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City of Sebastopol City Council/Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: March 8, 2016
Agenda Item: 8A
To: City Council and Planning Commission
From: Kenyon Webster, Planning Director
Subject: Review of GPAC Draft General Plan
Recommendation: Provide Comments
CEQA Status: Environmental Impact Report to be Prepared

Introduction:

This memorandum recommends that the Council and Commission accept public testimony and provide comments on the GPAC (General Plan Advisory Committee) Draft General Plan (previously transmitted).

General Plan Process:

Three joint meetings of the Commission and Council were set for initial review of the draft General Plan. The first meeting on January 12 considered the Land Use and Circulation Elements. The February 9 meeting addressed the Community Services and Facilities, Conservation and Open Space, Community Health and Wellness, and Community Character Elements. The March 8 meeting will consider the Economic Vitality, Noise, and Safety Elements.

The purpose of these initial meetings to identify any *major* issues with the Elements prior to preparation of the formal Draft General and its Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Are any policies unacceptable? Are there significant new policies that should be added? Any minor edits can be provided to staff.

After the formal draft General Plan and EIR are prepared, there will be a public comment period followed by preparation of a Final EIR. Then, the Planning Commission will conduct its formal review in a public hearing process and make recommendations to the City Council, which will also conduct public hearings prior to adoption of the new General Plan.

At this time, the General Plan timeline anticipates adoption of the new General Plan by the end of 2016. To maintain this schedule, it is important that the project keep moving forward. Any additional meetings will likely have both budget and schedule impacts.

Elements for Review March 8:

The attached memorandum (previously distributed) from the General Plan consultant highlights several key issues regarding the four Elements to be discussed at the March 8 meeting.

Meeting Process

In terms of the structure of the meeting, staff suggests the following:

- Overview presentation by City's consultant
- Council and Commission questions of the consultant or staff
- Opportunity for initial public comment on any of Elements on the agenda
- Consultant facilitation of Commission and Council Element-by-Element discussion/comments, with opportunity for public comment prior to discussion of each subsequent Element

Attachment:

De Novo Memorandum



MEMORANDUM

TO: Sebastopol City Council and Planning Commission

FROM: Ben Ritchie and Beth Thompson, De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: Preparation for the March 8th Joint Workshop on the General Plan Update

DATE: February 22, 2016

INTRODUCTION

This memo provides an overview of the General Plan topics and elements that will be discussed during our joint workshop on March 8th. The intent of this memo is to assist in focusing your review of these elements on key issues and topics, in order to make the most beneficial use of our time together as we prepare the Draft General Plan for public review.

As with the last workshop, it is requested that you focus your review and comments on *major* policy issues and concerns.

The March 8th workshop will address the following elements. Please read and review these elements carefully prior to the workshop, and please come prepared to discuss any specific concerns and provide specific input related to these topics.

- **Economic Vitality**
- **Noise**
- **Safety**

Key issues you may wish to consider for each element are summarized below. Our discussion is certainly not limited to these issues.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

The GPAC and the public identified a wide range of economic issues and challenges to be addressed in the General Plan. During the Visioning process, the public emphasized the need to support and enhance local businesses in order to strengthen the economy, and to enhance economic opportunities associated with the tourism industry, without compromising the City's small-town charm and unique local character.

Issue to Consider: The Economic Vitality Element places an emphasis on supporting, encouraging, and expanding local businesses that serve the needs of City residents and residents of the West County. Examples of this approach are contained in policies EV 1-7, 1-10, 1-13, 1-14, and 4-1. While the General Plan does not prohibit, discourage, or otherwise impair the location and development of businesses that serve larger market areas, and does encourage some visitor-serving businesses, the primary emphasis is

placed on local-serving businesses and employers. The intent of this policy approach is to ensure that Sebastopol maintains its unique character and identity, and does not become imbalanced.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? With limited opportunity for locally-generated business revenue growth, should more emphasis be placed on job generation and increasing sales tax revenues from retail chains, restaurants and the tourism industry, even if this approach attracts businesses that might change Sebastopol's character?

Issue to Consider: The GPAC had discussions related to a local Living Wage requirement. There are many potential pros and cons to this type of requirement, and the GPAC did not provide unanimous definitive direction on the issue. The General Plan includes Action EV 1e, which calls for "consideration of a living wage."

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? Should more specificity and direct action be called out in the General Plan?

Issue to Consider: As the General Plan was developed, there was a tendency to place particular emphasis on the Downtown area when prioritizing policies and actions related to economic development. The GPAC felt that it was very important to also emphasize other areas of town in need of economic development assistance and prioritization. Policies EV 3-1 and 3-2, and Action EV 3c call for the recognition and planning for economic development and other improvements in the northern and southern gateway areas of the City.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? Are there additional steps that should be taken to enhance economic opportunities in areas outside of the Downtown core?

NOISE

The Noise Element seeks to preserve a quiet atmosphere around town and to reduce potential nuisance noise from vehicles and stationary noise sources. Vehicle noise is most pronounced in the Downtown area, and is primarily attributed to noise from vehicles travelling through town on the State highways. The most effective way to reduce highway vehicle noise is to reduce traffic volumes and reduce vehicle speeds. These issues are primarily addressed in the Circulation Element.

Issue to Consider: Goal N 2 and the supporting policies and actions provide a mechanism to allow for temporary increases in noise standards in the Downtown core on weekend nights (Friday and Saturday). The intent of this policy approach was to help meet the community's desire to see a more active and vibrant Downtown. The GPAC was divided on this approach. Some GPAC members felt that increased noise levels in the Downtown would have negative impacts on the surrounding residential areas, while other GPAC members felt that it was appropriate to allow higher noise levels Downtown during weekend nights in order to enhance business opportunities and increase the vibrancy and "nightlife" of Sebastopol.

Question to Consider: Does the General Plan take the correct approach to this issue? Is it appropriate to allow increased noise levels in the Downtown during weekend nights, as provided for by Table N-3 and the policies and actions following Goal N 2?

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Safety Element provides the framework to reduce risks associated with a range of environmental and human-caused hazards that may pose a risk to life and property in Sebastopol. Inclusion of the Safety Element in the General Plan is required by State law. The Safety Element includes goals, policies, and actions to protect residents, businesses, visitors, and land uses from hazards, and includes the following topics:

- Seismic and Geologic Hazards
- Flooding Hazards and Flood Protection
- Emergency Response and Disaster Preparedness
- Hazardous Materials

Questions to Consider: Action SA-1q calls for consideration of a program to encourage owners of 'soft-story' buildings to improve earthquake resistance. Should a more aggressive approach be articulated? The volunteer Fire Department is having challenges responding to weekday, daytime calls. Should additional actions be considered to address this? Are there additional safety-related topics that are not addressed in this element, or other General Plan elements, which should be included and addressed?