

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PLANNING COMMISSION CANDIDATE

CANDIDATE: Casey Kopcho

PLEASE RESPOND IN WRITING BY: Thursday, January 24, 2019, at 5 p.m.

PLEASE SEND TO: Lynda Rose
Assistant to Mayor Chuck Bennett
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OR VIA FAX: 503-588-6354

1. Please explain your understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Planning Commission.

My understanding of the role of the Planning Commission is that it is responsible for the activities, as assigned by City Council, to develop, update, and maintain the Comprehensive Plan. To accomplish this, the Commission makes recommendations to the Council on development updates and changes as well as advises the Council regarding future growth development.

Additionally, the Commission serves as a critical conduit for public involvement by developing a Plan that promotes citizen engagement. The Commission also works to research local industrial and economic needs while taking into account the overall quality of life of the cities citizens. Research conducted in this area is used to provide educated recommendations to the Council.

2. What skills, knowledge and perspectives do you possess that will enable you to be an effective member of the Commission?

My background as a leader within the federal and state government afforded me the opportunity to familiarize myself with a wide variety of topics and engage with individuals at all levels of government and the public. My professional work as an auditor is hinges upon my ability to research material and provide objective recommendations based on that research. My unique background enables me to communicate concisely the results of what can often be fairly technical work. As a result, I'm confident that I will be able to work effectively as an objective Commission member and provide the Council with recommendations backed by ample support.

In addition, I have a solid understanding of the Salem Revised Code and Oregon Department of Transportation requirements and would be able to leverage that understanding to expedite my work when dealing with variances or other determinations that may need to be made.

I also have the good fortune to live throughout the country which granted me perspective on how other municipalities operate and glean best practices. As a result, I have a wealth of knowledge from places like Austin, Texas where they recently overhauled their Land Development Code with a program known as CodeNEXT. While there, I was part of a team that worked to determine the overhaul's impact to local transportation plans and intend to leverage that experience in working for the Commission.

Finally, my experience as a small business owner allows me to understand the needs of other small business owners in the city. This perspective provides me insight when trying to recognize the goal of a requestor or how certain decisions might impact the small business community.

3. One of the most common application types you will hear at the Planning Commission is a Comprehensive Plan Change and Zone Change, where an applicant wants to change their zoning to facilitate a development proposal. What is your perspective regarding responding to the current market versus maintaining a long term vision?

When approaching changes to the Comprehensive Plan, I do so with an understanding that each planning decision affects multiple objectives beyond the immediate outcomes. I believe that a smart growth strategy must be carried out that aims to secure growth opportunities while protecting the environment and ensuring that all citizens enjoy prosperity. To accomplish this, I believe the city should focus on building upon existing assets while taking incremental actions to strengthen communities, and building long-term value to attract a variety of investments. This difficult balance includes identifying which assets to leverage as well as understanding long-term environmental and growth implications.

4. What are some examples of how you believe Salem has done a good job of land use and transportation planning? What are some areas for improvement?

I believe Salem has done a good job in identifying those areas that will serve as assets for future growth such as the Kuebler / I-5 interchange and industrial commercial zoned regions east of I-5. Continuing to open the city to new business by means of existing assets is critical to its long-term success. Likewise, understanding the cost and impacts of proposed projects and rejecting projects when the costs outweigh the benefit is an area I believe Salem has also excelled. I believe the city has also done an admirable job in communicating potential transportation impacts to proposed development. A good example of this is the recent traffic impact analysis provided regarding the proposed Kuebler Gateway development.

I believe one area where all cities, including Salem, can improve is by continuing to identify best practices globally and leveraging them to keep land use code as modern as

possible. An example of this is how Austin, Texas identified a practice to improve tree retention and revised their code to identify two new categories of trees (in addition to Significant and Heritage) that allow for the city to further maintain its urban forest. Practices that strike a balance between impact and growth will be vital to the success of Salem.