
Item 9B Code of Conduct Complaint

From Becca Rubin <becca@beccarubin.com>

Date Wed 9/24/2025 11:48 AM

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

Dear Capitola City Council,

As a woman and the mother of a daughter in this county, I write today out of deep concern that this Council has chosen to elevate a retaliatory and intimidating complaint into a public agenda item. To put Councilmember Melinda Orbach on trial for speaking openly about her own experience of harassment is not only absurd—it sends a chilling message to every woman in this community: that her 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 unmistakable: a woman, a mother, and an elected leader asserting her right to safety and to set boundaries when faced with threatening behavior. In a world where women are so often silenced, minimized, or pressured to doubt their own lived experiences, Councilmember Orbach did what strong women do—she spoke up. That should never be treated as a transgression.

Rather than escalating conflict, Councilmember Orbach has repeatedly sought resolution, offering mediation through the Conflict Resolution Center multiple times. Her good-faith efforts have been met not with respect but with continued attempts to discredit her leadership and undermine her character. Now, instead of standing with her, this Council risks legitimizing harassment by entertaining a baseless code of conduct complaint.

Let us be clear: Councilmember Orbach did not slander, demean, or lash out—she 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 believe their voices matter, is watching. To punish her would be to reinforce one of the most harmful messages women have always been told: stay quiet, stay small, don't upset power.

I urge this Council to reject this complaint decisively on September 25. Capitola deserves leaders who stand with women when they speak their truth, who value integrity over intimidation, and who ensure that public life is grounded in respect and safety. To discipline Councilmember Orbach for demanding civility is to reward harassment—and that is something no city committed to justice and equity should ever tolerate.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Rubin