
item 9B code of conduct complaint

From Amanda Crowder <a.marie.crowder@gmail.com>

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

Dear Capitola City Council,

I am writing to express strong concern about the Council's decision to agendize a code of conduct complaint against Councilmember Melinda Orbach and I urge you to dismiss the complaint against Councilmember Orbach. This action sets a troubling precedent for how the City responds to conflicts between council members and creates unnecessary risk for Capitola.

No matter what his intent was, the actions taken by this individual were perceived by Councilmember Orbach and her family as threatening. Council members have no formal means of defending themselves against suspicious behavior, implied threats, or intimidation that may not meet the threshold of criminal conduct. In this case, Councilmember Orbach relied on the only tool available to her—her voice—to establish boundaries and protect her family.

It is important to note that Councilmember Orbach publicly apologized at the June council meeting for naming an individual, and she has consistently sought to de-escalate by offering mediation. In fact, both parties are currently engaging in mediation through the Conflict Resolution Center, which is the most appropriate and constructive path forward. By scheduling this hearing, the Council undermines that process, complicates resolution of the original conflict, and risks subjecting the complainant to further criticism for his actions.

Finally, moving forward with this hearing creates additional liability for both the City and Councilmember Orbach should this situation result in litigation tied to the complainant's tort claim for defamation. Rather than protecting the City or resolving conflict, this approach exposes Capitola to further division and legal risk.

We all know the current political climate is tense, divisive, and often hostile. Public servants at every level face constant criticism, intimidation, and personal attacks. Serving on council is already demanding and stressful; to add weaponized complaints on top of that makes it harder for good people — especially women — to step up and lead. Capitola should be making public service more sustainable, not more punishing.

As a parent, I want to teach my kids — that their voices have the power to create positive change, to speak out against injustice, and to demand that their boundaries be respected. This hearing sends them the opposite message: that when women speak up, they will be silenced, criticized, or punished. That is not the lesson we should be modeling as a community.

I strongly urge the Council to dismiss this complaint on September 25. Capitola deserves leaders who prioritize fairness, safety, and mediation—not those who turn conflict into a public spectacle that undermines trust and accountability.

Respectfully,
Amanda Crowder
Resident of Live Oak