

January 27, 2017

Mayor Stromberg and members of the Ashland City Council—I appreciate the opportunity to express my interest in Position #6. Thank you for your time and consideration—

What do you think are the biggest issues facing the city?

When I look around Ashland, I notice that there are a lot of people my age and older; OSF plays are loaded with silver-haired patrons, as are the movies at the Varsity Theatre. It is expensive to live in Ashland, expensive to buy property and rents are high; sometimes just finding a rental is impossibly frustrating. My young friends have been leaving Ashland for years. In a more vibrant Ashland, younger people would stay having found a diverse workplace, sustainable incomes and housing that was available and affordable.

As I am walking the streets of Ashland in the early morning, I see the folks who have slept in the woods or have taken advantage of a church floor when the temperatures drop below 20 degrees. They are men, loaded with a backpack, sleeping bag, pad, and sundry personal items. Right now, there is only one woman; she is obviously answering to an internal voice and she often shouts back. Starbucks is the spot downtown where these folks often sit, cardboard signs and dogs near. I tend not to offer money but I am comfortable buying coffees and teas and I am often graced with personal stories. These folks are not going away—others will take their place—and my guess is that their numbers will increase.

This summer I noticed larger groups of folks playing music and talking and shouting and eating and smoking in the public parking lot across Lit Way from the small convenience store and Chloe, an upscale salon and spa. Two women who work in Chloe told me that they wished that this group wasn't in the parking lot because the men made them nervous. Eric, a periodic visitor to Ashland, used to sit in front of the convenience store with his buddies; he isn't there anymore,—no one is. It appears that they have moved across the way to the parking lot.

Truth is, people on the street are another issue. Talking with them educates me into their realities of drug and alcohol dependence, mental illness, personality disordered behavior and fear. While I often marvel at the kindness shown them and the multiple resources that our city dispenses, I continue to believe that there is more to be done. One step forward is to involve the “parking lot posse” in a discussion aimed at stronger relationships built upon common ground.

What is your primary motivation for seeking the vacant council seat?

My primary motivation is to be of service. “To whom much is given, much is expected.” I am that person; I have been blessed with a set of talents, with (relative) wealth, knowledge and time. To serve my community—the place where my children were raised and the place that I have called home for most of my life would be my good fortune.

What community and city activities have you been involved in recently?

Very recently, I joined thousands of other women in the Women’s March in Ashland; the Monday before that I attended the Martin Luther King celebration. I belong to a board of directors’ that oversees the Star thistle project; ST was built with a HUD grant and it offers housing to those individuals who suffer from mental illness. I am grateful to have been a part of this board because I have been a witness to humane housing—both in design and maintenance for the benefit of its tenants.

On a much more personal note, I pick up trash as I make my 5-mile morning trek through Ashland. In addition, I pick up trash at the Ashland Skatepark along with sweeping leaves when the piles create a skating hazard. I realize that these activities of mine probably don’t fall into the category of what most people consider “community and city activities.” I must credit Brian Almquist, a former City Administrator, with his unknowing mentorship. Many mornings I see Brian picking up trash, taking down outdated “garage sale” signs and peeling stickers off of the plexiglass bus stop walls. Brian is one of my heroes—his attention and care reflects his abiding affection for the City of Ashland. I hope that mine reflects the same.

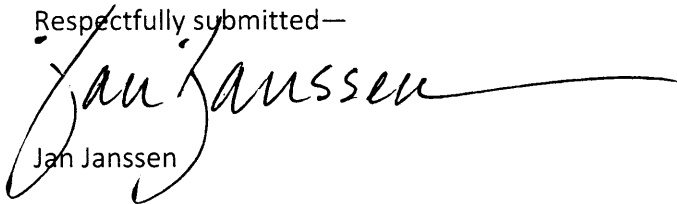
What is the role of the city councilor?

When I hear “city councilor” in my head, I think of a public policy-driven role. I think of serious study, stacks of paper, manila folders, meetings, ordinances, legal documents, a packed Council Chambers, microphones, lights, name plates, and the importance of order and respect.

I also think of a councilor as being a trusted person—one who would return a call or make some sort of contact with a community member—one who would acknowledge prejudice and bias in the mix of a decision. Over the past year, community members have called me when juveniles (and those over 18) have been involved in the news. Having left my position with the City of Ashland over ten years ago, I am still surprised by these calls. In both cases—the boys who held up the female pizza delivery driver and the stabbing death of the woman at the hand of her son, I talked to people who were concerned, frightened, questioning, and eager to help in some way if that was possible. I am not a lawyer and I could only speculate about the fate of these kids. At core was the conversation itself and my hearing, “I feel better now, thank you for listening.”

And, thank you for “listening.” I look forward to an interview, should that happen, and I wish all of you well in your search.

Respectfully submitted—



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