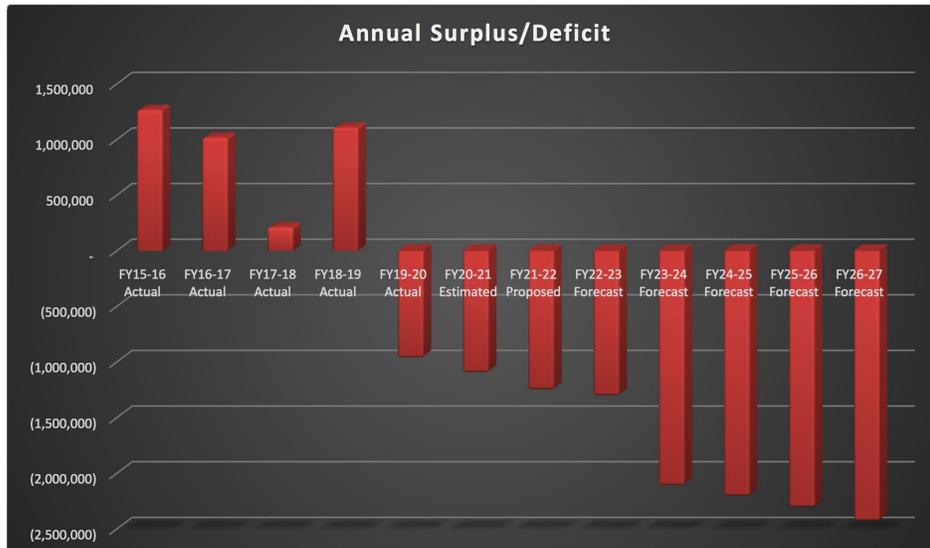


**From:** [Kate Haug](#)  
**To:** [Mary Gourley](#)  
**Cc:** [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Fritz, Paul](#); [Ana Kwong](#); [Lawrence McLaughlin](#); [Dante Del Prete](#); [Bill Braga](#); [Kari Svanstrom](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment 6/21/21- City Budget - Focus on City Services and Revenue  
**Date:** Thursday, June 17, 2021 10:20:28 PM  
**Attachments:** [Annual SurplusDeficit Graph.png](#)

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June 17, 2021

Dear Council Members,

The City of Sebastopol has a budget deficit. This deficit is present even though many key City staff positions remain vacant and many staff are doing the job of two people. At this point, it seems that the financial health and long-term financial planning should be the focus of the Council.

As a citizen, I urge you to focus resources on funding the vital City services such as fire, public works, and police.

We need our fire and police departments to be fully supported as they are not only crucial for day to day emergencies but we rely on them during times of evacuation due to fire, flood and other climate emergencies. We have many elderly people in our community and a skilled and support emergency service team is crucial given our geographic proximity to wild fire and flood.

I urge you to focus on working with existing businesses to increase sales tax revenue, a primary source of income for the City. I urge you to make Sebastopol more appealing to new businesses to increase sales tax revenue. I urge you to work on filling the commercial vacancies downtown. Sales tax is a primary source of funding for the City budget so it should be a primary focus for the Council. Unfortunately, we do not live in an economic

structure where non-profits and homeless services provide revenue for City infrastructure and City service.

I urge you to start thinking about filling the revenue loss created by the conversion of the Sebastopol Inn to permanent supportive housing for homeless people.

Instead of paying Co-Mission a consultant fee, allocate the money to the Sebastopol Downtown Association, the Sebastopol Center of the Arts and the Chamber to beautify Main Street, hold public events and create more visually appealing parklets. It seems that these organizations could produce physical improvements and host social events to help bring people into downtown and attract new business.

Given Sebastopol's location near many tourist destinations and wealthy Bay Area communities, it seems that if downtown did not appear so threadbare and was beautified with plantings, lights, cleaning and other basic amenities, it might attract new businesses and also more foot traffic. Co-Mission does not seem to be able to produce any compelling results from their projects as there is still a lot of vacancy downtown and downtown is in poor condition.

I am sure that Council members walk downtown at different times of day, see the trash building up around the vacant hotel site, the weeds in the parking lots, the disjointed visual impact of the sidewalks. When you walk downtown and down Morris Street to the Laguna, what would compel you to open a business in Sebastopol? What would compel you to invest your savings and work 60 hours per week and take that risk if it appears that the City is not a willing partner in your investment?

Instead of hiring a consultant, why doesn't the Council hold a quarterly open house for business owners to come in and tell the Council what it is like to run a small business in town and what would support them?

If you want to support existing local businesses, why don't you work with the Barlow, a complex that most likely generates at least 10% of the City Budget through sales and property tax, to mitigate some of the impact of the homeless encampment downtown? The Barlow and several other business owners have detailed the impacts of the downtown Morris Street homeless encampment. If you want to help these local, non-chain businesses, why are you not addressing their concerns?

If you are going to meet with and involve homeless advocacy groups like SAVS in a Morris Street program, why are you not also including local businesses in these meetings so that as part of your program, you can help to mitigate the impacts of the Morris Street encampment in dialogue with local businesses, especially as these businesses have reached out to you for help?

If you are running a budget deficit, why are you considering hiring a homeless outreach coordinator for \$76,000 per year when this person is limited to 40 hours per week and when the County and State have significantly more financial resources? The State budget for homeless services is \$12,000,000,000 or \$75,000 per homeless person. The County will be receiving \$25,000,000 annually from Measure O.

Why are the citizens of Sebastopol paying for this position, when the State and the County have much more abundant resources? Why doesn't the County pay for Sebastopol to have a homeless coordinator as part of the staffing at Sebastopol Inn, which will most likely have an operating budget (which does not include purchase price and renovation costs) of over \$1,200,000 this year? The Sebastopol Inn already has case managers and other professionals on-site. Why doesn't the City request for this position from some of the Measure O money?

If the State thinks that it takes \$75,000 to transition people out of homelessness, it is doubtful that the City of Sebastopol has the resources to do this work in its entirety.

It seems like a misuse of funds to start a position, funded by the citizens of Sebastopol, when the City already has vacancies in key departments, unfunded public works projects and a high amount of commercial vacancy.

As the Annual Surplus/Deficit Graph shows increasing deficits, now seems to be the time to focus on supporting and maintaining vital City services and also toward developing new revenue sources. The Council has not addressed the lost TOT and sales tax from the conversion of the Sebastopol Inn. Perhaps, the first priority would be to address that permanent loss of revenue.

Thank you for your work and advocacy for the citizens of Sebastopol.

Best,  
Kate Haug