

Written Public Testimony 12/07/21

Public Testimony #1

I am writing to oppose Alan Sandler's proposal to repair and then have a 20 year lease of the Community Center. Out of the blue, he reportedly approached only two Councillors with no community involvement or process, which would give him virtually unchecked authority over its use determining activities and setting rates and fees etc..for 20 years.

His ideas of the uses for the building have not come from the community. If we want to adopt his ideas, the whole community should be approached. We might be in agreement.

He is a well known landlord, who I believe is 87, and would be turning over control to an unnamed team at some point as well. We do not know how much a desire for profit motivates him or his team.

I have lived in Ashland since the mid 1970s and know the special uses and meaning of this Center for Ashland and the valley for decades. It has been part of the fabric of this town and not for private profit. It is a building we taxpayers already paid for, own and benefit from, with deep historical roots. It is akin to the concept of the Commons in England.....truly a Community Center in every sense of the word.

Sandler reportedly approached two Councillors: Seffinger and Hyatt. Why just them? Why not introduce this in public to the entire town? He could put this proposal in the paper or send out a flyer in a heartbeat....or he could easily donate money to cover the repairs to the Community Center. What a nice legacy that would bea donation to Ashland from one of its big landowners!

However, if we want to consider his proposal, let's have zoom meetings, send out flyers and engage the town itself. That would give the public time to talk about ALL of our options and decide as a big group what we want. Do we really want to turn over one of our most beloved buildings to one person or team? Should a lease like that be for 20 years???? How much profit would he or his team be making in that 20 years? Any process should take its time and not be rushed through as the holidays are upon us.

I do not support turning over our Community Center in such a way. It has been ours for a very long time and served us in a way that maximized access to itfor weddings and anniversaries, dances, classes, workshops etc. It did not require lots of money to rent....and we have always had the use our own building we paid for from our taxes. I want our Community Center to remain just that. Please, turn this proposal down.

If Sandler wants to get public approval, let him approach the community first...or donate as a gesture of gratitude to the town that gave him the opportunity to prosper.

~Gwen Davies
Ashland

Public Testimony #2

I am writing in opposition of forming a private partnership with Allan Sandler, or any other private person.

Our public buildings should not be controlled in any way by a private entity, let alone under a lease for 20 years.

Thank you,
Jill Friedman, Ashland
To the Council:

Public Testimony #3

I have read the post from Julie Akins regarding the plans for the Community Center. My opinion is to keep control of the usage of this facility in the hands of the public. We should proceed with renovations as voted on and make it happen.

regards,
Linda Lanzhammer

Public Testimony #4

Holiday season is upon us all! I question why this large agenda is not put out until late on a Friday evening. How many people will sit at home this weekend to write council, and will the council have time to see and respond to those who do? Please put the agendas out earlier for all to see, and spend the time to view them in their entirety.

I am adamantly opposed to any one person wanting to request a 20 yr contract on OUR Community Center, regardless of age (which is questionable and not knowing who his team and heirs how and could come into play, at some time)! Many have used Our Community Center over the years for weddings, Birthdays, music, religious celebrations, to name a few! At one time there was an annual Thanksgiving dinner, enjoyed by the entire community, rich or poor! Allowing a lease for 20 yrs to a private person would be a large disadvantage to the entire community, as well set a precedent for others to follow! Allan Sandler could choose to donate his time and money, and what a legacy this would be for all! Please take the time to evaluate the fees from Community Development, regarding our schools. The loss of class rooms concerns myself and others who voted for this School Bond! If they can eliminate fees for Columbia Care, ...surely they can think of our students and the loss of classrooms, and do the same!

Respectfully, Nancy K Boyer

Public Testimony #5

Hello again: I thought of two other points to make.

I am inspired by a comment our Mayor made on Next Door. She pointed out that the childhood activities proposed by Sandler...and I will add the concerns for programs for early childhood "education" ...or just plain fun!!..... that Councillor Hyatt is concerned about..., would be much better placed at Briscoe School. It is sort of a no brainer.

It is bigger, has parking, the playground, and has been designed for children!!! It is out of the craziness and traffic issues of the Lithia Park area and competing uses. IT'S A SCHOOL!

We have many other settings that are better and groups of folks who would want to get involved: our school system, SOU, OSF, etc...teachers in training etc for programs for them..so many marvellous possibilities. Sandler and others could donate to that kind of effort around

town...or explore various leases that serve the public!! This is exciting. There are so many possibilities around town that are naturals.

The Lithia Park location is the worst placecan you imagine traffic and safety issues in the middle of tourist season?? It already is rather dangerous there to park and get out of parking spots etc.

I also thought more about the fact we have already voted, assessed, reassessed, had more votes, changedetc etc what the process should be with the Community Center. We were beginning to ask for proposals from professionals to address what needs to be done to meet the proper standards. Numerous course corrections have occurred and may occur again.

I want to know what proposals would come in from professionals after all the reviews. We might get new ideas or solutions and who knows what they would want to charge...and then the City would choose. Of course the companies would have to know that submitting something to us was worth the time and effort they put into it. There is every opportunity for someone like Sandler or other folks able to donate to the costs either right now or when a contract has been signed. They certainly can submit proposals for a lease along with other professional groups too. Go back to "regular order."

I want this to continue to be a community center in every sense of the phrase. Rebuilding the community is vital right now in all the decisions we have before us. I do not think that putting another layer of a private team, and what they may or may not want in the next 20 years, serves us.

I hope that folks follow up on the possibilities of Brisco School or other settings for early childhood activities. Let us stay the course as the CC just voted on a few weeks ago.

~Gwen Davies
Ashland

Public Testimony #6

Please don't lease the community center to Mr. Sandler. It does not sound like it is in the community's best interests. We do not have many community sites for various gatherings as it is, and to practically give that one away and put the power in one person's hands is wrong. Please vote against this proposal.

I'm response to my emailed opinion to Paula Hyatt, she indicated that preschool/early learning was important, but she discusses that as if it is one combined, interdependent issue, when they are, in fact, two separate issues. They are only interdependent if you make them interdependent. I'll explain.

Early education is important; I have no issue with that. My issue is that the CONTROL of what happens in the community center (and at what cost) should remain with the community or with elected officials of the community, NOT with a single member of the community.

Paula Hyatt tugged at my heartstrings with the mention of the necessity of locations for early learning. Her response infers that we either hand it all over to Mr. Sandler and get a place for a preschool or we choose to keep the preschool desert that we have, and that is not an appropriate argument or inference. The city CAN maintain control and still put preschool in there if it chooses to do so, or it can find other locations that are suitable.

As elected officials, you should research what the community needs, and it sounds like you may be doing that with your research into preschool needs (I hope that you are also researching other community needs as well). But whatever solutions you offer to that end, the solution can and should still be with the city maintaining control over the community center. To suggest that we either give Mr. Sandler control and get early learning OR we don't get early learning at all is just a red herring.

Please don't see this situation as a necessary interdependence when it shouldn't be and does not need to be.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tina Siegl

Public Testimony #7

Council,

I strongly oppose a majority of the changes to the Annexation Code that are proposed. This is another example of poor legislation potentially resulting from the city attempting to respond legislatively to one project's denial at LUBA.

In this case, it is multi-modal transportation that is under attack. These changes can be summed up by the shift in the approval criteria for pedestrian and bicycle safety changing from being "safe" to the lower threshold of "reasonably safe". 18.5.8.050 E.2 and E.3. The proposal goes further by removing the obligatory requirement of constructing transit facilities in applicable circumstances when annexing property into the city. 18.5.8.050 E.4

Although variances to the Street Design Standards were previously allowed, shockingly, the proposal opens with a shift in the language for allowing variation from the standards to no longer require a "demonstrable difficulty". Proposed 18.4.6.040 B.1.b. allows for a variance when "[t]here is no demonstrable difficulty in meeting the specific requirements". This begs the questions of whether the city should have Street Design Standards whatsoever and undermines the very basis of legal construction. This ultimately allows for arbitrary proposals with no criteria as to whether they meet safety standards. "It looks good to me, Jim Bob." The Purposes, Intent, and Background of the Street Design Standards are very broad and open to grossly subjective interpretation.

One can see why the language is shifting from “safe” to the subjective form of “reasonably safe” for pedestrians and cyclists.

I have not looked into the specifics of the proposal that triggered these changes and at first glance I was also disappointed to see housing denied by LUBA, however, that is irrelevant. The proposed annexation criteria changes will have long-lasting effects to future projects. This city prides itself in prioritizing multi-modal transportation and these proposed changes are not demonstrative of that history.

Annexations usually involve relatively undeveloped land when street standards are easily met to ensure our children, pedestrians, and cyclist are safe and transit facilities are provided by obligation.

I strongly encourage the council to broadly deny the proposed changes at this point. If you wish to remove some ambiguities in the current law, please ask city staff to return with a simplified version.

Respectfully,
Eric Navickas

Public Testimony #8

Hello

As a resident of Ashland for 43 years, I sorely miss the community center, which served our community in so many ways. I urge the council to vote against “pausing” the work on the community center. There should be no private lease for public buildings — please!

Thank you.

Anita Isser

Public Testimony #9

Subject: Public Testimony re. Community Center building rehabilitation for Tuesday, December 7

Message: Re: ?Consider motion to pause the current engineering design work on the Community Center building and retaining wall pending a full review of the proposal for leasing and rehabilitating the building as proposed by Allan Sander.? My wife and I moved to Ashland twelve years ago. Although we were attracted by Ashland's beautiful location, we were also attracted by the wonderful people we met here. We came to realize that Ashland is really one big family that generally shares similar progressive values...values that cause conservative critics to decry Ashland as "The Peoples' Republic of Ashland." What keeps us as "one big family" is that we have skin in the game: literal ownership or part ownership of utilities, electric generation, the treatment plant, fiber network, parks, public schools, golf course, buildings, etc. With regard to the latter, we are strongly opposed to any private sale or leasing of the historic Community Center building as

proposed by Allan Sandler . Any short term "pragmatic" gain will simply provide more relief to those who can most afford a higher, progressive tax; some of these folks owning two or more homes. What is most concerning, however, is that any move toward privatizing the commons subverts the very thing that makes us "The Peoples' Republic of Ashland," the very underpinning of that intangible, ephemeral feeling of being a part of a community...a feeling that is supported by the very tangible reality that "we all have skin in the game." This sense of community demands our collective support of the commons; otherwise, we become just another ordinary town. Thank you for your consideration, Andrew and Barbara Seles

Public Testimony #10

Subject: Community Center proposal

Message: Let us have a full scale consideration of the Sandler proposal to rehabilitate the Community Center across from Lithia Park. We could have a community Zoom meeting facilitated by an independent body. Thank you. Jan Elliott