

Torran Korman

From: City Council
Sent: Monday, April 6, 2026 10:59 AM
To: Mary Gourley
Cc: Oriana Hart; Erik Billing; Elissa Overton; Torran Korman; John Jay; Jane Riley; Victoria Henkel; Zulema Higgins
Subject: FW: Support for Sebastopol Soccer Community: Youth Annex Parking Lot and Hotel Sebastopol Lot: Letter of Support

Please see public comment as it relates to an agenda item on the upcoming city council meeting.

BCC: Email BCC to City Council, City Attorney

City staff that received this email are listed in the CC distribution line as noted above.

City Staff: Please Post to City Website

Thank you

Mary Gourley

Interim City Manager

From: Benjamin Harris <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Monday, April 6, 2026 9:05 AM

To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Cc: Jill McLewis <jmclewis@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Subject: Support for Sebastopol Soccer Community: Youth Annex Parking Lot and Hotel Sebastopol Lot: Letter of Support

Dear Sebastopol City Council,

My name is Ben Harris and I'm writing to you today to voice my support for the proposed soccer court projects at the Youth Annex parking lot and the Hotel Sebastopol empty lot beside Sebastopol City Plaza.

My family has lived in Sebastopol for nearly 10 years now and Sonoma County for about 20 years. My 3 children are going through and have gone through the Sebastopol elementary, middle and high school educational systems. I have been coaching recreational and select (competitive / travel) soccer for about 14 years, with the last 6 years associated with WESCO Utd. All three of my children have played and are still playing for WESCO Utd at the recreational and select level and I've been fortunate enough to coach all 3 of them at some point. For the last 5 years I've also coached the Analy JV Girls Soccer Team with Head Coach Megan Bloom. As well as my volunteer coaching commitments, I also serve on the WESCO Board, various sub-committees and help support the WESCO coaching clinics - when needed. I preface my email with this information as I want to convey that I am an active and passionate member of the Sebastopol soccer community, which is a big part of my life and my families and I see the growing need for more soccer space through my involvement in Sebastopol soccer in various roles.

Since I started coaching at WESCO Utd, I have come to realize how important WESCO soccer is to the community fabric and spirit of Sebastopol and west county - something that stretches back over 50 years now. The club provides playing opportunities for everyone at all levels. Children have the opportunity to play outside with their friends, having fun, making memories and learning how to play the beautiful game of soccer. The club also provides opportunities for teenagers to participate as coaches in WESCO soccer clinics

and as referees. I have seen the club expand significantly in the recreational and select sides of the club over the last 6 years. The WESCO Apple Classic Soccer Tournament has grown massively in size and stature - hosting 163 Teams in 2025 and in years past teams have travelled from Humboldt and the Gold Country to play. This tournament brings in a huge surge of economic benefits for the local community and raises the profile of WESCO soccer and Sebastopol as a place of quality soccer and a destination town in wine country. I have also seen the direct result of WESCO's growing popularity over the last 5 years as a pathway into the boys and girls Analy High School soccer teams - with 70% of the successful girls 2025 / 26 varsity team having played / currently playing for WESCO Utd.

Soccer is booming in Sebastopol, but a growing issue is the multiple number of teams competing for limited field space availability. This is beginning to restrict access and availability for kids wanting to play soccer - particularly during the winter months when fields close or practice time slots become limited due to high school sport priority. There is real concern that we will not be able to support the increasing demand for soccer from the community's youth - something that will likely increase with the US World Cup this year generating further interest in the sport. It's also not just about having a space for structured / coached practice sessions, it's also about kids simply finding a place to play informal pickup games, which is key for social aspects, skill development and physical activity.

As I've stated, there is a growing need for additional areas for kids to play soccer and I support **both** location proposals put forward. However, I do have some concerns over the proposed soccer court at the hotel location. As you're aware, there are potentially significant historic archaeological features and deposits associated with Sebastopol's China town and the later Japan town at this location. In principal, I'm not opposed to this location, but I do have concerns over the potential impacts that construction of a soccer court could have on these sensitive archaeological features. I trust that the city would undertake a full analysis to determine the feasibility of installing a soccer court at this location that would not adversely impact significant archaeological resources.

I think the location for a soccer court at the Youth Annex Parking Lot is a fantastic opportunity for the city to support developing an area that creates much needed outdoor recreational activity space for the communities youth to enjoy playing and learning about soccer for years to come.

I believe that that developing either or both these spaces would fit within the spirit in which the Sebastopol General Plan Policy CSF 2-10 was developed, which seeks to create "new park and recreation facilities in areas that are accessible and convenient to the community" and Policy CSF 2-11, which seeks to "Increase recreational opportunities throughout the city.

Thank you for your time and your service to the community.

Sincerely

Ben Harris