

RECEIVED APR 24 2018

Brent Thompson
P.O. Box 201
Ashland, OR 97520

Monday 23 April 2018

To: the Mayor and Council
Re: Council Position #6

That the application period for City Council Position #6 has been extended indicates that the Mayor and Council want a broad array or group of candidates. Therefore, I am submitting an application. I am a resident of Ashland, and I am registered to vote in the State of Oregon. I have been an Oregon resident since 1983.

Biggest City Issues:

I believe the biggest issues facing the City of Ashland are the following:

- *Maintaining community intimacy and a caring, responsive city wide atmosphere in the face of endless change, population growth pressures, and fiscal challenges;
- *Attempting to accommodate growth within the existing city limit while being creative and innovative in providing a variety of housing options;
- *Comprehending the financial handicap city, county, state governments, and school districts face due to the guaranteed return of 8% in the Public Employees Retirement System. This means we may have to make difficult fiscally responsive decisions in order to provide basic services without continuing to raise the tax burden on residents through utility tax and/or rate increases and property tax increases. I believe this problem will be acute until 2030. Therefore, the Council must sometimes "say no" to worthwhile projects or requests.

Motivation for Serving

While individuals can never justifiably claim that their efforts will make things "better:", I believe I have a track record over the last 34 years of making things "less worse" in Ashland, Jackson County, and even the State of Oregon. I believe that in the short tenure offered in this position, i.e. until, 31 December 2018, I can adapt quickly and contribute quickly. It is the first time in my memory that two Council positions have been vacant in such a short time. Thus, experienced candidates with some of what might be called "institutional memory" seem most desirable. I have that to offer.

Recent Community and Civic Involvement

Since, I left Council Position #6 in January 1997 after 13 years on the Citizens Planning Advisory Commission, the Planning Commission and the City Council, I served on the Airport Commission, the first Transportation Commission for almost four years, and in 2014 I was Co-Chair of the ad hoc Downtown Beautification Commission/Committee appointed by Mayor Stromberg. This last group was composed of mostly downtown business owners who proved to be effective committee members. This body convened bi-monthly at 7:30 AM and adjourned at 9 AM. Over 10 meetings 17 "digestible" recommendations were formulated as to how to allocate Transient Occupancy revenues for downtown beautification.

As President of Friends of Jackson County I was invited to be a part of the Medford Boundary Adjustment Committee in 2010. I attended meetings where I urged the committee to include in its mission recommendations for infill not just geographic expansion. Because of the realities and requirements of what is known as the Regional Problem Solving master plan, the Medford City Council was forced to disband the Boundary Adjustment Committee. To my knowledge an "infill committee" was never appointed. Pity.

Since 2013 I have been one of two pole vault coaches at Ashland High School. I also encourage participation in the decathlon and heptathlon. In that time four female vaulters have made the top 10 record board with the girls' school record being broken three times. Three male vaulters have made the top 10 record board, and there are now three decathlon marks including one mark that was in the top 10 for all U.S. high school track and field athletes in 2015. Next year we hope to have our first heptathlon marks.

I helped found and/or was president of: Friends of Jackson County, The Jackson County Citizens League, and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.

Role of the City Councillor

The role of the City Councillor is to learn all possible about 1) the current workings and finances of Ashland's government, 2) Ashland's community organizations including SOU, 3) Ashland's residents and their vision, and 4) Jackson County issues. The Councillor must study issues well, then listen, and then listen some more as movement is made towards decisions. Eventually the Councillor has to decide it is time to make a decision, help formulate a motion, and then diplomatically explain the reasoning for a given vote. The City of Ashland with its 21,000 residents and 17 Commissions is a complex entity to govern. Many things are brought before the City Council. Decisions must be made in a timely fashion, and the reasoning for decisions must be conveyed to the public. Thus, the most effective Councillor would be one who is not only studious and communicative but who also is not a "ditherer".

Brent Thompson
541 488-0407

References-

Hans Voskes- Head Track Coach Ashland High School
Karl Kemper- Athletic Director Ashland High School
Jay Hummell - former Superintendent Ashland High School
Charlie Hall- SOU Head Football Coach
David Kanner- former Ashland City Administrator
Brian Almquist-former Ashland City Administrator 1970- 1998
Cathy Golden Shaw- Ashland Mayor Jan 1989 to Jan 2001
Darby Stricker- Mayor of Talent
Jeffrey Riley - JPR- Jefferson Exchange Host
Gary Turner- Attorney Davis, Hearn, Turner, etc.
Bill Robertson- Fire District 5 Board Member

Planning urged to make cities more 'comfortable'

By BRENT THOMPSON

Oregon arguably has the best body of land use planning law in the United States.

The goals of the 1970s, such as farmland preservation and the prevention of urban sprawl and leap-frog development, have been achieved to some extent. Oregonians did not want to duplicate California's style of land-use planning.

But there is an important aspect of planning that we have ignored. While we have wisely protected our farmland and contained the cities, we have not made our cities and towns comfortable to be able to walk, stroll or linger in.

It is difficult to quantify comfort, which is part of the problem. Inside of our urban-growth boundaries we are duplicating California's worst sins by not trying hard enough to make people comfortable. We know we don't like huge parking lots, congestion, strip development with a seemingly endless series of one-story, single-use structures with standard franchise themes, but we don't know what to do about it. These types of development are oriented solely to automobile, not pedestrian, use, which makes these areas uncomfortable for people.

We are continuing to build shopping centers in the middle of parcels, surrounding them with asphalt, omitting sidewalks and paths to neighboring residential areas, and justifying such development by describing the shopping center as "regional," which means shoppers have to drive there. From the streets, we see some landscaping and — far away across the asphalt — the shopping center. This is the California model.

Shopping centers and commercial buildings do not have to be built that way. They can be built closer to surface streets with parking at the side or in the rear, which invites people to walk there, thus making people unquantifiably "comfortable." Buildings should be located on parcels to enhance, rather than detract from, the streetscape.

Cities should reflect the values of their residents in planning. If we want to drive our cars everywhere, we should continue as we are for the next decade and beyond. If we want the option of walking, we can voice our objections to any development that does not provide for all forms of transportation equally. The state land-use transportation goal provides for that, even though it is generally ignored by developers and planners. We can remind planning officials of it by proclaiming that: "We want to walk!"

This doesn't mean that we always want to walk or that we don't want to drive, but that we don't want to be penalized for walking.

Brent Thompson, an Ashland building renovator and property manager, is a member of the Ashland Planning Commission and the board of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.

IN MY OPINION

riding a bicycle or using public transportation. We would like to have alternatives that invite driving and walking.

Imagine your car out of service. Can you function in your town? If not, your city needs to revise its planning policies. Your town needs site-design guidelines and transportation policies that provide easier access for walkers, bicyclists and public transportation users.

These things can be done, and planners want to incorporate the will of the people in their planning. They often know how to make a comfortable town. They simply need community support to do it. Letting them know that we want to be able to walk is a good start. Tell them you want to be able to walk to places in your town.

Oregon planners and our Legislature have led the state closer to proper land use than any other state. They just need to bring us the rest of the way. A single planning action rarely affects a city greatly, but if there are enough of them where the comfort of carless people is a priority, the entire city will become more comfortable. It is possible even to reduce the amount of parking needed.

The U.S. standard is one parking space for every 400 square feet of commercial space. As a statewide goal, we could conceivably plan well enough for alternative forms of transportation to make our state standard one space for every 600 square feet of commercial space. If we set that as a goal, our planners would figure out many ways of attaining it, and we would begin what would be known as the "Oregon urban planning model."

What could be a better goal for the next decade?

The result of this 1989 Column was Oregon's Transportation Planning Rule where all forms of transportation have to be considered in all planning actions, not only cars.