

From: Ellen Golla [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 21, 2026 8:59 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Comment on A&M BBQ smoke emissions

Dear Sebastopol City Council members,

Please see the attached letter for comments we'd like to submit in regard to the situation with A&M BBQ. Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Ellen Golla

Ellen Golla
Outreach Director
Doctors and Scientists Against Wood Smoke Pollution (DSAWSP)

[REDACTED]



Sebastopol City Council
7120 Bodega Ave
Sebastopol, CA 95472
July 21, 2026

Re: A&M BBQ smoke emissions

Dear Sebastopol City Council members,

Doctors and Scientists Against Wood Smoke Pollution (DSAWSP) is an international coalition dedicated to raising awareness of the serious, but under-recognized, public health issue of air pollution caused by wood burning. This is our second letter regarding A&M BBQ. We are reaching out to you again because we are genuinely concerned about the people living near these smokers. This is, in our opinion, a disturbing situation.

We were dismayed to learn that A&M was allowed to move both of the industrial-sized smokers back to this location in this residential area, while a moratorium was announced on enforcement action over the smoke. This was a cruel thing to do to the people living near this business who were, and are again, suffering from the effects of this smoke exposure. These neighbors don't have a social media platform to rally support like A&M BBQ does, but they are your constituents too, and their health and well-being need to be taken seriously.

The City Council is affording undue deference to the owners of this business, while discounting what is fair for the affected residents of this neighborhood.

Now it has come to our attention that Sebastopol City Council is considering rezoning to allow A&M BBQ to keep the smokers at this location. Also, the possibility of adding filters to the smokestacks has been raised, in the belief that this would solve the smoke emissions problem. We are concerned about these developments.

For multiple reasons, smokestack filters aren't the answer here. We were involved in a case where a wood-burning restaurant spent over \$100,000 on filtering equipment for its exhaust outlet, only for the problem to continue. In that instance, the local health department eventually stepped in and ordered the restaurant to stop burning wood and charcoal despite the filter. We are aware, also, of similar situations with other wood-burning restaurants in which expensive emissions filtering equipment did not stop the problem.

In the case we were involved with, the only source of smoke emissions to the surrounding neighborhood was the one exhaust outlet, and it created an intolerable situation for those neighbors. That is not the case with A&M BBQ, who've made the various sources of their smoke emissions a feature of their marketing.

A&M has posted videos on social media showing how the smoke pours out from the sides of the smokers, as well as images of how the wood is burned openly at the ends of these industrial-sized devices. (For example: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DO84XJmkTmz>.) The smokestacks are certainly a problem, but they are only part of the problem. Furthermore, filters are not effective at capturing smallest and most harmful ultrafine particles that make up a large portion of emissions when wood is burned.

Much of the country's attention has been focused in recent days on the wildfire smoke affecting large parts of the country. What many people are not aware of, is that there is no safe level of air pollution, and the health effects of wood smoke exposure are not linear. For example, in an article in the British Columbia Medical Journal¹, air quality experts stated:

“Here lies the public health paradox: wildfire smoke gets a lot of public and media attention when PM_{2.5} concentrations are extreme, but it causes much more harm at the lower concentrations that occur more frequently.”

For affected neighbors in a situation like this, the smoke emissions can be comparable to living with localized wildfires year-round.

It is important to understand that wood smoke pollution is not about a “nuisance” or about a neighbor dispute over a disagreeable smell. It is, in fact, a serious public health issue.

Wood smoke is uniquely toxic—it is probably the most toxic type of air pollution the average person is ever exposed to. Exposure to this type of pollution is linked to serious health outcomes and premature deaths.

Nobody should be involuntarily subjected to this because of someone else's culinary preferences.

Sincerely,

Brian Moench, MD

Board chair, Doctors and Scientists Against Wood Smoke Pollution (DSAWSP)

www.dsawsp.org

¹ S. Henderson, et al, “The public health paradox of wildfire smoke,” *BCMj*, 2024.