

5/20/2025

Hermosa Beach City Council
c/o City Clerk
1315 Valley Drive
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

Re: Breach of Settlement Agreement and Public Misconduct by Former Councilmember Stacey Armato

Dear Mayor Saemann & Councilmembers,

I respectfully submit this letter for inclusion in the public record at your next meeting. I write to bring to your attention a needless breach of a legal Settlement Agreement by former Councilmember Stacey Armato. This conduct not only violates the legal agreement entered into by the City, Ms. Armato and Hermosa Fitness, but it continues to undermine the leadership values that Hermosa Beach deserves.

In December 2021, the Los Angeles Superior Court ruled in favor of our business, Hermosa Fitness, in a writ of mandate proceeding against the City of Hermosa Beach and Ms. Armato. The court found that Ms. Armato had violated our constitutional due process rights and ordered the City to vacate its previous denial of our permit application and conduct a new, lawful hearing. These legal findings were grounded in clear evidence that Ms. Armato had improperly prejudged the matter, engaged in behind-the-scenes coordination with opposition, and still participated in a quasi-judicial proceeding in which she was legally obligated to remain impartial. In short, the court found Ms. Armato used her public office to covertly rig a process and conceal her bias, all while pretending to be a neutral arbiter. The court's order was an unequivocal condemnation of Ms. Armato's conduct.

Following that decision, we filed a federal civil rights lawsuit, which was ultimately resolved through a settlement agreement jointly executed by the City, Ms. Armato, and our business. Importantly, this agreement included a non-disparagement clause which prohibits either party from making any public or private statements that defame or disparage the other. It also limits any public comment to a mutually agreed-upon joint statement. This provision, as well as a provision to not disseminate documents, were not incidental and nor negotiated for mutual protection. They were imposed by the City to keep the public from learning just how egregiously the City and Ms. Armato abused their authority.

Despite these agreed upon restrictions, Ms. Armato has now recently chosen to violate them. On a public forum widely followed by Hermosa Beach residents, she referred to our business and owners as a "*persistent, uncooperative, litigious nuisance*" and attempted to cast her actions in heroic terms, stating that she "*put the residents before [her] own selfish interests.*" Ironically, these statements were part of a

series of posts in which Ms. Armato was lobbying to holding several current City Councilmembers accountable for “unsavory actions” and “creating widespread chaos in our city”... *“Why should we not hold them accountable if their actions are quite unsavory and are creating widespread chaos in our city?”*.

The litigation stemming from her actions cost the City \$1.3 million in settlement and legal fees, staff resources and the loss of a legitimate business. These funds were not wasted defending the public interest, they were spent cleaning up the damage from a single councilmember’s unlawful behavior that would have been entirely avoided had she followed her oath and the law. As a result of her actions, Ms. Armato was a named defendant in both the state and federal cases, not just in her official capacity, but in her personal capacity. It is no stretch to say that Ms. Armato’s personal financial exposure and her desire to conceal what transpired from the public eye were one of the primary reasons the City settled the case.

We share this to emphasize that this kind of behavior—abuse of power, refusal to acknowledge wrongdoing, rewriting history after the fact—erodes public trust. It tells residents and business owners that elected officials can violate their duties, weaponize city resources, and then walk away without accountability. I assure you our story is not an isolated case; we were simply fortunate enough to have the resources to properly protect our rights.

We support Ms. Armato’s right to speak her mind however she sees fit; but she doesn’t get it both ways. We request the Council (1) to publicly acknowledge Ms. Armato’s violation of the agreement (2) reaffirm its commitment to the agreed settlement. Additionally, in the spirit of transparency and public accountability, Hermosa Fitness hereby invites the City to jointly authorize the full public release of all documents, communications, and deposition testimony related to this case. We support the community to draw their own conclusions.

The people of this city are entitled to honesty, fairness, and responsible governance. I ask that you not only to protect the City's legal interests but to also continue to work to restore the credibility and values that public service should reflect. As you know, the taxpayers of Hermosa Beach have already paid for Ms. Armato’s behavior once. They should not have to pay for her arrogance a second time.

Respectfully,

Jed Sanford

The admin has temporarily turned off commenting!

From Maximus Salon <419maximus@gmail.com>

Date Tue 5/27/2025 7:09 AM

To City Clerk <cityclerk@hermosabeach.gov>; Councilmember Ray Jackson <rjackson@hermosabeach.gov>; Councilmember Dean Francois <dfrancois@hermosabeach.gov>; Mayor Rob Saemann <rsaemann@hermosabeach.gov>; Mayor Pro Tem Mike Detoy <mdetoy@hermosabeach.gov>; Councilmember Michael Keegan <mkeegan@hermosabeach.gov>

Cc Easyreader@easyreadernews.com <Easyreader@easyreadernews.com>

Many in our community are starting to feel like they're being manipulated by a political groups on social media—it's starting to feel less like open dialogue and more like controlled messaging.

Just yesterday, on the Hermosa Residential Forum, Councilmember Jackson posted a public letter. But as you can see in the screenshot below, comments were turned off after a few supportive responses were made. *It is absolutely shameful* that in USA, on memorial weekend symbolizing to sacrifice and freedom, this can happen in a small town like ours!

This was the comment I tried to share—but it didn't make it through.

Hermosa, are we still tossing around this “power play” talk? Can we just get back to our normal city vibes already please?! I'm starting to feel weird about the word “transparency” a bit! love it for building trust, but not when it's thrown around in public by politicians and always wanting it for the other side it. It has become a political tool and nothing else.

Let's take a deep breath and look at this with a smile and some fairness. The idea of a “power play” makes it sound like someone's plotting in a cape and twirling a mustache, but we think this is really about finding the right interim leader to keep our Hermosa groove going strong.

Remember seven years ago when we welcomed Suja Lowenthal as city manager? She didn't have city manager experience back then, but we gave her a chance! Now, Mr. Napolitano, which I don't know and have never met steps up with his own solid public service experience. Sure, it's not textbook municipal management, but his time in elected office means he gets how to serve a community like ours. That's gotta count for something, right?

Instead of seeing this as skipping the “due diligence” step, let's call it a chance to trust a capable interim leader while we launch a full-on, transparent search for our next permanent city manager. Hermosa deserves a process that's both urgent and upright.

Please, please let's just take a few breaths Hermosa, here's why we live in a imperfect world with imperfect people.

Let's remember something simple but powerful: every single person brings a unique perspective shaped by their own experiences, values, and beliefs. And while we may not always agree—or even understand—those perspectives, that doesn't make them any less valid.

In a community like ours, disagreement is inevitable. But it's how we handle those differences that defines our character. Instead of attacking or dismissing people who think or decide differently, what if we leaned into listening? What if we saw those differences as a source of strength rather than division?

We don't have to agree with every viewpoint to respect the person behind it. In fact, real community means creating space for a range of voices—even the ones that challenge our own. That's where growth happens. That's where trust is built.

Side note: Let's stop measuring people by how closely they align with our own beliefs and start valuing the diversity of thought that makes Hermosa (or any place) vibrant and resilient. We don't need uniformity to thrive—we need understanding, dialogue, and a little grace.

Ed Hart



The admin has temporarily turned off commenting.



William Jason

All-star contributor 11h · 🌐

From councilman Jackson.



Raymond Jackson is in Hermosa Beach, CA.

11h · 🌐

Where's the Due Diligence?

Two weeks ago, this Council... See more

CITY OF HERMOSA BEACH Meeting Date: May 27, 2020 Staff Report No. 20-05-002

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council

A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AN AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH STEVEN NAPOLIANO FOR INTERIM CITY MANAGER AND APPROVE AN AMENDMENT TO THE SALARY TABLE

Hand a Polital Insider \$240k & the Keys to the City

- No Recruitment**
- No Vetting**
- No Interview**

We talk about transparency. So where is the Council's due diligence? Our staff and community expect us to do the job, not just talk about it.

Mr. Napolitano comes to the City with more than 30 years in local government. Mr. Napolitano is a former two-term Mayor and City Councilmember for the City of Manhattan Beach.