

City Council

Mayor Jill McLewis
Vice Mayor Sandra Maurer
Councilmember Phill Carter
Councilmember Neysa Hinton
Councilmember Stephen Zollman



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Sebastopol Commons Committee

Councilmember Stephen Zollman – Chair
RM Horrell – Vice Chair

**SEBASTOPOL COMMONS: BUILDING THE COMMONS COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**

**MEETING MINUTES
(ABBREVIATED)**

In Person Location: Sebastopol City Hall, City Hall Conference Room, 7120 Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol
Remote Teleconference Participation: 12125 Ramsey Road, Sebastopol

CALL TO ORDER: *Councilmember Zollman called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm*

ROLL CALL:

Attendees: ***Committee:*** *Councilmember Stephen Zollman, Councilmember Phill Carter, RM Horrell, Sarah Glade Gurney, Naomi Hupert, Kent Jenkins, Mary Lou Schmidt, Remote: Fred Engbarth and Deb Hoadley (non-voting)*
Other: *None*
Absent:
City Staff: *Mary Gourley, Erik Billing, Elissa Overton*

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: The City of Sebastopol acknowledges that we live and work within the unceded ancestral homelands of the Southern Pomo and the Coast Miwok people. We pay our respect to the past, present, and future generations of these peoples, including the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria.

Consent Calendar Item(s):

1. Approval of Minutes of the January 13, 2026 Building the Commons Committee Meeting
 - a. **Motion for Approval: Yay’s: 8, Nay’s: 0, Absent: 1**

Subcommittee Update(s):

2. Update from the Funding Assessment Subcommittee
 - a. Presentation. Visual not recorded. Audio available.
3. Update from the Community Needs Assessment Subcommittee
 - a. Will be given at the next meeting

Subcommittee Composition:

4. Discussion of Restructuring of current Subcommittees or establishment of additional subcommittees (this is a standing agenda item and will only be discussed if new subcommittees are requested)
5. Identify focus topics of newly created subcommittees (this is a standing agenda item and will only be discussed if new subcommittees are created)

Motion to define purpose of the committee:

Our purpose is to create a long-term solution included with the charge of our advent and that in doing so we're weighing the elements of cost, location, and access, and that timeliness and immediacy of satisfaction of these needs are elements thereof.

Motion for Approval: Yay's: 8, Nay's: 0, Absent: 1

New Business:

6. Discuss quarterly Report to the City Council for the April 7, 2026 City Council Meeting

Timelines/Milestones/Next Steps:

7. What is required to be accomplished by the next meeting
8. What is required to be accomplished within three months
9. What is required to be accomplished within six months

Future Meetings:

10. Next Meeting Date: **March 10, 2026 at 1:00 pm**
11. Meeting Agenda Items for March 10, 2026 (the committee process is to approve the agenda items for the next Committee meeting
 - a. **Reminders will be sent two weeks and one week prior to the meeting, with one week prior being the deadline for subcommittee reports.**
12. Request for Future Agenda items (this is an opportunity for members to make requests for topics/agenda items/information for next meeting)

I. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

- Councilmember Zollman adjourned the meeting at: 3:00 pm

Submitted by: Elissa Overton, City Staff Member

ATTACHED:

Attachment A – AI transcription of meeting minutes

ATTACHMENT A

THE FOLLOWING DATA IS GENERATED BY AI AND CONTAINS INACCURATE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE. PLEASE LISTEN TO THE AUDIO RECORDING FOR CLARIFICATION AND FURTHER DETAILS.

The Finance Committee presented a comprehensive analysis of potential locations for the Sebastopol Commons project, evaluating sites including the O'Reilly building, Railroad Forest, Calder Creek corridor, and downtown locations. Each site was assessed using SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) considering factors like cost, accessibility, flood risk, parking, and timelines. The committee passed a motion establishing that location selection will be guided by financial viability, accessibility, community impact, agency accommodation, and timeliness. A key discussion focused on whether the committee should pursue immediate solutions versus long-term vision, ultimately agreeing to create a lasting solution where timeliness is a weighted factor rather than a separate short-term approach. The committee confirmed their next meeting on March 10th to review both the finance and needs assessment reports, with a potential additional meeting between March 10-31st to finalize the April 7th City Council report. The Council report will be informational, including summary findings and attached detailed reports with a map of evaluated locations.

Key Considerations Discussed

- **Transportation:** Senior accessibility is a concern for any location. Committee noted that transportation services are provided for those who need it, and no location within city boundaries eliminates walking challenges for all residents.
- **Parking:** O'Reilly has existing adequate parking. Other sites would require creative solutions including multi-level parking structures (\$2 million per 40 cars).
- **Urgency:** Senior Center has immediate space needs and is ready to launch a capital campaign within 18 months. Community Center also faces current space challenges.
- **Funding approach:** O'Reilly option would require partnership with 3-5 different entities. Long-term vision sites would need 1-2 major donors attracted by architectural vision.
- **Climate resilience:** O'Reilly building offers high ground, generator, heating/cooling, and potential evacuation center capability.
- **Sustainability:** Repurposing O'Reilly keeps 45,000 sq ft of material out of landfill.

Sites Evaluated

1. **O'Reilly Campus:** Existing 90,000k sq ft facility and 15k sq ft garage available for approximately \$20 million with three buildings including warehouse space. Advantages include immediate availability, ADA compliance, existing parking, fiber internet, generator, and climate resilience (out of floodplain). Could serve as evacuation center. Challenges include distance from downtown core and need for creative financing with multiple partner entities.

2. **Railroad Forest:** New build opportunity with green space access and trail connectivity. Estimated \$12-23 million. Challenges include single access point on busy road, flooding issues, and significant infrastructure requirements.
3. **Calder Creek Civic Commons:** City-owned space between existing buildings. Would require significant investment (\$60+ million) for creek daylighting, remediation of former laundry site contamination, and multi-story construction. Offers downtown location but faces long timeline and complex challenges.
4. **Rite Aid Building Adaptive Reuse:** \$10 million purchase with \$40K/month rent. Poor condition would require extensive work, total cost approaching \$30 million.
5. **Current library/City Hall:** Expanding would require relocating City Hall, taking down existing buildings, and addressing parking. Estimated 5+ years of planning and potential lawsuits.
6. **Hall Site:** 1.5-2 million acquisition, suitable for library only, would be new build far from center.
7. **Tow Building (Petaluma Ave):** 3,700 sq ft at \$1.5 million. Deemed inadequate for needs and would require extensive renovation or rebuild.

After extensive discussion about whether to pursue short-term solutions versus long-term vision. It was discussed that in the process of selecting a location, factors will include financial viability, accessibility, ease of access, community impact, availability for all agencies the committee is looking to partner with, and timeliness. The committee will recommend a location to Council that represents a long-term solution, with timeliness being one of the weighted factors in decision-making rather than pursuing separate short-term and long-term solutions.

RM Horrell stated “The goal is to live up to the charge and create this vision. One of the elements of getting the decision around which place to go is also going to include the turnaround timeline of making it happen. That saves money because the economy continues to get more expensive. Looking at building this year vs. 10 years saves money.

Timeliness is an element to making long-term decisions about the vision, but it’s not separate and indistinct. We are going to work on this in the meantime

We are going to create this vision that has ongoing and lasting and legacy impact for the City, Senior Center, The Library, etc., in these ways. Part of our decision about where it is going to go and what we do is going to include prioritizing the timeliness thereof because we save money on building, we save money in the long run “

The committee passed a motion clarifying their approach:

Motion (unanimously approved):

Our purpose is to create a long-term solution included with the charge of our advent and that in doing so we're weighing the elements of cost, location, and access, and that timeliness and immediacy of satisfaction of these needs are elements thereof.

This motion resolved ongoing debate about the committee's scope. Key points of discussion included:

- Fred emphasized the importance of community representation and questioned whether the committee should focus on short-term or long-term investments
- RM clarified that the Finance Committee is currently evaluating financial implications of potential visions before moving to funding development, as donors need a clear plan to support
- Kent stressed that the Senior Center has immediate needs and questioned whether the committee should address current problems or focus solely on visionary projects
- Mary expressed concern about alignment with City Council's original charge, which established the committee to create a vision for a commons
- The group agreed that pursuing a location like O'Reilly could fulfill both the commons vision and address immediate needs without constituting a "short-term solution" separate from the vision
- Naomi emphasized that delaying too long would cause organizations with immediate needs to pursue separate solutions, undermining the commons concept

Vision and Funding Strategy Alignment

Fred raised important questions about the committee's scope, asking whether they should focus on financial analysis versus funding development, and expressing concern about community representation in the process.

RM responded by clarifying the committee's phased approach:

1. Current phase: Evaluating financial implications of various location options
2. Next phase: Once a vision/location is selected, transition to funding development
3. Rationale: Cannot approach donors (county, state, major donors) without a concrete plan to present

The committee has compiled an internal document listing dozens of potential funding sources, which will be refined once a specific location and vision are selected. The choice of location will influence which donors to approach (e.g., pursuing O'Reilly family donations if selecting the O'Reilly building).

Mary clarified that the committee's charge from City Council is to create a visionary commons solution. If the committee wants to explicitly address immediate needs as part of that vision (rather than solely focusing on a future project), this should be clarified with Council to ensure alignment with their intent when establishing the committee.

Community Commons Vision Implementation

The committee clarified that the library has been the assumed baseline throughout all discussions. The Finance Committee's work focused on identifying locations that could accommodate library expansion while partnering with other organizations (senior center, community center, nonprofits, health services) to create a true commons.

Key commons principles discussed:

- Multi-generational spaces serving children, families, and seniors
- Shared reception/welcome desk reducing administrative redundancy
- Coordinated scheduling among partner organizations
- Cafe and outdoor spaces for community gathering
- Flexible spaces for nonprofits, county services, or private practice offices
- Meeting rooms, auditorium/performance space, and exercise facilities
- Expanded library concept with study spaces and modern amenities

The O'Reilly building was highlighted as offering courtyard space for outdoor dining, potential daycare with playground access, numerous existing offices that could be leased to offset costs, and a large warehouse space suitable for performances, exercise, or community events.

Bill noted that a 10-year study already identified the current library needs to double in size, and current facilities don't serve the purposes envisioned in expanded library concepts like those in Roseland, Petaluma, Walnut Creek, and Boulder, Colorado.

Next City Council Report Planning

The committee extensively discussed logistics for their April 7th report to City Council:

Timeline Established

- **March 10th (Regular Meeting):** Review both Finance Assessment Subcommittee and Community Needs Assessment Subcommittee reports, discuss Mary's compiled draft Agenda Report for Council
- **Between March 10-31st:** Hold additional special meeting if needed to finalize edits to the Agenda Report before April 7th Council meeting
- **Staff preparation:** Coordinate interpreters for any additional meeting

Report Content and Format

After debate about whether to provide a summary versus detailed report, the committee decided:

- **Format:** Informational report (not requiring Council action/direction)
- **Content:** Mary will prepare a summary based on both subcommittee reports
- **Attachments:** Full detailed reports from both sub committees, plus map showing all evaluated locations with addresses
- **Approach:** Make clear that no immediate recommendations are being made; committee is showing progress and continuing to explore options

- Philosophy: Be transparent about work completed while avoiding premature specificity that might generate controversy before committee is ready

Sarah advocated for transparency, arguing the public and Council need to see the detailed work. RM emphasized that the Finance Committee report is already written to avoid appearing as a recommendation, clearly stating options are being ruled in/out based on preliminary analysis and remaining open to new suggestions.

Phil noted the April timeline to head to City Council is feasible, rather than delaying to May (which would conflict with Council budget work and goals-setting).

Next Steps Summary

- Mary will prepare a summary report for the April 7th City Council meeting, integrating the Finance Assessment subcommittee and Community Assessment subcommittee reports, with attached detailed documents and a map of potential locations with addresses