


Agenda Report Reviewed by:  
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM

**Meeting Date:** January 17, 2023  
**To:** Honorable Mayor and Honorable City Councilmembers  
**From:** Agenda Review Committee  
**Subject:** Request for City Sponsorship for Sebastopol Walks 2023 and Request for Assistance with Publicity  
**Recommendation :** That the Council approve sponsorship for the program and assist with publicity  
**Funding:** Currently Budgeted: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No XX N/A  
Net General Fund Cost: N/A  
Amount: \$0

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) N/A AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

**INTRODUCTION:** This item is to request that the City Council Approve City Sponsorship for the Sebastopol Walks Program (for its 15th Year) 2023 and Request for Assistance with Publicity

**BACKGROUND:**

For 11 of the last 15 years, local volunteers have organized and conducted once-monthly, docent-led walks around town. More than 3,000 people have participated in more than 120 walk events. These statistics are best estimates only.

The program, known as Sebastopol Walks, has introduced people to the fun of exploring town on foot, learning about the social/cultural/political history of the community, and discovering what makes Sebastopol a great place to live and visit. Locals, locals with out-of-town guests, residents from other Sonoma County cities, out-of-county and international visitors have enjoyed the walks. Intended as a community-building experience, the walks became a tourist attraction.

The inspiration for the walks was a booklet called Sebastopol Walks written by local activist Richard Nichols, its first edition funded by the City. For the second edition, then Mayor and Former City Councilmember Sarah Gurney organized three progressive dinner walks, featuring local restaurants, and raised enough money for the booklet’s second printing. Funding for the third edition came from the sales of the book, including at Copperfields Books. The local store has sold over 1000 copies. The booklet has been the number one holiday best seller for several years. It has served inexpensive gift and/or souvenir and has been presented to many Sister City/other visitors to City Hall.

Originally, a four-member core group of volunteers assumed leadership for all of the walks. Soon community leaders were recruited to share the responsibilities, expanding the core group. Later, the current Mayor and Former Council Members were invited to create and lead new routes, often highlighting City governance, service delivery, and opportunities for the future.

The WALKS Program has emphasized the value of exercise for good health. Already in existence when Sonoma County Health Action started the iWALK campaign (in 2013), Sebastopol WALKS was highlighted as the

demonstration program. It has inspired several other local walking programs: for example, one at the Senior Center; iMOSEY through an earlier Health Action Chapter; at least one private women's group; and a sister program in Novato. It is the only Health Action iWALK activity still in existence.

The 2023 Walks Program welcomes new organizational leadership. Experienced volunteer Simon Lowings has rekindled interest in the program amongst long-timers and encouraged new local volunteer leaders. Mr. Lowings has also recruited a replacement for the graphic designer, Kathy Oetinger: Gary Morgret, who is a designer, artist, photographer for Pepperwood, and Coastwalker, has agreed and has been doing the Walks flyer.

**DISCUSSION:**

Prior to retirement from the Council, former City Councilmember Gurney has placed this item on a forward agenda and tonight's item is requested by the recomposed volunteer team requesting sponsorship for another season of walks for 2023. The Agenda Review Committee is now sponsoring this agenda item.

The group proposes 10 walks, February through November. As before, Walk events will be held on the last Saturday of each month, meeting at The Plaza at 9 AM, departing at 9:15 AM, and returning around noon. Each walk will have a leader and a sweep. Participants will sign a Release of Liability. Everyone will be encouraged to wear a face covering and maintain a six-foot distance, if desired. The Program will be canceled upon direction from the City Manager/Attorney in the event CDC guidelines indicate.

The anticipated 2023 calendar of events is attached. The events will vary in focus, length, and difficulty, based upon the routes chosen by the morning's leaders.

Some walks will be mainly for exercise to show participants how to connect places in town by foot and others will be informational. Some are new routes and new subject matter; others are updated versions of favorites.

The WALKS will build interest in Sebastopol as a health-oriented community and help people experience the connectivity of our network of streets, sidewalks, paths, trails and alleys. Participants will learn that they can get around town without driving their car and that they can enjoy the outdoors on foot. They will learn about Sebastopol's social, cultural, and political history as well as its municipal functions.

The group seeks City sponsorship, in part in order to secure insurance coverage. The City has served as sponsor for each prior year. The group requests minimal help with publicity: posting on the City's Facebook page, website and community newsletter; placing flyers in the lobby at City Hall; installing the banner on the Gazebo at The Plaza one week in advance; etc.

**GOALS:**

This item relates to City Council Goal 5: Provide open and responsive Municipal Government Leadership; Goal 4 - Maintain and Enhance the City of Sebastopol as a Walkable/Bike-able Community and Enhance the City's Commitment to Promotion of our public's health by Creating and Participating in City and Community Programs, Services and Policies; 4.2. Foster a Sense of Community by Providing and Encouraging Participation in Community Events, Volunteering, and working with Non Profits to Support Local Events; 5.2. - Promote and enhance utilization of community energy and skills by creating opportunities for volunteer service.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), in that adopting a resolution making required findings and authorizing the City Manager to implement teleconferenced public meetings for the City Council and all City subordinate bodies pursuant to Assembly Bill 361 does not meet CEQA's definition of a "project," because the

action does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and because the action constitutes organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. and is exempt pursuant to Section 15269(c) of the CEQA Guidelines, as specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives any public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report, such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to scheduled meeting date.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the recommended action tonight other than publicity efforts through the City's social media avenues, City Website, and Relaunch media

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the City Council Approve Continued City Sponsorship of the Sebastopol Walks Program 2023 and Assist with Publicity for all 2023 events as requested.

**Attachment:**

Schedule for 2023

# SEBASTOPOL WALKS 2023

NOW IN OUR 15TH YEAR

**FEBRUARY 25 Saturday, 9AM**

Drink Sebastopol  
Leader: Anne Lowings

**MARCH 25 Saturday, 9AM**

Businesses Behind the Scenes  
Leader: Diana Rich

**May 6 Saturday, 9AM**

*(date change due to Apple Blossom parade)*  
iWalk iEat Local in Sebastopol #4  
Leader: Neysa Hinton

**MAY 27 Saturday, 9AM**

Heritage Trees of Sebastopol  
Leader: Virginia Anderegg

**JUNE 24 Saturday, 9AM**

Tree Fingerprints - Bark Rubbings  
Leader: Jizell Albright

**JULY 29 Saturday, 9AM**

Solar Sebastopol  
Leader: Tor Allen

**AUGUST 26 Saturday, 9AM**

Sebastopol History Walk  
Leader: Donna Pittman

**SEPTEMBER 30 Saturday, 9AM**

Time Out with Sebastopol Area Time Bank  
Leader: David Gill

**OCTOBER 28 Saturday, 9AM**

Spiritual Sebastopol - Part II  
Leaders: Robert Harkavy & Annella Dalrymple

**NOVEMBER 25 Saturday, 9AM**

TBD  
Leader: Patrick Slayter

