

From: Finn Liss [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2026 10:07 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Cc: Kris Austin [REDACTED]
Subject: General Public Comment

Mayor, Members of the City Council, City Staff, and Members of the Community,

Thank you for taking the time to hear public comment regarding A&M BBQ and the concerns surrounding our current operations.

Over the past several months, concerns have been raised related to smoke, air quality, and the overall scale of our operation at our current location. We want to be clear that our intention tonight is not to dismiss the concerns of our neighbors or create conflict with the City. We are here because we want to work collaboratively toward a practical and responsible solution. We want to begin by acknowledging those concerns directly and respectfully.

Our growth has outpaced what our site was originally intended to support. We began as a small restaurant with limited production, and demand from both restaurant guests and catering clients has increased significantly over the last two years. That growth has allowed us to create jobs, contribute to the local economy, support community events and organizations, and bring visitors into Sebastopol. We understand this has also created impacts that need to be addressed responsibly.

We feel it is important to clarify a misconception that has appeared in some public comments and discussions.

A&M BBQ is not an industrial meat processing facility or wholesale factory shipping products across counties or states. We have never operated as a wholesale production business. We are a restaurant and catering company preparing food for our guests, local events, wineries, businesses, and community gatherings. Our operation is centered around serving customers here in Sonoma County and the surrounding community.

We began exploring relocation opportunities approximately a year ago, before these concerns became public, because we already recognized that our growth was beginning to exceed the limitations of the current property. We understood that, long term, the business would eventually require a larger and more appropriately zoned location to continue operating responsibly and sustainably.

Over the past month, we have been in communication with City staff, including Steven Brown, regarding possible paths forward. We appreciate the willingness of staff to engage with us constructively and help identify potential options. Based on those conversations, we have continued actively pursuing relocation opportunities and evaluating properties that may be better suited for our operational needs.

We are currently exploring multiple sites, including locations within properly zoned commercial and industrial areas that could support a larger smoking operation with less impact on surrounding residential neighbors. We are also working toward developing a temporary use plan that could allow meat smoking activities to occur off-site while we pursue a permanent long-term location.

At the same time, we are researching and consulting with professionals regarding potential engineering and filtration solutions that can help reduce smoke emissions during this transition period. This includes exploring commercial filtration systems, stack modifications, and other technologies designed to improve air quality impacts associated with offset smokers.

We understand that these efforts do not erase the concerns that have already been raised. However, we hope they demonstrate that we are taking the situation seriously and acting in good faith to find solutions rather than avoid responsibility.

We also want to acknowledge the overwhelming support we have received from the community throughout this process. Over the past week, we have heard from thousands of customers, local residents, winery partners, event organizers, and supporters who care deeply about keeping A&M BBQ in Sebastopol. We are incredibly grateful for that support, and we believe it reflects the positive role our restaurant has played within the community.

We are encouraged by the level of community support and engagement throughout this process. In addition to phone calls and public comments, many local residents, business owners, property owners, and supporters have actively reached out to help us identify potential relocation opportunities and temporary solutions. The community's willingness to assist us in finding a more appropriate long-term location reflects not only the support for A&M BBQ as a business, but also a shared desire to find a constructive solution that works for everyone involved.

Over the last two years, A&M BBQ has been fortunate to receive recognition from local, regional and national publications, including being named one of Northern California's best BBQ restaurants and being featured in multiple food and hospitality publications highlighting our contribution to the local culinary scene. While awards and recognition do

not excuse operational challenges, we believe they do demonstrate the value this business brings to the community, local tourism, and the broader Sebastopol economy.

We are a locally operated small business built by people who live here, work here, and care deeply about this community. Our team consists of cooks, servers, dishwashers, managers, prep staff, and catering employees whose livelihoods depend on the continued operation of this business. An immediate shutdown of our smoking operations would have a significant impact not only on ownership, but also on the many employees and families who rely on these jobs.

We are simply asking for a reasonable path forward and enough time to transition responsibly.

We believe there is a balanced solution that protects the interests of nearby residents while also allowing a local small business the opportunity to relocate and come into compliance in an orderly and cooperative manner.

We are committed to continuing open communication with City staff and the community throughout this process. We are committed to pursuing relocation as quickly as possible. And we are committed to being part of the solution.

Thank you for your time, your patience, and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Kris Austin (Owner & Pitmaster)

Finn Liss (Co-owner & Head of Operations)



Finn Liss

Co-owner &

Head of Operations

A&M BBQ

Sebastopol, CA
95472