

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
CITY COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT OUT**

**FROM: MAYOR ZOLLMAN, Council Liaison to Homeless Service Organizations (Primary)
VICE MAYOR McLEWIS, Council Liaison to Homeless Service Organizations (Alternate)**

UPDATE REGARDING ELDERBERRY COMMONS

On June 3, the City Council heard an information report on ongoing issues regarding Elderberry Commons. Prior to the meeting, individual Councilmembers had received complaints from residents of the complex as well as second hand reports from other Sebastopol residents. The purpose of the informational item was to give residents of the City and Elderberry Commons the opportunity to report what they had experienced, and for the Council to discuss the matter and possible solutions. Due to the limitations of the Brown Act, the only way for this conversation to occur was during a noticed meeting of the City Council.

The City has never had any role in the development, funding, or management of Elderberry Commons. Accordingly, when the City began to receive complaints, the City needed to first determine who the relevant parties were. The City met with West County Community Services (WCCS) in mid-May to report our concerns, and understand the role of WCCS at the property. The City met with WCCS first because the City has a preexisting relationship with WCCS through a separate contract to provide outreach services to the unhoused community in Sebastopol. WCCS informed the City that it provides the supportive housing services at Elderberry Commons, but that it is Burbank Housing that operates and manages the facility.

Thereafter, the City reached out to Burbank Housing to schedule a meeting. The City was eventually able to connect with the appropriate individuals at Burbank Housing and a meeting occurred on June 4. A summary of that meeting is below. When Elderberry Commons first opened, the Mayor provided his card and personal cell-phone number to Burbank Housing's Chief Operating Officer and other employees attending the groundbreaking, and encouraged them to get in contact if any challenges occurred at the site. Unfortunately, until the City reached out to Burbank Housing, there had been no communication from them about the site.

On June 5, Supervisor Hopkins office noticed the City that it was planning on meeting with DHS, CDC, and Burbank on June 9 to discuss the issues at Elderberry Commons, and would follow up with the City after. The City welcomed the opportunity to meet with Supervisor Hopkins about this situation. Elderberry Commons is located in the City of Sebastopol, and calls for service are handled by the Sebastopol Police Department. However, after meeting with WCCS and Burbank, as well as hearing complaints from Elderberry Commons' residents about how new tenants are assigned by DHS, the City determined that the County was a relevant party in solving this situation as well. Since Elderberry Commons originated as a County project, and was recently sold by the County to Burbank, the City assumed the County was monitoring the property and aware of the ongoing issues. However, on June 11 the City received a letter from Supervisor Hopkins indicating she was not aware of the ongoing issues. We have not received answers as to why Burbank and WCCS never brought the ongoing issues to the County's attention.

Unfortunately, a meeting between the City and County remains unscheduled. On June 9, Supervisor Hopkins' office contacted the Acting City Manager asking to schedule a meeting on June 13 from 10:30-11:30. Unfortunately, City Hall is closed on Fridays and staff had a scheduled medical appointment on that day that could not be rescheduled. Supervisor Hopkins' office then offered 9:00 a.m. on June 12 as a meeting time. The Acting City Manager indicated that the City would work on moving scheduling conflicts to make that time work. The City and Supervisor Hopkins' office then confirmed the meeting time for 9:00 a.m. on Thursday June 12. However, Supervisor Hopkins officer later stated that the meeting would need to be rescheduled to 8:00 a.m. The Acting

City Manager let the Supervisor Hopkins' office know that time would not work due to conflicts, and asked for some alternative times. Unfortunately given the short notice, the City and County could not find a time that would work for both parties on June 11 or June 12. Supervisor Hopkin's Office let the City know they would be unable to meet with the City until July.

Supervisor Hopkins spoke with Chief McDonagh on June 10. A summary of the conversation is below. Supervisor Hopkins sent the City a letter on June 11, a copy of which is included in the agenda. The letter summarizes the meetings the County has had, the steps being taken to attempt to address the ongoing situation, and acknowledges the need to address the unacceptable criminal activity and ongoing lease violations. We are committed to working with Supervisor Hopkins on these matters, including determining how the County can reimburse the City for the costs it incurs (both previously and in the future) related to Elderberry Commons, including but not limited to law enforcement costs. During the City's meeting with Burbank, they indicated they could not afford 24/7 security, and we will also work with Supervisor Hopkins to urge the County to provide the necessary funding to create a safe environment at Elderberry Commons so residents can thrive.

The City will continue to monitor the situation at Elderberry Commons to ensure outstanding issues are being addressed so that the residents of Elderberry Commons, and Sebastopol as a whole, are safe.

Updated Calls for Services & Related Statistics for Elderberry Commons since Opening.

- 172 routine and proactive security patrols of the location
- 20 calls relating to disturbing the peace
- 10 calls for welfare checks & unwanted subjects
- 9 arrests
- 19 other calls for service
- 2 calls relating to a suicidal party

Summary of Meeting with Burbank Housing

City met with Burbank Housing on June 4th.

Attendees:

- Mayor Zollman
- Vice Mayor McLewis (Alternate to Council Liaison to Homeless Service Organizations)
- Acting City Manager Gourley
- Ben Wick
- Alicia Gomez

Topics Discussed:

City discussed reason for meeting and discussed the following concerns:

- Complaints received from community and residents alike
- Number of calls for service to police/costs to city for police staff
- Loitering, drug activity, noise, altercations/felony arrests
- Property boundary/security breaches (such as code to gate given to multiple people/no security checks)
- People laying on the lawns in common areas as well as outside the gated areas
- People laying on sidewalks
- Complaints of WCCS being in the office but not answering the door

Burbank:

- Is the owner of the site for year or so
- Does not receive any funding from HUD or County; only receives revenues from rents
 - But does receive funding from Sonoma County Housing Authority for vouchers
- Discussed WhiteStar as Security for Elderberry
 - Currently 24/7 on weekends and 12 hours on weekdays
 - \$100K for 7 days at 8 hours
 - \$300K for 24/7 on weekends and 12 hour days
- WCCS provides case management; WCCS receives funding from HUD; stated they are on site Monday-Saturday
- Discussed process for lease violations
- Discussed eviction process
- Burbank stated they had success in Petaluma and Napa
- Stated they have had issues with some residents (multiple texts; calls); and have moved one tenant to a hotel ; stated this is expensive to do
- Stated these projects usually take around six months for things to settle down

City discussed some recommendations:

- Key Code Recommendation
- Burbank to meet with Police Chief regularly
- Potential training of security personnel
- Chief of Police to be asked to reach out to Petaluma and Napa to get their Chief's perspective
- Active engagement with the City and community
- Better messaging of what is being done to address the issues
- City to discuss these issues with the Mayors Meeting on June 26th

Summary of Meeting Between Police Chief & Supervisor Hopkins

- Supervisor Hopkins stopped by the Police Department on June 10. The Chief was at the office and available for a meeting.
- Supervisor Hopkins wanted to receive information on the issues at Elderberry Commons and the Police Department's involvement
- The Chief provided the same comments and information that was provided during the June 3 Council meeting.