

PUBLIC COMMENT PRESENTED
AT THE YOUNTVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING AND FOR THE RECORD
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

Hello. My name is Jill Turner.

Regrettably, for all of us, I am back again. With due respect to all, today's comments continue my questions from the previous Town Council meeting regarding the former Town Manager's severance package. But I must say, after the Town Attorney's comments on August 4, I am more confused than ever. Here's why:

1. First, Mr. Bell stated that **"severance is paid out under circumstances specified in the employment agreement."** However, the employment contract of June 6, 2023, Item #25, states that, **if the Town Manager resigned, he is entitled ONLY to payment of accrued vacation leave** or other payments required by law – NOT to a 10-month severance package and more – estimated to be worth \$250 K or more.

2. Mr. Bell also said that Yountville's severance is much, much less than that other towns, including St. Helena and Calistoga. But this strikes me as **"Whataboutism"** – a tactic that deflects from a difficult question by raising a different issue. As Mr. Tagliaboschi mentioned previously, I am unclear what severance payments in other towns have to do with what is being paid in Yountville. I think this is irrelevant. **We taxpayers are concerned about Yountville payments, not those of other towns.**

3. Mr. Bell also stated that, in the event of certain separations, it will only be discussed in the context of the agreed-upon press release. I DO see that in the Employment Agreement, as Item #24, entitled "Communications Upon Termination." However, that item mentions this press release **"In the event Town terminates the Town Manager for any reason or no reason..." – not for a resignation.** But we are told that the Town Manager resigned, not that he was terminated. **So, which is it? Did he resign – or was he really terminated?**

4. And that brings up a final point in the Employment Agreement: Item #26, "Compliance With Law." It states: **"This Agreement is subject to all applicable provisions of State and Federal law."** As some may recall, Proposition 59, the Sunshine Amendment passed in 2004 with 83% voter approval. It is now in the California Constitution – Article 1, Section 3, which states: **"The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business, and, therefore, the meeting of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny."** This section also mentions requirements to comply with the California Public Records Act and the Brown Act.

So, referring us to the press release to answer our questions is not satisfactory on several levels: first, the press release agreement refers to termination, not resignation; and, in any case, this is superseded by the California Constitution.

I'd like to reiterate this has nothing to do with the privacy or personnel matters of Mr. Raulston, the details of the severance discussions by the Town Council, or who approved it.

But from what I read of the law, **we taxpayers are entitled to know exactly what severance decisions were made and why.**

So, I repeat my questions and conclusions from the August 4 meeting:

1. First, if Mr. Raulston resigned voluntarily, **why was he granted severance at all?** What was the legal or policy basis for that decision?

More specifically, why wasn't the employment agreement followed as written, since it explicitly states that the **Town has no obligation to provide severance following a voluntary resignation?**

2. Second, given this puzzling matter, **did Mr. Raulston actually resign, or was he, in fact, terminated?** Were the circumstances different from what the public was told? If so, why?

3. What was the **total cost** of this Resignation Agreement -- including salary, benefits, accrued vacation, and any other compensation?

4. Has the **severance package been paid out?** All of it?

5. If not, **is there any recourse** to suspend the remaining payments and/or recover any of these monies?

As a longtime Yountville resident and taxpayer, I continue to believe these are reasonable questions. This issue is NOT about the people involved. It is about accountability, transparency, and responsible stewardship of public funds.

The people of Yountville deserve a clear explanation of how this decision was made, and why it was in the Town's best interest. Please respond. Thank you.

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Jill Turner

Jillforyountville.com

jillturnerpr@gmail.com

707-944-2433 / 415-850-8753 cell