

**From:** Kristen Brown <thekristenbrown@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 22, 2025 3:09 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Subject:** Item 9B - Code of Conduct Complaint

Dear Capitola City Council Members,

I write today out of profound concern that this Council has chosen to elevate a complaint rooted in retaliation and intimidation to the level of a public agenda item. To put Councilmember Melinda Orbach on trial for speaking openly about her own experience of harassment is not just absurd, it is a dangerous signal to every woman in this community that her voice can be punished for daring to tell the truth.

As a former Capitola City Council member who served eight years on council, including two terms as mayor, I understand how deeply concerning it is when boundaries are crossed by constituents. During my own service, I had photos of my home published online, people contacting my landlord to question my residency, and even a tracker placed on my car. These behaviors reveal a troubling belief that public servants are not entitled to privacy or personal safety.

Councilmember Orbach has already acknowledged that naming an individual was a mistake she will not repeat. But the heart of her comments on April 17th was clear: a woman, a mother, and an elected leader asserting her right to safety and to draw boundaries that deserve to be respected. That should never be treated as a transgression.

Rather than inflaming conflict, Councilmember Orbach has sought resolution by offering mediation through the Conflict Resolution Center multiple times. Her willingness to meet in good faith has been met not with respect, but with ongoing attacks on her character and attempts to discredit her leadership. And now, instead of standing with her, this Council risks legitimizing harassment by entertaining a baseless code of conduct complaint.

Let us be clear: Melinda did not slander, demean, or lash out. She stated facts of the inappropriate behavior she experienced and asserted her boundaries. For that, 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, is watching closely. To punish her would be to reinforce the oldest, most harmful message women hear: stay quiet, stay small, and certainly don't hold men accountable for their behavior.

Every minute the council spends on these trivial accusations against Councilmember Orbach is time taken away from the important work of running the city on behalf of **all** residents. 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 life.

I urge this Council to reject this code of conduct complaint decisively on September 25th. To discipline Councilmember Orbach for insisting on civility is to reward harassment, and that is something that no public servant should stand for.

Thank you,

Kristen Brown

Former Capitola Mayor