

From: Louisa Ernst [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2026 5:05 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: 2/17/26 City Council Meeting: Agenda Item 7

Dear Mayor McLewis and Members of the City Council:

I do not support you creating a giant loophole in your Surveillance Technology and Community Safety Ordinance for all so called Traditional Security Cameras. Many of those are privately owned and operated, are ubiquitous across the city, and can be placed and/or operated in ways that violate privacy laws by exempting them from having City Council approved surveillance use policies.

I understand and support that the Sebastopol Police Department needs to be able to access and use camera footage from legally placed and operated private security cameras/doorbell cameras as part of their criminal investigations.

An alternative to modifying the ordinance to create a way for unaccountable, nontransparent, warrantless, citywide, dragnet surveillance tools in your city, you should instead modify Section 8.80.040 "Temporary acquisition during exigent circumstances" of the ordinance. That provision allows your police department to temporarily acquire or temporarily use surveillance technology in exigent circumstances without city council approval of a surveillance use policy for the type of technology in question (in this case the so called "Traditional Security Cameras"). This provision allows a seven day window for the use of a surveillance technology without an approved policy (i.e., you can use the data from any private legally placed and operating security camera as long as that data does not run over a 7 day period). All your Police Department needs to do is submit a written report summarizing that acquisition and/or use of surveillance technology under that section to the City Council within 60 days following the inception of the exigent circumstances. Currently your city defines exigent circumstances as an emergency involving imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to any person that requires the immediate use of surveillance technology or the information it provides. You should

broaden this definition to include the types of crimes that your police department believes they were forbidden to investigate due to your current ordinance.

If your police department wants to use so called Traditional Security Cameras on a regular basis, they should draft an adequate "surveillance use policy" for those cameras and have it approved by the Sebastopol City Council. As is clear in your ordinance, such a policy should competently address the following eleven areas: Purpose, Authorized Use, Data Collection, Data Access, Data Protection, Data Retention, Public Access, Third-Party Data Sharing, Training, Auditing and Oversight, and Complaints.

While you are the only city in Sonoma County to so far have passed a Surveillance Technology Ordinance, scores of jurisdictions, large and small, from coast to coast, have such ordinances in place. you must not back track on the intention created by that action. We are on a precipice of our legal rights to privacy being lost permanently in many ways, it is your duty as representatives of the city residents to keep that from happening every way you can. Do not ruin your well crafted city ordinance by creating an exception from transparency and accountability. Additionally I want to know when the Police Dept with come forth with policy for the CCTVs that is in alignment with the current policy for the Traditional security cameras?

Louisa Ernst