

From: Edward G [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2026 11:06 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Strong Support for A&M BBQ – Request for Reasonable Relocation Time

Edward Gathercole
[REDACTED], Sebastopol, CA 95472

05/21/26

****Subject: Strong Support for A&M BBQ – Request for Reasonable Relocation Time****

Dear Sebastopol City Council Members,

As a long-time resident and active member of this community, I am writing to express my unwavering support for A&M BBQ. I urge the City Council to grant this vital local business the reasonable time and collaborative runway they need to relocate responsibly, rather than imposing swift, punitive measures that would jeopardize their survival.

I have been a dedicated patron of A&M BBQ since the very day they opened their doors. I know this business not from a distance, but from hours spent standing in their lines, watching how they operate, and experiencing firsthand how they treat the people of Sebastopol. Kris Austin, his wife Tyanna, and their family are our neighbors—their kids go to school here, they invest back into our local economy, and they have consistently donated food and resources to local causes. My perspective is shaped by years of direct observation: A&M BBQ operates with deep integrity and an undeniable commitment to being good neighbors.

A&M BBQ is more than a restaurant; it is a cultural anchor. In a majority-white city, this thriving, Black-owned business brings an invaluable layer of diversity, warmth, and culinary excellence to Sebastopol. Standing in their notoriously long lines is not a chore—it is a community gathering where the A&M team walks the line, feeding waiting customers samples and making everyone feel like family.

This sense of family holds profound personal meaning for me. As a member of a Gold Star Family, Memorial Day Weekend is a time of immense, heavy remembrance. My younger brother was Sonoma County's first soldier killed in action in Afghanistan, and likely California's only former foster youth to make that ultimate sacrifice, losing his life on Memorial Day, May 26, 2008. During a weekend carries so much grief, going to A&M BBQ has become a vital tradition for me. Bringing home what is undeniably the best BBQ in Sonoma County provides a sense of comfort, solace, and community connection when my family needs it most. Their presence enriches our city's soul.

While the neighborhood concerns regarding smoke and traffic are valid points for discussion, the logistical reality of the situation requires a logical, measured solution.

- **Not an Industrial Factory:** A&M BBQ is a localized kitchen and catering service, not a mass-production wholesale facility.
- **The Reality of Relocation:** Moving a commercial restaurant operation—especially one involving specialized commercial smokers, rigorous environmental permits, complex infrastructure, and heavy financing—is a complex puzzle that cannot be solved overnight.

- **Economic Impact:** Forcing a premature shutdown or imposing stifling restrictions will not solve the issue; it will simply force layoffs, hurt local workers, and kill a celebrated, award-winning business.

The owners have already acted in good faith by making immediate operational adjustments and actively searching for a more appropriate long-term site for nearly a year. The most logical and productive path forward for Sebastopol is open communication and collaborative problem-solving, not bureaucratic eviction.

I respectfully ask the City Council to grant A&M BBQ the necessary time to execute a responsible transition. Let us protect our small businesses, honor the diversity they bring, and work together to keep this community asset thriving.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Edward Gathercole