

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
RESOLUTION NO. 6710-2025**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL APPROVING A REVISED FLAG POLICY FOR THE
OUTDOOR DISPLAY OF FLAGS AND BANNERS ON CITY PROPERTY RELATING TO FLAGS AND BANNERS**

WHEREAS, the City of Sebastopol currently displays the United States Flag, the State of California Flag, and the City of Sebastopol Flag at City Hall and other City facilities in accordance with federal and state law; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has discretion to determine whether to display non-governmental or commemorative flags and, if so, which flags to display; and

WHEREAS, on September 2, 2025, the City Council adopted a flag policy establishing guidelines for flags on City flag poles and banners on public light standards; and

WHEREAS, the display of commemorative flags on City-owned facilities can raise First Amendment issues, and the City Council desires to ensure that any such displays are considered government speech, under which the City retains full discretion and control over the messages conveyed; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that establishing a formal Flag Policy will:

- Clarify that City flagpoles and public light standards are not intended to serve as a forum for free expression or speech by the public;
- Establish a process for the City Council to approve commemorative flags and banners to be flown on City property to express the official sentiments of the City; and
- Provide clear standards for flag display and banners consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws and agreements; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to adopt a revised Flag Policy to identify preapproved banners for the City's light standards and modify the provisions of the policy related to lowering flags in response to presidential or gubernatorial proclamations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Sebastopol hereby:

1. Approves the Flag Policy attached hereto as *Exhibit A* and incorporated herein by reference.
2. Directs City staff to implement the Flag Policy and ensure that all flag displays on City property and within applicable rights-of-way comply with its provisions.

The above and foregoing Resolution was duly passed, approved, and adopted at a meeting by the City Council on the 21st day of October 2025.

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the City of Sebastopol City Council by the following vote:

VOTE:

Ayes: Councilmembers Carter, Hinton, Maurer, Vice Mayor McLewis and Mayor Zollman
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None

APPROVED: Signed by:
Stephen Zollman
AA58527C58C4493...
Mayor Stephen Zollman

ATTEST: Signed by:
Mary Gourley
44C0774260FE430...
Mary Gourley, Interim City Manager/City Clerk, MMC

APPROVED AS TO FORM: Signed by:
Alex Mog
66BDB79D572A4EB...
Alex Mog, City Attorney

Exhibit A – Flag Policy

FLAG POLICY

Effective September 2, 2025

Revised/Approved: September 2, 2025 by Resolution # 6710-2025

Council Policy # XX

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidance for the outdoor display of flags at City Facilities and public streets, including the display of commemorative flags and banners. Nothing in this Policy is intended to control the City's indoor display of flags, including commemorative flags, within City Facilities. This Policy is commonly referred to as "Flag Policy."

II. RESPONSIBILITY

The City Council serves as the final approval authority of the installation of banners and flags under this Policy. The Public Works Director is the approval authority for Encroachment Permits for the installation of banners and flags on City Facilities, City street right-of-way, and Caltrans street right-of-way (as permitted under a maintenance agreement with Caltrans for SR 12 and SR 116).

III. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to this Policy:

"U.S. Flag" means the Flag of the United States, as defined by 4 USC 1.

"California Flag" means the State Flag of California (also known as the "Bear Flag"), as defined by California Government Code Section 420.

"Banners" means pennant, streamer, flag, sign, picture, figure or other object displayed over a public street, designed for decoration or advertisement.

"City Facility" means any real property that is owned or operated by the City.

"Commemorative Flag" means a flag other than the U.S. Flag or the California Flag. The display of Commemorative Flags constitutes official governmental speech. The display of Commemorative Flags serves solely as an expression of the City's official sentiment and shall not create or serve as a forum for public expression. "Commemorative Flag" shall mean any flag which identifies with a specific date, historical event, cause, nation or group of people, whereby the City honors or commemorates the date, event, cause, nation or people by flying the flag.

"Sister City Flags" means the Sister Cities of the City of Sebastopol. The flags of the City of Sebastopol's Sister Cities ("Sister City Flags") may be displayed in accordance with this policy.

IV. STANDARDS

- A. Flags shall be displayed in accordance with Federal and State statutes and this Policy.
- B. Displaying the U.S. Flag and California Flag:

1. No other flag shall be placed above the U.S. Flag and no other flag shall be larger than the U.S. Flag. Other flags may be flown at the same height and in the same size, in accordance with this Policy. Where both the U.S. Flag and the California Flag are flown, they shall be of the same size.
2. Flags should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously. The U.S. Flag should be hoisted first and lowered last.
3. Flags shall be displayed during operating hours on all days on which the City is open for business, and on national and state holidays. Flags may be displayed twenty-four (24) hours a day as long as they are illuminated during darkness.
5. Flags shall not be displayed during inclement weather. However, all-weather flags may be displayed twenty-four (24) hours a day as long as they are illuminated during darkness.
6. The City shall display the U.S. Flag and the California Flag at City Facilities. The
7. U.S. Flag shall be displayed in the first position of honor. The California State Flag shall be placed in the second position of honor.
8. The authority of ordering flags flown at half-staff rests with the President of the United States, the Governor of the State of California, and the Sebastopol City Council. On behalf of the City Council, the Mayor may authorize flags to be lowered to half-staff. In the Mayor's absence, the City Manager, or his/her designee, may authorize the lowering. Upon issuance of a presidential or gubernatorial proclamation or order, the city will voluntarily comply with said proclamation, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor in consultation with the City Manager.
 - a) The flags may be displayed at half-staff upon the death of a government official or employee, past or present, in accordance with recognized customs or practices consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, and employee contracts.
 - b) The flags should first be hoisted quickly to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flags should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. 3
 - c) On Memorial Day, the flags should be displayed at half-staff until noon, then raised to the peak for the remainder of the day.
 - d) The flags, when flown at half-staff, will be flown from the time of death or the ordering to fly flags at half-staff until the time of interment, unless otherwise authorized by law or Presidential direction or order.
9. Whenever the U.S. Flag is flown at half-staff, all displayed flags shall also be flown at half-staff. When lowering a flag to half-staff, the flag shall first be hoisted to its peak for an instant and then lowered to half-staff. At the end of the day, the flag shall again be raised to its peak before being lowered for the day. If any other flag is flown at half-staff, the commemorative flag will also be flown at half-staff.

C. Displaying Commemorative Flags

1. Commemorative Flags must be either purchased by the City or temporarily donated for the City's use and must be clean, without holes and tears, and be made of an all-weather fabric.
2. Commemorative Flags must be the same size or smaller than the United States and California flags that are flown and must be below the California flag.

3. The City will not be responsible for the condition of the commemorative flag once flown.
4. Commemorative Flags shall be displayed for a period of time that is reasonable or customary, but no longer than thirty-one (31) continuous days
5. A “Commemorative Flag” shall be consistent with the City’s vision, mission and priorities.
6. The following commemorative flags are authorized as part of this policy during the time periods indicated:
 - a) Children’s Memorial Day (Fourth Friday in April);
 - b) Progressive Pride (Month of June);
 - c) Women’s Equality Day (Week of August 26);
 - d) Sebastopol World Friends (Week of August 21);
 - e) POW/MIA (Month of September).
7. The following are not allowed as Commemorative Flags and will not be considered by the City Council:
 - a) Flags of a particular religious movement or creed to avoid the appearance of City government endorsing religion or a particular religious movement or creed;
 - b) Flags of a political party to avoid the appearance of City government endorsing a political party; and flags advocating a certain outcome in an election.

V. REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR HANGING OF FLAGS AND BANNERS

The City’s flagpoles and light standards are not intended to serve as a forum for free expression by the public. The City shall display commemorative flags and banners (whether commemorative or an advertisement) only if authorized by the City Council as an expression of the City Council’s official sentiments. Any such authorization shall be given at a duly noticed meeting of the City Council, unless explicitly preapproved by this policy.

- A. Within Caltrans right of way (SR. 116 and SR 12).
 1. The request must be from a non-profit organization
 2. The request is subject to approval by the City Council, unless approved by this policy.
 3. The following banners are authorized as part of this policy:
 - a) 3rd of July Fireworks
 - b) Apple Blossom
 - c) Film Festival
 - d) Gravenstein Apple Fair
 - e) Ballet Nutcracker
 - f) Elder Abuse Awareness
 - g) Seasonal Happy Holidays
 - h) Experience Sebastopol
 4. Banners and flags must not contain private advertising whether in text or logo format.
 5. The banner must be of substantial material, such as cloth, canvas, or plastic.
 6. The lowest point of the banner or flag must be at least eighteen (18) feet above the highway pavement.
 7. Suspension or installation of banners or flags is prohibited on State-owned traffic signal poles or other State-owned facilities.

8. The applicant must apply for a City encroachment permit and pay applicable permit fees, unless otherwise waived by the City, and provide insurance for the hanging of the banners.
9. The display may be allowed two (2) weeks before the event and may remain in place for the duration of the event. However, the total period of display should not exceed six (6) weeks or as specified in Section VI, paragraph H, whichever is sooner. For additional requirements pertaining to banners on Public Light Standards, see Section VI of this Policy.
10. If any of these requirements cannot be met, the applicant shall apply for an encroachment permit directly with Caltrans and provide proof of approved Permit to City.
11. For more detailed information, see Caltrans Encroachment Permit Manual, Chapter 5, Specific Encroachment Permits at the following link: [Chapter_5.docx](#).
12. For additional requirements additional requirements pertaining to banners on Public Light Standards, see Section VI of this Policy.

B. Within City Street right of way.

1. Paragraphs A(1) through A(9) of Section V, shall apply.
2. For additional requirements pertaining to banners on Public Light Standards, see Section VI of this Policy.

C. City Facilities. Only the U.S. Flag and the State Flag can be displayed on the Corporation Yard and Police Station flagpoles. Commemorative Flags shall be displayed exclusively on the City Hall flagpole and shall not be displayed on other City facilities.

D. Flag Raising Ceremony Logistics. The Mayor is the organizing lead for flag raising ceremonies or if unavailable, the Vice Mayor (Organizing Lead). The Organizing Lead may also select a delegee from among the City Council to assist and shall inform the City Manager of the delegee. The Organizing Lead will coordinate with the City Manager's office to set the date and time of the ceremony, and be the lead for event coordination, including inviting speakers, providing any requested event information for public marketing. The Organizing Lead shall also inform the City Manager as soon as possible of any potential public safety issues as they become known.

E. Flag Raising Ceremonies are outdoor events held in in front of City Hall (7120 Bodega Avenue). Ceremonies are limited to one hour maximum and can accommodate approximately 30 people. Flag raising ceremonies shall make all efforts to be scheduled during normal City Hall working hours, at a date and time available to be supported by City staff.

F. Public Works Department shall maintain the flagpole located at City Hall and the Corporation Yard and the Police Department shall maintain the flagpole at the Police Station. Raising and lowering of flags shall be in accordance with City policies and/or Council resolution.

VI. ADDITIONAL POLICIES PERTAINING TO PUBLIC LIGHT STANDARDS

- A. The Public Works Department shall be responsible for installation and removal of banners of general seasonal or citywide interest ("Welcome to Sebastopol" or "Happy Holidays" for example).
- B. The time period between Thanksgiving and New Years shall be reserved for general holiday banners, as approved by the City Manager.
- C. Non-profit providing a public service may request the installation of banners on brackets not reserved for general interest banners for periods of up to thirty days, subject to approval by the City Council.
- D. Banner placement and removal by applicant shall require filing of appropriate encroachment permits, application fees, provision of insurance meeting City standards, and following installation and removal protocol established by the Public Works Department.
- E. Reservations for time period shall be on a first-come, first-serve basis with filing of a complete application being required to establish a reservation. All reservations are subject to the approval of the City Council to determine if the proposed banner is consistent with the City Council's official sentiments.
- F. A fee as outlined in the current and approved City Master Fee Schedule per banner installed shall be collected for banner bracket replacement/repair.
- G. Organizations installing banners shall also be responsible for their removal not later than thirty days from installation, or within seven days following any event advertised by the banners, whichever is sooner.
- H. Organizations installing banner shall not remove any existing banners without express written approval from the City.
- I. The application for banners shall include a drawing and description of the proposed banner.
- J. The size and materials of the banners shall conform to specifications of the Public Works Department, if not explicitly specified in this Policy.
- K. Banners installed in violation of these banner standards shall be subject to immediate removal by the City and may be subject to penalties, as authorized by applicable laws.
- L. The City Council welcomes donations for additional banner brackets in appropriate locations to allow expansion of the banner program.

This Policy supersedes Resolution 5737.