City of St. Helena
Special City Council Closed Session Meeting
Wednesday, October 15, 2025 @ 4:30 PM
City Hall - Main Conference Room
1088 College Avenue, St. Helena

PLEASE NOTE: Any person who wishes to speak regarding an item on the agenda or make a comment under the "Oral Communication" portion of the agenda may do so, but please observe the time limit of four minutes.

Page

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL
   Mayor: Paul Dohring, Vice Mayor Michelle Deasy, City Council Members: Aaron Barak, Kate Spadarotto, Billy Summers

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERTAINING TO CLOSED SESSION
   Each person's comments shall be limited to 4 minutes.

5. CLOSED SESSION:

   5.1. Conference with City Labor Negotiators (Anil Comelo, Mandy Kellogg, Joe Leach)
   Negotiations with St. Helena Employees Association (SHEA)
   Brown Act Section: 54957.6

   5.2. Conference with Real Property Negotiators — 5 - 11
   Property: 1480 Main Street and 1572 Railroad Avenue
   Agency Negotiators: City Manager, Community Development Director and City Attorney
   Negotiating Parties: TBD
   Under Negotiation: Price and terms of payment
   Brown Act Section: 54956.8
   Public Comment - Elaine de Man
   Public Comment - Susan and Michael Shifflett
   Public Comment - Joshua Parke
   Public Comment - Lana Ivanoff

   5.3. Public Employee Performance Evaluation — 13 - 145
   Title: City Manager
   Brown Act Section: 54957
   Public Comment - Joshua Parke (1)
   Public Comment - Joshua Parke (2)
   Public Comment - Joshua Parke (3)
   Public Comment - Leslie Stanton
   Public Comment - Elaine de Man and Jordan Coonrad
   Public Comment - Norm Manzer
   Public Comment - Norm Manzer (2)
   Public Comment - Nicole Abiouness

Public Comment - Pam Smithers
Public Comment - Pat Friday
Public Comment - Phil Murphy
Public Comment - Priscilla Dell
Public Comment - Priscilla Dell (2)
Public Comment - Priscilla Dell (3)
Public Comment - Resident
Public Comment - Richard Seiferheld
Public Comment - Robert Fiumara
Public Comment - Ross Allen
Public Comment - Ross Allen (2)
Public Comment - Sarah MacDonald
Public Comment - Shannon Lail
Public Comment - Stephanie Smithers
Public Comment - Stephanie Smithers (2)
Public Comment - Stu Smith
Public Comment - Susan & Terry McWilliams
Public Comment - Susan Davis
Public Comment - Ted Shuel
Public Comment - Terence Ford
Public Comment - Terence Ford (2)
Public Comment - Tom Belt
Public Comment - Tom Belt (2)
Public Comment - Tom Belt (3)
Public Comment - Adam Rotello
Public Comment - Christine Hale
Public Comment - Daniel Hale
Public Comment - Daniel Hale (2)
Public Comment - Darcy Dunlap
Public Comment - Elaine de Man
Public Comment - Elaine de Man (2)
Public Comment - Erin Lail
Public Comment - Grace Kistner
Public Comment - Jerry & Michele Hyde
Public Comment - Jessica Hague
Public Comment - Jessica Hague (2)
Public Comment - Jordan Coonrad
Public Comment - Julia Bolander
Public Comment - Julia Bolander (2)
Public Comment - Julie Ann Kodmur
Public Comment - Karen Williams
Public Comment - Kelly Wheaton
Public Comment - Kelly Wheaton (2)
Public Comment - Lana Ivanoff
Public Comment - Larry Vermeulen & Connie Wilson
Public Comment - Leslie Dunlap
Public Comment - Mark Smithers
Public Comment - Mark Smithers (2)
Public Comment - Matthew Walter
Public Comment - Michelle Liu Covell

Public Comment - Albright
Public Comment - Bryan Sandoli
Public Comment - Charles Covell
Public Comment - Charles Covell (2)
Public Comment - Brittany Anderson

5.4. Conference with Labor Negotiator
City designated representative: City Attorney
Unrepresented employee: City Manager
Brown Act Section: 54957.6

6. ADJOURNMENT

The next Regular City Council meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

This agenda was posted at City Hall, 1088 College Avenue, and at Vintage Hall, 465 Main Street, St. Helena, California on October 9, 2025.

Andrew Bradley, City Clerk

In Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please call the City Clerk's Office (707) 967-2792. Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Outlook

Closed session item 5.2

From Elaine de Man <elainede@sbcglobal.net>
Date Sat 10/11/2025 12:27 PM
To Public Comment <publiccomment@cityofsthelena.gov>

Dear Mayor Dohring and City Council members,

I respectfully request that any further negotiations concerning the sale of the Main Street and Railroad Avenue properties be suspended until we have a complete report from the Finance Committee.

Thank you,

Elaine de Man

Outlook

Proposed land sale and hotel development

From Susan Shifflett <suztshiff@gmail.com>
Date Tue 10/14/2025 4:54 PM
To Public Comment <publiccomment@cityofsthelena.gov>

To our City Council and Planning Commission,

How can we be discussing, behind closed doors, the sale and development of two City owned properties, without first addressing and solving the impact that another hotel will have on crucial considerations like water, roads, traffic, and employee housing.

You are putting the cart before the horse.

Our water, the most basic of necessities, is neither drinkable nor affordable for local taxpaying citizens. The lone bridge allowing direct access into town from Silverado Trail is woefully under-designed for its current demand. Another hotel will only exacerbate these issues, requiring more City expenditures.

If instead of building a hotel on Adams Street we were to build townhouses, we would be able to provide more affordable housing as well as encourage downsizing by citizens who want smaller homes within walking distance of shopping, banking, the library, etc. Their larger existing homes would then be available for sale, thereby bringing in more tax revenue. And there would be less demand on roads and traffic.

Existing hotels in St. Helena are not typically at capacity. And the cost of a 1-night stay is becoming too expensive for many visitors, causing them to either look elsewhere for vacationing and wine tasting, or come into town just for the day.

Thank you for considering our comments,
Susan and Michael Shifflett
40 year residents of SH

From: Joshua Parke
To: Public Comment; Erika Opp
Subject: Asset Management
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 9:37:46 AM

Regarding agenda item 5.2.

I am writing to respectfully urge the council to reconsider the methodology with which they are pursuing the sale of city properties. I am not arguing for or against, this is a matter of fiscal responsibility and intelligent asset management.

The recent change of zoning of the Railroad parcel from mixed use to housing alone ironically decreases the potentiality of truly dense housing due to how the code is now written. Please don't overlook this, we need truly dense housing that the current zoning code restricts in it's language.

There are other diverse paths for sale of assets to pursue that allow the city more control of the future use of these parcels from a strategic perspective. By simply placing the parcels on the market as-is without strategic methodology and reasoning the city is unfortunately leaving millions of dollars on the table and missing critical opportunities for the potential of St Helena's future.

Sincerely,

Joshua Parke

From: lana ivanoff
To: Public Comment
Subject: Closed session hearing 10/15/25. Sale of City Hall property
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 8:59:17 AM

Closed CC Meeting 10/15/2025

City Council, and City Manager

In 2015-2016, when the first talk of selling City Hall became public, many residents were questioning what exactly the City was selling.
Back then, I met with John Tuteur, County Assessor, to get a copy of the parcel map of 1480 Main Street. Parcel # 009-211-016-000 , so we could see what exactly the City was proposing to sell.
Mr Tuteur, explained to me at that time, that because cities don't pay property taxes, the parcel map was not 'parceled out', and included the SHFD, City Hall, and additional undeveloped land.

Since the City has again been meeting in closed sessions about this sale, and the local papers have been covering the progress, I thought there must be a map, by now, showing the exact property which the City is proposing to sell.
So, on Oct 2, 2024, I again contacted Mr Tuteur, and asked for the parcel map of SH City Hall. He told me to contact the PWD, and get it from the Municipal Surveyor working for the City. He would in turn contact PWD Leach, and ask to be copied on his response to me.
I called PW Dept, and Joe Leach sent an email to Mr Tuteur, and myself, (cc copies to CM, Maya DeRosa, and Mario Traverso).
In that email, PWD Leach, stated that the City had developed a parcel map of "Old City Hall" and the "Fire Station", but that the map has never been recorded with the county….only used for Surplus Lands Act, and "solicitation of proposals for property purchase".
I think, given Mr Tuteur's response, the Assessor was surprised, and questioned Mr Leach as to when said recording would take place. PWD Leach, said "the lines are just penciled in, and there is no exact parcel map of said property".

How can the City negotiate selling a piece of property which has not been officially parceled out?
What map is Oliver Caldwell displaying at his "get togethers"? (And if Mr Caldwell is entitled to a 'penciled in, unofficial map'……so am I)

Old City Hall is PUBLIC property, and as a tax payer and resident of St Helena, I feel I am entitled to a map of PUBLIC LAND that is being offered for sale by the CC and CM.
This is a perfect example of the non transparency that gets the town riled up.
I have yet to receive a map, a tentative map, or an email response from PWD Leach, or anyone in the City. Mr Tuteur has was away last week, but I plan on contacting him again today, to see what my next steps might be.

Please make this information available to the citizens of St Helena……it is OUR property you are proposing to sell.

Thank you,
Lana Ivanoff

From: Joshua Parke
To: eopp@cityofsthelena.com; City Manager; Paul Dohring; Michelle Deasy; Kate Spadarotto; Aaron Barak; Billy Summers
Subject: City Manager Performance
Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 9:18:47 PM
Attachments: City Management Outreach.pdf

Good evening Erika,

Please see the following correspondence and form letter for submission for public comment to post to the upcoming city council meeting on October 14th.

Thank you

Dear St. Helena Resident,

We are reaching out regarding ongoing concerns about City Manager Anil Comelo's leadership. Attached is a brief form letter to the St. Helena City Council requesting that they initiate an immediate transition in leadership. If you agree, please sign the attached letter and return it.

If you have had a firsthand experience with Mr. Comelo that you believe the Council should be aware of, please compose and sign a brief factual account of your interaction—include dates, what occurred, and any outcomes if possible. Please email your signed letter and/or personal statement to joshuaparke@gmail.com by Friday, October 10, in order to meet the deadline for the next Council meeting. We will compile all signed letters and personal accounts to submit formally for the October 14 meeting. Alternatively, if you would prefer to send your account directly to the Council, please do so—this is an appropriate time. We have included council email addresses and an email address for direct submission to the city below.

We recognize that, given how some citizens have been treated, this may feel intimidating or risky. We understand and share that concern. However, considering the many problems the town faces, we believe this outreach and communication to the Council are necessary. Given the ongoing lack of transparency, direction, and community-specific understanding around planning and zoning, as well as the possible sale of City assets, we need decisive leadership and clear guidance.

Please note that this correspondence has been sent to City Manager Anil Comelo, each City Council member, and all City staff, and has been filed for public comment prior to being shared with residents.

Thank you for adding your voice in a constructive, professional manner. At your discretion, please feel free to forward this to other community members who you believe may wish to contribute their perspective on this matter.

Respectfully,

Joshua and Sarah Parke and family

Mayor Paul Dohring: pdohring@cityofsthelena.gov
Michell Deasy: mdeasy@cityofsthelena.gov
Aaron Barak: abarak@cityofsthelena.gov
Kate Spadarotto: kspadarotto@cityofsthelena.gov
Billy Summers: bsummers@cityofsthelena.gov
City of St. Helena public comment: publiccomment@cityofsthelena.gov

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Re: Request for Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing as a concerned resident of St. Helena to respectfully urge the City Council to initiate a resolution to end the City's employment of Manager Anil Comelo.

The City Manager plays a pivotal role in maintaining the trust, accountability, and effectiveness of our local government. Unfortunately, under Mr. Comelo's leadership, it has become clear that these standards have not been met. Persistent issues—including a lack of transparency, ambiguous and irresponsible fiscal leadership, a polarizing approach to discourse with residents that has fostered an atmosphere of *us versus them*, a general disregard for citizen concerns, and multiple combative interactions with residents and stakeholders—have eroded public confidence and hindered progress on key initiatives.

These concerns are not isolated incidents but reflect a broader pattern of ineffective leadership that has negatively affected the City's ability to move forward. St. Helena deserves leadership that demonstrates competence, integrity, and alignment with the needs and values of its residents.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the members of the City Council take action to promptly facilitate Mr. Comelo's transition out of employment. Decisive action is necessary to restore trust in City leadership; without public confidence in the City Manager, meaningful progress on critical infrastructure and planning initiatives cannot occur.

Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Outlook

Agenda

From Joshua Parke <joshua@parke.studio>
Date Fri 10/10/2025 8:23 AM
To Andrew Bradley <abradley@cityofsthelena.gov>

Good morning Andrew,

Would you please ask that the public comments submitted regarding City Management performance be moved to public comment for the special closed session on the 15th.

Also would like to request that the public comments submitted by myself regarding city management earlier this week be moved to the agenda for the special closed session on the 15th.

Thank you

Joshua Parke
Design Principal | PARKE
C 707.312.0346

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Outlook

Public Comment/Tuesday 10.14.2025/City Manager

From Leslie Stanton <lesliestan@gmail.com>
Date Fri 10/10/2025 11:43 AM
To Public Comment <publiccomment@cityofsthelena.gov>

Hello Council Members - I heartily endorse Mr. Parke's letter to you. I couldn't have said it better and will just add that my respect for this Council and many City Staff members, especially Anil Comelo, is at an all time low. We all deserve better.
Sincerely Leslier Stanton

Outlook

Fwd: Public Comment: Performance of City Manager

From Elaine de Man <elainede@sbcglobal.net>
Date Fri 10/10/2025 2:39 PM
To Public Comment <publiccomment@cityofsthelena.gov>

Please accept my public comment for the closed session meeting on October 15.

Dear Mayor Dohring and Council Members,

Jordan Coonrad and I would like to add our voices to those community members requesting a resolution to end the employment City Manager Anil Comelo immediately.

During his tenure as City Manager, Mr. Comelo has not only failed to garner the trust of the community, but he has persisted in pushing an agenda that benefits his personal goals and aspirations rather than those of the city and the community. His most recent contract, initiated by him, is a very clear case in point. In spite of a looming budget "crisis," he presented the council with a contract that further impacted the city's finances and gave him more benefits than reasonable under any circumstances.

The base salary increase from $235,072 to $331,005 ($95,933 or 41% in 3 years) were "justified" using a compensation study that compared St. Helena to significantly larger cities such as Santa Rosa, San Rafael, and Fairfield.

His expanded benefits include: a housing allowance that changed from a one-time $20,000 to $30,000/year, totaling $90,000 over 3 years; deferred compensation jumped from $10,000/year to $34,500; vacation time was increased from 20 days/year to 30 days/year, with the ability to cash out 120 hours/year—potentially worth over $19,000 each year; executive leave increased to 80 hours/year, fully cashed out if unused (worth another $12,700/year); sick leave is now partially to fully cashable, depending on year of resignation/termination—worth up to $15,000/year; and the city pays up to $10,000/year of Comelo's personal FICA tax!

Comelo also managed to secure for himself enhanced severance conditions and job security. Severance changed from a sliding scale (max 6 months) to a flat 12 months of full salary if terminated without cause and the new contract lacks "at-will" language and provides broader job protections. The estimated severance cost under the new terms is $331,008 which is double the previous maximum. Never-the-less, there are many in the community who think this would be "money well spent."

To satisfy Mr. Comelo's financial ambitions, a FY24 budget amendment required a budget adjustment of $128,962 across general, water and wastewater funds. And all of this

occurred during a time when the city was forecasting fiscal shortfalls and belt-tightening for residents which led to a failed ballot initiative to further tax the citizens of St. Helena.

What stands out in Mr. Comelo's contract is the aggressive compensation growth in a small city with financial strain. There are also transparency concerns as multiple changes were approved retroactively. Several perks (housing, leave cash-outs, deferred compensation, FICA payments) are substantially above standard public-sector packages for small communities. And the added severance and job security measures are extraordinarily protective. In short, the cumulative effect of all this places recurring and significant pressure on the city's budget.

Granted, the previous city council should never approved such a contract. But the point remains that Mr. Comelo's primary concern appears to be enriching himself at our expense, rather than maintaining the trust, accountability and effectiveness of our local government.

I personally have heard Mr. Comelo misrepresent the truth to the city council during one of your meetings. And he attempted to prejudice county representative against an individual for the sole reason that I introduced him to the mayor after a city council meeting. I also suspect that he is the source of poor morale among many city employees and the atmosphere he has created is the reason we have lost so many good members of the staff.

St. Helena deserves a city manager who demonstrates competence, integrity, and alignment with the needs and values of its residents. It deserves leadership that puts the needs and interests of the citizens of St. Helena and a sustainable future for the city above self-enrichment. The city council deserves and needs a city manager that they can trust to present honest and fact-based information to them. It appears that Mr. Comelo has failed on all counts.

Consequently, we respectfully request that the members of the City Council take action to promptly facilitate Mr. Comelo's immediate transition out of employment by the City of St. Helena as soon as possible to help restore trust in City leadership and allow us all to move forward with trust and accountability.

Elaine de Man and Jordan Coonrad

October 10, 2025

St Helena City Council

Dear Mayor Dohring and Council Members,

I am writing today along with other St Helena citizens to ask you to chart a better course for our town beginning with the termination of our City Manager, Anil Comelo.

Our prior City Council of 2024, for some obscure reason, felt it appropriate to award Mr. Comelo a $10,000 bonus and a one-year contract extension. In spite of citizens' objections, and a request by newly elected city council members to postpone that decision until those new members were seated, that former Council granted it.

Attached is my letter to that former Council of November 24, 2024 explaining my unsuccessful attempts to communicate with Comelo on several occasions. My attempts were stonewalled.

For several years our citizens have asked Council to appoint a citizens' advisory committee for Water & Sewer and for Finance. Our CM Comelo objected to that, and the former Council rejected that request as well. Thanks to you, our new Council, we now have both committees.

How interesting that only now, through the recent August report by this Citizen Finance Advisory Committee, it has been revealed that CM Comelo has $16,000,000 sitting in checking accounts that bear no interest. It is estimated that this represents a loss to our city of almost $1,000,000 over the past three years. Comelo declared "I take full responsibility." So, what precisely does that mean? Is he going to take personal responsibility for such financial missteps, and perhaps relinquish half of his annual salary of $307,000 until we are reimbursed for his poor performance as our CM?

Add to these his lamentable people skills, his seeming unwillingness to hear citizens' views, and it becomes clear he is a serious liability to our city government.

I am requesting that you bring this charade of city management to an end and terminate Anil Comelo.

Sincerely,

Norm Manzer

Norm Manzer, St Helena

Encl. November 24, 2024 letter

Norman Manzer

From:	Norman Manzer <manzer103@comcast.net>
Sent:	Tuesday, November 12, 2024 12:14 AM
To:	'pdohring@cityofsthelena.gov'; 'ehall@cityofsthelena.gov'; 'achouteau@cityofsthelena.gov'; 'bsummers@cityofsthelena.gov'; 'pkenealy@cityofsthelena.gov'
Cc:	'cityclerk@cityofsthelena.gov'
Subject:	COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS, AND OTHERS, ST HELENA CITY HALL

Dear Mayor Dohring and Councilmembers:

It appears that our City Manager prides himself on communication: the city newsletter, an Assistant Manager as a Public Information Officer, and the online web page to submit problems or repair requests without having to talk to a city employee.

As councilmembers you presumably get a prompt response from Anil Comelo. You should, since you sign his paycheck. If only we citizens could be so lucky.

Going back a couple of years, in his first 30 days in St Helena I called Anil to welcome him and to offer a personal VIP tour of our little town, as I had done once before for a new City Manager. He answered his own phone and said he would very much like to accept my invitation, but he was just leaving for a meeting. He took my contact info, and I never heard from him.

Let's fast-forward to my two emails at the bottom of today's email to all of you. Email Number One of October 14, 2023; and when no reply received, Email Number Two on November 8, 2023 as a second Request. Comelo did not reply to either email. Nada! Now we are three for three.

If only these were isolated incidents for City Hall, but they are not, and all are indicators of an endemic problem at City Hall. Here are some examples to ponder:

Maya DeRosa – In early 2023 I wrote several emails to Maya about the Charles Krug Winery using a former vineyard on Deer Park Road as a staging area for several companies, Of those letters to Maya, two of them required a second request and another required a third request to get replies. Four weeks ago I wrote Maya asking for the number of pages of her 9212 report to you. After two days of no reply, I drove to City Hall to get that answer in person. Maya was out to lunch, and I met with a newly hired Interim Planner, Joel Galbraith, a recent Sonoma County retiree filling in for Aaron Hecock's departure.

Maya returned to her office, and Joel got up and asked Maya if she could see me for a moment. She had no one in her office, and she told Joel to have me write my question on a paper, and she would let me know. I did that. A month has passed and no response from Maya. BTW, Joel is no longer at City Hall. He decided he didn't need to be in such an environment. And, such a nice guy.

Joe Leach – One June 25, 2024 I called Joe around 11a.m. and got his voicemail. I asked him to call back with an answer to my question, "Does Charles Krug Winery have a water meter with the city of St Helena?" Not receiving a call back by 1:23pm, I called Joe back and asked for an answer to that same question. That was four months ago, and no call back from Joe.

Water Department – On May 15, 2024 I called to end the billing for my rental at 1824 Crinella effective May 17. I had estimated my final bill of about two weeks and gave that amount to Elizabeth. She said she would call me back when they did their calculation to be certain we agreed. She did not call back, and no Final Bill was received. I did not call back then since I presumed that it possibly had to wait for the end of the complete billing cycle of two months. At the end of July I got the water bill of the entire prior two months, and not a Final Bill for only two weeks. On July 27 I called Elizabeth, and she immediately remembered our May conversation and apologized for not following through as promised.

I will spare you the details, but from my first call on May 15 until the Water Department could provide a Final Bill on September 7, I had to make six calls to this department to get the bill issued correctly. It included my two conversations with your Finance Director, Yosselyn. There are more bizarre details, but I will spare you.

So, here we are at Tuesday, November 12, and you are having a City Council meeting to consider a salary increase and an extended contract for our City Manager. After receiving my experiences with City Hall, would you think it appropriate to reward our City Manager for a city being run like this? Norm Manzer, St Helena

P.S. Please, do not ask your City Manager to contact me. I have 62 years of adult life, and I have been very successful in relationships and determining the character of others. I have a excellent understanding of just what we are dealing with here. And, I hope that at this juncture you do as well.

From: Norman Manzer <manzer103@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 08, 2023 11:12 AM
To: 'acomelo@cityofsthelena.org' <acomelo@cityofsthelena.org>
Cc: Paul Dohring (PDohring@cityofsthelena.org) <PDohring@cityofsthelena.org>
Subject: RE: Pot Holes

Hello Anil,

I wrote this to you over three weeks ago and have not received a reply. In that same time there has been no effort to improve the worsening potholes. Might I receive a reply from you? Norm Manzer

From: Norman Manzer <manzer103@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 15, 2023 10:40 PM
To: 'acomelo@cityofsthelena.org' <acomelo@cityofsthelena.org>
Cc: Paul Dohring (PDohring@cityofsthelena.org) <PDohring@cityofsthelena.org>
Subject: Pot Holes

Hello Anil, yesterday I went into town to buy a can of white spray paint, and this morning (Sunday) I was prepared to put on my reflector vest (that I wear while picking up litter around

town and the Silverado Trail) and drive down to the Pope Street bridge and the Trail to begin my intent to highlight the 25-30-(???) potholes extending down to the southernmost City Limits on the Trail. While Sunday morning is the lightest traffic load in that area, and presumably the safest time for me to risk being out in those traffic lanes, my 81 year old mind took control and halted my good intentions. It is obvious that you do not drive this area or surely it could never have been neglected to its current state.

It was back on May 12 that Mayor Paul Dohring afforded me the courtesy of 45 minutes to drive him around most of St Helena to review the typewritten list of problems I had listed for his review. And while we citizens had been told that this Trail area and the Pope Street bridge on the Napa River were to be repaved, little was being done to try and prevent cars from bottoming out or blowing tires from the increasing potholes. What is most distressing is that on occasion I will see some fresh asphalt in a large pothole, and it will still be a pothole of 2 inches deep instead of the former 3-4 inches. As I mentioned to Paul Dohring in my printed list of problems, your City crew does not know how to fill a pothole. And my reason for finally trying to take the bull by the horns with the spray paint is that a neighbor blew a tire in this same part of the Trail that not only cost him $363 to replace, but he barely averted an accident from the blowout.

I know that you will respond with all sorts of reasons and circumstances while problems like this exist, and while you are overwhelmed with so many other issues, there is no excuse why something so critical that affects citizens daily can't be addressed promptly. Filling potholes is not rocket science. If I can do it, any untrained person could be taught the simplicity of the procedure in just a short period of time. Needless to say, I am prone to send a Letter to the Editor and ask for others who have blown tires and possibly had accidents from the City's potholes to contact me so I can keep a running score. Yes, I understand that you have let a contract for the repaving, but in the interim surely the major potholes can be addressed immediately.

So, Anil, who is this Norm Manzer guy that is so infuriated about this problem? Besides seeing my name on the paper summary I gave Paul Dohring in May, and his comment that he would hand it over to you with reference to me, this is who I am: I am this old guy who has lived in the upper valley for 55 years, 50 of which have been in St Helena. I have been retired for 15 years now, but for 35 prior years I owned my own State Farm insurance agency in St Helena. I am a past president of the St Helena Chamber, a Calistoga Rotary member for 55 years, a member of our local Grace Episcopal Church for 25+ years and headed up the "It's Not Your Mother's Rummage Sale" for 12 of 14 years – a rummage sale that took in $65,000 in two days at its last event of five years ago and included 174 community volunteers. I am a member of the St Helena American Legion and the St Helena Historical Society.

For more than 30 years I was the self-appointed graffiti-remover in town and only ceased to operate when City staff refused to remove vulgar graffiti on public property, even

with repeated requests by your SHPD. My then 14 year old grandson and I received a nice plaque from the St Helena Beautification Committee for our efforts to remove graffiti in town and for picking up litter.

I am so glad I didn't decide to deface those Silverado Trail potholes with white paint – but only because instead of typing this to you, I could be in a bed at the St Helena Hospital or a funeral home. Norm Manzer, St Helena

October 15, 2025

Hello Mayor Dohring and Council Members Deasy, Barak, Spadoratto, and Summers –

Re: Termination of employment of City Manager Anil Comelo

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You for your willingness to serve the citizens of St Helena. This evening is one of those unpleasant times when the rubber must meet the road.

At last night's council meeting you became aware of the 52 citizens who have written to you about the deplorable function of our City Manager. You also heard from four citizens who somehow feel that Comelo is just what our city needs. Of the 3,527 registered voters in St Helena, we have a bold group of 51+ stepping forward to ask you to terminate Comelo's employment and four who want him to stay. One of those four stated that all of those opposing Comelo are the normal naysayers and negative citizens in our midst. You know these people, and they are the lifeblood of our community.

I understand that each of you have had your own "moments" with Comelo, and this evening is the time to make a break from the rude and demeaning character of our appointed manager and give our wonderful town a manager who can function with civility and success.

Of all the letters you have received, certainly the most startling is from Terence Ford with his testimony of Comelo using the C-Word to describe a woman of our community. We are counting on each of you to bring this to a halt.

We are asking for the immediate termination of City Manager Comelo.

Sincerely,

Norm Manzer, St Helena

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Re: Request for Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

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Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Print Name: Nicole Abiouness

October 13, 2025

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City of St. Helena
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St. Helena, CA 94574

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Respectfully,

Pam Smithers

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Pat Friday

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

PHIL MURPHY

October 8, 2025

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council

City of St. Helena

1088 College Avenue

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

I have signed the letter asking you to replace City Manager Anil Comelo. I want to add a specific example of his behavior that is by no means is the most egregious but falls within an area very familiar to me

Mr. Comelo requested a meeting with me and Grace Kistner. He asked us to be responsible to contact every homeowner in Vineyard Valley to be sure they have prepared a "Go Bag." We had no authority and in fact don't even know all the people who live in Vineyard Valley. A discussion ensued about evacuation routes and plans. I asked him to consider some type of lighting along the road on top of the levee. If an evacuation were to be needed after dark it could be at the very least frightening to older people many of whom have visual impairments. In a nanosecond he said no. No discussion, just "no." He did say to me "get three City Council votes and then I will consider it. He has authorized spending hundreds of thousands of our dollars on consultants with no resolution of long- standing problems. There was a very poorly planned evacuation drill. Then you, along with Maya DeRosa approved the development of the Hunter Project which make evacuation almost impossible. I was a member of the Measure A Committee and devoted much of my time and effort for nine years to get the St. Helena Flood Control and River Restoration project designed and built. I have little confidence that the system is maintained as required. Mr. Comelo is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of that project.

Sincerely,

Priscilla J. Dell Priscilla J. Dell

October 8, 2025

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Priscilla J. Dell

10-13-25

This is a revision of the original letter written and sent to the City Council on 10-08-25. I have bolded line 9 of paragraph because it is in error. Let the record show that I meant Mr. Comelo along with Mayo DeRosa approved the development of the Hunter Project etc. etc. Let the record also show that Mayor Dohring has always been an advocate for the welfare of the residents of St. Helena, both people who live here and business owners many of whom don’t live here. Sincerely Priscilla Dell 10-13-25

There was

October 8, 2025

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City of St. Helena

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Richard Seifeld
2020 BIRCH AVE
St. HELENA CA 94574

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ROBERT V. FIUMARA

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Respectfully,

ROSS R. ALLEN
643 PRATT AVE.,
ST. HELENA, CA

To: Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council

From: Ross R. Allen, 643 Pratt Ave., St. Helena, CA

Subject: Performance issues with City Manager Anil Comelo

As you are aware, due to incompetent financial management of reserve city funds, nearly TWO MILLION DOLLARS in interest was lost over a period of several years while those funds languished in a non-interest bearing account. This on-going situation resulted from a major lack of oversight and incompetence by the City Manager.

Given the difficult financial situation in our city, and the push (by the City Manager and others) to dispose of city properties (e.g. the Adams Street property) to generate revenue, this significant financial loss is forcing the city to consider options with long-term consequences that are very unpopular in our community.

During a previous City Council meeting, when this issue was discussed, the Mayor excused it with "anybody, including me, can make a mistake" and citizens were admonished "don't be mean." That response was completely inadequate and the admonition was inappropriate. Insisting on accountability is not "mean." A consequence for such gross financial mismanagement would typically involve termination for cause in almost every business or municipality.

It is a primary responsibility of the City Manager to ensure that City funds are properly managed. He has failed to do this.

For this reason alone, I support a *Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo*.

Respectfully,

Ross R. Allen
643 Pratt Ave., St. Helena

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
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Respectfully,

Print Name: Sarah MacDonald

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Shannon Lail

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Stephanie Smithers

Personal Statement Regarding City Manager Anil Comelo

To: St. Helena City Council

I am submitting this statement to share firsthand observations and experiences regarding City Manager Anil Comelo's leadership.

As a former City employee with ongoing relationships with current staff, I have observed and personally experienced behavior from Mr. Comelo that I believe is concerning for City leadership. Specifically:

- On multiple occasions at public events, Mr. Comelo has not acknowledged my presence unless explicitly approached, and when engaged, his responses have been curt and dismissive, which I believe is linked to concerned I have raised.
- Staff have confided that they have been instructed not to discuss certain matters with the public and fear retaliation.
- I firsthand witnessed the City Manager destroy the relationship the St. Helena Chamber of Commerce. When Anil started, he said to me, *"I don't believe in Chambers, I wouldn't give the Chamber $1 if it were up to me."* Without understanding the details of the City/Chamber contract or our dependency on tourism.
- I have observed instances where Mr. Comelo represented staff as being consulted or supportive of certain initiatives, when in fact they had not been consulted or made aware of the matters. Consider calling your previous Parks & Recreation Director.
- The recent formal letter from City staff expressing concern about workplace climate underscore patterns in Mr. Comelo's leadership that warrant careful consideration by the Council.
- The recent Budget survey resulted in insightful open comments, with at least 37 mentions of "city management", "admin", or Anil directly with dissatisfying remarks. Despite the city paying $7K for this survey tool, these comments we're not shared with the public in a similar fashion as other feedback.
- Additionally, there are circulating reports that the City Council may have reached an agreement with Mr. Comelo regarding an encouraged departure in 2026. If this is true, I believe the public has a right to know considering the numerous complaints that have surfaced.

These patterns of behavior have created an environment where transparency, collaboration, and trust have been compromised. Staff morale and public confidence

appear to be suffering as a result. I urge the Council to take these accounts seriously and evaluate whether current leadership reflects the professionalism, integrity, and openness our community deserves.

The City of St. Helena is facing critical challenges that require capable and trustworthy leadership. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that residents and staff can engage with City Hall without fear or frustration. I hope you will take decisive and transparent action to restore confidence in our local government.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Smithers
October 7, 2025

10.06.25

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1088 College Avenue
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Respectfully,

Print Name: Stu Smith

St. Helena Mayor and City Council Members

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

While we have not had the contentious personal interactions with City Manager Anil Comelo that other residents have had, his demeanor does not indicate a caring, engaged city leader, nor does he appear to exhibit respect for residents.

What concerns us is the nonchalance shown at the revelation of the city's loss of a potential $2 million in interest on city funds, an act of incompetence that surely would have met with immediate dismissal in the private sector or any competently-run city.

Mr. Comelo is paid a handsome salary with benefits including a housing allowance, yet he elects to live outside town during the workweek, effectively removing himself from being part of the community he supposedly heads.

St. Helena deserves a city manager who exhibits competence, integrity and a genuine interest in ensuring that the city progresses and overcomes its challenges. We do not believe Mr. Comelo is that leader and we ask that he be replaced.

Respectfully,

Susan and Terry McWilliams

40 year residents

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Susan Davis
2020 Birch Ave.
St. Helena, CA 94574

10.06.25

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Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Print Name: Terence Ford

Returning to St. Helena after ten years of working in southern California, we notice a great deal of discomfort, anger and disputation in the community being directed towards the City government.

Hoping for some answers, I ask the city manager, Anil Comelo, for a short, friendly get-together over coffee. We met at The Roasting Company on July 6, 2023 at 8:30am. The very first thing that Mr. Comelo said, and with some anger, was that "Kelly Wheaton is a cunt!"

I was quite honestly speechless. To this day, I have still not completely processed this brief but revealing conversation. However, I did began to understand some of our problems and where they have been coming from…

Terence Ford

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Re: Request for Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo

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Respectfully,

Tom Bale
10-8-25

Dear St. Helena City Councilmembers,

I'm writing this to share my dislike with Anil Comelo as our city manager. Based upon my experiences with him I have found that he lacks the skills to engage citizens in a polite and professional manner. In fact, I would characterize him as being rude and arrogant.

My first adverse experience with him occurred on September 22, 2022, at the conclusion of a utility rate study meeting. After the meeting I approached him to congratulate him on being our new city manager and to introduce myself to him. I was accompanied by Kelly Wheaton, Arlene and Rich Corsetti and Garry Rose.

As we approached Mr. Comelo, I held out my hand and said "Hello, my name is Tom Belt". Mr. Comelo responded by pointing is finger at my chest and said: *"I know who you are and stop submitting public Records requests".*

Needless to say, I was completely taken aback by his cold response.

I removed my unshaken hand and didn't know what to say. Then after briefly speaking to the others in my group Mr. Comelo again unprovokedly again pointed his finger at me and repeated: "Stop submitting public records requests". He rudely repeated this demand to me 3 or 4 more times until the group disbanded after which I tried to speak to him more calmly.

Mr. Comelo's unprofessional demeanor in front of my friends was completely unacceptable and unprofessional for a man in his position as city manager.

A few days after the above incident took place, I saw Mayor Paul Dohring walking by my home on Hillview Place. I approached Mayor Dohring and told him about my experience with Mr. Comelo. After listening to me, Mayor Dohring told me I could continue to submit public records requests, but he never addressed Mr. Comelo's rude behavior

On February 5, 2025, I emailed city councilman Aaron Barak. In the email a described five examples of the city being in violation of Proposition 218 with respect to how the city was managing its water and wastewater enterprises. In the email to Council Barak I requested city council to conduct an outside forensic audit of the city's water and wastewater enterprises. Unbeknownst to me Mr. Barak gave my email with the five examples of non-compliance to the city's attorney.

It ended up taking the city attorney 5 months to provide a response to my assertions regarding Proposition 218. Finally on July 22,2025, I receive an email from Mr. Comelo informing me of the city attorney's findings. The attorney concluded none of my allegations had any merit. On the same day I received the email from Mr. Comelo I emailed him back

to thank him for sending me the attorney's report. The following is the email I sent Mr. Comelo:

"Mr. Comelo,

Thank you for providing me with the City Attorney's complete findings instead of a more condensed summary. I realize had I requested a copy of the complete findings by submitting a public records request, the city could have denied my request because of the exemptions listed in California's Public Information Act.

Respectfully,

Tom Belt"

The following is the reply I received from Mr. Comelo on the same day:

Mr. Belt,

Your PRA request had nothing to do with the sharing of the City Attorney's memo. For the record, city staff have been making these assertions for several years to no avail and it is unfortunate that it required the expending of the City's dollars to produce this report. Further, there is nothing in this memo that is confidential and since it is a record that was specifically created for you, it is appropriate that the complete memo be shared with you.

Thanks
ANIL COMELO

Regarding Mr. Comelo's response, the email I originally sent to councilman Barak was not a public records request. I interpreted Mr. Comelo's reply for me thanking him as another example of his rudeness and I responded accordingly:

"Mr. Comelo,

First , in response to your reply, my email to Councilman Barak on February 5, 2025 was not in the form of a PRA. I was simply advising a new councilman of some concerns I had with the way the city, in my opinion, is out of compliance with Proposition 218. When I emailed Councilman Barak with my concerns, unbeknownst to me, he submitted my comments to the city attorney for review. Again, I never submitted my concerns as a PRA or asked for the city to expend revenue to determine if my concerns were accurate.

Secondly you wrote: "For the record, city staff have been making these assertions for several years to no avail and it is unfortunate that it required the expending of the City's dollars to produce this report." Please expand upon the assertions in your remark. What assertions?

Thirdly, I have not had the time to read the city attorney's findings in depth. Upon my first reading, I am not surprised at the attorney's findings. However, that doesn't mean I completely agree with the report. It will take me time and more research to accept all the findings as accurate.

Forth, in response to your comment about requiring the city spending revenue to respond to my written concerns to Councilman Barak I submit: Based upon the way you disrespectfully treated and berated me in front of my friends at a utility rate study meeting in 2022. And then, treated a friend of mine in a similar way at a Rotary Club meeting. I'm not surprised the city had to expend money to send you to counseling for the way you have treated others in the community. This seems like a needless waste of city revenue.

By the way, I am still waiting for an apology for your rude behavior, pointing fingers, and telling me on multiple occasions to quit submitting public records requests when you had absolutely no legal grounds to make those demands to me.

Thanks.

Tom Belt"

In conclusion, based upon my request after nearly three years of waiting for an apology, Mr. Comelo apologized for his behavior on September 22, 2022, but it was not forthcoming from Mr. Comelo. I had to ask for an apology.

In conclusion, after researching the city attorney's report and findings about my assertions that St. Helena was out of compliance with Proposition 218, I strongly believe the attorney's finding mischaracterized my assertions and that there were errors is his findings. I tried to reach out to city councilmember Michelle Deasey for a meeting with the city attorney to identify his errors, but the attorney refused to meet with me based upon Mr. Comelo's direction.

Tom Belt

Tom Belt
10-9-2025

Outlook

Anil Comelo

From TOM BELT <tmbelt@comcast.net>
Date Wed 10/15/2025 10:04 AM
To Michelle Deasy <mdeasy@cityofsthelena.gov>
Cc Andrew Bradley <abradley@cityofsthelena.gov>; Andrew Bradley <abradley@cityofsthelena.gov>

Good morning Vice Mayor Deasey,

I have to admit I was angered last night by the few Rotarians who slammed the people who had the courage to sign their names to the letters requesting the dismissal of Anil Comelo as our city manager. And among those letters there were several residents who signed letters describing the rude and disrespectful experiences they have had with Mr. Comelo, I being one of them. And it needs to be stated that several of those signatures came from individuals who do not comment on Nextdoor. The conspiracy that was alluded to is false. Even Paul Dohring stated at a past city council meeting that Anil is not liked by many in the community. That was one of the truest statements I ever heard Mayor Dohring say.

If calling a woman a "cunt" to a person Anil barely knows in a public place isn't enough to describe his character I don't know what is. I've already told you my story with him where he pointed his finger at me several times and demanded in a hostile voice to stop submitting public records requests in front four of my friends.

When one compares 45 people from the community who were courageous enough to sign letters requesting Anil's termination to the three who spoke up in Anil's behalf, the obvious conclusion is there should be more weight given to the majority.

I noticed this morning that even Mark Smithers included a letter to the list of others requesting city council terminate Mr. Comelo. Mr. Smithers sits on the citizen finance committee and is a well respected citizen in St. Helena. I'm sure he didn't make his decision lightly.

Anil Comelo has a temper problem. He can be rude and disrespectful at times. And I have no doubt there are many other residents in St. Helena who would have been willing to sign and submit letters, but as Michelle Covell stated last night, they were afraid of Anil's vindictive personality.

In conclusion, I hope you will read aloud this letter in front of the city council's closed session this afternoon.

Tom Belt

By copy of this to Andrew Bradley, I request this letter be added to the others for today's closed session of the city council meeting.

10.06.25

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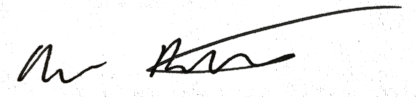
Respectfully,



Adam Rotello
1795 Fir Hill Drive

Dear Members of the St. Helena City Council,

I am writing to formally share a troubling interaction I had with City Manager Anil Comelo, as well as express my concern about a larger pattern of conduct that I believe is inappropriate and not in keeping with the standards of public service.

During the 2023 Harvest Festival, while watching the pet parade near the viewing platform, Mr. Comelo approached and remarked that the city should consider charging for stadium seating at the event, suggesting it could generate significant revenue. I initially believed he was joking, but it quickly became clear that he was serious. I politely expressed my disagreement, noting that the Harvest Festival is a community event meant to be inclusive and free for all residents.

What followed was unexpected and disconcerting. Mr. Comelo scoffed at my response, asked my name, and upon hearing it, responded with visible contempt: “Oh, you’re Dan Hale’s wife.” He then turned and walked away without further comment. His tone and demeanor were dismissive and disrespectful.

This interaction, while brief, was deeply unsettling, not just personally, but in what it may suggest about Mr. Comelo’s regard for members of this community. It also preceded, by about a year, a series of defamatory public statements and a false police report made by Mr. Comelo against my husband, Dan Hale, apparently in response to Dan’s inquiries into unlawful alterations made to the city’s zoning code. These actions, taken together, appear to be part of a broader pattern of retaliatory behavior designed to silence dissent or scrutiny.

Mr. Comelo’s conduct reflects a concerning lack of professionalism, transparency, and respect for both the citizens of St. Helena and the principles of open government. Public officials must be held to a high ethical standard, and I believe his behavior falls short of what the community deserves.

I am bringing this to the Council’s attention because I believe it is your responsibility to ensure that city leadership operates with integrity, treats all citizens respectfully, and fosters trust—not fear or intimidation.

I respectfully request that the City Council take this matter seriously and consider an independent review of Mr. Comelo’s conduct, both in terms of his treatment of residents and the actions he has taken in his role as City Manager.

Christine Hale

1851 Madrona Ave

Subject: Conduct of City Manager A. Comelo

St Helena City Council Members,

I am writing to formally reiterate, for the public record, a series of deeply troubling actions taken by City Manager A. Comelo and certain City staff in connection with a building application for the property located at 1443 Madrona Avenue.

During the course of this application process, Planner Galbraith and I became aware that the City's municipal code had been improperly and, in the view of myself and others, illegally altered by City staff. Upon this discovery, I submitted a direct and reasonable request for an explanation as to how such unauthorized changes were made. As Planner Galbraith was not employed by the City at the time of these alterations, I followed up with Planner DeRosa and also notified the City Council of these and other irregularities in the municipal code.

Rather than receiving a transparent or constructive response, my inquiry was met with silence and a coordinated campaign of retaliation. This campaign was orchestrated by City Manager A. Comelo. It began with his filing of a false police report alleging a fabricated "threat" against Planner Galbraith. This was followed by a letter he sent to the full City Council and City Attorney, which not only reiterated false accusations but improperly instructed me to restrict my access to City services.

A subsequent police investigation determined that no threat had occurred and that Mr. Comelo's allegations did not "add up." These actions represent not only a misuse and misdirection of City resources, but was also a clear and willful violation of due process. I formally requested a public hearing to address and correct the public record; to date, that request remains unanswered.

I have compiled a complete and detailed record of all related correspondence and communications, which I am happy to provide upon request. Despite this documentation, Mr. Comelo has continued his efforts to discredit me while directing staff and the City Attorney to avoid addressing the core question: **how and why was the municipal code improperly changed?** His actions have amounted to a focused attempt to slander and degrade my reputation and limit the pursuit of both my livelihood and advocacy. To be clear, to date those efforts have been somewhat effective and have done measurable damage. Mr. Comelo further compounded this misconduct by making false and misleading statements to *The St. Helena Star*, misinforming the public and further undermining trust in City leadership.

After repeated inquiries first by me, and later by my attorney, the City Attorney ultimately acknowledged, approximately four months later, that the municipal code had indeed been altered outside of the legally prescribed public process. While some of these improper changes are now being corrected, the process has been protracted, opaque, and remains incomplete nearly a year after the issue was first identified. The ongoing delays and lack of urgency underscore a broader pattern of inefficiency, evasiveness and predation that have become the hallmarks of Mr. Comelo's leadership.

In my view, Mr. Comelo's conduct, decision-making, and leadership do not reflect the values of the St. Helena community, nor do they serve the best interests of City staff or residents. His actions fall significantly short of the standards of professionalism, transparency, and accountability that the public has every right to expect from those entrusted with civic responsibility.His repeated and publicly demonstrated conduct speaks for itself. Yet the inaction of the City Council despite its clear responsibility and multiple opportunities to intervene amounts to tacit approval. Leadership cannot afford to be passive in the face of misconduct. To remain silent or still is to walk hand in hand with the behavior in question. No invocation of "grace" can repair the damage or absolve the failure to act.

I remain available to answer any questions and continue to urge the City Council to take appropriate, timely action to restore public trust and uphold the integrity of our local government.

Daniel Hale 707.227.4322 danielmarkhale@gmail.com

SH City Council,

I appreciated the strong representation of Rotary members at last evening's City Council meeting. However, I was surprised that none of the speakers from that group acknowledged, addressed, or even expressed interest in whether the alleged behaviors and conduct involving City Manager Comelo actually occurred.

Instead, many of the speakers' comments seemed more focused on slathering shame or characterizing other commenters as part of some nefarious group of Nextdoor "haters," self-interested parties, or rabid participants in witch hunting. This narrative largely sidestepped the central and necessary questions: **Did these alleged behaviors occur—and do these conducts continue to occur? If so, what damage has been done, what harm continues, how can the behaviors be stopped, and what is the responsibility of both City Staff and the City Council to address them?**

I would respectfully suggest a pivot away from counterproductive defensiveness and toward some version of calm reflection. Please shift away from the quick "othering" of concerned citizens. Some of these allegations are serious, and place both the City and its citizens at risk, and they deserve to be taken openly and seriously. Others paint a troubling portrait of a general approach to leadership, governance, process and functionality that the City Council can and should, at the very least, correct and redirect. I hope you would examine these testaments thoroughly and, if unsupportable, responsibly and with some urgency put the conducts and actors outside of the St Helena ecosystem.

I believe these matters need to be investigated simply, thoroughly, and with as little drama as possible. If, after due diligence, you find that the behaviors in question did not occur, then move on, put them behind you, and focus on the City's business. But choosing not to ask the fundamental questions tied to these multiple and varied allegations is neither responsible nor acceptable.

Lastly, I do not believe that dismissing or discrediting the legitimate concerns raised by a curiously textured and disparate group of engaged and sincere citizens—who have taken the time, and accepted the risk, to bring them forward—is an acceptable course of action. Thank you for your time and best of luck with the challenge set before you.

Sincerely, Daniel Hale 1851 Madrona avenue

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Re: Request for Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

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For these reasons, I respectfully request that the members of the City Council take action to promptly facilitate Mr. Comelo's transition out of employment. Decisive action is necessary to restore trust in City leadership; without public confidence in the City Manager, meaningful progress on critical infrastructure and planning initiatives cannot occur.

Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Darcy Dunlap
1510 Pine St
St. Helena, CA
94574

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Elaine de Man

From: Elaine de Man
To: Public Comment
Subject: Closed session agenda item 5.3
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 8:05:42 AM

Dear Mayor Dohring and City Council Members,

After listening to some of the public comments made at last night's meeting of the city council, I would like to amend my earlier comments. While I am happy for those residents who have had nothing but positive interactions with our city manager, that has not been my experience.

After one of the first city council meetings with our new council, I was approached by a young man whom I did not know. He introduced himself as the vice mayor of a Southern California municipality (I can't remember the name right now) and told me he was interested in the annexation situation for St. Helena with LAFCO and asked if I would introduce him to our mayor…which I did. Anil happened to be standing there and heard the introduction and the exchange between the mayor and this young man who was going to meet with the county's head of LAFCO the following day.

The following day, I received a phone call from the young man, saying I had more influence in this town than I realized. Apparently, because I was the one who had introduced this young man to the mayor, Anil had placed a call to the man heading LAFCO warning him against this young man and his proposal! Because of his very limited association with me…and for no other reason…this young man had earned a target on his back.

Even the LAFCO official was made to feel uncomfortable by this uncalled for and unsolicited interaction with our city manager! (Please, call the LAFCO office for verification of this interaction.)

I had heard rumors about our city manager's alleged "enemies list" and thought it was preposterous. Grown people don't behave that way, let alone a powerful city official. And then I found out I, for reasons unbeknownst to me, that I was on the "enemies list" along with, apparently, anyone even remotely associated with me.

This type of vindictive behavior is totally unacceptable on the part of our top city official and is not in the best interest of our community. And I believe now, more strongly than ever, that the only way St. Helena will be able to move forward and serve the needs of ALL its residents, is if Anil Comello is relieved of his position as city manager as quickly as possible.

Thank you,

Elaine de Man

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Jerry & Michele Hyde

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Jessica Hague

10.06.25

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City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Re: Request for Resolution to Facilitate the Exit of City Manager Anil Comelo

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing as a concerned resident of St. Helena to respectfully urge the City Council to initiate a resolution to end the City's employment of Manager Anil Comelo.

The City Manager plays a pivotal role in maintaining the trust, accountability, and effectiveness of our local government. Unfortunately, under Mr. Comelo's leadership, it has become clear that these standards have not been met. Persistent issues—including a lack of transparency, ambiguous and irresponsible fiscal leadership, a polarizing approach to discourse with residents that has fostered an atmosphere of *us versus them*, a general disregard for citizen concerns, and multiple combative interactions with residents and stakeholders—have eroded public confidence and hindered progress on key initiatives.

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Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Print Name: _____

Homeowner
1154 Hudson Avenue Saint Helena CA 94574

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Jordan Coonrad

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Julia M Bolander

Mayor and Members of the Saint Helena City Council

City of Saint Helena

1088 College Avenue

Saint Helena. CA 94754

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

A short time ago I went to City Hall to speak to speak to the Public Works director. No one at City Hall knew if he was there. Mr. Comelo was behind me. He introduced himself and asked if he could help. After asking my question three times and not getting a straight answer, I said to him that I assume he can't answer the question and walked away in disgust.

Respectfully,

Julia M Bolander

Julia M Bolander

10.06.25

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City of St. Helena
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Respectfully,

Print Name: Julie Ann Kodmur

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Print Name: Karen Williams

To whom it may Concern:

I have previously sent a Public Comment to the City Council referencing my introduction to Anil Comelo and his inappropriate and illegal action against Tom Belt regarding threats about filing of Public Records Requests. You may find that comment here. https://sthelena.civicweb.net/document/266784/. This incident happened back in August of 2022 shortly after Mr Comelo became City Manager. It was clear during this interchange that he was intending to drive a wedge between the staff and the community. He talked about citizens as adversaries and his need to "Protect" "HIS" staff.

His administration has led to the most divisive relationships between staff and citizens. There was a time when Mr Comelo had staff reviewing social media for anyone who criticized him. He maintained a list and if you contacted him, he would tell people he would not meet with them or give them what they asked for, because they had criticized him.

He was responsible for forcing out personnel that would not cow-tow to his edicts. I was told by 3 different employees at the Employee retreat that people were asked to put comments / questions anonymously into a bowl. One read paraphrased, "why is our staff so top heavy?" When he read it he demanded to know who wrote it. When no one came forward he chastised the room and said that that kind of question would not be tolerated. His style is heavy handed, punitive and tyrannical.

I talked to the then Library Director, Chris Kreiden, on her lunch hour on her last day of work. She said he would freeze her out of Department head meetings. He would schedule meetings with her and then repeatedly cancel. He wanted to restructure the Library and wanted her gone. He made her job so difficult, she took an early retirement. Everyone that leaves does not want to go on record, should it follow them. They know how vindictive he can be.

Although hersey I have been told that he referred to me as a "cunt" in a public setting. When these things have been brought to the attention of Mayor Dohring he has made excuses for Mr Comelo's behavior. I often wonder what Mr Comelo might be holding over Mayor Dohring's head. And strangely once at a city council meeting Mayor Dohring spoke directly to Mr Comelo, "people don't like you much, Mr Comelo."

Although I have not kept a file over the years, several dozen people have contacted me privately about bad experiences they have had with Mr Comelo. Sometimes they are just abrupt or rude interchanges and others involve threats and unprofessional behavior. It is my understanding that they hired a coach for Mr Comelo at the cost of $8,000 and that this was supposed to be a short term solution to his inappropriate behavior, but that this coaching continues.

Recently the hollowing out of our best and most responsive staff has continued. No one likes working for a tyrant. He gives his loyalists the ability to work from home at will. This may help to explain why these same executive staff do not provide proper supervision to their staff. And why when you call or email, you are lucky to get a response. He strikes me as a very insecure man who tries to cover for that, with threats and bravado.

This City Manager is generally disliked and not trusted. This is not because EVERYONE in town is bad, as he suggests. He does not care what the citizens want, he believes he knows what is best for St Helena, when he is probably the most disconnected and divisive City Manager we have had in the 35 years I have lived here.

The longer he continues as City Manager the worse things have gotten here. I am sure that there would be a substantial celebration by existing staff should he leave. They fear reprisal but my sympathy goes out to them who are working loyally for the town while some of the executive team seems to be working to pad their retirements. The current relationship between the City Government and the governed is unsustainable.

Sincerely,
KellyWheaton
1335 Inglewood Ave
St Helena, CA 94574

From: Kelly Wheaton
To: Public Comment
Cc: City Clerk; City Council
Subject: CLOSED SESSION City Council Comment to be added to packet/public comment for todays meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 7:12:30 AM

City Council,

I listened carefully to the comments at last night's meeting about our current City Manager and I think it is well known that I am not a fan. But that is not why I am writing.

I asked AI for the qualities of an excellent City Manager. This is the synopsis:

"An excellent city manager possesses strong leadership, strategic thinking, and financial acumen, along with exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, such as being a good listener, empathetic, and a relationship builder. They are also ethical, trustworthy, and adaptable, with a commitment to the community's welfare and the ability to make sound, collaborative decisions."

So rather than focusing on Mr Comelo I would like the City Council to focus on what the City needs going forward. With staffing and financial challenges, along with restructuring and renovation, do we have the right leadership in place? I would argue that we do not. We can wait until everything completly crumbles around us or with the help of the Finance and Water/Wastewater Committees, the Efficiency/ Modernization Study and the Compensation Study we can begin to rebuild, not only our foundation at City Hall, but the much needed trust between the City Government and the governed.

I know there are those that would like to delay the inevitable, however I would argue making a change now or at least setting the foundation for that change, is in everyone's interest including Mr. Comelo.

Looking to the future here are the qualties to focus on (quoting AI) and I hope that this framework could be used to Evaluate Mr Comelo's performance and whether he is "capable" of leading us forward. I have italicized areas of concern from my (and expressed community) perspective.

"Leadership and strategy

- Leadership: The *ability to* ***inspire*** and guide staff and the community.
- Strategic planning: Experience in long-term thinking and goal setting for the community's sustainability.
- Decision-making: Strong judgment and the ability to make informed, value-based decisions.
- Adaptability*:* ***Flexibility*** *and the ability to learn from mistakes and respond to change.*

Communication and interpersonal skills:

- Exceptional communication: The ability to ***effectively communicate*** *with the council, staff, and the public through various channels.*
- Active listening: The *skill of* ***listening more*** *than talking* ***to understand different perspectives.***
- Empathy*:* ***Understanding and sharing*** *the feelings of others, including stakeholders and community members.*
- Relationship building: *Investing time in building strong,* ***positive relationships*** with council members, staff, and *the community*.

Ethics and character:

- Integrity and ethics: A commitment to being *trustworthy and making ethical*, value-based decisions.

- Professionalism: Maintaining a *professional image and a positive,* ***collaborative*** *attitude, even when dealing with difficult issues.*
- *Emotional maturity: Being* ***self-aware*** *and* ***managing emotions*** *to avoid negatively impacting the work environment.*

Financial and operational management:

- Financial management: ***Expertise*** *in budgeting, accounting, and managing public finances.*

- Problem-solving: The ability to *analyze and resolve complex and* ***sensitive*** *issues.*
- Project management: Skills in overseeing projects from start to finish.
- Knowledge of government: Understanding local laws, regulations, and government operations. "

Making strong moves in leadership takes courage. You, the City Council, have an opening to make changes that will breathe new life into our community. You cannot build bridges when the leadership fundamentally believes they don't need them, and can go it alone. You will need the community's support to make tough calls. As noted above sadly, Mr Comelo lacks the qualities necessary to lead that change.

Sincerely,
Kelly Wheaton
Inglewood Ave

Kelly Wheaton

WheatonWood.com

10.06.25

Mayor and Members of the St. Helena City Council
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

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Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Laura Dwoff
1533 Pine St
St Helena

October 7, 2025

Mayor and City Council Members
City of St. Helena
1088 College Avenue
St. Helena, CA 94574

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

For too long the City of St. Helena has endured limited and unacceptable action towards its many problems. The current City Manager, Anil Comelo, has not proven to us that he is willing or capable to confront our problems in a timely and democratic way. He has eroded public trust, hindered progress on key initiatives, and demonstrated irresponsible fiscal leadership.

Trust in City leadership is vital, and Mr. Comelo has not provided that. It is our belief that he be asked to leave his position.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Larry Vermeulen

Connie Wilson

10.06.25

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Respectfully,

Leslie Dunlap
1510 Pine St.
Saint Helena, CA. 94574

October 13, 2025

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Respectfully

Mark B Smithers

From: Mark Smithers
To: Andrew Bradley; City Clerk
Cc: Paul Dohring; Aaron Barak; Michelle Deasy; Kate Spadarotto; Billy Summers; Paul Dohring; Aaron Barak; Michelle Deasy; Kate Spadarotto; rarcher@recology.com
Subject: Anil performance
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 11:36:37 AM

To our mayor and city council members,

First thank you for your service especially with all that's happening in the town we love. With all due respect, I provide the following for your consideration.

Our town is a little messy at the moment and our city manager is at the center. As you engage and discuss his performance there are many well documented aspects of community member experiences in statements sent to council. A few others have come to his defense suggesting he's doing a fine job. I'd like to provide a few straightforward facts:

1. We missed out on $2 million of interest earnings over the last 3 years.

2. A handpicked advisory committee was overly influenced to support an ill-conceived and poorly developed tax revenue proposal that was greedy and failed. An opportunity missed.

3. Our CM developed a ridiculous report suggesting our structural deficit was $6 - 10 million without collaborating with the finance committee. It is well understood a fully loaded deficit is south of $3 million.

4. He continues to suggest the deficit is $6-10 million in defiance of the finance committee and council. Now we have certain profit minded persons encouraged and invited by our CM using his figures to break a promise made to the community.

5. Recently he fabricated a TOT - Sewer improvement "offset" from a developer agreement for the Farmstead Hotel to fool the finance committee into not considering this potential TOT revenue (depending on progress) as they review unfunded future longer-term CIP. This has been dispelled.

6. He continues to espouse that staff are significantly under paid even though other information offered provides this is untrue. Further, he is unable to wait for the class and comp study's completion.

7. Significant water and storm drain projects continue to be delayed although we passed a bond measure and increased utility rates over 3 years ago.

8. We sit on millions of dollars of impact fees across a number of restricted funds that can be used to improve traffic, emergency routes, water and sewer systems, and develop parks, open space, and trails, etc. But we do nothing with these funds to improve our infrastructure and quality of life.

9. Our organizational structure has become even more top heavy and inefficient under his tenure with additional managers and layers creating unnecessary expenses and delays to the simplest projects.

The above are facts. Maybe his lack of performance could be somewhat acceptable if his total compensation package wasn't $500,000.

Respectfully,

Mark Smithers
Vallejo Street
St Helena

Mark B. Smithers
(707) 290-4508

10.06.25

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City of St. Helena
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Respectfully,

Matthew Walter

10.07.2025
To City Council:

This letter is to formally share my concerns with the City Council regarding a phone call I received from City Manager Anil Comelo on Monday, September 29, 2025.

I am a new Planning Commissioner and have been a resident of this city for the past ten years. This is the first phone call I've had from the City Manager since my appointment on July 22, 2025.

He began the call by stating he had several items to discuss.

The first point was his advice to be cautious about what I say or write publicly. He noted that, as a Planning Commissioner, if I make certain public comments, I could be required to recuse myself from future project reviews. I acknowledged the point and noted that I had received onboarding materials, including the Brown Act and the Code of Ethics. I then asked if there was anything specific I had said or written that led to this call. He said no — nothing came to mind — and that this was just general advice given to all new commissioners.

I responded by explaining that I find the line between speaking as a resident versus a Planning Commissioner unclear, and that it would be helpful to have more specific guidance beyond the general warning of "be careful what you say." Since being a resident is a prerequisite for serving as a commissioner, understanding that boundary is critical.

The second topic was a volunteer group formed following the September 23, 2025 City Council meeting, regarding alternative ideas for Site 10. During the meeting, there was a call for resident volunteers to bring creative input — and I raised my hand and submitted my information to the City Clerk.

On the call, Mr. Comelo stated that many residents had volunteered, and that he preferred I not participate in the group. He quickly moved to the next item.

The third topic related to a formal complaint I submitted after a meeting on July 24, 2025, with Mr. Comelo and Mandy Kellogg. At that meeting, I was told part of the complaint would need to go to City Council. Months passed with no update. After checking with a city council member, it appeared nothing had been brought forward. I followed up by email with Mr. Comelo and Ms. Kellogg — and received no reply.

During the phone call, Mr. Comelo scolded me for following up. He said that when he gives his word, it will be carried out, and that there was **no need** to follow up. I responded by thanking him for letting me know he was still working on it, and he said it would be going to the Council "in the next couple of months."

I returned to the second topic and asked for clarification: when he said he "preferred" I not be on the group, was that a decision made or simply a preference? He did not answer directly. Instead, he repeated that there were already enough volunteers, and that he preferred I not participate. I then asked how many people were selected and who they were. He declined to disclose that information. Again, I asked: was his "preference" a final decision, or did I still have the option to participate?
At that point, he raised his voice and said, "Michelle, I'm not arguing with you, but I am highly trying to dissuade you from being on the group."
I remained calm and repeated that I wasn't trying to argue — I simply wanted clarity. Eventually, he said, "If you INSIST on being on the group, then you can be on the group." I responded that I wasn't insisting; I was simply trying to understand why I wouldn't be included when I had volunteered, and when several councilmembers had expressed appreciation for my offer to participate.
He again repeated that if I insisted, I could be on the group. At that point, it became clear to me that the only way to remain involved was to insist — so I did. He replied, "Great, you're in the group. Goodbye." And he hung up.

At no point did I raise my voice. I was cordial throughout the conversation, even as the tone from the City Manager became heated. I had to ask the same question multiple times just to get basic clarity. The heat in that exchange was not necessary. It seemed intended to discourage further discussion.

I found this phone call troubling. A formal complaint deserves timely follow-up and clear communication. To be told that I should not inquire — even after months without an update — sends the wrong message. Following up on official matters is not only reasonable; it is expected. And a City Manager should welcome engagement and accountability, not discourage it.

Looking back, the call boiled down to three key messages:

1. Be careful what you say — even though the rules are unclear.
2. I would like you to not participate in a volunteer group.
3. Do not follow up — and do not put concerns in writing.

All three messages point in the same direction: **suppression, silencing, and discouragement.**

The City Manager does not oversee me. I am a resident. He works for the City and the City serves its residents. City Councilmembers represent their constituents and are responsible for holding the City Manager accountable.

When a resident brings forward a formal concern, it should be treated with seriousness and professionalism. Efforts to intimidate, silence, or discourage civic participation — even when subtle — have no place in the government of this town.

There should be zero tolerance for gaslighting, intimidation, or attempts to erode public trust in the democratic process.
To be clear, this is a formal letter of complaint on the conduct of the City Manager.

Sincerely,
Michelle Liu Covell

10.06.25

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1088 College Avenue
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Respectfully, Alice G Albright

10.06.25

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The City Manager plays a pivotal role in maintaining the trust, accountability, and effectiveness of our local government. Unfortunately, under Mr. Comelo's leadership, it has become clear that these standards have not been met. Persistent issues—including a lack of transparency, ambiguous and irresponsible fiscal leadership, a polarizing approach to discourse with residents that has fostered an atmosphere of *us versus them*, a general disregard for citizen concerns, and multiple combative interactions with residents and stakeholders—have eroded public confidence and hindered progress on key initiatives.

These concerns are not isolated incidents but reflect a broader pattern of ineffective leadership that has negatively affected the City's ability to move forward. St. Helena deserves leadership that demonstrates competence, integrity, and alignment with the needs and values of its residents.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the members of the City Council take action to promptly facilitate Mr. Comelo's transition out of employment. Decisive action is necessary to restore trust in City leadership; without public confidence in the City Manager, meaningful progress on critical infrastructure and planning initiatives cannot occur.

Thank you for your service and for giving this matter the attention it warrants. The residents of St. Helena are counting on you to act decisively in the best interest of the City and its future.

Respectfully,

Print Name: Bryan Sandoli

From: Charles Covell
To: Paul Dohring; Public Comment; City Clerk
Cc: Michelle Covell
Subject: Public Comment regarding City Manager
Date: Tuesday, October 14, 2025 11:49:58 AM
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Mayor Dohring and Members of the Council,

I am writing to add my name to the growing list of citizens calling for the removal of the current City Manager.

My wife, Michelle, and I first encountered Mr. Anil Comelo at the Harvest Festival a couple of years ago, and it was a discouraging experience. He was unnecessarily rude and dismissive — not at all the demeanor one expects from any public servant, much less the chief administrative officer of our city.

Michelle had spent the prior two years working successfully with Caltrans as a private citizen to secure safety improvements along Highway 29 north of Fulton Lane: better crosswalk markings and a speed limit reduction to 25 mph to match the southbound direction. This was a meaningful achievement that directly improved safety for residents and young families — done quietly, without fanfare or political mediation.

When she mentioned this accomplishment to the City Manager, he responded with unwarranted hostility. His tone was elevated and dismissive, and he waved her off, remarking that it “didn’t matter” because “people just get their speeding tickets fixed in court.” He then turned his back on her. Another witness can confirm this incident.

Even if he was personally disinterested in the topic — which would itself be troubling for someone in his position — a basic level of civility and respect toward a citizen was called for. His behavior was unprofessional and frankly offensive.

While I initially hoped this was an isolated lapse in judgment, I have since learned that this was part of a broader pattern. Many residents have described similar experiences of intimidation, defensiveness, and dismissiveness when attempting to engage constructively with the City Manager.

If we were seeing effective leadership, perhaps one could overlook poor interpersonal skills. But the issues now go far deeper. We are seeing dysfunction across city departments, staff turnover, financial mismanagement, controversies within Planning and Zoning, and a declining water system that is nearly unusable despite soaring rates. Moreover, the City Manager has said plainly that creative solutions cannot be expected from him — an astonishing admission for someone in his role.

It is time to move forward. St. Helena deserves a City Manager who leads with respect, creativity, and collaboration — someone who inspires staff and welcomes the talent and goodwill of our residents. We need a leader who values public input, not one who confronts, dismisses, or gaslights the community he is meant to serve.

Charles Covell
Principal
707.968.9280

COVELL ARCHITECTS

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www.covellarchitects.com

From: Charles Covell
To: Public Comment
Cc: Michelle Covell
Subject: Public comment for tonight
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 1:30:54 PM

I would like to add a response to some of the comments delivered last night during the regular city council meeting by a handful of citizens who offered words of support for the city manager.

I couldn't help but notice that some of these fellow-citizens attacked everyone who had voiced in writing their concerns about the CM, rather than disputing their key complaints. Some did offer reasoned arguments and sincere testimonials of Mr Comelo's virtues. And they should, if that is their lived experience with him.

However, some dismissed us all, called us names and accused us of a witch hunt. This aligns with some of the kind of behavior so many of us expressed concerns about with the CM.

Calling us haters is unfair name-calling and not a suitable term in public forum. I can't speak for all the signers and letter-writers, I don't even know many of them. However, I am not a hater, and do not seek to spend my time having to engage in civic matters. However, it is the duty of all of us to share our lived experience in the cause of making our town and government accountable and functional.

I applaud all who have shown the courage to speak out publicly and share their lived experience without demeaning or dismissing others points of view.

Charles Covell
Park St.

October 14, 2025

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Sincerely,

Brittany Anderson
St. Helena resident for over 20 years