



City of Sebastopol

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: February 17, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
Responsible Department: Interim City Manager Mary Gourley
Subject: Discussion and Consideration of 2026–2027 City Council Goals and Priorities – Meeting Date, Facilitator, and Process

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Council to discuss and provide direction regarding the process, facilitator, and date to establish City Council goals and priorities for 2026–2027; or
2. Reject a facilitator and set a date for the Goals and Priorities Setting Meeting, and direct City staff to prepare a proposed list of actions and priorities for the session using the City's current six goals as a framework.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM:

1. Presentation of the item by the requestor or responsible staff
2. Council questions and discussion
3. Public comment
4. Council deliberation and action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Each year, the City Council identifies strategic goals and priorities to guide City policy, budget allocations, and long-term planning. A clear process ensures the session is productive and allows Councilmembers to collaboratively determine priorities that align with the City's mission, ongoing projects, and strategic objectives.

BACKGROUND:

In April 2025, the Sebastopol City Council conducted a goal-setting workshop that established priorities of fiscal sustainability, community vitality, public safety, infrastructure, economic development, and organizational performance. The Council has received quarterly updates as to the status of the goals and priorities.

In preparation of the upcoming year's goals, as well as potential inclusion into the FY 26 27 City budget, City staff issued requests for scope of work seeing qualified facilitators. Two proposals were received:

Proposal 1:

- Scope of Work: Design and facilitation of an in-person workshop to fulfill the objectives of the bid request.
- Cost: Not to exceed \$9,125, inclusive of overnight travel expenses.

Proposal 2:

- Scope of Work: Facilitation of the goal-setting session on an hourly basis.
- Rate: \$275/hour
- Estimated Hours: 16 hours
- Total Estimated Cost: \$4,400 (billed only for hours worked; billed monthly, 30-day net)



City of Sebastopol

DISCUSSION: Council is asked to review the proposals submitted and provide direction regarding facilitator selection or directing staff to prepare actions and priorities based on the current six goals. The Six Current Goals are as follows:

1. COMMUNITY VITALITY: Enhance Sebastopol as a great place to live that values community health and well-being. Preserve Sebastopol's unique character.
2. PUBLIC SAFETY: Strengthen the public's safety and improve the quality of life. Includes supporting our first responders (police, fire, public works), responding to emergencies, protecting people, property, and businesses, and engaging in emergency preparedness community outreach, public education and prevention activities.
3. INFRASTRUCTURE: Maintaining High Quality Infrastructure, Facilities and Services includes repairing/replacing outdated city facilities, improving streets, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure.
4. HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION
5. LONG TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: Achieving Greater Fiscal Resilience and Long Term Fiscal Sustainability
6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STAFF ANALYSIS: Staff has reviewed both proposals and based upon review and reference checks, both facilitators would provide facilitation services for a goals and priority setting workshop. It should be noted that funding for a facilitator has not been budgeted in the FY 25/26 budget and would require a budget amendment.

BUDGET COMMITTEE REVIEW: The budget committee reviewed this item on February 9th 2026 and **was** /**was not** in support of funding a facilitator for the goals and priorities session.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS / PRIORITIES / GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

Goal 4: High-Performance Organization

Restoring public trust through transparent and inclusive processes

Improving public communications and community engagement

PUBLIC COMMENT: As of the preparation of this staff report, no public comments have been received. Any written public comments received after publication will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials prior to or at the meeting. Members of the public may also provide oral comments during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE: This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was made available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: Costs will depend on the facilitator selected. Staff time will also be required for preparation and support. Selection of either facilitator would require a budget amendment.

Comparison of Proposals



City of Sebastopol

Proposal Scope	Cost	Notes
1 In-person workshop, design and facilitation	\$9,125	All-inclusive, includes overnight travel
2 Hourly facilitation	\$4,400 (16 hrs @ \$275/hr)	Only billed for hours worked; billed monthly, 30-day net

RESTATED RECOMMENDATIONS/OPTIONS: That the City Council:

1. Select an external facilitator from the proposals received and approve a date for the goal-setting session; or
2. Reject external facilitation and set a date for the Goals and Priorities Setting Meeting, directing staff to prepare a proposed list of actions and priorities using the current six goals; or
3. Take no action and continue discussion at a future meeting providing further direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

Facilitator Proposals

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval:

Approval Date:

CEQA Determination (Planning):

Approval Date:

The proposed action is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Administrative Services/Financial Approval:

Approval Date:

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget:

Yes No

Account Code (if applicable) _____

Approval Date:

City Attorney Approval:

Approval Date:

City Manager Approval:

Approval Date:

Approval



January 5, 2026

Mary C. Gourley
Interim City Manager
City of Sebastopol

Dear Mary,

Thank you for your interest in working with Praxis Human Systems. I am very glad to have the opportunity to provide a proposal in support of your upcoming City of Sebastopol city council retreat. Below is a simple proposal outlining potential work, meant to capture elements you described in your request for proposals. If there are other elements desired from the retreat, such as team development, or addressing other issues, this proposal will change. This is meant to be a collaborative process, in any case, and we can evolve the scope as needed, once we are working together.

Objectives

1. Collaborate with the city council retreat planners to design retreat agenda
2. Facilitation of planning session to help council decide on goals and priorities for coming year

Proposed Process

I understand from your request, that you are looking for a brief timeframe of a few hours, for focused work directed on council planning for the upcoming year. Ideally, preparation can be supported by pre-work, that the council can do ahead of the retreat date. This will enable us to use the limited retreat hours to the greatest effect.

1. **Finalize expectations** – Additional conversation with key council members to plan, finalize desired outcomes and expectations, timing, and logistics for the project (~2 hours)
2. **Session design and preparation** – Design of retreat, including prework for council members, and preparation of needed materials. (3-4 hrs.)
3. **Facilitate retreat** – Delivery of half day planning session (including set up and break down as needed). You will be responsible for logistical preparations such as location rental, catering, and scheduling attendees. (6 hours)
4. **Documentation** –Transcribe retreat notes and create simple, brief document outlining decisions made (4 hours)
5. **Closure and evaluation** – a follow up opportunity to reflect on our work and determine the lessons learned and opportunities for the future



Consultation fees: Regular billing rate for local city and county agencies is \$275/hour. Total estimated hours 16 hours, for a fee of \$4400. Billing is hourly and I do not charge for hours not worked. Fees will be billed at end of month; due 30 days net.

Experience

I have worked with agencies throughout the County of Sonoma for over ten years, including Ag & Open Space, Sonoma County Regional Parks, The Board of Supervisors, Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures, Sheriff's Department, Department of Emergency Management, the HR Department and many more. I also have worked for several years in Solano County and Napa County systems, City of Cloverdale City Council, and City of Santa Rosa (Police department, HR, City Attorney).

Work has included large scale strategic planning, team and management development workshops, coaching, and hundreds of team retreats for planning, development, skill building and problem solving of all kinds.

Project Philosophy

My approach centers around the partnership between client and consultant. This collaboration is supported by a deep respect for the inspiration and ownership that is created when the client's knowledge, expertise, and experience are combined with the strategies, methodologies, and knowledge we bring. The result inevitably is a strong commitment to the project's successful implementation.

I believe in fixing systems, not blaming people. Each of us comes to work every day wanting to contribute, to be challenged, and to be successful. We will focus our attention on systems, processes, and patterns, not on individual performers.

Each organization is unique. Therefore, it is my goal to continuously tailor and tune our approach to meet the needs of your company.

Not Legal Advice

I am not licensed to provide legal advice. If any of the services provided involve legal issues, you are encouraged to consult legal counsel.

Liability

I rely on information provided by your organization to provide the best advice and direction under the circumstances. I am not responsible for fines, penalties, legal fees, or other damages resulting from advice given or services rendered. You agree to take full responsibility for implementing any advice or direction given by me. You agree to indemnify and defend my involvement in matters related to your company if legal issues are raised during the course of our work.



Assumptions

1. You will establish a point person I can work directly with including communicating the agenda and expectations with your group.
2. Point person and I will maintain routine and open communications regarding the project.
3. We will be open with each other (Client and Consultant) at every stage and help each other by providing immediate, constructive feedback on the quality of product, partnership, and process.
4. We will respect each other's confidentiality and proprietary materials and approaches.
5. We will manage reasonable accommodation for conflicts, unforeseen events, and other competing priorities.
6. Work may be a combination of in person and zoom meetings (for interviews), with an in-person retreat.
7. You will be responsible for logistical arrangements for your retreat.
8. Reports and documentation, beyond the interview report and notes from the retreat, are not part of this scope.

I'm looking forward to possibly working with you and the City of Sebastopol City Council to create a valuable and productive retreat experience for furthering your group's aims. Please let me know any questions.

Best regards,

Talia Eisen
Principal
Praxis Human Systems



Jen Cavanaugh

Cavanaugh Coaching and Consulting



City of Sebastopol

City Council 2026

Goals and Priorities Session

Design and Facilitation

Prepared for:
Mary Gourley
Interim City Manager
City of Sebastopol
7120 Bodega Avenue
P.O. Box 1776
Sebastopol, CA 95473
mgourley@cityofsebastopol.gov

Prepared by:
Jen Cavanaugh
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Proposal Outline

Executive Summary.....	3
Firm Overview.....	4
Range of Services Offered.....	4
Examples of recent relevant experience.....	5
Project Background.....	6
Approach.....	7
Incorporating Prior-Year Goals.....	7
Workshop Design Philosophy.....	7
Work Plan and Timeline.....	9
Budget.....	11
References.....	12
Facilitator Bio.....	13

Executive Summary

I am pleased to submit this proposal for the City of Sebastopol's March 2026 Goals and Priorities Session.

Building on your successful April 2025 goal-setting workshop, this focused half-day session will help the council confirm and prioritize goals for the year ahead while respecting the city's budget constraints and limited staff capacity.

Under Interim City Manager Mary Gourley's leadership, Sebastopol has made meaningful progress on 2025 priorities. This workshop provides an opportunity to review that progress, refine priorities for the year ahead, and ensure council direction aligns with organizational capacity as you enter the 2026-27 budget planning season.

This proposal incorporates insights from the 2025 workshop outcomes and addresses the city's current priorities: long-term fiscal sustainability, community vitality, public safety, infrastructure, economic development, and organizational high performance.

In partnership,



Jen Cavanaugh
Former Mayor, Piedmont, CA
Founder, Cavanaugh Coaching + Consulting

About

Jen Cavenaugh operates Cavenaugh Coaching + Consulting, a woman-owned consulting practice located in the East Bay that partners with high-impact leaders and teams to overcome hurdles and maximize their effectiveness.

Working in a personalized capacity, Jen delivers the highest quality leadership development and strategic planning experiences, tailored to the specific leadership challenges in each organization.

Jen collaborates with subject-matter experts and other professionals to deliver comprehensive consulting services to public sector and nonprofit clients.

Range of Services Offered:

- **Strategic Planning and Goal Setting:** Guides organizations through comprehensive planning processes, from visioning to implementation, ensuring that strategic plans and annual goals are actionable and aligned with organizational goals.
- **Retreat Hosting and Team Building:** Curates custom experiences tailored to the unique needs of each team for connection, team building, planning, and decision-making using diverse skills such as participatory leadership, Enneagram Personality Assessments and consensus-based decision-making.
- **Leadership and Team Coaching:** Provides a framework for connections and communications to help leaders and their teams assess their current challenges and reorient themselves to their bigger purpose and collaborate with others to act upon it.
- **Learning and Development Design and Training:** Designs custom curriculum and delivers professional experiences to address the development needs of teams and individual leaders
- **Performance Evaluation and Goal Setting:** Facilitate leadership performance evaluations that embraces a culture of open dialogue, transparency, and constructive feedback so that teams can speak with one voice and provide clear direction.

Examples of recent relevant experience:

City of Sonoma

- Facilitated multi-year goal-setting retreats (2025, 2026) including confidential council interviews, department head focus groups, annual goal progress review, priority setting and refinement, and post-retreat goal summaries aligned with resource constraints.

Alameda County Transportation Commission

- Designed and facilitated commission retreat focused on commissioner team building and agency strategic priorities using World Cafe format to align local and regional goals across agency objectives.

City of St. Helena

- Designed team-building retreat focused on establishing working norms and consensus-building frameworks as foundation for strategic planning and goal-setting work. Integrated Enneagram personality assessments to enhance team dynamics and communication effectiveness; planning for Feb 2026 strategic priority setting.

Alameda County Board of Supervisors

- Leadership coaching and team effectiveness support for board governance and strategic decision-making including development of a work plan for agreed board norms and policies.

Project Background

In April 2025, the Sebastopol City Council participated in a comprehensive goal-setting workshop that established priorities of fiscal sustainability, community vitality, public safety, infrastructure, economic development, and organizational performance. The session balanced recognition of recent wins—including regional partnerships, voter-approved revenue measures, and key hires—with honest acknowledgment of persistent challenges around budget constraints, aging infrastructure, and limited staff capacity for new initiatives.

The workshop reinforced that maintaining strong council-staff relationships and realistic expectations about what's achievable would be essential to success. Since July 2025, Interim City Manager Mary Gourley has led steady implementation, with over one-third of the council's goals completed and another half in progress. The city continues managing financial pressures while delivering on strategic commitments.

March 2026 Session Purpose: This half-day workshop will review progress, confirm or adjust priorities for the remaining goal period, and ensure council direction aligns with organizational capacity as the city enters budget season.

A focused session with a concise summary will ensure the council remains aligned on priorities as they enter budget planning season.

Approach

I understand the unique leadership challenges public sector leaders face and the constraints that affect effective council dynamics. High-functioning teams invest early in clarifying roles, setting expectations, gaining alignment around values, and building interpersonal connections that foster trust and effective communication. Annual goals grounded in clear strategy create momentum over time.

My engagement approach centers on:

- **Equitable participation** – Ensuring all voices are heard and valued in the process
- **Brave spaces** – Encouraging courageous conversations and constructive challenge
- **Personalized experience** – Creating meaningful, productive sessions that honor both the people and the work
- **Trust and connection** – Building the interpersonal foundation that enables collaboration over time

Incorporating Prior-Year Goals

This workshop builds directly on the 2025 goal-setting work by:

- Reviewing progress on established priorities with honest assessment of accomplishments and challenges
- Identifying which goals remain relevant and which need adjustment based on changed circumstances or resource realities
- Carrying forward momentum on partially completed initiatives rather than clean slate
- Using lessons learned from 2025 implementation to refine 2026 priorities

The half-day format focuses on confirmation and refinement rather than wholesale reinvention, respecting the work already done while allowing space for necessary course corrections.

Workshop Design Philosophy

Effective workshops require strong pre-work. I optimize the time before we gather to set expectations, gather input, and share background materials so our in-person time maximizes interpersonal connection, relationship-building, and shared understanding.

Like the host of a great dinner party, I guide the team toward desired outcomes while remaining mindful of energy levels and the need for movement or reflection. Participants are co-hosts in creating the experience—through clarifying expectations in advance and honoring different communication and learning styles.

The workshop will comply with the Ralph M. Brown Act while creating space for meaningful connection and strategic alignment.

Workshop logistics elements to be determined in collaboration with city staff:
location and setting, refreshments, technology support, materials, accessibility accommodations, and logistics coordination. Workshop procurement (food, facility rental, etc.) is excluded from this proposal.

Work Plan and Timeline

An in-person workshop is an important investment of time and resources both in the planning and in-person participation.

This comprehensive approach incorporates key phases of the workshop design and execution.

Project Initiation January 2026

- Contract execution and project kickoff
- Confirm design priorities with the City Manager
- Develop communications plan

Needs Assessment January 2026

- Review 2025 goal-setting materials, quarterly progress reports, and budget documents
- Conduct confidential 1-1 45-minute interviews with council members to understand perspective on key accomplishments and areas needing focus, changes or additions to current priorities, feedback on council effectiveness; interview scope to be refined with city manager.

Workshop Design Planning – January -February 2026

- Create and execute council communications plan for collecting input and aligning expectations.
- Summarize learnings and insights from council and staff leadership input.
- Prepare pre-meeting council briefing in partnership with City Manager leadership, as needed.
- Design participant experience, group activities, workshop flow, and workshop agenda.

Workshop Facilitation – March 2026 (to be adjusted as needed after summarizing needs assessment)

- Welcome and introductions
- Public Comment
- Review agenda ground rules and expectations
- Connection activity and reflections
- Review progress on 2025 goals: what's working or needs adjusting
- Set and prioritize revised 2026-27 goals: what to carry forward, add or change
- Resource and capacity alignment check
- Check-in on role clarity, working agreements and good governance principles, if needed
- Next steps and accountability framework
- Takeaways and reflection

Post-workshop Summary and Action Planning – March 2026

- Create and execute post-workshop survey for feedback
- In collaboration with city manager, summarize workshop takeaways and annual goals in one- to two-page summary report

SCHEDULING

In-person workshop to occur on a mutually agreed upon date between City Manager and facilitator based on availability.

Facilitator availability can generally be flexible in March with the exception of the following dates: March 5, 6 and 23-27 (*subject to change until contractually committed.*)

Location: Sebastopol off-site to be determined

Budget

Notwithstanding design changes from City Manager, Jen Cavenaugh (Cavenaugh Coaching + Consulting) is prepared to provide the requested Scope of Work and fulfill the Objectives of the Bid Request at a cost not to exceed \$9125 inclusive of overnight travel expenses for in-person workshop design and facilitation.

Incidental costs for potential workshop materials, not to exceed \$100.

This budget is exclusive of workshop refreshments, facility rental, workshop materials and copies, technology set-up, or staff support for logistics. The facilitator will collaborate with staff to determine logistics needed to achieve the intended experience.

Any additional work requested outside the scope of this project will be billed at \$250 per hour.

Optional Add-on (*Note: these activities and costs are not included in the proposed budget; discounted pricing included, as a part of the execution of the base proposal*)

- Six-month follow-up 1.5-2 hour in-person mini-workshop, design and facilitation: \$1800

Materials: All workshop materials and summary documents become property of the City of Sebastopol upon completion.

Cancellation Policy:

- More than 60 days before workshop: Full refund minus expenses for resources allocated and work undertaken up to the point of cancellation.
- More than 30 days and less than 59 days before workshop: 50% fee applies in addition to expenses for resources allocated and work undertaken up to the point of cancellation.
- Less than 30 days before workshop: Full fee applies.

References

Reference Name	David Guhin, City Manager
Agency	City of Sonoma
Phone	(510) 273-8780
Email	dguhin@sonomacity.org

Reference Name	Anil Comelo, City Manager
Agency	City of St. Helena
Phone	(707) 968-2743
Email	AComelo@cityofsthelena.gov

Reference Name	David Haubert, Board President
Agency	Alameda County Board of Supervisors
Email	david.haubert@acgov.org

Reference Name	Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Mayor
Agency	City of Alameda
Phone	510-747-4701
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Facilitator Bio



Jen Cavenaugh

*Cavenaugh Coaching + Consulting, Founder
Leadership Coach and Facilitator
City of Piedmont Mayor, former*

Jen is the former Mayor of Piedmont, CA, a Leadership Coach and Consultant with her MBA from the University of Chicago and leadership training from the Co-Active Training Institute. In her work, she leverages her vast professional experience in consulting, general management and marketing, working for Fortune 500 companies, community-based organizations and local government.

As a leadership coach, she works with mission-driven, committed clients to live and lead with self-integrity in alignment with their values. She works with clients across not-for-profit, government, and private sectors and in industries including technology, sustainability, health care, and education.

As a group facilitator, coaching partner, and consultant, she supports executives and their teams to navigate uncertainty, improve their performance and effectiveness, and fulfill their vision.

Jen is a long-time civic leader and public servant. She was elected Mayor of her hometown of 20+ years, Piedmont CA, by her colleagues in December 2023, after being elected to City Council in November 2016.

Throughout the state, Jen has been active in policy development, advocacy, and board governance. Jen has long-standing past board experience including leadership positions regionally and throughout the state including:

- **CalCities** member, Chair Environmental Quality Legislative Policy Committee; East Bay Division Board Member; Women's Caucus; Leadership in Action award by the Mayors and Council Members Leadership
- **Alameda County Transportation Commission** Board Member
- **Ava Energy**, Board Member and Interim Chair
- **Alameda County Mayor's Conference** Member and Nominating Committee
- **StopWaste**, Board Member

She restores herself in nature with full-time companions Shasta and Bailey, doesn't take herself too seriously on the pickleball court, and connects with her creative side as an amateur ceramicist.

Jen brings balanced energy and authenticity. She is known for her deep commitment to serving others through her coaching and civic leadership.