

City of Asheville
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
Application Form

APPLICANTS ARE STRONGLY URGED TO ATTEND SEVERAL MEETINGS OF A BOARD PRIOR TO APPLYING AND/OR APPOINTMENT TO A BOARD

Name of board or commission(s): Asheville City Council

Your name: Abigail Emison Home Phone #: (828) 505-2319

Street address: 275 Montford Avenue City: Asheville Zip Code: 28801

Mailing address (if different): _____

Employer: BUILDERadius, Inc.

Your position: Director of Business Development Office Phone #: (828) 350-9950 x417

Resident of City Asheville County Buncombe Race White * Sex Female * Age 28 *

Are you a United States Citizen (circle one)? Yes or No

Residence location (check one): Central North _____ South _____ East _____ West _____

How did you become aware of the opening? _____ Webpage _____ Current Volunteer eNews
_____ Government Channel _____ Newspaper _____ Radio _____ Organization _____ Agenda _____ Other

Please indicate the area(s) of expertise that you can bring to the above board(s), and then in detail list education, experience, reasons for your interest, and other factors that support your interest in serving (use additional sheets if necessary). Expertise: _____ Legal Technical _____ Fundraising _____ Community Contacts
_____ Business Management (Financial) Business Management (Operational) _____ Public Speaking

Please see attached resume and responses to questions.

Return to:
Maggie Burleson, City Clerk
Post Office Box 7148
Asheville, N.C. 28802-7148

E-Mail: mburleson@ashevillenc.gov
Telephone: 259-5601
Fax #: 259-5499

Signature: Abigail H. Emison

Date: 11/26/08

E-Mail: aemison@gmail.com

Fax #: (828) 350-9954

* This information is requested for the sole purpose of assuring that a cross section of the community is appointed.

1. What motivates you to apply for this position?

I am applying for the open seat on City Council because I believe it offers a unique opportunity to work to substantially improve the quality of life in Asheville. I have the professional experience and training in planning and development to advance job creation and housing opportunities in Asheville. All too often, citizens are forced to choose between staying in Asheville and taking a low-wage job, or moving away. Some stay, first because of the diversity of educational institutions, and then because Asheville is an amazing and beautiful city. However, many leave because Asheville lacks higher-wage jobs and enough affordable housing. If Asheville is to become a truly livable city, it needs to have more skilled job opportunities and reasonably-priced housing options. I want to work to bring higher wage jobs to Asheville concurrent with helping to lower the costs of development while protecting the environment. I know from my professional experience that this can be done, but I also know it requires action that only the Council can bring. I believe that I can do more for Asheville as a member of City Council who understands planning and economic development.

2. Where do you fall on the conservative-liberal spectrum in terms of fiscal and social policy?

I am a political Independent and have been so since I first registered to vote. I believe that the Conservative and Liberal labels have lost any true meaning, and I do not feel that I can tie myself to either set of ideologies that come with those labels. It is better to evaluate issues on their own merits and in the context in which they arise. I believe in doing what works, regardless of label or category of approach.

For example, I believe it is important that North Carolina requires municipalities to balance their budgets on a yearly basis. This helps to control excess spending and maintain accountability. However, in today's current economic climate, it is dangerous for cities, like Asheville, to cut services to such an extent that non-essential services are eliminated. With the budget shortfall, it will be tempting for City Council to pull back funding and support for economic development and planning services. This decision could be devastating. These are the investment areas that are crucial to helping Asheville prepare for recovery when the economy rebounds.

I also believe that one of Asheville's greatest assets is its tremendous diversity. We can use this diversity to attract new jobs. From the arts scene to the Mountain State Fair, from auto racing to hiking, and from political protests on all sides, Asheville delivers the entire spectrum of interests and opinion. We must use all of our assets to improve Asheville, and our diversity is a prime asset.

3. In your eyes, what should be the top 2 or 3 priorities our City Council should be focused on in the upcoming year and why?

I believe that the overall priority for City Council should be to prepare Asheville now for recovery from our current economic crisis. Council must think critically and invest strategically in programs and services. Every dollar must be spent wisely because of the decrease in revenue; and we must plan for the future if we want to keep Asheville livable. Now is Asheville's opportunity to lay the groundwork for a recovery that not only allows the City to recover, but to emerge as a leader in quality, sustainable growth.

City Council and staff have already begun to take steps toward good planning with the parks and recreation, affordable housing, transit, and downtown plans. It is critical that we as a community, and City Council, as leadership, continue to plan Asheville's growth, development and infrastructure. We must take the opportunity that the slowdown in the economy gives us to make sure that the plans we have create a consistent and implementable future.

My professional background in planning and development enables me to contribute both insight and passion to help the City take advantage of this unique opportunity. I have worked with more than fifteen different cities in a variety of financial conditions over the past nine years. Most recently, I have served as the Secretary of the Asheville Design Center, working with the citizens of Asheville to promote quality design solutions. I would like the opportunity to help the citizens of Asheville face the challenge of the economic downturn so that we recover into an Asheville that is economically viable and environmentally sound.

4. What do you consider the most crucial problem, need, or cause for the citizens of Asheville? How would you approach its resolution or champion the cause?

Asheville is a mecca for talented young people. However, even with excellent educational resources and an attractive location, Asheville does not provide enough of the higher-wage jobs that attract and retain young professionals. Asheville is a net exporter of talent because skilled young people cannot find high wage jobs that will permit them to purchase homes and raise families. Because of the disconnect between the current workforce and the available jobs, many Ashevilleans leave to raise their families. I believe that in order to bridge this disconnect, City Council must promote and foster not only small business, but also medium and large businesses which create high wage, high quality jobs. I am the Director of Business Development at one of the few information-based medium-sized businesses in Asheville, BUILDERadius, Inc. We strive to hire recent graduates of area colleges and universities, as well as area residents. I believe Asheville needs many more companies like BUILDERadius and I can use my background and experience to help attract these companies.

As a member of City Council, I would work to address the employment disconnect by collaborating with economic development officials throughout the region. Asheville needs a comprehensive strategy that addresses the needs of existing small, medium and large businesses. I will personally go out with local economic development officials and meet with small, medium and large businesses individually and on an ongoing basis to focus Council's attention on creating programs and supporting staff in our mutual goal of building a livable city.

5. 2008-09 and 2009-10 fiscal years will be financially tough for the City. What will be your top funding priorities and what would you like to see reduced to balance the budget?

In order to achieve the level of fiscal austerity required by this economy, it is necessary to have both priorities and methods to guide the reductions.

Asheville's first funding priority should be to protect direct city services such as police, fire and sanitation services. In light of the current economic climate, the City may be tempted to reduce the number of hours or availability of these services, but this reduction will occur at exactly the time that citizens need them the most. In addition, many city services provide a valuable level of interaction between citizens that help reinforce the City's role in creating better quality of life.

The second priority should be to protect planning and economic development services, which will provide the basis for economic recovery. Maintaining these activities will allow us to move forward and plan for the future through collaboration with the community.

In order to achieve the necessary reductions to balance the budget, I would support managing by objective. City Council should ask each department for recommendations on how they would achieve 1%, 2% and 5% budget reductions. These recommendations should be expressed in terms of what services would be diminished given the budget reductions, not simply in terms of a percentage reduction in overall budget. City Council can use the specific recommendations provided by staff to choose between the various outcomes and select those that are appropriate in the current economic climate.

ABIGAIL HARRISON EMISON

275 Montford Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801
828-505-2319
aemison@gmail.com

EMPLOYMENT & EXPERIENCE

BUILDERadius, Inc., Asheville, NC, Summer 2007-Present

Director of Business Development. Create and manage strategic partnerships. Develop marketing strategy and materials. Provide internal planning consulting to the software development team. Led development and release of new web-based software product.

Regional Growth Partnership, New Haven, CT, Summer 2006-Summer 2007

Director of Municipal Services. Administered state and federal brownfield assessment and revolving loan fund grants. Managed brownfield real estate transactions within the South Central Connecticut region. Coordinated regional marketing initiatives. Created and managed strategic economic development and reuse plans for municipalities.

Community Development Department, Economic Development Division, City of Cambridge, Cambridge, MA, Summer 2005

Intern. Analyzed retail survey of the City of Cambridge and prepared detailed report. Created marketing plan and outreach materials for the City. Developed economic development newsletter for distribution to Cambridge businesses.

Analysis Group, Inc., Boston, MA, Summer 2002-Summer 2004

Analyst. Constructed econometric models for legal clients. Designed and implemented data collection in the consumer products industry for mergers, acquisitions and litigation.

Office of Brownfield Cleanup and Redevelopment, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC, Summer 2001

Intern. Investigated the effects of brownfield pilot grants on future redevelopment. Assessed EPA's innovative approaches to Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) brownfield projects.

Office of Economic and Employment Development, City of Durham, Durham, NC, Summer 2000

Intern. Researched and prepared grant proposals exceeding \$2 million for the redevelopment of the American Tobacco Campus brownfield industrial area in downtown Durham.

MAJOR PROJECTS & PRESENTATIONS

"Smart Growth and Planning for Your Community," presentation at the 2008 BluePrince® Conference, Asheville, NC, March 2008.

"Former Hamden Middle School Reuse Project," commissioned study and report for the Town of Hamden, CT, July 2007.

"North Branford Route 80 Corridor Study," commissioned study and report for the Town of North Branford, CT, January 2007.

"Local Political Impacts of Brownfield Redevelopment," paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association Conference, Atlanta, GA, January 2006.

"Two Squares, One Place," commissioned study and report for Hyde/Jackson Square Main Street, Boston, MA, May 2005.

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

Master of City Planning, Environmental Policy Group.

Research Assistant to Judith Layzer, Associate Professor of Environmental Policy.

American Institute of Certified Planners 2007 Student Project Award – Application of the Planning Process.

Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA

Bachelor of Arts (*Magna Cum Laude*) in Economics (Honors) and Political Science.

SOFTWARE SKILLS

MS Office (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint), ESRI Tools (ArcGIS), Adobe Design Suite (InDesign, Photoshop), Google SketchUp, and several statistical software packages (SAS, Stata, SPSS).

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & CIVIC SERVICE

American Planning Association, *Member*

Urban Land Institute, *Member*

Asheville Design Center, *Secretary*