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**Capitola City Council**

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**From** Susanne Melehan CA-Santa Cruz <susanne.melehan@commonspirit.org>

**Date** Thu 9/25/2025 1:00 PM

**To** City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>

Dear Capitola City Council,

I write today out of concern that this Council has chosen to elevate a complaint rooted in retaliation and intimidation against Councilmember Melinda Orbach, who is on trial for speaking out against her own experience of harassment. This is heinous--a woman should always be able to speak out against harassment.

Councilmember Orbach has already acknowledged that naming an individual was a mistake she will not repeat. She is a woman, a mother, and an elected leader who asserts her right to safety and to draw boundaries when faced with threatening behavior. Women are too often silenced, minimized, or second-guessed for their own lived experiences. Councilmember Orbach speaking up should not be viewed nor treated as a transgression.

Councilmember Orbach has sought resolution and offered mediation through the Conflict Resolution Center multiple times, but her willingness to meet in good faith has been met with contempt with ongoing attacks against her character and attempts to discredit her leadership. Instead of standing with her, the Council risks legitimizing harassment by fostering a baseless code of conduct complaint against her.

Councilmember Orbach did not slander, demean, or lash out--she asserted her boundaries; yet, she has endured threats, online intimidation, and relentless personal attacks. Every woman in public service and every mother in Capitola raising daughters to use their voices are watching. To punish her would be to support the old adage: "stay quiet, stay small, and don't upset power."

Please strongly reject the complaint placed against Councilmember Orbach on September 25th, 2025. Capitola deserves leaders who stand with women when they speak their truth, who value integrity over intimidation, and who protect the right to safety and respect in public. Do not punish Councilmember Orbach for insisting on civility and seeking resolution on this matter.

Respectfully,  
Susanne Melehan

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