

Dear City Council and City Staff,

I am writing to ask that you include separate budget meetings for Capital Improvements and Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds, which include capital improvements for the Water and Sewer Infrastructure and Water Infrastructure for Fire Fighting.

I have watched the budget process over many years and each year critical discussions regarding Capital Improvements, Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds and Water and Sewer Infrastructure are left to the last minute which has yielded terrible results.

Capital Improvements need much more discussion as they include all of Sebastopol's parks, public spaces and public buildings. In addition, this includes roads and sidewalks. Given all the recent attention on our transportation plan and the need for pedestrian infrastructure, now is the time to look closely at this budget. Are there any places in it to improve pedestrian experiences like connecting the sidewalk on Palm between Main Street and Petaluma Avenue, fixing the dangerous intersection at Jewell and Willow, fixing the Ives Park pathway or adding a stop sign at the extremely dangerous intersection of High Street and Burnett?

Water and Sewer are critical City Services and it is known the infrastructure is failing. The City needs to have more transparency and dedicated meeting time to 1) presenting a master plan of the current water and sewer infrastructure and a timeline of updates and replacements; 2) costs associated with updates and replacements with inflation built into the pricing; 3) revenues associated with the infrastructure updates and replacements. Importantly, there needs to be public transparency regarding the Water Infrastructure for Fire Fighting, including hydrants, water tanks and other resources used by fire fighters. Water testing should also be more available.

Ratepayers are paying for financial, administrative, engineering and public works costs. The City needs to establish an oversight committee dedicated to Water and Sewer Enterprise funds to make sure that the public has access to the infrastructure and services for which they are paying. Ratepayers are paying for administrative services, there is no reason why the City, as the fiduciary for the funds, cannot allot some time to public transparency, real time communication and accountability.

Please avoid the bad practices of the past by rushing through the very important topics of Capital Improvements and the Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds.

Thank you,  
Kate Haug