

July 1, 2026

Neighbor Sign-On Letter to Sebastopol City Council re A&M BBQ Smoke

To the Mayor and Members of the Sebastopol City Council:

We write as residents and neighbors of A&M BBQ to express our deep concern about the City's recent decision to delay enforcement related to A&M's smokers for at least six more months.

This issue is not new. A&M has known since at least August 2025 that smoke from the smokers was affecting nearby residents, and the City has been aware of these concerns since September 2025. For nearly a year, neighbors have repeatedly reported smoke entering homes and outdoor spaces and interfering with daily life.

Earlier this year, the City began enforcement actions and committed to keeping the neighborhoods informed about the process and next steps. Residents understood that the City had recognized the problem and was working toward a solution that complied with its own rules.

Then, without a clear public explanation to the people most affected, the City changed course and reportedly granted at least six additional months for the smokers to continue operating in their current location.

This decision has real consequences.

The extension covers the summer and wildfire season, when many residents already struggle with smoke and heat. Many of us do not have air conditioning, and keeping our windows closed for hours at a time simply is not a realistic solution. Yet the burden of this decision falls entirely on the people living closest to the smokers.

Many of us have changed how we live in our own homes because of the smokers. We have kept windows closed, stayed indoors, run air purifiers, worn masks, avoided our porches and yards, and, at times, left our homes until the smoke cleared. This is more than an inconvenience. It is a loss of the use and enjoyment of our homes and an ongoing nuisance for the surrounding neighborhoods.

The City has stated that there is no health and safety concern based on data from a Bay Area Air Quality Management District monitor at 103 Morris Street. We do not believe that conclusion makes sense.

The residents experiencing the greatest impacts live within approximately one-tenth of a mile of the smokers. Yet the City has relied on data from a monitor located elsewhere rather than measurements taken in the neighborhoods where the complaints originate and where the impacts are occurring.

Wood smoke contains PM2.5, a pollutant that public health agencies have long recognized as harmful to human health. The effects of smoke are also highly local. The people most affected are generally the people living closest to the source.

For nearly a year, residents living near A&M have reported smoke entering our homes, yards, and outdoor spaces. Our neighborhood's PurpleAir monitors also show significant spikes in PM2.5 when the smokers are operating, including higher readings on the side of buildings facing A&M than on sides facing a busy highway. These monitors are not perfect, but they are measuring the air where we actually live. The City's monitor is not.

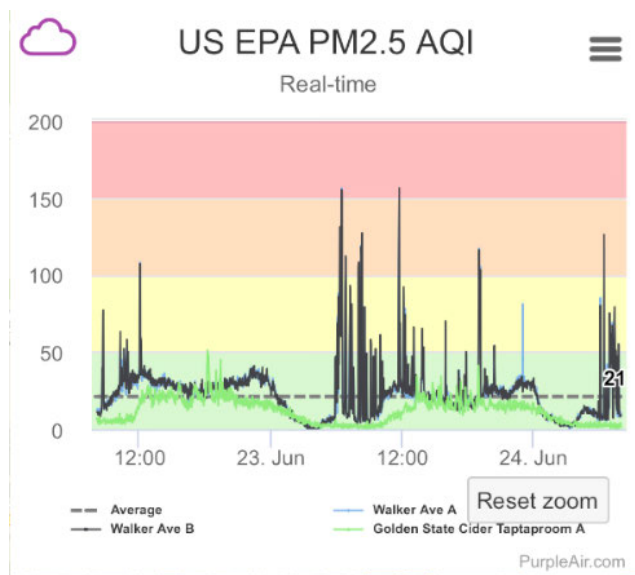


Exhibit: Screenshot of June 23 and 24 Purple Air readings at Walker Ave in black (~1 block away from A&M facing toward smokers) compared with Golden State Cider in Barlow in green, which is nearby official BAAQMD monitor at 103 Morris St. Walker Ave PurpleAir monitor shows pronounced spikes during morning hours when A&M commercial smokers are in operation. Data demonstrates periods of local unhealthy air quality (orange and red zones), during periods when Sebastopol Barlow is experiencing excellent air quality (green zone).

The City has no neighborhood monitoring showing that these local impacts do not exist. In the absence of local evidence, it is unreasonable to dismiss the experiences of the people living next to these smokers or to conclude that

there is no local health concern simply because a monitor located elsewhere does not detect one.

We are not asking the City to assume the worst. We are asking the City not to assume there is no problem when the people who live here experience the impacts every day and there is no local evidence proving otherwise. When there is uncertainty, that uncertainty should favor protecting the residents who are living with the smoke, not extending the burden on them for another six months.

The surrounding area is not solely commercial. It includes homes, apartments, medical offices, residential care facilities, senior housing, and families with children. The people potentially affected by these emissions include older adults and individuals with underlying health conditions. These residents deserve the same consideration and protection as any other neighborhoods in Sebastopol.

This is not simply a paperwork issue or a technical zoning dispute. The City's rules matter because they exist to protect the people who live and work here. The smoke impacts have been known for many months. Enforcement had already begun. The recent decision simply delays a solution while requiring neighboring residents to continue bearing the consequences.

We understand that A&M BBQ is an important local business and that many people value it. We do not want to harm the business or the people who depend on it. We have supported efforts to find practical solutions that allow A&M to continue operating while reducing impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. Temporary relocation of smokers and implementing filtration technologies have been discussed. Our goal has never been to shut down A&M. Our goal has always been to find a way forward that does not require neighboring families to absorb the impacts of smoke emissions.

The City's extension may reduce the immediate burden on the business, but it increases the burden on the families who live next to these smokers. Someone is being asked to bear the cost of this delay. At present, that cost falls entirely on the surrounding neighborhoods.

We respectfully ask the City Council to:

- Publicly explain why enforcement was delayed for another six months and what changed to justify that decision;

- Explain why the people most affected by this decision were not informed before the extension was granted;
- Restore a clear and timely path toward compliance with the City's zoning requirements;
- If the City continues to allow operation during the extension, place the responsibility on the City and/or the operator—not the neighborhood—to provide local evidence supporting the conclusion that the smokers are not adversely affecting nearby residents; and
- Reestablish transparent communication with the affected neighborhoods regarding all future decisions and enforcement actions.

For nearly a year, residents have tried to work through the City's process in good faith. We have been patient. We have reported our concerns. We have waited while the City pursued enforcement and promised updates.

We are not asking the City to choose between A&M BBQ and its neighbors. We are asking the City not to place the entire burden of this decision on the people who live next to these smokers.

We ask the City Council to act transparently, enforce its rules consistently, and protect the residents who live with the consequences of this decision every day.

Sincerely,

[Signatories on following page]

cc: Mary Gourley, City Manager

Name	City of Sebastopol Resident
Amanda Horejsfeld	Yes
Ann Hurst	No
Barbara Corinblit	Yes
Ben Kaun	Yes
Beth Bollinger	Yes
Bill Roby	Yes
Connie Kellog	Yes
Corinne Asturias	Yes
Craig Hansen	No
Cynthia Kishi	Yes
Doug Yule	Yes
Ella Stein	Yes
Emma Cahn	Yes
Estelle Ogus	Yes
Jake de Souza	Yes
Jay Goldin	Yes
Julia Lopez	Yes
Justin Kornfein	Yes
Katie and Tim Finegan	Yes
Kimberlee Keller	Yes
Kit A Keller	Yes
Larry Robinson	Yes
Lisa Cahn	Yes
Marilyn Madrone	Yes
Marissa Lang	Yes
Mark Jackson	Yes
Megan Finaly	Yes
Megan Kaun	Yes
Megan Waterman	Yes
Megan Watt	Yes
Michael Bollinger	Yes
Nena Reiners	Yes
Patty Holden	Yes
Richard Targow	Yes
Sahara Chaldean	Yes
Sasha de Souza	Yes
Sondra Beam	No
Trish Davis	Yes
Veronica	Yes
Vita Iskandar	No
William Egloff	No