

From: Luke Frances [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 29, 2026 5:59 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Public Comment - A&M BBQ

My name is Luke Frances and I have lived in Sonoma County for 15 years. Since A&M has opened my girlfriend and I have sincerely enjoyed Kris' restaurant for the thoughtfully prepared, delicious food, and the warm and inviting atmosphere that he provides.

I would be remiss not to mention that my girlfriend is Black, one of the only 7,125 Black residents of Sonoma County. As such, and despite the self appointed progressive identification of the County, she has been subjected to numerous incidents of racism during the years she has lived here, many of them in Sebastopol. After each of these incidents, after the frustration, the anger, and the reflection, one constant would be that we always went to go get some comfort food to heal a little bit from whatever the injustice de jour was. Before Kris opened A&M this more often than not meant a trip across a bridge to either the East Bay or San Francisco, but once he was operating typically meant a trip to A&M. Of course we also celebrated with meals as well, bought Thanksgiving dinner from there, and just genuinely enjoyed a wonderful local Black owned small business. From the long lines wrapped around the block it seems that many others shared this sentiment. A&M was both a cultural oasis and a widely celebrated success story.

Now I'm not an environmental engineer nor do I work for the EPA, but I do know what racism smells like. Despite the passive aggressive tactics employed by these "neighbors" meant to disguise their true intent, this campaign against this beloved local business, reeks of it.

And you know what, Sebastopol doesn't deserve Chris Auston or A&M. He does not need to subject himself to these petty racist attacks on his business from people who likely style themselves some kind of forward thinking progressives while simultaneously running one of the only Black owned businesses in town out on a rail. I hope he moves to a market that allows him to thrive without replaying the historic tendency of white grievance to harm Black people with economic success stories. But this town owes him the leeway to make this move on his own timeline, at least give the man that so you don't destroy his chance at starting his business over elsewhere.

I'll end this by saying that when things like this happen I am always disgusted but never surprised. If Sonoma County generally, and Sebastopol specifically, ever want to be more than a white retirement community and foster a diverse community with a resilient economy, then we really have to do better and stop with this overtly divisive behavior.

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