

Dear Director Sullivan, City Council and City Staff,

Thank you for presenting to Sebastopol and sharing this important information with our community.

Sebastopol has been struggling with a significant homeless population and failed policies for the last decade. The City had a large encampment on Morris Street that was plagued by crime, drug use, fire and unsanitary conditions with human feces, urine, needles and other detritus. Two people died on Morris Street. There were many fires in the Laguna and Sebastopol's Public Works Department spent about 50% of tax payer funded time picking up after homeless people.

At the urging of Diana Rich and Una Glass, the County sponsored Horizon Shine, which also suffered from drug use, untreated mental illness, evictions for violent behavior and no housing found for residents. Residents protested the site and filed a lawsuit against the City. Yet, Council proceeded forward. When Horizon Shine closed, the City had an RV Encampment on 116 which was a public nuisance with unleashed dogs, aggressive behavior, and a fire. It took over 18 months to clear the encampment. It had negative impact on the businesses located directly across the street.

Residents of Horizon Shine, with the ACLU as their attorneys, sued the City of Sebastopol, which cost residents over \$600,000 in legal fees.

Una Glass, Diana Rich, Patrick Slayter, Neysa Hinton, and Sarah Gurney all supported Lynda Hopkins and Barbie Robinson's bid to turn the Sebastopol Inn into a Homekey Hotel. In 2020, the County purchased the hotel for \$6,200,000 about 40% above appraised value. This was despite community protest due to the impact Permanent Supportive Housing would have on a small downtown like Sebastopol's and the permanent loss of tax revenue from TOT, sales and property tax. All the Council was supportive of the project. Mayor Slayter had this to say in a Press Democrat article:

"Mayor Patrick Slayter has voiced support for the project, pointing to the site's proximity to Park Village, a city-owned low-income mobile home park managed by the nonprofit West County Community Services.

"We see that kind of supportive housing is a success," Slayter said in August, adding that Sebastopol could play a role in the equitable distribution of homeless services. "The three larger cities should not bear the burden, so for Sebastopol to help with that I think is a really positive thing." <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/sonoma-county-poised-to-get-6-million-state-grant-to-buy-sebastopol-inn/>

Since Elderberry Commons has opened, the police have been called on a weekly, if not a daily basis. The site serves as a drug and prostitution site and has generally been a chaotic chasm of crime. See:

<https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/the-crisis-at-elderberry-commons>
<https://www.sebastopoltimes.com/p/the-crisis-at-elderberry-commons-933>

Sebastopol consistently has the most homeless people per capita in Sonoma County.
Sebastopol has the most beds per capita in Sonoma County.

Sebastopol has consistently run a deficit and has underfunded the police department, the roads, capital maintenance on City property and other vital services for tax paying residents. The amount of resources absorbed by non-tax paying homeless individuals is over \$20,000 per year. The amount of resources allocated to tax paying residents is less than \$1800 per year. As you can see, the tax paying residents are shouldering a huge financial burden and paying a huge social cost to have such a high per capita amount of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in Sebastopol.

In the light of these facts, I would like to see the following:

- 1) A HEART team member stationed at the Sebastopol Police Station paid for by the County which has over \$208,700,000 in funding.
- 2) A mobile response team dedicated to Sebastopol 24/7.
- 3) Measure O money that matches our homeless population. Why did Windsor receive \$1,500,000 in 2024 Measure O money when they only have 26 homeless people and Sebastopol only receive \$446,900 when Sebastopol has 108 homeless people (4x the amount in Windsor)?
- 4) Measure O money in the Sebastopol budget to help train our Police Officers and provide assistance to Sebastopol's Police Officers as they have the most consistent contact with the homeless population.
- 5) Horizon Shine never provided any mental health services. If you read any of the minutes and reports from Horizon Shine, they had an ever-revolving staff of non-professionals. Why was SAVS given \$700,000 of Measure O money if they did not provide any professional mental health services? I would like to see the County assign \$700,000 to Sebastopol to our general fund to pay for additional Police Staffing.
- 6) I would like to know how Homekey projects will be funded with the 2026 Federal Budget. It appears that Trump is eliminating Project Based Vouchers, which fund Homekey rooms. How will Homekey be funded if there is no Federal money. If the County loses Project Based Vouchers, what will happen to residents in Homekey Hotels and is the County prepared economically to continue providing housing indefinitely regardless of Federal Funding?

For more information, see:

Public Comment Regarding SAVS and problems from within
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTVyUxTQtDw>

This comment is consistent with SAVS own documentation about expelling violent residents.
<https://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/getattachment/Meeting-Event/City-Council/2023/City-Council-Meeting-April-18,-2023/Agenda-Item-Number-10-SAVS-1st-Quarter-report.pdf.aspx>

You can see public comments here:

<https://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/Meeting-Event/City-Council/2023/City-Council-Meeting-April-18,-2023>

Horizon Shine resident Paige “Elightza” Corley was arrested for drug sales.

Paige “Elightza” Corley was featured in this video and PD story:

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/civil-rights-groups-sue-sebastopol-over-disputed-rv-parking-ordinance>

Paige “Elightza” Corley is a plaintiff in the lawsuit against the City of Sebastopol

<https://www.aclunc.org/our-work/legal-docket/yesue-et-al-v-city-sebastopol>

<https://dockets.justia.com/docket/california/candce/4:2022cv06474/402522>

It is clear that County has a long way to go with “solving homelessness” in Sebastopol as the Citizens of Sebastopol are still funding a significant amount of resources and are living with a large homeless population within City Limits which degrades the quality of life for residents, increases crime, increases the flow of drugs like Fentanyl and Meth (both at Elderberry Commons), and harms our local businesses.

The County needs to address these issues with more direct resources and more direct funding within Sebastopol City limits.

Thank you,
Kate Haug