

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Just Cause Eviction Public Comment
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Call for Comprehensive Just-Cause Eviction Protections

To: Members of the Sebastopol City Council

Date: 11/3/25

Subject: Expanding Chapter 9.36 — Just-Cause Eviction and Tenant Relocation — to Cover All Rental Housing Units

Thank you for the opportunity to address housing insecurity and publicly comment to protect residents of Regulated Units through Chapter 9.36. Your recognition that “secure and stable shelter is a basic necessity of life” and that displacement “creates an undue hardship for tenants” reflects the heart of Sebastopol’s values — compassion, equity, and community stability.

Yet, as written, **Chapter 9.36 leaves out the majority of Sebastopol renters: families and individuals living in single-family homes, duplexes, smaller complexes, and new construction.** This omission creates a profound inequity — protecting some renters while excluding roughly 40 percent of others who face identical risks of no-fault eviction and displacement.

Here are experiences of renters who are not included in the Just Cause Eviction Protections.

A single parent rents a single family home, enrolls the kids in school, and works locally. The rent is increased yearly within legal limits. The renter has no issues as a tenant but receives notice the lease will not be renewed. The property owner states a family member will be moving in. After an exhaustive search the renter finds another home, but the move means changing schools and a longer work commute. After moving out the former tenant sees the home up for rent at higher rent.

Similar to the experience above, another renter lease ends because the property owner states major remodeling needs to be done. The house is exterior is repainted and put up for rent.

Unjust evictions mean children lose their schools, elders lose their community networks, and workers lose proximity to their jobs and transportation. When a tenant is evicted without cause, it destabilizes more than one household — it erodes the policies intended to make Sebastopol a livable, compassionate city.

Sebastopol's data show that half of households are renters, and many rent single-family homes or units smaller than forty units. These residents include teachers, caregivers, farmworkers, seniors, and low-income families — the same populations the City seeks to protect through its Housing Element and General Plan commitments to equity and sustainability.

Excluding them from just-cause protection institutionalizes a two-tiered system: one where renters in large affordable complexes are protected from arbitrary eviction, while others — often those renting from small landlords or in modest homes — can lose housing for no reason at all. Fairness should not depend on the type of building one can afford to rent.

The City Attorney's report notes that California's Tenant Protection Act (Civil Code § 1946.2) exempts units built in the past 15 years and single-family homes not corporately owned. But the Act also expressly allows cities to adopt stronger local laws.

Cities across California — including Los Angeles, Berkeley, Richmond, and Santa Ana — have all extended just-cause protections to all renters, recognizing that the same moral and public-health rationales apply regardless of structure size or subsidy status. They have shown that such policies are both legally defensible and administratively manageable.

By contrast, continuing to exclude large portions of Sebastopol's renters risks deepening the very instability Chapter 9.36 seeks to reduce. Given the city's 3.2 percent rental vacancy rate and limited new housing supply, every unjustified eviction contributes to displacement, homelessness risk, and community fragmentation.

Why are there just cause exemptions for single family homes, rental buildings under 15 years? The exemptions aka “carve outs” are the results of lobbying from realtor groups. Ask yourselves what rationale would support just cause eviction to depend on the type of property owner, age of construction or how many units the landlord owns? Why would you subject your constituents of renters to these unfair housing policies?

Recommendation

I respectfully urge the Council to amend Chapter 9.36 or adopt a subsequent ordinance that:

- 1.

Extends just-cause protections to all residential rental units, including single-family

homes, duplexes, small multi-unit buildings, and new construction.

2. Eliminates exemptions based on property size, age, or ownership structure, except where explicitly precluded by state or federal law.
3. Maintains relocation-assistance provisions for all no-fault evictions, scaled appropriately by unit size and rent level.
4. Makes the ordinance permanent or subject to renewal after review, rather than sunset in 2027.

These actions would close an equity gap and align Sebastopol with its stated commitment to fairness, housing stability, and community wellbeing.

Please take action to ensure that every Sebastopol renter, regardless of the type of home they live in, is protected from unjust eviction.

Respectfully,

Michelle Kelly