

TO: City of Ashland Council  
FROM: Dr. Anne C. Cowen  
Subject: Council Vacancy due to Expire December 31, 2018

Hello Council,

My reasons for wanting to serve Ashland goes back to my roots and lifelong commitment to the public sector and its values. My father was a city manager, so I grew up in the public limelight. I then went on to major in Political Science at Willamette University. There, I was able to have an internship at the City of Salem as well as with the State government and legislature. These experiences prepared me well for my MA in Political Science at UCLA. I then worked as an analyst for a management counseling firm in San Francisco that did work exclusively with public sector organizations. Seeking more hands-on work in local government, I worked in budgeting and personnel for the Department of Engineering for the City of Los Angeles.

After two years, I decided to go back and acquire my doctorate in Public Administration at USC. During that time, I was a manager, teacher as well as student. After acquiring my All but Dissertation (ABD), I accepted my first full-time teaching job in the Political Science Department at CSU Chico. I taught public budgeting, personnel, research, public policy, theory and behavior at the undergraduate and graduate levels and managed the Public Administration section of the department. While I found that I loved teaching and management, I felt I needed greater hands-on training to more effectively teach these courses. My next two years were as a Budget Analyst with the Office of the Legislative Analyst (LAO) in Sacramento, CA. I analyzed both bills and the Governor's Budget for fiscal impact, wrote executive reports requested by the Legislature in my areas of budgeting, and testified in front of the Legislature. With newly developed insight and knowledge, I took at tenured teaching position in Public Administration with CSU Sacramento School of Business & Public Administration. I taught, wrote, researched, consulted with State and local government as well the nonprofit sector, helped build new programs and centers, managed programs, coached thousands of students, for the next 25 years.

When Proposition 13 (the tax cutting measure) was passed by the California voters in 1978, I was asked to retool and teach business courses such as human resources, management, ethics, diversity and business government relations. While this was an unexpected direction, it enriched my understanding of the role of government as well as appreciating the perspectives of the business sector. I retired as an Emeritus Professor in 2004.

Since moving to Ashland, I have been impressed with your local government. I believe I bring a good deal of knowledge, skills and abilities to the issues facing the Council, the City and its citizens. It would be a great honor to serve.

Cordially,

Anne Cowden

**Respondent: Anne Cowden**

**RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS:**

1. **BIGGEST ISSUES:** The first comment I would like to make is that we as a community, as often as possible, use the word issue to frame discussions of items to be addressed. We often say problem instead which frames ideas in a more negative way from the beginning. Thank you for saying issues in this request. An example is the issue of the homeless or unhoused population.
  - 1) Availability of adequate affordable for purchase housing and a greater number of reasonably priced rentals. This housing scarcity is related to another issue or issues: Young families and especially those with children find it very difficult to find affordable housing to buy or rent in Ashland. This reality forces them to move away and take their property tax payments to Talent, Phoenix or Medford, even if they work in Ashland. The ripple effect impacts our schools, available workforces, citizens to be active in helping to sustain our community and more.
  - 2) We need higher paying jobs at the level at least of a living wage. Although many of the jobs here are in private sector, pressure and greater awareness can be brought about by the Council to contribute towards the healthy and prosperous growth of the total community. If people do not have disposable income, businesses suffer along with the citizens.
  - 3) Mental health or I should say lack of facilities to assist those in need of these services exacerbates the unhoused population as well as others who need assistance. This population needs help, not rejection and scorn. That they can't park to sleep in their cars is an issue. I know that some in the faith community have started to address this issue, but much more needs to be done. As of 2016, 21.5% of Ashland residents were below the poverty line. The Federal Government definition of poverty is \$24,000 a year to sustain a family of four. The Ashland percentage is higher than the Oregon total average of 18%. As we know, economic times have only gotten worse for those already in trouble. Poverty coupled with racism and classism are issues that our community needs to address. We are a very white community at 86.5%. However, we do have people who represent different cultures, identities, ideas, perspectives that need to become fully included into the dialogue of community. It is often hard for most of us to see the minority and understand that their face and experiences are not the same. Informally, I ask an African American employee of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) about racism in Ashland. As you know, the casts, crews and other employees are very diverse. She said that that OSF is doing their part about racism and diversity. That we, the whites, must educate ourselves and help others who are white understand and accept diversity. I agree and did some of my own research on racism in Southern Oregon. I think what we are facing are deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs of white supremacy.

Yes, some people's attitudes and beliefs have changed over time with education and the passage of civil rights laws, but these racists' attitudes and beliefs still need to be rooted out with awareness of our own inner racism, often unconscious, as well as the obvious racism of some residents: "*While the Klan may have been new to the state, the attitudes and issues it exploited were not. Racism, religious bigotry, and anti-immigrant sentiments were deeply entrenched in the laws, culture, and social life of Oregon, and few Oregonians questioned the Klan's doctrines of white supremacy, Protestantism, and "One-Hundred Per Cent Americanism"*"—The Oregon Historical Society. We are a highly educate community. 97% have graduated from high school, 57% hold a bachelor's degree and 27.4% have graduate or professional degrees. This too can lead to classism and being unaware that not everyone has had the same advantages or wants them. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is rewriting the society we once knew; it is a brave, new world with robots likely to do much of what we have done for centuries. This technological reality is becoming a continuing issue for all of us. Finding the budgetary funds to continue to keep up with technological change will be one of the most difficult challenges facing the City government and the community.

4) The retention of younger people with more to engage them and appeal to them to stay in Ashland to help us build it up. We have a very diverse and wonderful college with SOU. It is a leader in diversity and other areas. I think we should do more to engage them and to build a conduit to work for SOU graduates and others who wish to work and stay in Ashland. We are very much an aging community which can and will turn into at least two issues: providing health care and home care and replacing this population that now provides most of the volunteers that sustain our nonprofits. Currently, about 40% of Ashland is 45+ with 15% over 65. We need a diversity of younger and middle-aged people to buy into the concept that Community Ashland is for all of us.

2. **MOTIVATION:** My letter outlines my life-long commitment to public service. As a semi-retired person, I have time, experience and knowledge to give and want to give.
3. **COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:** I volunteer for the Ashland Emergency Food Bank once or twice a week, Uncle's Diner, several committees through the Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (RVUUF): Social Justice & Action, Economic Equity, Stewardship Chair, Overnight Parking Program, Garden Work. At OLLI I was part of a three-person team who put on the Fall 2017 Mixer for members to meet instructors. I am teaching a class at OLLI this Spring on how we as a nation created what has been called The Swamp. I am taking a class at SOU in *Persuasion* in the Communications Department and will be taking two more communications classes in the Spring: *Argumentation & Critical Thinking* and *Advanced Public Speaking*. I also coach people to help them find a job they can be passionate about. I am involved in community organizing through the RVUUF. We are currently working with the Snowberry residents to help them organize themselves to provide an enriched community experience and work towards many goals such as affordable onsite childcare. I have run small businesses in the past and am currently helping a friend build a business serving seniors in the Ashland area.

4. **ROLE:** I think that the role of the city councilor is to listen, hear, perceive, study, reach out to and understand all citizens and what they expect from their city government. This means the Council to the person who gives out parking tickets. Anyone involved with city government is a representative of Ashland. As a Council, it is essential to listen and try to weigh the desires and often conflicting wants of the citizens, the mandates the City has, the budget realities, and then come to reasonable, just and fair decisions that are openly articulated to all. I have found as an educator, that if people are more aware of what is being decided and can have input, there is a greater sense and a greater reality of participatory democracy. As Thomas Jefferson said: *You can't have a democracy without an educated electorate.*

*Thank you for your attention,*

*Anne C. Cowden*