City of Sebastopol
Planning Department

August 16, 2021

Christine Sosko
Department of Environmental Health, Sonoma County

Re: MEHKO - Microkitchen permitting

City staff has identified a number of issues of concern in the proposal which would require analysis and City Council direction. However, there was insufficient time to bring the question to the City Council before the deadline. Below are some of staff's concerns, which include both support for our business areas, which continue to struggle and recover from the pandemic impacts, and to residential areas.

The City of Sebastopol has a number of vacancies in our commercial districts, including in our downtown. Staff is concerned that this type of use could potentially exacerbate those vacancies. We are also concerned regarding deliveries, traffic, and parking requirements in residential neighborhoods, as well as ensuring proper ventilation and fire safety for these uses, noise concerns from potential ventilation/mechanical equipment greater than a residential kitchen, and potentially accessibility issues as many residences won't be able to provide ADA facilities, which would exclude an important part of our community from these venues.

Staff believes there are viable alternatives for those 'starting up' restaurant businesses within the City of Sebastopol that allow for low cost alternatives to a full-fledged restaurant, but still consider the above issues. The City of Sebastopol, for instance, has seen restaurants that include more than one restaurateur in a single space, "pop ups" both at existing restaurants (one of which is now in the process of opening a permanent restaurant, renting a formerly vacant space) and in private parking lots and other outdoor events; as well as mobile food carts and trucks.

I would be happy to speak with you directly regarding staff's concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kari Svanstrom, Architect, AICP, LEEDap
Planning Director
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Cc: Larry McLaughlin, City Manager
       Mary Gourley, Assistant City Manager