

Dear Town Council, Town Manager, Yountville taxpayers, and related stakeholders,

Here are some recommendations and comments on Resolution Number 26-4404 that is on the March 17 agenda for the Town Council.

BACKGROUND

I read with concern the March 17 Town Council agenda, items 11 A & B. On the schedule for Tuesday's meeting are documents to and from Town Manager Brad Raulston for Town Council members' approval to provide BAE Urban Economics "with an expansion of the professional services agreement" for the Yountville Commons (YVC) project.

Here is the exact wording of Resolution Number 26-4404:

“RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF YOUNTVILLE AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT FOR AS-NEEDED ON-CALL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES WITH BAE URBAN ECONOMICS, INC. IN THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF \$250,000 FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD WITH NO OBLIGATION FOR THE TOWN TO AWARD A WORK ORDER AND ENCUMBER FUNDS WITHIN THE TERM OF THE CONTRACT.”

Here are my thoughts on this matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

1. Do not pass this resolution, which on judgment is not the best way to obtain the affordable/ workforce housing information on Yountville that so many taxpayers have requested.
2. Instead, request bids from three outside, well-regarded market research companies with known expertise in consumer research (there are many in the Bay Area and beyond); exclude existing vendors, who may not be unbiased. Obtain RFPs (Requests for Proposals) from each for the Town Council's review and decision. Proceed with the bid deemed to best match the pre-defined objectives and deliverables as determined by the Town Council. Then proceed as indicated, guided by the chosen company's experience and recommendations on how best to achieve the objectives of obtaining qualitative data on Yountville workers.
3. Instead of funding this Resolution, allocate the requested \$250,000 to actually implement the consumer research project, noting it should cost far less than that.

DISCUSSION

1. A Reminder of the Research Objective: In the February 17 Town Council meeting and the other meetings I attended, there was one consistent goal related to this project that was voiced

repeatedly by attendees – Talk to the customer: talk to Yountville workers who are the target market of the YVC project and find out what THEY want. This is a **quantitative** objective, not a qualitative goal, meaning get input and hard data (that is, per AI, “objective, quantifiable, and verifiable information, such as numerical figures, facts, and statistics obtained from direct measurement or reliable sources...”) from MANY people, not just a few.

2. Implications of the Resolution: To clarify, does the Resolution as written mean that BAE potentially receives up to \$250,000 for professional services over three years that the Town Manager himself can authorize and execute as he sees fit? This seems to give an excessive amount of money and power to a person who is an employee of the town. (And this comment is nothing personal about Mr. Raulston, whom I have never met.)

3. Concerns about BAE in This Expanded Capacity: First, looking at the [BAE website](#), while the company appears to have expertise and strengths in many areas, consumer market research is not one of them. Second, I think it is unwise to provide many more funds – for “as-needed on-call” professional services, authorized and executed by the Town Manager – to a company that, understandably, may have a bias or vested interest in the outcome, based on the projects and analyses that they have already done for the town.

4. Concerns about BAE’s Recommendations to Date: As an aside, I have been in marketing and public relations for my entire career. It is with that background that I provide these comments. Here are the three (four) market research methods suggested by BAE in the “Yountville Town Council Staff Report” and related attachments from Mr. Raulston and BAE’s Mr. Kowta, dated March 17, 2026, which are followed by my comments on each:

a. Additional 3rd Party Data Collection: A substantial amount of research analysis has already been completed by BAE for the February 17 Town Council meeting. While it may have been better than nothing, their “Yountville Town Commons Pro-Forma Financial Analysis” dated February 13, 2026, of the American Community Survey research has some inherent flaws – not BAE's fault, however. Nevertheless, the data analyzed is from 2020-2024 and has a huge margin of error: of the total stated number of Yountville workers of 3,095, the margin of error is $\pm 1,211$. (FYI, the standard margin of error on most professional research is 3-5% -- not 39%!)

While other similar projects (such as Burbank Housing mentioned) may have some modest learnings for the YVC project, I think all future research and analysis efforts should focus on Yountville itself, a unique community and workforce situation (as really, they all are). I would not spend additional time and money trying to draw conclusions based on other geographic areas (although, as previously stated, I continue to think Napa Valley College’s River Trail Village project is noteworthy and a cautionary tale). But why go elsewhere? Why not just focus on getting information from Yountville? As was done by The Estate Yountville, why not just ask the employees/workers themselves what they want in their housing situation?

2. Employee Focus Groups: Focus groups can be very valuable tool for **qualitative** research; they are designed for small groups, usually 6-8 people, who share their subjective comments (that is, their opinions and sentiments) on a topic. However, as BAE proposes, two or three focus groups would elicit input only from about 12-24 people from about 3,000 Yountville workers – hardly what town residents were recommending at the February 17 meeting: namely, to obtain input and hard data from MANY Yountville workers who are the target market of the YVC project.

3/4. Online Employee Survey (Online and/or In-Person): As mentioned, many taxpayers in meetings I have attended have reiterated the absolute need for quantitative data on the target market, as provided by market research such as a survey. With about 3,000 in Yountville's potential pool of consumers (affordable/workforce persons), a realistic starting number might be 10% or 300 completed surveys. Yes, there may be issues to address about privacy, language issues (English/Spanish), employer involvement, survey method (online, in-person, mail, etc.) et al. However, these are not insurmountable, especially for seasoned consumer research companies, who deal with such issues every day.

Furthermore, on judgment, I would think these workers would NOT be that difficult to reach. Why? Because Yountville employers know exactly who these workers are (their employees!), and many employers are eager to implement affordable/workforce housing in Yountville – as long as it is done the right way.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues, which are important to us all in Yountville.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill M. Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jill" being more prominent.

Jill M. Turner

Yountville

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