



City of Sebastopol
Planning Department

Date: August 11, 2026
To: Climate Action Committee
From: Victoria Henkel, Permit Technician
Subject: Lowering the Age of Youth Applicants Discussion and Action

Background:

The Climate Action Committee (CAC) consists of seven (7) members, including one (1) City Councilmember and six (6) community members. Committee membership is intended to reflect a range of experience and perspectives related to climate action, sustainability, and community engagement. Membership categories include:

- One (1) City Councilmember
- Youth Representative (currently ages 17–23)
- Climate Change Background
- Sebastopol Business Owner
- Local Climate Action Group Representative
- Environmental Justice & Equity Background
- Rights of Nature Background
- Energy Background
- Transportation Background

The current Youth Representative category requires applicants to be at least seventeen (17) years of age. During the most recent recruitment process, staff received applications from two (2) interested youth applicants who were fifteen (15) years old and therefore did not meet the current eligibility requirements.

The CAC requested that staff explore the possibility of lowering the minimum age requirement for the Youth Representative position from seventeen (17) to fifteen (15) years of age to encourage broader youth participation and engagement in local climate action efforts.

To evaluate potential liability and participation considerations, staff consulted with the City's insurance provider, California Intergovernmental Risk Authority (CIRA). CIRA provided recommended parental/guardian consent language for youth applicants under the age of eighteen (18). The proposed consent language has been incorporated into the Youth Application and is attached for review.

Because the age requirement is established by City Council action, any amendment to the Youth Representative eligibility criteria would require City Council review and approval.

Discussion:

The Committee may wish to discuss whether expanding eligibility to include applicants ages fifteen (15) and sixteen (16) would further the City's goals of youth engagement, civic participation, and climate leadership development. Lowering the minimum age requirement could increase the pool of interested applicants and provide younger residents with an opportunity to participate in local government decision-making related to climate policy and sustainability initiatives.

If the Committee wishes to pursue a change to the age requirement, the matter must be referred to the City Council for consideration.

Option 1 – CAC Referral through Agenda Review Committee

The CAC may direct staff to request that the Agenda Review Committee place the item on a future City Council agenda for discussion and possible action. This direction would be provided through a motion adopted at a regular CAC meeting.

Option 2 – Council-Sponsored Agenda Request

The CAC may ask a City Councilmember to sponsor the topic for consideration at a City Council meeting. A second Councilmember would need to support the request at that meeting. If supported, the item would then be referred to the Agenda Review Committee for scheduling on a future City Council agenda.

Recommendation:

Provide direction to staff regarding whether the Committee wishes to pursue a recommendation to the City Council to amend the Youth Representative eligibility requirement from ages 17–23 to ages 15–23 and, if so, which process the Committee would like to utilize for bringing the matter forward.

Attachments:

Updated Youth Application



City of Sebastopol
7120 Bodega Avenue
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Youth Application Instructions

Use this form to apply to serve on the City of Sebastopol's Climate Action Committee.

Please complete the entire form and either print and mail it to the address above or email your completed application to planning@cityofsebastopol.gov. If a question does not apply, please note it as not applicable. Please deliver the completed form by the date and time due to the Planning Department. All applications will be reviewed by the City Council. Interviews may be required by the City Council. If appointed, you have a choice whether you wish to have your contact information visible to the public; however, your information may be made public upon request by (a) member(s) of the public.

Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Home Address, City, State, and Zip Code:

Phone Number: _____

If appointed, do you want this number to be visible to the public?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am a minor (your phone number will not be made public)

E-Mail Address: _____

If appointed, do you want this address to be visible to the public?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am a minor (your email will not be made public)

Do you live in Sebastopol?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Do you go to school in Sebastopol?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you attended a meeting of this body? If so, when?

Can you make a one-year commitment to participating on this Committee?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Have you served on, interviewed for, or applied for this body previously?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If so, when? _____

Do you have a job?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, who is your present employer: _____

Job Title: _____

Please list school clubs and/or civic or charitable organizations to which you belong or have belonged:

Describe the activities you have helped organize or taken part in through these groups or organizations:

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What special interests, skills, and talents would you bring to this Committee?

Please list any educational programs or courses you have taken that relate to the work of this Committee:

Have you previously served on any governmental bodies? If so, please list position held and dates:

Please state why you would like to become a member of this Committee:

To your knowledge, are you associated with any organization/employment that might be deemed a conflict of interest in performing your duties if appointed to this position?

☐ No

☐ Yes

If yes, please state name of organization/employment: _____

Are there particular issues you think the Committee should concentrate on?

What exciting possibilities do you see for Sebastopol as a community in the future, and how might this Committee help us get there?

Is there any other information that you feel would be useful to the City Council in reviewing your application and materials provided with the application?

I certify that I have thoroughly read and understand all material in this application.

Applicant's Signature: _____

Applicant's Name (PLEASE PRINT): _____

Date: _____

Parental Consent: *(If applicable)*

If the applicant is under age 18, the parent/guardian must complete the following:

As parent/guardian of this minor, I have reviewed the volunteer application form and give my consent for (name): _____, (age) _____: to participate in this volunteer committee/commission/board with the City of Sebastopol (City). I further agree to hold harmless the City in regard to any injury sustained by the above-listed minor during the time he/she is engaged as a volunteer. I also agree to authorize City to utilize any photographs or videos of such minor in program publicity and for other uses consistent with the law without any further written agreement or authorization. I hereby agree to indemnify and hold harmless City, its officers, employees, or agents from any and all liability for damages, loss, or injuries, either to person or property, which the said minor may sustain while engaged in volunteer activity with City. I further certify that I have legal custody by virtue of being the parent or legal guardian by court order.

Signature of Parent: _____

Date: _____