



City of Sebastopol

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: February 3, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
Requestor: Councilmember Carter
Responsible Department: Planning Department
Subject: Sebastopol Women-Led Business Owners Celebration & Networking Evening

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize a City of Sebastopol Women-Led Business Owners Celebration & Networking Evening; and authorize up to \$700 for the event. This event is a continuing effort of the Economic Gardening Council goal.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM

1. Presentation of the item by the Requestor or responsible staff
2. Council questions and discussion
3. Public comment
4. Council deliberation and action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Sebastopol is home to an extraordinary number of women-led businesses that play a central role in the City's economic resilience, community character, and day-to-day vitality. The proposed Celebration & Networking Evening recognizes and elevates these businesses, supporting economic development and small business retention by fostering connection, visibility, and collaboration among local entrepreneurs.

BACKGROUND:

Recent outreach to identify women-led businesses—beginning with those located downtown—has revealed a substantial and diverse group, including wellness providers (such as Pilates studios), retail establishments (including multiple locally owned dress shops), shared workspaces/pop ups (such as The Livery), agricultural and service-oriented businesses (including the local feed store), and many others.

These businesses are not only economic drivers but also serve as community anchors—providing employment, gathering spaces, essential services, and social cohesion. Collectively, women-led businesses are helping to sustain Sebastopol through changing economic conditions and are widely recognized as a stabilizing force within the local economy.

The intent of the proposed Celebration & Networking Evening is to recognize and elevate women-led businesses both within downtown and throughout the broader Sebastopol community, ensuring that businesses located outside the downtown core are equally acknowledged and included.



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DISCUSSION: The Sebastopol Women-Led Business Owners Celebration & Networking Evening is envisioned as a recognition-focused, relationship-building event that publicly acknowledges the women whose businesses contribute significantly to Sebastopol's economic and social stability.

Event Concept

- **Proposed Name:** Local Women Business Owners Reception
- **Format:** Evening celebration (6:00–8:00 p.m.) featuring a business showcase and informal networking. Food would follow a potluck-style model, supplemented by modest City-hosted refreshments, recognizing that no single business should be expected to fully host the event.
- **Estimated Attendance:** Approximately 80 local women owner-operators, City officials, and invited community partners.
- **City Investment:** Estimated \$500–\$750.

Program Elements

- Brief welcome remarks from the Mayor and/or Councilmember(s);
- Acknowledgement of women-led businesses and their role in sustaining Sebastopol's local economy;
- Business showcase tables (display-only, no sales or active work required);
- Dedicated networking time;
- Group and individual photo opportunities to support City and business promotion. It is unknown at this time if this will be a donation or expenditure.

Logistics Overview

- **Invitations:** Personalized invitations issued by the City (email with optional postcard follow-up); City staff will work with Councilmember Carter to obtain list of owners of businesses; prepare invitations; and conduct follow up.
- **RSVP Management:** Simple online form including dietary restrictions and guest count; City staff will provide management for RSVPs for the event.
- **Setup:** Participating businesses may bring small table displays or materials, if desired; Businesses will be responsible for set up/take down; Councilmember Carter will work with venue for set up/take down.
- **Follow-Up:** Optional creation of a contact list to support ongoing peer networking among women business owners.

VENUE OPTIONS (FREE OR LOW-COST) (Councilmember Carter will secure the date and venue).

- The Barlow (event center or participating business space);
- Sebastopol Center for the Arts (community rate);
- HopMonk Tavern;
- Generously offered space from a local business owner (e.g., winery, brewery, wine bar, or cider house).

NEXT STEPS (if approved)



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1. Finalize and verify the list of approximately 80 women-led businesses, including those located outside the City limits;
2. Select an event date (targeting February–March, avoiding major holidays);
3. Secure a venue;
4. Obtain City Council approval for the proposed \$500–\$750 expenditure;
5. Issue invitations four to six weeks in advance.

STAFF ANALYSIS: Supports the City's goals of economic development and small business retention by fostering connections, visibility, and collaboration among local entrepreneurs. It is anticipated that staff time will be required to help support the event. An estimate of staff time is anticipated for a maximum of three to four hours. If staff is requested to conduct set up/take down it is anticipated that would be an additional few hours.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS / PRIORITIES / GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

- Goal 4: High-Performance Organization
- Restoring public trust through transparent and inclusive processes
- Improving public communications and community engagement

PUBLIC COMMENT: As of the preparation of this staff report, no public comments have been received. Any written public comments received after publication of this report will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials prior to or at the meeting. Members of the public may also provide oral comments during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE: This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was made available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: The estimated City cost for the event ranges from \$500 to \$750. Anticipated expenses include:

- Wine/beer: \$200–\$300;
- Appetizers to supplement potluck contributions: \$150–\$200;
- Printed programs and name tags: \$50–\$75;
- Decorations and basic setup: \$50–\$75;
- Marketing and invitations: \$50–\$100.

Costs may be reduced through in-kind donations, sponsorships, or use of City-owned resources.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve and authorize the City of Sebastopol Women-Led Business Owners Celebration & Networking Evening, with up to \$700 in funding,



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OPTION(S):

2. Modify the event scope or funding and provide Council direction.
3. Decline to authorize the event.

ATTACHMENTS

None.