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City Recorder
City Hall
20 East Main Street
Ashland, OR 97520
Melissa.huhtala@ashland.or.us

RE: Letter of Interest
Council Position #3

Thank you for taking applications for the vacant council position. Please accept mine. I live in Ashland. I have been a resident for 25 years. I am registered to vote.

Primary motivation:

Before the election of Donald Trump, I could scarcely believe what I discovered in Jackson County when as an attorney I represented tenants living in housing that could kill them and their children. There is a pervasive and underlying meanness in a legal system that tolerates and encourages unsafe drinking water, dangerous electricity, fire hazards, vermin, poisons, toxins and other disease hazards in housing. I mention Trump because his bullying tactics and compulsive need to "win" at any cost are similar to the practices of some Jackson County judges, attorneys and police. It's an age-old problem of the privileged enforcing their privileges at the expense of humanity—particularly at the expense of poor children. The conditions I saw, the suffering, and the aggressive tactics used to deny justice, health and basic needs broke my heart. I think many people in Ashland have never seen the harms that are inflicted upon their neighbors. I think many people in Ashland do not realize that dangerous housing—and no housing at all—not only breeds disease and despair but is a substantial factor that drives inequality. I would like to do everything possible to stop this exploitation, misery and social injustice.

Biggest issues:

1. Smoke Pollution

In 2017, 665,000 Oregon acres burned and \$454 million was spent on firefighting. Two of our largest fires, Chetco Bar and Eagle Creek, were the nation's top-priority fires in August and September. OSF lost about \$400,000 in refunds for outdoor performances canceled because of smoke. The festival laid off a dozen employees as a result. The smoke reached levels hazardous to human health. The front-page headline of the September 7, 2017, *Daily Tidings* read, "SMOKE-SMACKED." The subhead: "Rogue Valley going on four weeks of fire-fueled, smoke-shrouded misery." I believe the beauty, liveability and economic prosperity of Ashland is damaged when the air is a dense, dangerous fume.

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2. Housing

In 2017, the median price of a home sold in Ashland was \$421,500. The land component of the price of a home continues to inflate, and Ashland land costs about \$1 million per acre. Ashland prices exclude people who work here. This is a matter of social justice. With regard to housing, Ashland has become exclusive and fundamentally unjust.

Recent community and city activities:

Most recently, I was on Team Ashland. I learned that our city has the highest standards of safety. The water supply, for example, is managed and maintained to be pure and reliable. The fire department, for a second example, trains constantly and identifies and uses the best practices and techniques.

The new tools of technology enable skilled employees to map and document all the city's infrastructure and systems, and thereby make maintenance, repair and upgrades as cost effective and efficient as possible. In short, I learned that Ashland is really a special place because of its excellent employees. And, as those employees pointed out, Ashland is really a special place because of its citizens and its generous citizen volunteers.

Role of the City Councilor:

I believe the primary role of any elected or appointed official is to do everything possible to ensure the safety of all citizens. I mean safety in its broadest sense. People, for example, should not be subjected to hazardous smoke pollution even if it means owners of forests must manage their lands to minimize wildfire hazards. People should be able to find and afford safe housing in a good location even if it means slumlords must repair their rentals and earn a more modest return on investment, and even if it means 20 acres of poor-quality "farmland" must be used to achieve this realization of social justice. Future generations should inherit a fully functioning natural environment that supports life in its fullest and healthiest expression, even if it means we must curb our reliance upon fossil fuels and internal combustion engines and adopt clean, renewable energy instead.

A councilor should preserve these and all aspects of public safety. To that end, a councilor should listen, facilitate, educate and encourage. In the short time available for this appointment, I would encourage council to enact code language and policies to facilitate an implementation of statewide land-use planning Goal 10 that actually works—so that Ashland may have "adequate numbers of needed housing units at price ranges and rent levels which are commensurate with the financial capabilities of Oregon households." My experience in law makes me ideally suited to interface with the state sovereign to help solve our housing crisis. Ashland and the Rogue Valley are different from the Willamette Valley, and the housing crisis can be solved with different policies here than would be appropriate there. Laws should be tailored to community when one-size-fits-all creates a mismatch and a fallacy. My experience in law also makes me suited to suggest to the federal sovereign that forest lands currently mismanaged to produce hugely destructive wildfires should be managed as healthy forests instead.

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Finally, a councilor appointed for a short term to replace a popular, successful and well-respected councilor should be cognizant of the privilege afforded by the appointment, maintain continuity, be a caretaker, and facilitate the proper functioning of the council and the city to the fullest extent—because the November election will be upon us shortly and will afford our citizens the opportunity to select a candidate for the next full term.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Haneberg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Haneberg