

Gautho, Julia

From: heather b <hbristolatc@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2025 6:14 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Item 9B code of conduct complaint

Dear Capitola City Council:

I write today out of significant concern that this Council has chosen to elevate a complaint rooted in retaliation and intimidation to the level of a public agenda item. To allow this complaint against Councilmember Melinda Orbach to proceed as a public agenda item honors and justifies the action of the intimidator punishing a woman and her family.

Councilmember Orbach is a valued member of the community and has demonstrated her integrity and character as a Council Member, healthcare provider, mother and woman choosing to serve her community despite the time it takes her away from her young family. I can't imagine the fear she must have had for her safety and the safety of her loved ones given the frightening actions of her accuser, especially in the light of recent politically motivated events and violence. The Council sets this a dangerous precedent to every woman (and man for that matter) in this community that their voice can be punished for daring to tell the truth.

Councilmember Orbach has already acknowledged that naming an individual was a mistake she will not repeat. But the heart of her comments on April 17 was clear: a woman, a mother, and an elected leader was asserting her right to safety and to draw boundaries when faced with threatening behavior. Councilmember Orbach did what strong women, or any member of our community should be encouraged to do—she spoke up. That should never be treated as a transgression. To silence this is a true act of legitimizing harassment by entertaining a baseless code of conduct complaint. Councilmember Orbach did not slander, demean, or lash out—she asserted her boundaries for her safety and to demonstrate her character and commitment to a peaceful resolution.

In our small county and large country, no one, including civil servants and political figures, such as yourselves, should have to endure threats, online intimidation and relentless personal attacks while serving our communities. Ms. Orbach has sought resolution, offering mediation through the Conflict Resolution Center multiple times. Surprisingly, her willingness to meet in good faith has been met not with respect, but with continued attacks on her character and attempts to discredit her leadership. For what purpose does this continued support of the intimidator serve but to further reinforce the oldest, most harmful message women hear: stay quiet, stay small, don't upset power.

I urge this Council to reject this complaint decisively on September 25, 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 life.

To discipline Councilmember Orbach today for insisting on civility is to reward harassment—and sets precedent for future harassment/punishment of public figures and that is something no city committed to justice and equity should tolerate.

Respectfully,

Heather Bristol