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City of Sebastopol

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARY GOURLEY IS NAMED SEBASTOPOL CITY MANAGER

SEBASTOPOL, CA, MAY 6, 2026 – The Sebastopol City Council today announces the appointment of Interim City Manager Mary Gourley as City Manager. The five-member Council unanimously approved the appointment at its May 5 meeting. Ms. Gourley has been concurrently serving as both Assistant City Manager and City Clerk during her tenure as Interim City Manager. She formally takes on the role of City Manager today and her agreement with the City establishes a three-year term ending June 30, 2029.



Ms. Gourley brings more than three decades of dedicated public service to the role, all within Sebastopol city government. Over the years she has taken on increasing leadership responsibilities including serving as Assistant City Manager since 2016, and, most recently as Interim City Manager since July 2025. She began her career with the City in 1995 in the Planning and Engineering Departments as a secretary and was later appointed Planning/Public Works Technician. In September 2006, she was selected from a competitive pool of 37 applicants to serve as City Clerk. Fellow colleagues and staff voted Ms. Gourley City Employee of the Year in 2010 and nominated her for the same award in six of the seven preceding years. Ms. Gourley is a graduate of the inaugural class of the Sonoma County Local Leadership Academy and, in May of 2013, became Sebastopol's first City Clerk to earn the Certified Municipal Clerk designation. Three years later she achieved her Master Municipal Clerk Designation. In 2019 Ms. Gourley was recognized as City Clerk of the Year for the State of California by the City Clerks Association of California (CCAC), a lifetime honor few achieve.

Following the resignation of the former City Manager in April 2025, the City Council initiated a formal external recruitment process and authorized issuance of a Request for Proposals. Five proposals were received, and the Council interviewed three firms before selecting one firm, subject to contract negotiations. After thorough consideration, negotiations did not result in a final agreement.

Throughout this period, Ms. Gourley provided steady, experienced, and effective leadership for the organization. She began serving as Acting City Manager in April 2025 and transitioned to Interim City Manager in July 2025, continuing in that role through today. Her leadership ensured organizational stability, continuity of operations, and ongoing progress on key City initiatives.

During the past eleven months, Ms. Gourley has served as Interim City Manager while also continuing her responsibilities as Assistant City Manager and City Clerk. Notably, she served in this expanded capacity at her existing salary, reflecting a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility and organizational continuity.



New Sebastopol City Manager Mary Gourley (center in yellow) is congratulated by the City Council.

City Council members expressed deep gratitude for Ms. Gourley's willingness to step into the City Manager position on a permanent basis. "I am thrilled to announce the appointment of Mary Gourley as our next City Manager," said Mayor Jill McLewis. "Mary's in-depth experience, commitment to public service, and proven leadership made her the clear choice to serve as Sebastopol's City Manager. Her institutional knowledge and steady guidance have been invaluable, and we are confident in her ability to lead the City forward. I have full confidence that under her continued leadership, we will advance our priorities—strengthening our infrastructure, supporting economic vitality, enhancing public safety, and improving the quality of life for all Sebastopol residents."

"Sebastopol is a truly special community to serve," said Mary Gourley. "I feel deeply honored and truly grateful for the City Council's trust in appointing me as the permanent City Manager. After more than 31 years of dedicated service to this city, I am as passionate as ever about this work and fully committed to continuing to serve our community. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Council, our dedicated staff, and all Sebastopol residents as we build on the strong foundation we've established and advance our shared priorities for the future of our community."

As City Manager, Ms. Gourley will serve as the City's chief administrative officer, responsible for implementing City Council policies, overseeing day-to-day operations, and managing municipal staff and resources.