City of Sebastopol

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: November 17, 2026

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To:	Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
Requestor:	Councilmember Hinton
Responsible Department:	City Manager
Subject:	Approval to Direct Staff to Amend City Council Protocols and Allocate Dedicated Time for Staff Recognition and Proclamations During City Council Meetings

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RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council consider direction to staff to amend the City Council Protocols to restore a dedicated time for staff recognition and proclamations within the Presentations portion of the agenda, separate from Public Comment, with up to 3 minutes per recognition or proclamation and up to 3 minutes for comments by each recipient.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM:

1. If the item remains on the Consent Calendar, no presentation is required and the item will be approved as part of the Consent Calendar.
2. If the item is removed from the Consent Calendar, it will be heard as a regular agenda item, at the time determined by the Mayor, 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: At recent City Council meetings, staff recognitions and proclamations have been handled during the Public Comment portion of the agenda and limited to two minutes. This practice uses time set aside for residents and gives honorees little or no opportunity to speak.

Councilmember Hinton has requested that the Council restore the City's prior practice of recognizing staff and presenting proclamations during the Presentations portion of the agenda. Under the proposal, each recognition or proclamation would be allowed up to 3 minutes, and each recipient would be allowed up to 3 minutes to make comments.

This item asks that the Council support directing staff to amend the City Council Protocols accordingly. There is no fiscal impact.

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BACKGROUND: Councilmember Hinton submitted a Request for Item to be Placed onto a City Council Meeting Agenda and requested that the comments related to staff recognition and proclamations have recently been incorporated into Public Comment and limited to two minutes, which reduces the time available to the public under current City policy.

The request also notes that the current practice does not adequately honor persons in attendance who are receiving proclamations or certificates of service awards. Previously, the City allowed recipients of proclamations, certificates of service awards, and employee honors to speak during the Presentations portion of the agenda. As a small town with a small staff, the City found this practice to be an effective and staff-friendly way to recognize employees.

DISCUSSION: The proposal would move recognitions and proclamations out of Public Comment and into Presentations, and set clear time limits for both the presentation and the recipient's remarks.

Moving recognitions to Presentations keeps the full Public Comment period available to residents for matters not on the agenda, consistent with current City policy.

Each recognition or proclamation could take up to 6 minutes (3 minutes for the presentation and 3 minutes for the recipient). Where several honorees are recognized at one meeting, the Mayor may manage the number of presentations scheduled or the order of the agenda to keep meetings on time.

If the Council supports the proposal, staff will prepare the amendments to the City Council Protocols and staff will apply the new practice to agenda preparation.

STAFF ANALYSIS: The City Council Protocols are set by the Council and may be amended by Council action. The proposed change affects only the order and time limits of the agenda; it does not change the public's right to comment on agenda items or on matters within the Council's jurisdiction under the Ralph M. Brown Act. Staff time to prepare the amendment is minimal and can be absorbed within existing resources.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS / PRIORITIES / GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:
This action supports the City Council's goals and priorities, including:
- Goal 4: High-Performance Organization
- Restoring public trust through open, accountable, and transparent government
- Maintaining compliance with state law, including the Political Reform Act

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.

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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 this action. Staff time to update the City Council Protocols will be covered by existing staff resources.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council direct staff to amend the City Council Protocols to provide a dedicated time for staff recognition and proclamations in the Presentations portion of the agenda, separate from Public Comment, allowing up to 3 minutes per recognition or proclamation and up to 3 minutes for comments by each recipient, and return the amended Protocols to the Council for adoption.

OPTION(S):

1. Take no action and continue the current practice of handling recognitions and proclamations during Public Comment.
2. Approve the proposal with different time limits (for example, up to 5 minutes per recognition or proclamation, as originally requested, or a shorter limit for recipient comments).
3. Approve the proposal and allow the Mayor discretion to adjust time limits at a given meeting based on the number of presentations scheduled.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Proposed Amendment to City Council Protocols – Staff Recognition and Proclamations

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Approval Date: 11/09/2026

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: 11/09/2026

The proposed action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(2) and (b)(5), as it is an administrative activity of the City that will not result in any direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

Administrative Services/Financial Approval: Approval Date: 11/10/2026

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Account Code (f applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 11/10/2026

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 11/10/2026

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ATTACHMENT 1 – DRAFT

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CITY COUNCIL PROTOCOLS

STAFF RECOGNITION AND PROCLAMATIONS

Presentations, Staff Recognition and Proclamations.

A. **Placement on Agenda.** Staff recognitions, certificates of service awards, and proclamations shall be scheduled in the Presentations portion of the City Council agenda and shall not be taken up during the Public Comment period.

B. **Time for Presentation.** Each recognition, certificate of service award, or proclamation shall be allowed up to three (3) minutes for presentation by the Mayor, Councilmember, or staff member making the presentation.

C. **Recipient Comments.** The employee or honoree receiving the recognition, award, or proclamation may make comments not to exceed three (3) minutes.

D. **Public Comment Preserved.** Time used for presentations, staff recognitions, and proclamations shall not be counted against the time allocated for Public Comment.