



City of Sebastopol Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: September 8, 2026
Agenda Item: 6A(ii)
To: Planning Commission
From: Eli Arreola, Associate Planner
Subject: Boards, Commissions, and Committees Handbook
Recommendation: Review draft handbook and provide comments for staff

Background:

City staff has developed a draft handbook (Attachment 1) for appointed members of the City of Sebastopol's standing boards, commissions, and committees. The handbook aims to explain how the Sebastopol government works, what different bodies are authorized to do, how meetings must be run, and the ethics and records rules that apply to members.

The handbook includes several tools for members, namely:

- A statement of purpose for each appointed body, and how to stay within the scope,
- An annual Work Plan cycle that the City Council can require or encourage,
- Public recruitment and onboarding practices,
- Training expectations and a staff-liaison checklist, and
- Reference sheets for the Brown Act and Form 700 & AB 1234.

Staff is gathering input from board, commission, and committee members before taking the handbook to City Council for approval.

Open Discussion:

This portion of the agenda item is envisioned as an open discussion for the Commission regarding the attached handbook.

Public Comment:

No public comments have been received as of the writing of this staff report.

Recommendation:

Staff requests that the Planning Commission provide comments on the draft handbook.

Attachments:

1. Draft Boards, Commissions, Committees and Citizen Appointments to Outside Agencies Member Handbook



City of Sebastopol

Boards, Commissions, Committees and Citizen Appointments to Outside Agencies

M E M B E R H A N D B O O K

A practical guide for appointed members of the City of Sebastopol's standing boards, commissions, and committees.

How to use this handbook

This handbook is the City’s reference guide for people appointed to standing boards, commissions, and committees. It explains how Sebastopol government works, what each body is authorized to do, how meetings must be run, and the ethics and records rules that apply even to unpaid volunteers.

Review Duties of Body Appointed to (Appendix B). Sign the acknowledgement in Appendix A and return it to the Department Staff Liaison before your first regular meeting.

Tools

This Handbook adds tools for appointed bodies:

- A clear statement of purpose for appointed bodies, and how to stay inside the scope.
- An annual work-plan cycle the Council can require or encourage.
- Public-recruitment and onboarding practices.
- Regular training expectations and a staff-liaison checklist.
- Quick-reference sheets for the Brown Act and Form 700 / AB 1234.

Not legal advice

This handbook is orientation, not a substitute for the Municipal Code, a Council resolution, or advice from the City Attorney. When a rule in the Code or a live resolution and this handbook differ, follow the Code or resolution and ask staff.

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1. How Sebastopol government works

Form of government

Sebastopol is a general-law city incorporated in 1902. It uses the Council–Manager form of government. Five Councilmembers are elected at large to staggered four-year terms. The Council selects a Mayor and Vice Mayor from its membership each year based upon City Council Protocols.

Who does what

- **City Council.** Sets policy and the budget, makes appointments, and is the final appeal authority unless state law says otherwise.
- **City Manager.** Runs day-to-day administration and assigns staff to appointed bodies.
- **City Attorney.** Advises the Council and appointed bodies. Advice is for the body as a whole, requested through staff or the Chair.
- **City Clerk.** Agendas and noticing support, Maddy Act local appointments list, Form 700 filing help, and custodian of this handbook.
- **Planning.** Staffs the Planning Commission, Design Review Board / Tree Board, Climate Action Committee, and Public Arts Committee.
- **Administrative Services and Public Works.** Primary support for the Enterprise Fund Oversight Committee and site/asset support for Building the Commons.

What appointed bodies are — and are not

Appointed bodies give the Council resident expertise and a public forum. They do not supervise staff or the City Manager. They do not speak for the City unless authorized. Recommendations go to the Council unless the Municipal Code grants the body final authority on a class of decisions.

Service is unpaid. Members serve at the pleasure of the City Council.

2. Purpose of appointed bodies

Municipal boards, commissions, committees and citizen appointments or liaison exist to help the governing body do three things well: study a subject in more detail than a Council agenda allows; bring professional or lived expertise into public view; and serve as a conduit between residents, staff, and the Council.

Used well, they produce a more engaged community and better Council decisions. Used poorly, they generate work the City cannot staff, blur who is in charge, or drift into advocacy the Council never authorized.

Decide first: advise or decide

Before a body acts, every member should be able to answer one question: does this body advise the Council, or does the Municipal Code give it final authority on this class of decision?

- **Advisory bodies** (Climate Action, Public Arts, Enterprise Fund Oversight, Building the Commons) recommend. They do not set rates, hire consultants, commit funds, or speak as the City.
- **Quasi-judicial bodies** (Planning Commission on many applications; Design Review Board / Tree Board on design and tree items) decide rights under the Code. Those hearings have extra rules on ex parte contacts and the record.

How a body is created

Sebastopol bodies are created in one of three ways. The method matters because it controls how the charge can be changed.

- **Required or shaped by state law.** Planning functions and open-meeting, ethics, and records rules come from California statutes. The Council cannot waive those.
- **Municipal Code.** Standing bodies with ongoing duties (Planning Commission, Design Review Board) live in the Code. Changing duties usually requires an ordinance.
- **Resolution or Council action.** Shorter-horizon or project bodies (Enterprise Fund Oversight by Resolution No. 6713-2025; Building the Commons by September 2, 2025 action and Resolution No. 6714-2025) can be adjusted by later Council action.

Ad hoc groups are different. Council may create an ad hoc group for a defined task and a sunset date. Whether the Brown Act applies depends on who sits on it and how long it lasts.

Three elements every body needs

Whether the enacting document is an ordinance, a resolution, or a later charter the Council approves, it should state three things:

- **Purpose.** What question is this body answering, for whom, and by when? Create specific, measurable products (an annual report, a work plan, a recommendation on a class of applications).
- **Membership.** Size (odd numbers avoid ties), categories or expertise, residency rules, term length, who appoints, whether a Council liaison sits on the body, and how vacancies are declared.
- **Procedure.** Quorum, officers (Chair or Vice Chair), how the agenda is built, and how recommendations travel to Council.

3. Sebastopol’s appointed bodies

Standing bodies covered by this handbook

Body	Size / term	Character	Staffed by
Planning Commission	5 members / 4-year terms	Advisory and quasi-judicial	Planning
Design Review Board / Tree Board	5 + alternate / 2-year terms	Quasi-judicial design and tree review	Planning
Public Arts Committee	5 members / 4-year terms	Advisory; 1% public-art review	Planning
Climate Action Committee	Council liaison + community / typically 2-year terms	Advisory; work plan to Council	Planning

Body	Size / term	Character	Staffed by
Enterprise Fund Oversight Committee	Up to 5 (1 Council + community) / 2-year terms	Advisory; Water and Wastewater funds	Admin. Services / Public Works
Building the Commons Committee	Up to 9 (2 Council + partner seats)	Advisory; concept, sites, funding path	Public Works

One-page fact sheets for each body are in Appendix B.

Council standing committees not covered here

Agenda Review, the Budget Committee, and most Councilmember seats on outside agencies follow City Council Policy No. 9 (annual Council and staff committee assignments). They are listed so members of City bodies know where a recommendation may go next. Enterprise Fund recommendations often travel to the Budget Committee and then to Council. Building the Commons reports quarterly straight to Council.

External-agency seats and community appointments

Council also appoints people — sometimes Councilmembers, sometimes community members — to boards that are not City bodies. Policy No. 9 and the approved Council and staff assignment roster (January 6, 2026, amended February 23, 2026) group those seats into types: a seat on another agency's governing board; a seat on an advisory committee of another agency; a liaison to a partner organization; City-created standing or ad hoc committees; and miscellaneous assignments. Most roster seats are filled by Councilmembers or staff. A smaller set is filled by community members. Those citizen seats, and their duties, are listed here.

Those appointees are not running a Sebastopol board. They sit under the other agency's statute, joint-powers agreement, bylaws, and meeting rules. They still serve at the pleasure of the Sebastopol City Council, and they still owe Council a report. Member duties for every citizen seat — City bodies and outside appointments — are listed in Appendix G.

Duties of a Council-appointed community member

- Learn the scope of the outside body before the first meeting: governing or advisory, what it can decide, and what it can only recommend.
- Prepare and attend. The other agency's quorum and notice rules apply to that body, not Sebastopol's handbook, except that a Sebastopol appointee must still avoid committing City funds, staff time, or policy.
- Represent Sebastopol's appointment without forgetting the body's own mission. On a countywide board, vote in the interest of that agency as a whole while making sure Sebastopol's needs are on the table.
- Act as a conduit: carry local concerns (and, where one exists, advice from a local advisory board) to the outside body, and carry that body's decisions and risks back to Council.
- Give Council a periodic or annual update — in writing or on a Council agenda — on the agency's finances, major decisions, and effects on Sebastopol. Do not wait to be asked when something will bind the City or change a local facility.

- Stay inside the appointment. Do not speak as the City, use City letterhead for personal views, or treat City staff as the outside agency's staff.
- Ask the City Clerk on day one whether the City's Conflict of Interest Code or ask the other agency's code if it requires Form 700 or ethics training for the seat.
- Resign in writing to the Clerk if you cannot serve. Council may remove its appointee.

Citizen seat	Kind of body	Typical term / notes
Sonoma County Library Commission	Governing board of the Library JPA	4 years; voting member; report annually to Council
Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District Board of Trustees	Separate special-district governing board	City has typically appointed for 2 years; currently vacant
Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CBPAC)	Advisory to SCTA on TDA Article 3 and the county bike/ped plan	Citizen representative alongside Planning staff
SCTA/RCPA Climate Action Advisory Committee citizen liaison	Advisory citizen input on climate implementation	Vacant

Councilmember and staff seats on SCTA, RCPA, Sonoma Clean Power, Zero Waste Sonoma, CIRA/REMIF, the Santa Rosa Plain GSA, RRWA, and similar agencies are assigned each year under Policy No. 9.

Sonoma County Library Commission (City appointment)

Under the Sonoma County Library Joint Powers Agreement, each member city — including Sebastopol — appoints one voting commissioner to the 11-member Library Commission. The Commission is the governing body of the countywide library system. It is not an advisory committee. Its role relative to the Library is the role the City Council plays relative to the City: policy, budget, and hiring and evaluating the Library Director.

The Sebastopol-appointed commissioner typically serves a four-year term, at the will of the City Council. Applicants need not live inside city limits; they may live in the greater Sebastopol area or elsewhere in Sonoma County. The Commission usually meets monthly. The commissioner is also the Commission's liaison to the Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board and may be named to Commission subcommittees (finance, advocacy, director evaluation).

Sebastopol's recruiting materials add local duties on top of the Commission's job description such as: advocate for the Sebastopol Regional Library (facility, staffing, programming, access, and a fair share of system resources); carry LAB feedback and local data to the Commission; and report at least annually to Council, with the Council's library liaison, on the Library's finances, operations, and community impact.

Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board (not a City body)

The Library Advisory Board — sometimes called the Library Advisory Committee — advises the Library Commission and the Library Director on service at the Sebastopol Regional Library. The Library Commission appoints LAB members; the City Council does not. Council does appoint one Councilmember as a non-voting ex-officio liaison to the LAB. Friends of the Library and the branch manager also sit ex officio. LAB members who want a City handbook for meetings and ethics may use this one as orientation, but their appointing authority and bylaws are the Library's.

Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District Board of Trustees

The District is a separate special district that protects public health from mosquitoes and vector-borne disease using integrated vector management. It has its own staff, budget, and facilities. Each city or the County appoints a trustee who lives in that jurisdiction. Trustees serve without compensation and may receive an expense allowance not to exceed \$100 per month under Health and Safety Code section 2030(b). They receive no benefits.

Sebastopol's seat is a Council or citizen appointment. The City has typically appointed for two years; currently the seat is vacant. The Board meets at 7:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at District headquarters, 595 Helman Lane, Cotati (or by Zoom). Meetings are noticed under the Brown Act.

Trustee duties: set District policy; oversee the District manager and budget; represent Sebastopol residents' health and environmental concerns on the Board; attend regular and special meetings; and report to Council when District actions, assessments, or service levels will affect the City. The trustee does not direct City staff and does not speak as the City.

Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CBPAC)

CBPAC advises the Sonoma County Transportation Authority on Transportation Development Act Article 3 funds and on coordination of bicycle and pedestrian planning. It maintains and updates the countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and recommends the annual TDA Article 3 program of projects. The emphasis is facilities for bicycle commuters, not only recreation.

Sebastopol's assignment is mixed: Planning staff sit on the committee, and Council has also appointed a citizen representative (Gavin Waters). Meetings are on fourth Tuesdays of alternate months at 1:30 p.m. at the Sonoma County Transportation office.

Citizen-representative duties: prepare and attend; review project proposals and the master plan with a Sebastopol and West County eye; help staff prioritize a project list; report to the Planning liaison and, as needed, to Council when a recommendation would change local streets, paths, or the City's grant position. The seat is advisory to SCTA. It does not commit City funds or program the City's own Capital Improvement Program.

SCTA/RCPA Climate Action Advisory Committee — citizen liaison

This is a citizen seat meant to give expert community input on implementation of climate-action initiatives to SCTA/RCPA, separate from the Councilmember who sits on the SCTA and RCPA boards (those two boards share a representative). The citizen liaison seat is currently vacant. Council was in consensus that the SCTA/RCPA Council liaison would appoint per that committee's charter, and later postponed recruitment.

If filled, the liaison's duties are to prepare for that advisory committee's meetings, carry Sebastopol climate-plan and Climate Action Committee work into the county conversation, and report back to the Council SCTA/RCPA representative and to staff. The liaison does not replace the City's Climate Action Committee and does not speak as the City.

Reporting paths

Body	Primary product	Goes first to
Planning Commission / DRB	Decisions and recommendations on applications; policy referrals	Codified path (such as use permit)/ Council on appeal or referral
Public Arts Committee	Art and in-lieu recommendations	Council
Climate Action Committee	Work plan and policy recommendations	Council
Enterprise Fund Oversight	June annual report; cost-allocation and rate advice	Often Budget Committee, then Council
Building the Commons	Quarterly report and concept package	Council directly

Ad hoc committees

An ad hoc committee is a temporary group created for a single, defined task and a sunset date. It is not a standing body. When the task is done — or the sunset arrives — the group dissolves. Council may convert leftover work into a standing body, as it did when the Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc was dissolved and Building the Commons was created.

What an ad hoc is for

Use an ad hoc when the question is short-horizon and specific. Do not use an ad hoc as a standing committee under another name. If the charge is “parks issues on an ongoing basis,” or the group has a fixed meeting calendar set by Council, it is a standing committee — even if someone called it an ad hoc.

How Council creates one

Council creates an ad hoc by motion or resolution. The creating action should state, in writing:

- The exact question or product (one report, one recommendation, one set of interviews).
- The staff liaison and which department pays the staff hours.
- The sunset date, or the event that ends the group (“upon delivery of the report to Council”).

Without a written charge and a sunset, an “ad hoc” will drift into continuing subject-matter jurisdiction and should be noticed as a standing body.

When the Brown Act applies

The working rule in Government Code section 54952(b) is:

- **Often exempt.** A temporary advisory group made up solely of less than a quorum of the parent body (for City Council, two Councilmembers), with a limited task and no fixed meeting schedule set by formal action, is generally not a legislative body. It does not have to post an agenda or take public comment. It is still advisory only. It cannot take action for the City.
- **Covered.** The Act applies if the group includes anyone who is not a member of the parent body (residents, partner-organization seats, or other appointed officials sitting as members); if it has continuing subject-matter jurisdiction; or if Council fixes a meeting schedule. A standing subcommittee of a majority of a board or commission is also a Brown Act body.

- **Covered if a majority of a standing body is named to it.** Do not staff an “ad hoc” with three Planning Commissioners and treat it as private. That is a meeting of a majority of the Commission.

Members, staff, and product

- Ad hoc members serve at the pleasure of the Council, without compensation, and do not supervise staff.
- If the group is Brown Act–covered, follow the same way a standing body would.
- If the group is Council-only and treated as exempt, members must still avoid creating a serial meeting of a Council majority. Two Councilmembers may talk; a third may not be looped in on the same deliberation.
- Staff may support an ad hoc — prepare materials, take notes, schedule rooms — without becoming a voting member. Adding staff or residents as members is what usually triggers noticing.
- The product is a recommendation or report. An ad hoc does not set policy, hire consultants, commit funds, select a site, or speak as the City unless Council has authorized a specific statement.

Sunset and what happens next

Write the end into the creating action. Typical ends: a calendar date, delivery of a named report, or Council’s receipt of a recommendation. If work remains, Council should either extend the sunset in public or create a standing body with a new charge. Do not let an expired ad hoc keep meeting.

Sebastopol example: the Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc ended when Council created Sebastopol Commons: Committee for Building the Commons (September 2, 2025; composition revised by Resolution No. 6714-2025). Building the Commons is a standing advisory committee with a project clock and a current sunset of September 30, 2026. It is not an ad hoc, and it is noticed.

Ad hoc groups created by a board or commission

A standing body may ask Council, or in some cases act itself, to name a less-than-quorum work group for one finite task (for example, two Planning Commissioners asked to tour a site and report back). A standing subcommittee of a majority, or any work group given ongoing jurisdiction, must be posted.

4. Appointment, term, and leaving office

How vacancies are filled

- The City publishes a local appointments list under the Maddy Act (Government Code section 54972), typically each December.
- Applicants use the current City application for the body (Planning Department or City Clerk).
- The Council interviews and appoints by majority vote. Interviews in open session let the Council talk in public about the body’s purpose and set expectations from day one.

Public recruitment

- Post the Maddy list each December as well as post each opening on the City website, at City Hall, and through partner organizations tied to the body's charge (arts nonprofits, climate groups, business associations, neighborhood groups).
- State the body's purpose and the time commitment in the recruitment notice, not only the legal categories.
- Invite a diverse pool.
- Keep applications simple and offer help from the Department Staff Liaison.

Terms

Terms overlap and stagger as set in the Municipal Code or the appointing resolution. Two- and four-year terms are the local pattern. There is no compensation. Reappointment is not automatic.

Eligibility

Each body has its own residency, professional, or partner-organization rules. All members serve at the pleasure of the Council.

Vacancies, resignation, and removal

- Resign in writing to the Clerk or staff liaison.
- The Council may remove a member.

New-member checklist

- Sign the handbook acknowledgement (Appendix A) and return it to the City Clerk before your first regular meeting.
- Complete ethics training (AB 1234) within the required window if the seat is covered. File the certificate with Administrative Services.
- File Form 700 if the Conflict of Interest Code lists the seat. Ask the Clerk on day one.
- Learn the meeting location (City Hall conference room, 7120 Bodega Avenue, or Youth Annex, 425 Morris Street) and hybrid / Zoom instructions.
- Read the fact sheet for your body and the current work plan or resolution before the first meeting.
- Meet the staff liaison. Individual members do not direct other City employees.

5. Roles and working relationships

Role of board, commission, and committee members

A member's role is to bring independent judgment, local knowledge, and the time to study an issue that a Council agenda cannot hold — and to do that work in public, inside the charge Council gave the body. Members are public officials for meetings and ethics purposes even when unpaid. They prepare for

meetings, hear the public, debate the item in front of them, and either decide the matter (when the Municipal Code gives the body that authority) or send a clear recommendation to Council.

The role is not to manage the City. Members do not supervise the City Manager or staff, assign work to individual employees, commit funds or staff hours, or speak as the City unless Council has authorized a specific statement. Service is a public trust held at the pleasure of the Council, without compensation. The value of the seat is the quality of the advice or the decision — not the title.

Every member

- Prepare. Read the packet.
- Stay inside the body's charge and the posted agenda.
- Treat applicants, colleagues, staff, and the public with respect.
- Send operational complaints to staff, not to individual employees in public.
- Attend. Send regrets to the liaison as early as possible.

Chair and Vice Chair

The body usually elects officers annually. The Chair runs the meeting, keeps to the agenda, and recognizes speakers. The Chair works with the staff liaison on agenda order. The Chair does not supervise staff.

Staff liaison

The liaison prepares the agenda and staff reports and gives a professional recommendation. Individual members do not direct staff between meetings. Document requests go through the designated liaison.

Staff may brief members separately. Staff may not carry one member's position to a majority of the body — that is a serial meeting.

Council liaison

Some bodies include a Councilmember (Climate Action, Enterprise Fund Oversight, Building the Commons). That seat links the two bodies. It does not turn the committee into a second Council, and it does not let the committee instruct the rest of the Council off-agenda.

Speaking for the City

A member may say they serve on a named body but should not, unless authorized, speak on behalf of the City. A member may not commit City funds, staff time, or policy, and may not use City letterhead or the City logo for personal views.

6. Meetings and procedure

Ralph M. Brown Act

Appointed boards, commissions, and standing committees of the City are legislative bodies under the Brown Act (Government Code section 54950 and following).

- **Regular meetings:** post the agenda at least 72 hours in advance, at City Hall and online as the City practices.
- **Special meetings:** at least 24 hours' notice to members and the public; limited to listed items.
- **Agenda limit:** the body acts only on posted items, except as the Act allows for brief responses and referrals.
- **Serial meetings:** a majority must not deliberate by daisy-chain emails, texts, reply-all, or hub-and-spoke conversations through staff or a Chair.
- **Public comment:** on agenda items and, for regular meetings, on matters in the body's subject matter. Follow City Council Policy for Public Comments unless the body has adopted a consistent local practice.
- **Writings:** documents distributed to a majority are generally public.

Quorum

A majority of the body as established by code or resolution. No action without a quorum. A quorum is a majority of appointed regular members.

Parliamentary authority

Sebastopol bodies should use Robert's Rules of Order unless Council adopts something else. Basic flow: motion, second, discussion, vote.

Agendas, packets, and minutes

Staff builds the agenda with the Chair. Packets post with the agenda. Members should not circulate side materials to a majority off-agenda. Minutes are action minutes. The body approves minutes.

Subcommittees and site visits

A standing subcommittee of a majority is a Brown Act body.

Hybrid and livestream practice

The City commonly uses in-person meetings plus Zoom. If a member appears from a remote location under current teleconference rules, notice requirements may change for that meeting.

Quasi-judicial hearings

On Planning Commission and Design Review items that decide rights, avoid ex parte contacts. If a contact occurs, disclose it on the record before the hearing.

7. Ethics, conflicts, and records

Public official status

Appointed members are public officials for meetings and ethics purposes even when unpaid.

Political Reform Act and Form 700

If the City's Conflict of Interest Code lists the seat, the member files Form 700 with the Clerk. Members will receive a conflict of interest form if required to file. Typical filings are an assuming-office statement, an annual statement, and a leaving-office statement.

Do not vote on or influence a matter in which you have a disqualifying financial interest. Recuse, leave the dais, and have the recusal noted in the minutes. When in doubt, recuse and ask for written advice from the City Attorney or the Fair Political Practices Commission.

AB 1234 ethics training

Members of bodies covered by AB 1234 complete the required ethics course and file the certificate with the Administrative Services Department.

Public records

Emails and texts about City business can be public records, including on a personal device. Social media posts about City business can be records. Do not delete messages that are records. Staff stores, retains, and produces City-held records; members should copy the liaison rather than run a private archive of City work.

Social media and gifts

Personal posts are personal. Do not deliberate with a majority of the body in comments or direct messages. Follow FPPC gift limits.

Use of office

Do not use the appointed seat to obtain a financial advantage that would not otherwise be available. Do not use City letterhead, logo, or email for personal campaigns or private business.

8. How work gets done

Stay inside the scope of duties defined for that body.

Annual work plan

A simple annual cycle keeps advisory bodies aligned with Council:

- The body drafts a one- to three-page work plan: last year's results, this year's products, and any metric of public participation it will track.
- Council reviews the plan, may add referrals, and either accepts it or sends it back.
- The body works the plan. Mid-year course corrections go through the liaison, not through side conversations with individual Councilmembers.

A recommendation does not create a project.

Recommendations

Use a clear motion and record the vote. Staff restates the motion and vote. The body does not lobby Council as a bloc outside noticed meetings.

9. Conduct

- Be civil to colleagues, staff, applicants, and commenters.
- Do not use City letterhead, logo, or email for personal campaigns.
- Attend and prepare. Send regrets to the liaison as early as possible.
- If you are an applicant or appellant, follow recusal rules.
- Do not surprise the body or staff with off-agenda materials sent to a majority.
- Repeated violations may be referred to Council.

Civility is not a courtesy overlay on the real work. On a five-member body, one member who lectures, ambushes staff, or treats public comment as optional can stop the body from finishing its charge.

10. Practice tools

The items in this section are recommended practice.

Regular training

New members should receive orientation before or at the first meeting: this handbook, the fact sheet, Brown Act and public-records basics, and how packets and hybrid meetings work. City staff shall conduct in person orientation with new members and refresh training when the law or the body's charge changes.

Staff liaison handbook duties

An effective body is a three-way coordination among Council, the appointed members, and staff. Liaisons should:

- Make sure required meetings occur and are properly noticed.
- Build the agenda with the Chair.
- Arrange in-person and virtual access, recording or minutes, and packet posting.
- Research issues and prepare alternatives and a staff recommendation.
- Carry the body's recommendations to the next stop (Budget Committee, Council, or the codified path).
- Help the body keep an annual work plan current.
- Never shuttle positions among a majority of members.

When to ask the City Attorney

- Before treating any group as exempt from the Brown Act.
- When a member is unsure whether a financial interest requires recusal.

- When a serial-communication or social-media thread may have become a meeting.
- When a body wants to speak publicly as the City.

DRAFT

Appendix A. Acknowledgement of receipt

I acknowledge that I was given the City of Sebastopol Boards, Commissions, and Committees Handbook upon appointment (or reappointment).

I have reviewed the handbook, including the fact sheet for the body on which I serve. I understand that I am a public official for meetings and ethics purposes; that I must follow the Brown Act and the Public Records Act; and that I must complete ethics training and conflict-of-interest filings if my seat requires them.

I understand that I serve at the pleasure of the City Council, without compensation, and that I do not supervise City staff.

Name (print): _____

Body: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Return this page to the Department Staff Liaison before your first regular meeting.

Appendix B. Committee fact sheets

Confirm meeting time, location, current size, and category rules on the posted agenda and the live Maddy Act list. Where recruitment materials have varied, the sheet says so.

B-1. Planning Commission

Type	Advisory and quasi-judicial
Authority	City Council appointment; land-use ordinances including General Plan, zoning, subdivisions, cultural heritage (see Title 17)
Size / term	Five members / four-year terms
Eligibility	Residents of the City; or City business owners who live in Twin Hills, Sebastopol Union, or Gravenstein Union school districts; up to one additional person from those district areas. A majority must live inside city limits at all times.
Meetings	Second and fourth Tuesdays, typically 6:00 p.m. (confirm current location: Youth Annex or as posted)
Staff	Planning / Community Development · (707) 823-6167
Quorum	Majority of the five seats

Duties

- Recommend General Plan, zoning, subdivision, and related ordinance changes to Council.
- Review use permits, variances, subdivisions, and similar applications as assigned by code.
- Carry cultural-heritage duties assigned in the Municipal Code.
- The Planning Commission has also been used as the City's parks-related forum for some master-plan work.

B-2. Design Review Board / Tree Board

Type	Quasi-judicial
Authority	Sebastopol Municipal Code Chapter 2.32; tree duties under Chapter 8.12
Size / term	Five members plus an alternate / two-year staggered terms
Categories	A: two persons, including if possible a licensed architect and a licensed landscape architect. B: architect, landscape architect, building designer, or contractor. C/D: other members. Council may appoint outside category if no suitable applicant is available (SMC 2.32.020).
Meetings	Typically fourth Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. (confirm posted agenda)
Staff	Planning / Community Development
Quorum	Majority of appointed regular members (confirm alternate voting rules with liaison)

Duties

- Review design of qualifying new development and exterior modifications.
- Review signs, landscaping, and lighting as they relate to development.
- Sit as Tree Board for commercial and multi-family tree removals under Chapter 8.12.

B-3. Public Arts Committee

Type	Advisory, with review of public-art and in-lieu proposals
Authority	Municipal Code public-art provisions (1 percent of qualifying commercial or industrial construction; art on municipal property)
Size / term	Five members / staggered terms (confirm current length on Maddy list)
Categories	Arts nonprofit; public-art practitioner; general public; a Design Review Board member — confirm live resolution text
Meetings	Typically second Tuesday every other month, 1:00–3:00 p.m.
Staff	Planning / Community Development

Duties

- Review owner-commissioned public art and in-lieu payments into the Public Art Fund.
- Advise on art installed on municipal property.
- Recommend program and site priorities to Council.

B-4. Climate Action Committee

Type	Advisory
Authority	Council-created standing committee; Climate Action Framework and related Council direction
Size / term	Currently structured as one Councilmember plus community members (youth seat 17–23); terms commonly two years. Confirm live size — recruitment materials have varied.
Categories	Climate background, youth, business, local climate group, environmental justice and equity, rights of nature, energy, transportation. Residents of the City and of the 95472 zip have been used in recruitments.
Meetings	As posted (often weekday afternoon; hybrid)
Staff	Planning · ClimateActionCommittee@cityofsebastopol.gov

Duties

- Prepare and maintain a work plan for Council approval.
- Advise on updates to the Climate Action Plan / Framework and Climate Emergency items.
- Recommend education, events, and code or program changes within staff capacity.

B-5. Enterprise Fund Oversight Committee

Type	Standing advisory committee
Authority	Resolution No. 6713-2025
Size / term	No more than five members / two-year terms expiring January 31; one renewal allowed; Council may stagger initial terms
Seats	One Councilmember; at least one city business owner or representative; at least two city residents engaged in City governance; at least one person with accounting, auditing, or financial expertise (residency may be waived for that seat)
Meetings	As posted; hybrid practice in use

Staff	City Manager, Administrative Services Director, Public Works Director
Authority limit	Advisory only. No power to set rates, approve budgets, direct staff, or bind the City.

Duties

- Review Enterprise Fund budgets and financial reports (Water and Wastewater first).
- Analyze rate studies and rate proposals, including cost-allocation methods.
- Evaluate CIPs, master plans, and long-term forecasts for those funds.
- Engage the public and ratepayers.
- Submit an annual report to Council in early June, before the next fiscal year budget is adopted.

B-6. Sebastopol Commons: Committee for Building the Commons

Official name	Sebastopol Commons: Committee for Building the Commons
Type	Standing advisory committee with a project clock
Authority	Council action September 2, 2025; composition revised by Resolution No. 6714-2025
Predecessor	Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc (dissolved when this body was created)
Size	No more than nine members; two Councilmembers plus named partner-organization seats
Eligibility	Age 18+; live or have a business in Sebastopol, or work for a listed organization
Meetings	Typically about the second Tuesday, City Hall conference room; hybrid when teleconference rules apply
Staff	City Manager's Office and Public Works
Sunset	Current sunset September 30, 2026. Original window pointed to about June 30, 2026. Update this line whenever Council acts.
Authority limit	Advisory only. No power to select a site, hire consultants, acquire property, or speak as the City unless authorized.

Duties

- Give the Commons concept an actionable definition (civic hub inside city limits serving Sebastopol and West County).
- Assess partner and community needs.
- Compare location options (new build vs. reuse).
- Sketch a funding plan (grants, foundations, public-private).
- Define the scope of a later feasibility study — this Committee does not complete CEQA or design.
- Submit a written quarterly report to the City Council.

B-7. Sonoma County Library Commission (City appointment)

Type	External governing board (Library JPA) — not a City body
Authority	Sonoma County Library Joint Powers Agreement; each member city appoints one voting commissioner
Size / term	11 commissioners countywide; Sebastopol seat is one vote / typically four-year term (e.g., July 1, 2026–June 30, 2030)

Eligibility	Not required to live inside city limits; may live in the City, greater Sebastopol area, or elsewhere in Sonoma County
Meetings	Usually monthly, plus special meetings and Commission subcommittees as assigned
Local liaison duty	Ex-officio liaison to the Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board
Appointment	City Council; serves at the pleasure of the Council
Staff / contact	Sonoma County Library administration; City Clerk for the City appointment
Authority limit	Governs the Library, not the City. May not commit City funds, staff time, or City policy.

Duties

- Sit as a voting member of the Library Commission: policy, budget, and hire/evaluate the Library Director.
- Govern in the interest of the countywide system while advocating for the Sebastopol Regional Library (facility, staffing, programming, access, equity of resources).
- Carry Sebastopol community concerns and Library Advisory Board feedback to the Commission.
- Attend LAB meetings as the Commission liaison.
- Report at least annually to the City Council, with the Council library liaison, on Library finances, operations, strategy, and local impact.

B-8. Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board

Type	Library advisory board for the Sebastopol Regional Library — not a City body
Authority	Created by the Sonoma County Library Commission; LAB bylaws
Size / term	Up to 11 voting members / typically four-year terms; one youth member (shorter term)
Who appoints	Library Commission appoints voting members. City Council appoints only a non-voting ex-officio Council liaison.
Meetings	Second Wednesday of even months, 4:30 p.m., Sebastopol Regional Library, 7140 Bodega Avenue
Ex-officio seats	Library Commissioner liaison; City Council liaison; Friends of the Library; branch manager

Duties

- Advise the Library Commission and Library Director on service at the Sebastopol Regional Library.
- Bring branch-area public input to the Commission. The LAB has no decision-making authority.
- A City Council liaison attends to keep Council informed; that seat does not vote on the LAB.

B-9. Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District — Trustee

Type	Separate special-district governing board — not a City body
Authority	Health and Safety Code mosquito and vector control district law; city council appointment of a resident trustee
Term	City has typically appointed for two years; current term ends December 31, 2026
Status (Feb. 23, 2026 roster)	Citizen appointment vacant; recruitment open; no applications received as of that date
Meetings	Second Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., District HQ, 595 Helman Lane, Cotati (or Zoom)

Compensation	None. Expense allowance not to exceed \$100/month (H&S Code § 2030(b)). No benefits.
Staff / contact	District staff; City Clerk for the City appointment

Duties

- Set District policy and oversee the District manager and budget.
- Represent Sebastopol residents on mosquito and vector-borne disease control, using environmentally responsible integrated vector management.
- Attend regular and special Brown Act meetings.
- Report to Council when assessments, service levels, or District actions will affect the City.

B-10. Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Type	Advisory to SCTA — not a City body
Authority	SCTA / TDA Article 3 program; countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
Sebastopol seats	Planning staff plus a citizen representative (Gavin Waters on the Feb. 23, 2026 roster)
Meetings	Fourth Tuesdays of alternate months, 1:30 p.m., Sonoma County Transportation office
City department	Planning

Duties

- Advise SCTA on TDA Article 3 funds and bike/ped planning.
- Help maintain and update the countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.
- Review project proposals and help prioritize a program of projects, with attention to commuter facilities.
- Keep the Planning liaison and Council informed when a recommendation would change Sebastopol streets, paths, or grant position.

B-11. SCTA/RCPA Climate Action Advisory Committee — citizen liaison

Type	Countywide advisory citizen seat — not a City body
Authority	SCTA/RCPA committee charter; City assignment roster
Status (Feb. 23, 2026 roster)	Vacant. Council consensus was that the SCTA/RCPA Council liaison would appoint per the charter; recruitment later postponed.
Related City seats	The Councilmember on SCTA and RCPA is a separate, elected-official appointment (same person on both boards).
City department	Public Works

Duties

- Give expert citizen input on implementation of climate-action initiatives.
- Carry Sebastopol Climate Action Committee work into the county conversation.
- Report to the Council SCTA/RCPA representative and to staff.
- Do not replace the City Climate Action Committee or speak as the City.

Appendix C. Brown Act — rule of thumb

Topic	Rule of thumb
Regular agenda	Post 72 hours before the meeting, at City Hall and online as the City practices.
Special meeting	24-hour notice to members and the public; limited to listed items.
Action	If it is not on the agenda, do not act, except as the Act narrowly allows.
Serial meeting	No majority deliberation outside a noticed meeting — including email and text.
Staff briefing	Staff may brief members separately; staff may not carry positions among a majority.
Public comment	See City Council Policy for Public Comments.
Documents	Writings distributed to a majority are generally public.
Remote member	Follow the teleconference statute in effect on that date; extra posting may apply.
Ad hoc (Council-only, < quorum, one task, no fixed calendar)	May be exempt from posting. Confirm with the City Attorney before skipping notice.
Ad hoc that includes residents or other non-members	Treat as a Brown Act body. Post and take comment.

Appendix D. Ethics and Form 700 checklist

- Ask the Clerk on day one: Does this seat file Form 700? Is AB 1234 required?
- Assuming-office statement, annual statement, and leaving-office statement — if designated.
- File certificates of ethics training with the Administrative Services Department.
- When in doubt about a conflict, recuse and ask for written advice.
- Do not accept gifts over the FPPC limit from a source with business before your body.
- Treat emails, texts, and posts about City business as potential public records, including on a personal device.

DRAFT

Appendix E. Sample annual work-plan outline

1. Charge/Duties of the Body

2. Last year's results

- What the body delivered.
- What it started and did not finish, and why (staff capacity, waiting on Council, waiting on a study).

3. This year's work

- For each: the question, the product (memo, recommendation, report), the month it should reach Council, and the staff hours it will take if known.

4. Public engagement

- How the body will hear from people who do not already attend.

5. What the body will not do

A short list is as useful as the to-do list. Example: "This committee will not select a site, hire a consultant, or complete CEQA."

6. Council referrals

Leave a blank for items Council adds when it reviews the plan.

Appendix F. Duties of every citizen seat

This appendix is the member-duty list for every seat a community member can hold by City Council appointment. Body-level duties remain in Appendix B. Councilmember and staff seats on SCTA, RCPA, Sonoma Clean Power, Zero Waste Sonoma, CIRA/REMIF, and similar agencies are assigned under Policy No. 9 and are not listed here.

Every citizen appointee, on every seat below, also does the following: prepare and attend; stay inside the charge; treat the public and staff with respect; recuse on a disqualifying conflict; avoid serial meetings; not supervise staff; not commit City funds, staff time, or policy; not speak as the City unless authorized; and serve at the pleasure of the Council without compensation (except the mosquito-district expense allowance allowed by statute).

City standing bodies

Planning Commission

- Read the packet before each meeting (typically second and fourth Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.).
- On applications, decide the item under Title 17 and the General Plan; build a record; disclose any ex parte contact before the hearing.
- On policy, recommend General Plan, zoning, subdivision, and cultural-heritage changes to Council.
- Do not lobby Council as a bloc off-agenda. Transmit recommendations through staff.

Design Review Board / Tree Board

- Review design, signs, landscaping, and lighting on qualifying projects, and sit as Tree Board on commercial and multi-family tree removals under Chapter 8.12.
- Apply the categories and findings in Municipal Code Chapter 2.32. Confirm alternate voting rules with the liaison.
- Avoid ex parte contacts on quasi-judicial items; disclose any contact on the record.
- Meet typically the fourth Tuesday at 3:30 p.m.

Public Arts Committee

- Review owner-commissioned public art and in-lieu payments into the Public Art Fund (1 percent of qualifying commercial or industrial construction).
- Advise on art on municipal property and recommend program and site priorities to Council.
- Meet typically the second Tuesday every other month, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Climate Action Committee

- Prepare and keep a work plan for Council approval.
- Advise on the Climate Action Plan / Framework and Climate Emergency items.
- Recommend education, events, and code or program changes that fit staff capacity. A recommendation does not create a project.
- Youth members (17–23) have the same meeting and ethics duties as other members, within the seat's eligibility rules.

Enterprise Fund Oversight Committee

- Review Water and Wastewater budgets and financial reports.
- Analyze rate studies, cost-allocation methods, CIPs, master plans, and long-term forecasts.
- Engage ratepayers and the public.
- Submit the annual report to Council in early June, usually through the Budget Committee. Advisory only — no rate-setting, budget approval, or direction of staff.

Building the Commons Committee

- Give the Commons concept an actionable definition (civic hub inside city limits serving Sebastopol and West County).
- Assess partner and community needs; compare new-build vs. reuse; sketch a funding path; define the scope of a later feasibility study.
- Submit a written quarterly report to Council.
- Do not select a site, hire consultants, acquire property, complete CEQA or design, or speak as the City unless authorized. Watch the sunset (September 30, 2026, unless Council extends it).

External citizen appointments

Sonoma County Library Commission

- Sit as Sebastopol's voting member on the 11-member Library JPA governing board.
- Share in Commission duties: library policy, annual budget, and hiring and evaluating the Library Director.
- Advocate for the Sebastopol Regional Library (facility, staffing, programming, access, equity of system resources) while governing in the interest of the countywide system.
- Attend monthly Commission meetings and any assigned Commission subcommittee.
- Serve as the Commission's liaison to the Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board and carry LAB feedback to the Commission.
- Report at least annually to City Council, with the Council library liaison, on Library finances, operations, strategy, and local impact.

Marin/Sonoma Mosquito & Vector Control District — Trustee

- Sit as Sebastopol's resident trustee on the District Board (separate special district; own staff, budget, and facilities).
- Set District policy; oversee the District manager and budget; use environmentally responsible integrated vector management.
- Attend regular meetings (second Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Cotati headquarters or Zoom) and noticed special meetings.
- Represent local health and environmental concerns; report to Council when assessments, service levels, or District actions will affect the City.
- Serve without pay; expense allowance only, not to exceed \$100 per month (Health and Safety Code § 2030(b)).

Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

- Sit as the City’s citizen representative alongside Planning staff.
- Advise SCTA on TDA Article 3 funds and countywide bicycle and pedestrian planning.
- Help maintain the countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan; review proposals; help prioritize a program of projects, with attention to commuter facilities.
- Flag effects on Sebastopol streets, paths, and grant position to the Planning liaison and, as needed, to Council.
- Do not commit City CIP funds or speak as the City.

SCTA/RCPA Climate Action Advisory Committee — citizen liaison

- Give expert citizen input on implementation of climate-action initiatives (seat vacant and recruitment postponed on the February 23, 2026 roster — confirm before serving).
- Carry City Climate Action Committee work into the county conversation.
- Report to the Councilmember who sits on SCTA and RCPA, and to Public Works staff.
- Do not replace the City Climate Action Committee, sit as the City’s SCTA/RCPA board member, or speak as the City.

Related seats that are not City citizen appointments

- **Sebastopol Regional Library Advisory Board.** Voting members are appointed by the Library Commission, not the City Council. Duties: advise the Commission and Library Director on the Sebastopol branch; bring service-area input; no decision-making authority. Council appoints only a non-voting ex-officio liaison.
- **Policy No. 9 Councilmember and staff seats.** SCTA, RCPA, Sonoma Clean Power, Zero Waste Sonoma, CIRA/REMIF, Santa Rosa Plain GSA, RRWA, and similar assignments are filled by elected officials or employees, not community members.