

To the members of the Sebastopol City Council

I am writing to express my concern and disappointment regarding the way that the members of the Community Commons Committee were treated at the September 15th City Council Meeting. This committee was initiated by the City Council, operated under the Brown Act providing full transparency for the public through published meeting agendas, minutes and reports. The Council received quarterly reports on committee activity. The purpose, as was understood by the Committee, was to recommend options for the following issues:

- 1- The library needs more space and the building is maintained by the city.
- 2- The Senior Center needs more space and the building is maintained by the city
- 3- The Community Cultural Center is in a flood zone and is maintained by the city.

The individuals who agreed to serve on this committee were volunteers who used their time, experience and energy in good faith, with the expectation that their work would be taken seriously. It was also assumed that they would personally be treated with respect and courtesy. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

It appeared by the few questions asked of the committee by the Council that Council members had not read the quarterly reports or the final report, all which were submitted, as required, to the Council before the meeting. The questions asked by the Council seemed focused mainly on the library location, ignoring the upcoming cost of the maintenance and repair of all the city owned property. Information regarding these costs was included in the final report submitted to the Council.

The mayor chose to selectively present public comment from her walk around town as if there was no support at all for what was presented by the committee. The fact is, after many discussions and interviews with local stakeholders and users, feedback from the public meetings, review of the written public comments sent to the Council before the September meeting, there were more positive comments about moving forward than negative. There were questions asked by the public that were reasonable and would need to be given further consideration during a deeper financial investigation regarding costs and benefits of moving forward.

The Council is required to do what is fiscally best for Sebastopol. The work done by this committee was meant to aid the Council in coming to an informed decision. I would suggest going forward with any volunteer committee, that you consider the time, energy and value of the community members just as you did with your concerns about the time utilized by the city staff. The committee's work was disregarded with no interest in, or consideration of, the merit of the work