

Gautho, Julia

From: Karl Forest <karlforest1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 3:37 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Item 9B Code of Conduct Complaint

Dear Capitola City Council,

On May 8, 2025 Alexander Pedersen resigned from the Capitola City Council following an April vote regarding the Rail Trail, after which harassment in the form of a smear campaign of lies regarding his residence drove him from office. According to a May 9, 2025 article in Lookout Santa Cruz titled, "Citing harassment, Vice Mayor Alexander Pedersen resigns from Capitola City Council," Council member Clarke was quoted saying, "...they felt the council member did what he felt best..." making "the best choice for himself and his family." Nowhere in the article was any reporting of any council member other than Melinda Orbach defending Mr. Pedersen, addressing the harassing lies. The council not standing up for Mr. Pedersen was wrong then.

And this is wrong now. You need to stand up for your fellow council members. Council Member Melinda Orbach, who has also suffered from harassment after the same April vote, has publicly named the continuing harasser and harassment, directed not only to herself but to her family, from online, in person, and email directed to her and the council. And now a tort claim that seeks monetary compensation for her speaking her truth, while he is allowed under our system to spew his lies. And is the council defending her? Maybe. When given the opportunity to do so unequivocally, Council member Westman moved to agendize further discussion on September 25. Enough members agreed to allow the continuation of this harassment rather than stop it once and for all. Perhaps this is in reaction to the tort claim. Perhaps there are other motivations. But it is plain to see there have not been any violations of the Capitola code of conduct by Council Member Orbach.

I ask the council on September 25 to put a stop to the bullying and dismiss this claim. You had the chance before to quickly and directly address this injustice and stop this outrageous claim. You should be supporting Council Member Orbach to speak openly about harassment and intimidation. You should be criticizing intimidating behavior from a community member, not censoring a fellow council member for openly protecting her family and herself.

Vote to dismiss. Support truth, principle and directly address this intimidation.

Thank you for listening.

Karl Forest
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Capitola