

Date: July 21, 2026

To: editor@yountvillesun.com

From: Robin Chambers & Jill Turner, Yountville Residents

Subject: **Opinion: Let the Next Town Council Help Choose Yountville's Next Town Manager**

Yountville is approaching a critical civic decision: the hiring of a new Town Manager. That person will help guide and execute town operations, advise elected leaders, manage staff, and shape how local priorities are carried out. It is not a routine appointment. It is one of the most consequential decisions a Town Council can make – and this is particularly true for Yountville at this moment in time.

For that reason, the current Town Council should delay its final Town Manager decision until after the November 3 election and until the newly elected Council is seated in early December. This is not a call to disrupt town government or politicize a professional hiring process. It is a request for prudence, transparency, and respect – both for the incoming Town Council and the voters whose input will help lead Yountville into its next chapter.

The Town Manager works for the Town Council. Any candidate for such a senior position will of course want to know who their bosses will be. Likewise, the incoming Council should have a meaningful voice in selecting the person who will help execute its policies, support its goals, and manage the day-to-day work of Town Hall. Hiring someone before the new Council is seated risks creating an awkward, unfortunate, and avoidable mismatch: one Council makes the choice, while another inherits the relationship.

There are practical reasons for waiting as well. The period between November and December is filled with major holidays and year-end obligations. It is not an ideal time for a new executive-level employee to begin such an important role. Many strong candidates who are currently employed would need to give proper notice, wrap up responsibilities, and may reasonably prefer not to forfeit year-end compensation or benefits they have earned in their current positions. Furthermore, the successful candidate not living in the area would need to handle new living arrangements and logistics, especially for families with children. In reality, a new Town Manager may not begin work until the new year regardless of when the final decision is made.

That makes haste unnecessary and difficult to justify. If the position is likely to begin in January, there is little reason to rush the decision in the closing weeks of the current Council's term. A short delay would allow the process to continue thoughtfully while giving

residents, businesses, the recruiting firm, and both the current and incoming Council members more time to assess the qualities Yountville needs in its next Town Manager.

Yountville residents and businesses have shown again and again that they care deeply about the town's future. These stakeholders are a major part of the town's strength – and ultimately, to whom all Town Councils are accountable

The best course would be for the current Council to acknowledge the concern now and voluntarily delay the final Town Manager decision until the new Council is seated. Such a choice would be wise, accommodating, and reflect the spirit of good governance. This proactive action would demonstrate that the Council understands the importance of public confidence in the process, not merely its legal authority to act.

If the Council chooses not to delay, residents and businesses may need to consider additional civic steps. But that should not be necessary. A reasonable request has been placed before the town: let the voters speak, let the new Council take its seat, and then let Yountville choose its next Town Manager with the broadest possible confidence.

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NOTE: The idea to delay hiring the Town Manager was made recently by Stephen Becker to Jill Turner. His thinking is presented separately. As appropriate, we encourage you to advise Stephen or Jill if you support this approach – or not. Likewise, if you have further thoughts on this matter, please share them with the Town Council directly via the Town Clerk:

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