City of Sebastopol

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: December 1, 2026

This item will be heard following the certification of the November 3, 2026 General Municipal Election results and the seating of the newly elected Councilmembers. If the election certification is continued, this item will be continued to the same meeting.

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To:	Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
Requestor:	City Manager
Responsible Department:	City Manager Mary Gourley
Subject:	City Council Reorganization – Election of Mayor and Vice Mayor (Mayor Pro Tempore): Ratification of Installation of Mayor and Vice Mayor per City Council Protocols

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RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council, per City Council Protocols, ratify the installation of Councilmember Sandra Maurer as Mayor and Councilmember Neysa Hinton as Vice Mayor (Mayor Pro Tempore) to serve for the upcoming year.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM:

1. This item will be heard as a regular agenda item, at the time determined by the presiding officer, immediately following the certification of the election and the administration of the Oaths of Office, and will proceed as follows:

    a. Presentation of the item by the Requestor or responsible staff
    b. Council questions and discussion
    c. Public comment
    d. Council deliberation and action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Each year the City Council conducts a reorganization by selecting from among its members a Mayor and a Mayor Pro Tempore (Vice Mayor) to serve for the upcoming year. In election years, this selection is made at the meeting at which the results of the election are declared and confirmed. Per City Council Protocol, Sandra Maurer, who served as Vice Mayor during the prior year, would become Mayor, and Neysa Hinton would become Vice Mayor. Council is asked to ratify the appointment of the Mayor and Vice Mayor per City Council Protocols.

BACKGROUND: Mayor: Each year the City Council conducts a reorganization by selecting from among its members a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore (Vice Mayor) to serve for the upcoming year. The Mayor presides at City Council meetings and serves as the official head of the City for ceremonial purposes. The Mayor Pro Tempore (Vice Mayor) performs the duties of the Mayor during the Mayor's absence or disability. This

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reorganization usually takes place at the first regular meeting in December or upon certification of the Election if it is an election year. During even years, the City Council shall select the Mayor at the meeting during which the results of the election are declared and confirmed, which will normally be the first regular meeting in December. The Policy of the City Council is that the individual who served as the Vice Mayor the prior year shall serve as Mayor.

Vice Mayor: The City Council believes that experience as a Council Member will assist those who are selected to serve as Vice Mayor, and that it is in the City's best interest that these selections be made in a manner that permits the Vice Mayor to gain that experience in cycles of governing and to acclimate themselves to the jobs, tasks, and roles prior to assuming their respective offices. During even years, the City Council shall select the Vice Mayor at the meeting during which the results of the election are declared and confirmed, which will normally be the first regular meeting in December. The Policy of the City Council is that the most senior member of the City Council who has not served as Mayor during their current term shall be the Vice Mayor.

Because 2026 is an election year, the reorganization is scheduled for the December 1, 2026 regular meeting, immediately following adoption of the Resolution declaring the results of the November 3, 2026 General Municipal Election and the seating of the newly elected Councilmembers, so that the reorganized Council includes all members who will serve during the upcoming year. City Council Policy Number 1 and Number 2, Selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor, including the rotation chart updated to reflect the November 2026 Election results, is included as Attachment 1.

The Council adopted the existing policy for the selection of the Mayor and Vice-Mayor in an effort to make the process predictable and objective, as well as give each Councilmember the opportunity to serve as mayor. However, because there are five Councilmembers, each of whom serves a four-year term, it is impossible to guarantee each Councilmember will have the opportunity to be mayor. Who will serve as mayor and vice-mayor under the existing policy depends on whether councilmembers are re-elected.

DISCUSSION: Ratification of Installation of Mayor and Vice Mayor: Per Council Protocol, Sandra Maurer would become Mayor and Neysa Hinton would become Vice Mayor. Council is asked to ratify the appointment of the Mayor and Vice Mayor per City Council Protocols.

The Council may ratify both appointments by a single motion and majority vote. Upon ratification, the Mayor and Vice Mayor will assume their respective seats at the dais, and the Mayor will preside over the remainder of the meeting.

If the officially signed Certificate of the Canvass of Votes Cast is not received from the Sonoma County Registrar of Voters by this meeting and the certification of the election is continued to the December 15,

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2026 regular City Council meeting, staff requests that this reorganization item also be continued to that meeting.

STAFF ANALYSIS: The recommended action is consistent with the adopted City Council Protocols for the selection of the Mayor and Vice Mayor (Mayor Pro Tempore) in an election year. Staff recommends that the City Council ratify the installation of Sandra Maurer as Mayor and Neysa Hinton as Vice Mayor.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS / PRIORITIES / GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

This item supports the City Council's goals and priorities, including:

- Goal 4: High-Performance Organization
- Restoring Public Trust

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: There is no fiscal impact associated with the ratification of the Mayor and Vice Mayor.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council, per City Council Protocols, ratify the installation of Councilmember Sandra Maurer as Mayor and Councilmember Neysa Hinton as Vice Mayor (Mayor Pro Tempore) to serve for the upcoming year.

OPTION(S):

1. If the certification of the election is continued to the December 15, 2026 regular meeting, continue this item to that meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. City Council Policy Number 1 and Number 2 – Selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor (with chart updated as of November 2026 Election Results)

APPROVALS:
Department Head Approval: Approval Date:

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CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date:

The proposed action is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Administrative Services/Financial Approval: Approval Date:

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Account Code (f applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 11/23/2026

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 11/23/2026

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ATTACHMENT 1

CITY COUNCIL POLICY NUMBER 1 AND NUMBER 2
SELECTION OF MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR

The City Council is the legislative-policy-making branch of City government. The City Council consists of five members. Each member is selected from a non-partisan, at-large election and serves a four-year term, however, there are no term limits in the City of Sebastopol. Annually, the City Council appoints a Vice Mayor from its membership to serve a one-year term.

The Mayor and Vice Mayor serve at the pleasure of the City Council, with the Vice Mayor authorized to possess and perform the duties of the Mayor in the absence of the Mayor.

It is important to note that the Council acts as a body. No member has any extraordinary powers beyond those of other members. While the Mayor and Vice-Mayor have some additional ceremonial and administrative responsibilities, all members are equal with regard to voting and in other significant areas. The intent of this policy is to ensure a fair and equitable policy for all Councilmembers regarding Selection of Vice Mayor.

PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF MAYOR:

During odd years, the City Council shall select the Mayor at its first regular meeting in December. During even years, the City Council shall select the Mayor at the meeting during which the results of the election are declared and confirmed, which will normally be the first regular meeting in December.

The Policy of the City Council is that the individual who served as the Vice-Mayor the prior year shall serve as Mayor. In the event the individual who served as the Vice-Mayor the prior year is ineligible or otherwise unavailable to serve as Mayor, the Mayor shall be the individual with the most seniority, who has previously served as Mayor or Vice Mayor, but has not served as Mayor during their current term in office. If no such person exists, the Council shall select the individual of their choosing to serve as Mayor.

Seniority is defined as the longest serving member on the City Council without a break in service. In the event of a tie of seniority, then seniority shall be established by the number of highest votes received during their most recent election when said members were elected.

At no time shall the Mayor seat be filled by a Councilmember who has not served on the Council for a minimum of one year.

PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF VICE-MAYOR:

The City Council believes that experience as a Council Member will assist those who are selected to serve as Vice Mayor, and that it is in the City's best interest that these selections be made in a manner that permits Vice Mayor to gain that experience in cycles of governing and to acclimate themselves to the jobs, tasks, and roles prior to assuming their respective offices.

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During odd years, the City Council shall select the Vice-Mayor at its first regular meeting in December. During even years, the City Council shall select the Vice-Mayor at the meeting during which the results of the election are declared and confirmed, which will normally be the first regular meeting in December.

The Policy of the City Council is that the most senior member of the City Council who has not served as Mayor during their current term shall be the Vice-Mayor.

Seniority is defined as the longest serving member on the City Council without a break in service. In the event of a tie of seniority, then seniority shall be established by the number of highest votes received during their most recent election when said members were elected.

In order to ensure experience and continuity, a newly elected Councilmember shall serve at a minimum one year on the Council prior to being eligible to serve as Vice Mayor.

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(Updated chart below as of November 2026 Election Results)

	Carter is re-elected.		Carter isn't re-elected, Hinton is re-elected		Neither Carter nor Hinton are Re-Elected	
	Mayor	**Vice-Mayor**	**Mayor**	**Vice-Mayor**	**Mayor**	**Vice-Mayor**
2027	Maurer	Hinton	Maurer	Neysa	Maurer	Hinton
2028	Neysa	Carter	Hinton	Carter	Hinton	Carter
2029	Carter	Woodruff	Hinton*	Woodruff	Council Election**	Woodruff***
2030	Woodruff	Hoff	Woodruff	Hoff	Woodruff ***	Hoff***

*The Council policy provides that the individual who serves as vice-mayor in the prior year will become mayor. In this situation, Carter is not eligible to become mayor because he is not re-elected. In these circumstances, the policy provides that the mayor shall be the individual with the most seniority, who has previously served as Mayor or Vice Mayor, but has not served as Mayor during their current term in office. In this situation, that would be Hinton, who would be beginning a new term in 2029.

** If neither Hinton nor Carter is not re-elected, there will be no one on the Council in 2029 who has previously served as the mayor or vice-mayor, but has not already served as the Mayor during their current term (Maurer will have served as mayor in 2027, the first year of her new term). In these circumstances, the policy provides that the Council shall select the individual of their own choosing.

*** This chart assumes that the vice-mayor would still be selected based on the existing policy, which selects as the vice-mayor the most senior councilmember who has not served as mayor during their current term. If there is a tie in seniority, then the person who received the most votes during their most recent election would be vice-mayor. In this situation, that is Woodruff in 2029. The person actually serving as vice-mayor may be impacted based on the selection of mayor.

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The Mayor and Vice Mayor serve at the pleasure of the City Council, with the Vice Mayor authorized to possess and perform the duties of the Mayor in the absence of the Mayor.

It is important to note that the Council acts as a body. No member has any extraordinary powers beyond those of other members. While the Mayor and Vice-Mayor have some additional ceremonial and administrative responsibilities, all members are equal with regard to voting and in other significant areas. The intent of this policy is to ensure a fair and equitable policy for all Councilmembers regarding Selection of Vice Mayor.

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PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF VICE-MAYOR:

The City Council believes that experience as a Council Member will assist those who are selected to serve as Vice Mayor, and that it is in the City's best interest that these selections be made in a manner that permits Vice Mayor to gain that experience in cycles of governing and to acclimate themselves to the jobs, tasks, and roles prior to assuming their respective offices.

During odd years, the City Council shall select the Vice-Mayor at its first regular meeting in December. During even years, the City Council shall select the Vice-Mayor at the meeting during which the results of the election are declared and confirmed, which will normally be the first regular meeting in December.

The Policy of the City Council is that the most senior member of the City Council who has not served as Mayor during their current term shall be the Vice-Mayor.

Seniority is defined as the longest serving member on the City Council without a break in service. In the event of a tie of seniority, then seniority shall be established by the number of highest votes received during their most recent election when said members were elected.

In order to ensure experience and continuity, a newly elected Councilmember shall serve at a minimum one year on the Council prior to being eligible to serve as Vice Mayor.

(Updated chart below as of November 2026 Election Results)

	Phill runs for re-election and wins		Phill isn't re-elected, Neysa is re-elected		Neither Phill nor Neysa Re-Elected	
	Mayor	**Vice-Mayor**	**Mayor**	**Vice-Mayor**	**Mayor**	**Vice-Mayor**
2027	Sandy	Neysa	Sandy	Neysa	Sandy	Neysa
2028	Neysa	Phill	Neysa	Phill	Neysa	Phill
2029	Phill	James	Neysa	James	Council Election*	James*
2030	James	Ian	James	Ian	James*	Ian*

CITY COUNCIL POLICY NUMBER 4
SEATING CRITERIA

This policy establishes the procedure and authority for determining seating arrangements.

Seating of Mayor:

The Mayor shall be seated in the center seat. Should the Mayor be absent, the Vice Mayor will assume the Mayor's seat.

Seating of the Vice Mayor:

The Vice Mayor shall be seated to either side of the Mayor, with the Vice Mayor receiving preference for obtaining their desired seat.

Councilmember Seating

Authority is hereby delegated to the Mayor to assign seats at the dais.

Immediately following the meeting at which the declaration of the municipal election results is made and the City Council has chosen one of its members as Mayor based upon City Council Policy Number 1, the newly selected Mayor shall solicit input from the remaining Council Members as to seating preferences. The Mayor shall give highest priority to seating the Vice Mayor in their desired seat, pursuant to B above.

Prior to the next regular City Council meeting, the Mayor shall provide the City Council with the new seating arrangements.

Once a seating arrangement is established, the Mayor shall only adjust the seating arrangement for good cause.