
Public Comment – Item 9B (Code of Conduct Complaint against Melinda Orbach)

From Emmy Mitchell-Lynn <emmythehistorian@gmail.com>

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To City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>; Gautho, Julia <jGautho@ci.capitola.ca.us>

Dear Capitola City Councilmembers,

I am writing regarding Item 9B and urge you to dismiss the complaint against Councilmember Orbach.

The facts the public has been privy to are these: at the April 17, 2025 meeting, Councilmember Orbach described behavior that crossed the line from political disagreement into intimidation. She named the individual and asked him to stop. In response, he filed a Code of Conduct complaint, then a tort claim, and has continued to send demands for censure, reprimand, and removal from committees. Councilmember Orbach has acknowledged that naming him was a mistake in form, and mediation has been sought to resolve the matter.

Councilmember Orbach's comments do not constitute "abusive conduct." They were a straightforward account of actual events that raised legitimate safety concerns. Labeling this as a "personal attack" misuses the Code of Conduct and reflects a troubling pattern in Capitola, where process is increasingly used to marginalize or silence elected and appointed officials whose voices do not align with the priorities of certain groups. This kind of attack, regardless of which side engages in it, undermines the Council's work and erodes public trust, and it fundamentally needs to stop. Allowing this complaint to stand would only legitimize harassment and intimidation as political tactics.

What makes this especially damaging is who Councilmember Orbach is as a leader. She is not reactionary or partisan. She takes the time to analyze every issue from multiple angles, weighing competing interests and offering solutions that are balanced and fair. This impartiality is rare in today's politics, and Capitola should recognize it as an asset. Undermining that kind of leadership sends the message that fairness and balance will be met with hostility rather than respect.

And this is not an isolated incident. I served on a Capitola city board for over six years before stepping away because of the increasingly hostile climate of our city's government. I have watched how bullying tactics and divisive behavior drive out people who try to serve thoughtfully. What is happening to Councilmember Orbach is part of that same pattern — a pattern that should not be rewarded.

Allowing this complaint to move forward would not protect civic life; it would hand more power to those who thrive on intimidation. Dismissing it is the only outcome that refuses to reward harassment and keeps Capitola's public process from being further hijacked.

Sincerely,
Emmy Mitchell-Lynn