



COUNTY OF SONOMA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
575 ADMINISTRATION DRIVE, RM. 100A
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95403
(707) 565-2241



Dear Mayor Zollman and Sebastopol City Councilmembers:

I am writing to express concern that our office was not notified or consulted by the Mayor or City Manager prior to your most recent City Council meeting regarding the increase in calls for service at Elderberry Commons. Given the shared responsibilities between the County and City in addressing homelessness and behavioral health needs, early communication is critical to ensuring coordinated responses and maximum support.

We would have appreciated the opportunity for early intervention and collaboration. Instead, we learned about the challenges being faced by the Sebastopol Police Department from a Sebastopol Times article written by Laura Hagar published on Wednesday, June 4. Since then, our office has been in daily — and sometimes hourly — communication and coordination with stakeholders regarding the challenges at Elderberry Commons.

In hopes of fostering a direct line of communication with the City, our office made multiple efforts to schedule an urgent meeting to align on this matter before the City's next public session. Despite offering several scheduling options, we understand that the Mayor and/or Vice Mayor were unavailable to meet the week of June 9-June 13. In lieu of that discussion, I am providing this letter to outline steps currently being taken by County departments and contracted service providers to address concerns at the site. In the interest of transparency and collaboration, I hope this information supports the City Council's continued work on this matter and helps inform future decision-making.

Here is a summary of major meetings as well as progress made to date. The immediate and longer-term actions being taken by the County are as follows:

1. I, along with Lupe Catalan, our District 5 Field Representative, connected with concerned tenants willing to provide feedback to assess needs. District 5 Chief of Staff Tracy Lyons and I initially shared this feedback with Burbank Housing, West County Community Services (WCCS), and the Department of Health Services (DHS) last week. We have met at least daily with Burbank Housing, WCCS, and DHS since then to work on and implement solutions.
2. On Monday, June 9, our office met with representatives from Burbank Housing, WCCS, as well as relevant County staff to check in on progress and see how else the County can assist in addressing challenges.



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3. On Tuesday, June 10, I, along with Tracy Lyons, met with Nolan Sullivan, Director of the Department of Health Services to request additional case management capacity through the County. He has directed the County's Homelessness Services Division Director to work with WCCS to offer additional Homeless Case Management Supports. The County has case managers standing by and ready to assist. As WCCS has been providing this service and knows the clients best, the County is following their lead.
4. On Tuesday, June 10, I stopped by the Sebastopol Police Department to solicit feedback and input from Police Chief McDonagh, and subsequently shared that feedback with service providers.
5. The County's Adult Services Section Manager is currently coordinating with WCCS to offer any additional Behavioral Health Supports they need, specifically:
 - a. Screening of tenants for existing program linkage,
 - b. Offering specific wrap around services meetings for any specific clients where there may be heightened safety or behavioral health concerns or needs.
 - c. Offering general Behavioral Health resources for the campus through WCCS.
6. The Director of the Department of Health Services has contacted Burbank Housing and WCCS Executive Teams to discuss longer range planning and property management.
7. The Director of the Department of Health Services has contacted the Sebastopol Chief of Police to discuss longer term partnership and support.
8. The Community Development Commission is working with Burbank Housing to ensure terms of their agreements are upheld.
9. For future permanent supportive housing projects, I will be working with the Director of the Department of Health Services Director to consider policy changes that could be made to the placement policy established by the Continuum of Care board to allow providers to interview prospective tenants. While all tenants go through a generic assessment process to assess their readiness for housing, a final review by the service providers might lead to fewer unsuccessful placements.

The actions being taken by Burbank Housing are as follows:



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1. Increased on-site security. Security provider Whitestar is now on site 6PM-4AM Monday-Friday and 24 hours Saturday & Sunday.
 - a. Burbank Housing has put in a request with Whitestar Security to increase security to 24 hours, seven days a week as needed. Whitestar is working on providing the personnel to support this; once the date is confirmed that this goes into effect, it will be communicated.
 - b. The Burbank Housing Site Manager is on property from 9 AM-6 PM Monday-Friday. In addition, West County Community Services is on site Monday-Saturday.
2. A new communication protocol has been established by Burbank Housing to ensure seamless and timely sharing of information between all partner agencies. This includes regular check-in meetings to discuss case management and incident response. This enhanced collaboration allows teams to support residents and address potential issues before they escalate.
3. Burbank Housing has begun the development of an onsite community garden. This project is intended to foster a sense of community, provide therapeutic and recreational opportunities for residents, and promote positive engagement. The hope is for the garden to become a source of pride and a valuable amenity for the Elderberry Commons community.

I also discussed some medium-term strategies with West County Community Services, including the following possible solutions, which they are currently exploring:

1. Facilitation services for the tenants to help them set up a tenant council that can assist with self-governance and community responsibility.
2. A series of restorative workshops hosted by Restorative Resources.

I continue to believe that Elderberry Commons can and will be an asset to our community. The vast majority of tenants living there are folks just trying to live their lives in peace. That said, I fully acknowledge that we must address the unacceptable criminal activity and ongoing lease violations. Safety and neighborhood peace are paramount. Based on my conversations with our service providers, we are on the same page with respect to our goals. Stabilizing Elderberry Commons is a top priority for the County, Burbank Housing and WCCS. Please know that I will



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continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures and will remain in close communication with our partners and residents.

Sincerely,

Lynda Hopkins

District 5 Supervisor

County of Sonoma