From: Lee Mathias [redacted]
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2026 3:14 PM
To: Zulema Higgins <zhiggins@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Mary Gourley <mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Phill Carter <pcarter@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Neysa Hinton <NHinton@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Stephen Zollman <szollman@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Jill McLewis <jmclewis@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Sandra Maurer <smaurer@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Cc: Ian Hoff [redacted]; james Woodruff [redacted]
Subject: Agenda item 20 RFP for recurring annual contracts also discusses a new PIO position and a major tech project – why

Hi Zulema,

Attached Public comment for the November 17 city council meeting.

Thanks,

Lee

[redacted]

Agenda item #20 Discussion and Consideration of Release of Request for Proposal for Contracts also discusses a new PIO position and a major tech project – why?

Two issues for the council to consider:

1. Building Permit ERP/System Modernization
2. Hiring a permanent PIO

These two items are included on an agenda focused on issuing RFPs for ongoing contracts that will be renewed by June 2027. Good job being proactive, but two unrelated initiatives included deserve more analysis and supporting data from the City Manager and should come forward as separate agenda items.

Building Permit ERP/System Modernization –

This is not a recurring contract it is a proposal for a project to upgrade existing technology. The City Manager has the responsibility for developing a rationale for the initiative and finding the budget dollars. Once the City Manager is satisfied it should be a budget priority it should be brought to the City Council. It does not belong on this agenda item.

Hiring a Permanent PIO

Hiring a permanent PIO is a legitimate idea and one that the City Manager should analyze and decide if it makes sense given current staffing and the budget dollars available. The argument that other cities do it, ignores the fact the Sebastopol has a huge deficit and no realistic plan to address it. Other small cities use the City Clerk to perform the PIO duties.

Key questions not addressed in the brief argument included in the staff report:

How many hours a week does that position require? If part-time position will the union expect this position to join the bargaining unit? How long will they be ok with no benefits. Will a part-time worker offer the skills provided by Holly Hansen? Why can't Holly Hansen attend monthly cross-departmental meetings to coordinate public messaging and maintain a calendar of upcoming events and recurring communications.

Petaluma advertised for a part-time communications program manager up to 20 hours per week at $35-42.55/hr. with no benefits. At $42.55 annual cost would be $44,250.

The city's own "Sebastopol Growing Together: A strategy for a Livable Community" initiative is all about addressing the fact that workers making $40,000 a year in low paying Sebastopol jobs cannot afford to live in Sebastopol. **Is the City Council comfortable paying a less than livable wage and no medical benefits to an employee? Will future councils agree? If this position costs more then $50,000 it adds to the deficit.**