

**From:** Omar Figueroa [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 17, 2026 2:59 PM  
**To:** City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>  
**Cc:** Omar Figueroa [REDACTED]; Barbara Marland  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Agenda Item Number 7

Please confirm receipt of the following public comment

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I respectfully urge the Council to decline to introduce the proposed amendment to the Surveillance Technology and Community Safety Ordinance.

The staff report indicates the amendment is intended to address administrative burden rather than a demonstrated public safety need. The Police Department already has the ability to act in exigent circumstances and to seek Council approval when circumstances are not urgent. The concern identified is that the approval process may require multiple meetings and time. Administrative efficiency, however, is not the purpose of Chapter 8.80. The ordinance was adopted to ensure democratic oversight before surveillance authority expands. Changing that structure for convenience alters the policy goal of the ordinance itself.

When the Council adopted Chapter 8.80, it recognized that surveillance technologies allow the government to identify, monitor, and locate people in daily life, implicating privacy and liberty interests. The ordinance therefore regulates expansion through a case by case public review process. The proposed amendment replaces that approach with a categorical exemption for so called traditional security cameras and their upgrades. This is not a small clarification. It converts a deliberative approval framework into a standing authorization.

The distinction matters. The current ordinance regulates whether surveillance expands. The amendment instead regulates only the type of technology. Over time, most surveillance growth occurs incrementally through upgrades, integrations, and new uses rather than through entirely new systems. Removing review for an entire category transfers future oversight decisions from the Council to administrative discretion. Once adopted, future councils cannot easily restore the lost checkpoint because the precedent has already been set.

This issue is therefore one of governance architecture rather than policing tactics. Public approval requirements exist to maintain community trust, provide transparency, and ensure that secondary uses of collected data remain consistent with original public authorization. Even if particular uses appear routine today, the approval process allows the Council and the public to evaluate evolving uses as technology and investigative practices change.

The staff report references uncertainty about the use of privately owned camera footage. Clarifying procedures may be appropriate, but removing the review requirement entirely is a broader structural change than necessary to resolve operational questions. A narrower clarification could address staff concerns while preserving the Council's oversight role.

Importantly, the record does not identify a pattern of crimes going unsolved because of the ordinance, an emergency where necessary action was prevented, or a demonstrated public demand for expanded surveillance authority. In the absence of such findings, the safer course is to preserve existing oversight until a specific and documented need is presented.

Sebastopol adopted Chapter 8.80 to ensure transparency before surveillance expands, democratic accountability for its use, and public participation in decisions affecting privacy. Those goals remain important regardless of the specific technology involved. The proposed amendment would permanently narrow the circumstances in which the Council reviews surveillance expansion, even though future impacts cannot yet be fully anticipated.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Council decline to introduce the amended ordinance and instead consider, if necessary, a more limited clarification that resolves operational concerns without removing the Council's approval authority. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to transparent and accountable local governance.

Respectfully submitted,

Omar Figueroa

Resident, Homeowner, and Business Owner in Sebastopol

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Omar C. Figueroa, Esq.

[Redacted]

Sebastopol, CA 95472-3352

Tel: [Redacted]

Fax: [Redacted]

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