

From: Melissa Hanley [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2026 8:26 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Cc: Mary Gourley <mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Langberg, Lars [REDACTED]
Subject: Committee Workplan Vote This Evening

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for your time this evening and for approving the Design Review Board's work plan. I appreciate the additions you made to it. I am writing because the Council also declined our request for additional meetings and "punted" the decision until the February budget review, and I want to be direct about why that decision concerns me.

The additional DRB meetings would have cost the City approximately \$6,000 per year (though as Councilmember Carter rightly noted, this is not a sunk cost but an opportunity cost). For that investment, the Board could have completed two major City ordinances, along with other items in the work plan. By any measure, that return is exceptional.

The revised tree ordinance is a clear example. It includes increased fines for those who fail to obtain proper permits, so it would pay for itself many times over once enacted. Done well, these items are cost positive. I understand the City is facing a budget crisis. But a city does not cut its way out of a budget crisis; it grows its way out. Investing in the work that strengthens Sebastopol's planning framework and generates revenue is how that happens. Declining a \$6,000 investment with this kind of payoff is short-sighted and counter-productive.

There is also a human cost. The Board has three vacancies opening soon, and I have been actively encouraging qualified people to apply. I now have to ask myself how I can, in good faith, invite volunteers to commit their time to a body whose work the City will approve on paper but not support in practice.

The Council has to decide whether it wants these ordinances completed or not. If it does, the work needs the resources to match. Tonight's decision sends a different message, and I will have difficulty explaining to my fellow Board members that it was anything other than a snub of their effort and mine. Frankly, it's hard to imagine how we will achieve our base workplan let alone the requested additions.

I ask that the Council reconsider the request for additional meetings and consider the lost opportunity to move the city forward. I would welcome the chance to discuss this with any of you directly.

Respectfully,

Melissa



Melissa Hanley AIA, IIDA

Founding Partner

