 11,335	\$ 136,016
Planning Director		B	\$ 68.66	\$ 5,492	\$ 11,900	\$ 142,805
		C	\$ 72.09	\$ 5,767	\$ 12,496	\$ 149,951
		D	\$ 75.70	\$ 6,056	\$ 13,121	\$ 157,456
		E	\$ 79.48	\$ 6,358	\$ 13,777	\$ 165,318

Staff reviewed similar and lower-level classifications from other municipalities for minimum qualifications and found that most Senior Planner classifications have the same or greater minimum qualifications as Sebastopol's Planning Director, and higher-level classifications require one to two additional years of experience. Therefore, staff recommends increasing the qualifications to include five years of experience.

MUNICIPALITY	CLASS TITLE	MQ'S
Calistoga	Planning and Building Manager	Equivalent to a 4-year college degree with major coursework in community development, urban planning, architectural design, civil engineering, or a related field; Five (5) years of management or administrative experience. Master's degree desired.
Petaluma	Senior Planner	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in planning, or a related field; Six (6) years of progressively responsible professional-level experience in the field of urban or environmental planning.



MUNICIPALITY	CLASS TITLE	MQ'S
Santa Rosa	Supervising Planner	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in urban and regional planning, six (6) years of increasingly responsible and directly related experience in urban or regional planning or a related field, including previous experience leading or directing the work of others.
Santa Rosa	Deputy Director Comm Dev – Planning	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in planning, or a related field; at least three (3) years of related experience and training, or equivalent combination of education and experience.
Sausalito	Principal Planner	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in urban planning, city/regional planning, public administration, or a related field; Five (5) years of increasingly responsible municipal planning and management experience, preferably with long-range planning. At least two (2) of the five years in a supervisory role is required.
Tiburon	Senior Planner	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in urban planning, or a related field; five (5) years of progressively responsible municipal planning or a related field. At least one (1) year of leading a team in a planning-related field.
Larkspur	Senior Planner	Equivalent to a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with major coursework in urban or regional planning, or a related field; at least four (4) years of increasingly responsible and directly related experience in urban or regional planning or a related field.

Minimum Qualifications:

Any combination of education and experience that would provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in the position is qualifying. A typical way to meet the qualifications is:

Education: The equivalent of a Bachelor's degree (B.A.) from a four-year college or university with major coursework in urban or regional planning, sustainability, or a related field.

Experience: Five (5) years of progressively responsible planning experience, preferably in a municipal setting, including at least two years of which are serving in a supervisory role or capacity.

- Possession of a certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) or equivalent professional recognition within 12 months of hire.
- **License and certifications:** Possession of a valid California Driver's license. Possession of a certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) or equivalent professional recognition is desired.

INTERIM CITY MANAGER ANALYSIS:

Re-establishing the Planning Department and recruiting a Planning Director aligns with the City's commitment to maintaining a well-qualified and highly skilled workforce. The previous consolidation of Planning, Building, and Economic Development did not achieve the intended operational efficiencies. Economic responsibilities have



largely been managed by the Interim City Manager and outside consultants rather than the Department. Designating the Planning Director as an “at will” position is consistent with other Department Head classifications and provides the City with flexibility in managing performance and organizational needs. This request supports the City’s goals of operational efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and delivering high-quality municipal services to Sebastopol’s residents, businesses, and visitors.

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

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

GOALS:

Goal 5 - Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

Goal 6: Maintain a highly qualified Staff that works to provide services to serve and protect the residents, visitors, and businesses of this community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost of the Planning Director is 15% less than that of the Community Development Director. The difference between the cost of the positions should result in approximately \$27,000 in savings in future fiscal years beginning in FY 2027; for FY 2026, staff anticipate no savings. Separation costs as outlined in the at will agreement of the former CDD and interim consultant support will negate any potential savings. The cost of the recruitment required, estimated to be \$4,000 - \$6,000, is included in the current agreement with the City’s human resources consultant.

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 the scheduled 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:

Staff recommends the City Council take the following actions:

1. Re-establish the City’s Planning Department in place of the existing Community Development Department.
2. Approve the revised Planning Director classification specification.
3. Authorize Interim City Manager to recruit for the position and make any necessary changes to documents, schedules, and staff assignments to effect the changes.

CITY COUNCIL OPTION(S):

1. Do not approve the revised job classification or authorize the recruitment of the Planning Director.
2. Direct staff to re-recruit for the Community Development Director

ATTACHMENT(S):

Resolution and Exhibit A: Revised Planning Director Classification Specification

APPROVALS:

Department Head Responsible for Agenda Item:

Approval Date: 9/9/2025



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

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

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: 9/9/2025

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

City Attorney Approval

Approval Date: N/A

City Manager Approval:

Approval Date: 9/10/2025

RESOLUTION NUMBER: XXXX-2025

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
TO REESTABLISH THE CITY’S PLANNING DEPARTMENT IN PLACE OF THE EXISTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT, APPROVE THE REVISION OF THE PLANNING DIRECTOR CLASS SPECIFICATION, AND AUTHORIZE THE
INTERIM CITY MANAGER TO RECRUIT FOR THE POSITION AND TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO EFFECT THE CHANGES.

WHEREAS, the City of Sebastopol maintains a classification plan that includes the titles, duties, and responsibilities of all City positions, and

WHEREAS, the classification specification for the position of Planning Director was last updated in February 2006 and is in need of updating to improve minimum qualifications, establish it as “at will”, and modernize language, and

WHEREAS, the Community Development Director classification has been vacant since September 2, 2025, and the City desires to provide continuity of leadership for the city’s planning functions and staff, and

WHEREAS, the Sebastopol City Council desires to reestablish the Planning Department in place of the existing Community Development Department, and

WHEREAS, the Planning Director is “at will”, exempt from the overtime regulations of the Federal Labor Standards Act, and not represented, and

WHEREAS, the Sebastopol City Council recognizes the need for continuity of leadership and desires to authorize the Interim City Manager to recruit for the position and take all necessary actions to effect the changes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of the City of Sebastopol hereby

1. Re-establish the City’s Planning Department in place of the existing Community Development Department.
2. Approve the revised Planning Director classification specification.
3. Authorize Interim City Manager to recruit for the position and make any necessary changes to documents, schedules, and staff assignments to effect the changes.

The above and foregoing Resolution was duly passed, approved, and adopted at a meeting by the City Council on the 16th day of September 2025.

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the City of Sebastopol City Council by the following vote:

VOTE:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

APPROVED: Stephen Zollman, Mayor

ATTEST: Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager / Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
Alex Mog, City Attorney

Exhibit1: Class Specification, revised – Planning Director



City of Sebastopol

PLANNING DIRECTOR

DEFINITION:

To direct, oversee, and materially participate in the work of the City's Planning Department, including current and long-range planning, maintenance of the General Plan, Housing Element, and zoning codes, review of proposals for construction and development within the City of Sebastopol; coordinate activities, permits, and projects with other City departments; review and prepare recommendations to the Planning Commission on development proposals, and serve as the official secretary and officer of the Planning Commission.

The Planning Director performs professional planning duties in the fields of long-range planning, current planning and building permitting, including a variety of diverse professional planning assignments; oversees technical reviews and evaluations of land use and permit applications, handles the most complex customer service issues, environmental impact documents, and construction projects, and provides supervision or lead direction to professional and support staff. The director ensures compliance with all aspects of the City's General Plan and related ordinances and laws, and performs related work as assigned.

The Planning Director will demonstrate cultural competency working 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.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

The Planning Director is a single-position classification at the executive management level with duties that are administrative/managerial and highly complex in nature, involving highly technical functions. The incumbent has broad management authority for the day-to-day operations of the department. This class serves as the City's professional expert on all matters related to the activities of the Planning Department.

This position is exempt from the overtime regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act and is an "at will" classification serving at the pleasure of and receiving administrative direction from the City Manager. The Planning Director's duties require a broad scope of independent decision-making within legal, policy, and regulatory guidelines. The Planning Director exercises general direction and supervision over professional, technical, and administrative support staff.

This class differs from the next lower level of Associate Planner in its responsibility to oversee all planning operations and personnel, managing the large and complex planning projects and/or studies of considerable difficulty. This class is distinguished from other Department Directors in its responsibility to the Planning Department.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED:

Receives direction from the City Manager.

Exercises direct supervision over employees in the Planning Department, which includes an Associate Planner, Permit Technician, and Administrative Technician.

EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Illustrative Only):

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Assume full management responsibility for all Planning Department programs, services, and activities, including planning, permitting, code enforcement, and special projects.
- Develop, plan, and implement the goals and objectives of the Department and participate in the development and achievement of City-wide goals.
- Advise the public and applicants on planning and related City regulations.
- Work cooperatively with other City staff members; advise on design review.
- Assist and attend Planning Commission meetings; prepare agendas and reports for the Planning Commission; supervise staffing of the Design Review Board and Tree Board; Public Arts Committee, as well as other committees created and assigned to the Planning Department
- Participate in and make presentations to the City Council, and a variety of boards, commissions, and committees as needed.

- Plan and implement park capital improvement projects; supervise City compliance with California Environmental Quality Act and related state and federal regulations.
- Research, prepare, and implement General Plan and Housing Element updates, as well as zoning code amendments.
- Review plans, drawings, and projects for zoning code compliance.
- Collaborate with other staff members who are part of City staff, including Assistant City Manager, City Clerk, City Engineer, Building Director, Police Chief, Public Works Director, and Administrative Services Director.
- Prepare area studies and other special studies.
- Travel between departments, regional and state meetings, and project sites.
- Oversee the coordination of planning permits and accept for processing building, and engineering permits at the public counter.
- Represent the City to outside agencies.
- Prepare, reconcile, and manage departmental budget.
- Perform field investigations and write reports on specifically assigned problems in the field of zoning, subdivisions, park and recreation areas, population movement and traffic, code enforcement, and other land use studies.
- Contribute to the overall quality of the department's service by developing, reviewing, and implementing policies and procedures to meet legal requirements and the City's needs related to physical and economic development.
- Continuously monitors and evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and procedures.
- Assess and monitor the distribution of work, support systems, and internal reporting relationships
- Assign work activities, projects, and programs; monitor workflow; review and evaluate work products, methods, and procedures.
- Carry out supervisory responsibilities in accordance with the organization's policies and applicable laws.
- Interview, recommend for hire, and train employees; plan, assign, and direct work; appraise performance; develop, reward, and discipline employees; maintain discipline and high standards necessary for the

efficient and professional operation of the planning department; and address complaints and resolve problems.

- Identify opportunities for improvement; directs the implementation of change.
- Perform other tasks as directed by the City Manager.
- Meet with developers, engineers, property owners, contractors, and other agencies to discuss the merits and concerns of development proposals.
- Represent the City in regional planning and development efforts; provides written interpretations and clarifications of the Planning Code.
- Direct, coordinate, and review amendments to the General Plan; provides general plan and code interpretation as needed.
- Stay abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of community development and other services as they relate to the area of assignment.
- Monitor changes in laws, regulations, and technology that may affect office operations.
- Recommend and administer policies and procedures.
- Prepare and present staff reports and other necessary correspondence.
- Direct, oversee, and participate in the development of the department's work plan.
- Research and prepare technical and administrative reports; prepare written correspondence.
- Represent the Planning Department to outside agencies and organizations; participate in outside community and professional groups and committees.
- Represent the City with dignity, integrity, and the spirit of cooperation in all relations with staff and the public.
- Foster an environment that embraces integrity, service, inclusion, and collaboration.
- Be an integral team player, which involves flexibility, cooperation, and communication.
- Build and maintain positive working relationships with co-workers, other City employees, and the public using principles of good customer service.
- Perform related duties as assigned.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES:**Knowledge of:**

- Principles and techniques of conducting site planning, architectural review, architectural design, urban, and subdivision design, land use, and other analytical studies, evaluating alternatives, and making sound recommendations.
- Theories, principles, and contents of General Plan, land use, zoning, subdivision, and urban planning regulations, natural resource protection, and environmental laws, including but not limited to pertinent local, State, and Federal rules, regulations, and laws.
- Methods and techniques for the development of presentations, contract negotiations, business correspondence, and information distribution; research and reporting methods, techniques, and procedures.
- Modern principles and practices, technical legal issues, and research methods of municipal planning, zoning, demographics, and environmental management.
- General concepts of construction, architecture, landscaping, grading, drainage, and traffic and transportation engineering related to the process of urban planning.
- Permit tracking software and Bluebeam experience is a plus.
- Principles and practices of policy development and implementation.
- Principles and practices of leadership, motivation, team building, and conflict resolution.
- Organizational and management practices as applied to the analysis and evaluation of programs.
- Principles and practices of supervision, training, and personnel management.
- Modern office practices, methods, and computer equipment, including relevant software programs.
- Oral and written communication skills; business English, including vocabulary, spelling, and correct grammatical usage and punctuation.
- Safe work practices.
- Principles and practices of excellent customer service.

Ability to:

- Interpret and evaluate plans, specifications, legal documents, and planning and zoning matters; analyze, critique, and prepare written assessments of development proposals.
- Understand and interpret laws, regulations, codes, and procedures; observe performance and evaluate staff; problem-solve department-related issues; and explain and interpret policy.
- Contribute effectively to the accomplishments of City goals, objectives, and activities.
- Analyze problems, identify alternative solutions, project consequences of proposed actions, and implement recommendations in support of goals.
- Analyze budget and technical reports; interpret and evaluate staff reports and related documents.
- Interpret and apply City and department policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. Accomplishing departmental planning and operational goals and objectives, and furthering City goals and objectives within general policy guidelines.
- Prepare map illustrations, tables, graphs, and other visual media for report and meeting presentations; navigate web-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS) system that includes land use information.
- Establish and maintain a variety of filing, record-keeping, and tracking systems.
- Organize and prioritize a variety of projects and multiple tasks in an effective and timely.
- Develop and implement department policies and procedures.
- Travel between departments and project sites.
- Gain cooperation through discussion and persuasion.
- Supervise, train, and evaluate personnel. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.
- Communicate effectively, tactfully, and positively in both oral and written form.
- Read, write, and comprehend the English language at a level necessary for effective job performance, exercising correct English usage, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Operate and use modern office equipment and technology, including computers and applicable software.
- Maintain regular attendance and adhere to the prescribed work schedule to conduct job responsibilities.
- Utilize appropriate safety procedures and practices for assigned duties.

- Continuously, sit at a desk while studying or preparing reports; twist to reach equipment or materials; perform simple grasping and fine manipulation; write or use a keyboard to communicate through written means; and lift or carry weights of 10 pounds or less.

Education and/or Experience:

Any combination of education, experience, and training would provide the best qualified candidates. A typical way to obtain knowledge and abilities would be:

Education:

Equivalent of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with major coursework in planning, environmental design, urban design or development, project management, or another field of study applicable to the responsibilities and requirements of this job class. Possession of a master's degree is desirable.

Experience:

Five (5) years of progressively responsible planning experience, preferably in a municipal setting, including at least two (2) years of experience in a role with direct supervisory responsibility.

Licenses and/or Certifications:

Possession at the time of hire and continued maintenance of a valid California Class C driver's license is required.

Possession of a certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) or equivalent professional recognition is desired.

Working Conditions:

Work is performed in a typical temperature-controlled office environment, subject to typical office noise and environment. Duties require work outside of normal business hours, including evenings and weekends, and travel.