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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL TAKES ACTION ON COMMUNITY ISSUES

Council maintains existing regulations for outdoor commercial barbeques and directs Council liaison to lead community meetings addressing racism, social bullying and mockery

SEBASTOPOL, Calif. OCTOBER 7, 2026 — At its October 6 meeting, the Sebastopol City Council took action on two issues that have generated significant community interest, voting not to move forward with proposed zoning changes for outdoor commercial barbeques in the Office Commercial zoning district and directing a Council liaison to lead community meetings addressing racism, social bullying and mockery.

Outdoor Commercial Barbeques

The Sebastopol City Council unanimously voted not to move forward with proposed zoning changes that would allow outdoor commercial barbeques in the City's CO (Office Commercial) zoning district.

Outdoor commercial barbeques are currently prohibited in the CO District, although they are conditionally allowed in Sebastopol's other commercial zoning districts. The issue came before the Council following concerns regarding A&M BBQ, which operates at 495 S. Main Street in the CO District.

Earlier this year, the Council directed staff to evaluate potential ways to accommodate outdoor commercial barbeques in the CO District. Staff presented two approaches: rezoning the specific property where A&M BBQ operates or amending the zoning code to make outdoor commercial barbeques a conditionally permitted use throughout the CO District. Both options would have required a Conditional Use Permit and compliance with new performance standards addressing issues including smoke, odor and air quality.

With the Council's decision not to proceed with either zoning approach, the City's existing zoning regulations remain unchanged. Outdoor commercial barbecues will continue to be prohibited in the CO District.

The City had temporarily paused code enforcement affecting the existing operation while potential zoning solutions were considered. According to the staff report, with no zoning change moving forward, that stay will end and the City will resume its standard code enforcement process. That process generally includes notice and an opportunity for corrective action before potentially progressing to fines or other remedies.

Staff Report [here](#).

Addressing Racism, Social Bullying and Mockery

The Council also appointed Councilmember Phill Carter to act as liaison to lead community meetings addressing racism, social bullying and mockery in Sebastopol.

Under the Council's action, the liaison will meet with neighbors, school partners, Safeway management and other community members as needed, request City staff support on an as-needed basis, and report back to the City Council quarterly. This approach uses the City's existing liaison structure rather than establishing a new two-member City Council ad hoc committee.

The action follows community concerns about racist graffiti, racial harassment and other conduct in and around the Safeway property on North Main Street, as well as broader concerns raised about racism, bullying and school climate in the community. The City staff report notes that residents have reported racist graffiti, racial mockery and harassment, and youth conduct in and around the Safeway property.

The Council also moved forward with additional measures including incorporating racial-bias and related training into City protocols, pursuing available training through the City's risk-management resources and a potential \$2,500 training grant. Staff was also authorized to prepare a draft graffiti ordinance for consideration by the City Council at a future meeting.

The City has already been working with community partners on the concerns raised by residents. Safeway has reported increased monitoring around the store, plans for a rear-area video camera, consideration of physical changes near the transformer area, and keeping paint on site so graffiti can be covered quickly after police documentation. Analy High School has also described educational and restorative efforts addressing hate speech, belonging and student conduct. The Sebastopol Police Department has increased security checks in the Safeway and Pitt Avenue area. Following an April 27 report of racist graffiti, four juveniles were identified, arrested and referred to the juvenile justice system.

The Council's action continues the City's response to concerns raised by residents while using existing Council and staff resources to facilitate community discussion, develop potential policy responses and report back to the Council on a quarterly basis. Members of the public wishing to connect with the Council liaison and be part of the conversation are invited to email their interest to info@cityofsebastopol.gov.

Staff Report [here](#).

Link to meeting recording will be available on the City of Sebastopol City Council Meetings Vimeo page [here](#). Discussion on the above items begins at the 2-hour 15-minute mark.

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