

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): City Council

Your name: Kathryn Liss Home Phone #: 828-505-1231

Street address: 11 Von Ruck Ct. City: Asheville Zip Code: 28801

e-mail kliss@igc.org

Mailing address (if different): _____

Employer: retired

Your position: _____ Cell Phone #: 443-904-3002

Resident of City Asheville County Buncombe Race w * Sex F * Age 62 *

Are you a United States Citizen (circle one) Yes

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

How did you become aware of the opening? _____ Webpage _____ Current Volunteer _____ eNews
_____ Government Channel X 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

I am a mediator and educator. I bring skills in facilitation and in bringing groups together which have previously been in opposition. I have worked with Building Bridges nearly from its inception and have built strong connections with those who are interested in bringing in the underrepresented groups in our community. I have worked in the schools and know many people who are involved in education. I have trained many people both in and outside of government in mediation and facilitation.

Return to: Signature: Kathryn A Liss Date: 11/21/08
Maggie Burleson, City Clerk
Post Office Box 7148
Asheville, N.C. 28802-7148
E-Mail: mburleson@ashevillenc.gov
Telephone: 259-5601
Fax #: 259-5499

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

KATHRYN LISS
11 Von Ruck Ct.
Asheville, NC 28801
828-505-1231
e-mail: kliss@igc.org

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE:

Educator, mediator and administrator. Extensive experience in high pressure, multitasking environments. Lived in Kenya and travelled extensively in Eastern and Western Europe and the Caribbean. Masters in International Administration.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2002-2007 National Coordinator, Help Increase the Peace Program, AFSC
Network among HIPP coordinators and facilitators throughout the U.S.; revised and published the 300 page conflict management training manual; organized the annual national gathering; trained new facilitators; recruited and supervised intern and volunteer coordinators; wrote successful grants; wrote biannual newsletter; managed the database and budget; connected with other similar programs. Designed and initiated a new model of presentation to prepare facilitators. Created and supported academic evaluation of the revised program. Led trainings in Japan and Hong Kong.
- 1994-2002 Trainer and mediator, The Mediation Center, Asheville, NC
Lead trainer for mediation, facilitation and conflict resolution trainings sponsored by the Center. Trained City of Asheville employees to manage conflicted situations. Trained volunteer community mediators.
Designed and implemented an on-going annual community-wide civic dialogue process (Vision Dialogues) for handling public issues. Facilitated public and small group meetings discussing controversial issues. Organized annual Dialogues on Racism for MLK days.
With colleagues, trained staff from county and city schools, set up peer mediation programs, designed a progressive curriculum for teaching conflict resolution grades 6-12. Wrote and published two 200 page teachers' manuals. Trained teachers in 3 other states in this material as well as locally.
- 1996 Trainer in Conflict Resolution, Tbilisi, Georgia
In two two week periods, led workshops in Conflict Resolution for various groups.
- 1992-1993 Trainer and mediator, Settlement Institute, Atlanta
Presented seminars and trainings in diversity awareness, conflict management and mediation for various audiences. Mediated in several courts and for the Justice Center of Atlanta, as well as assisting to set up a system of mediating employee disputes for the Georgia State Merit System.
- 1986-1992 Consultant in Citizen Diplomacy
Arranged youth and adult group exchanges with Tbilisi, Georgia. Created a business, Megobroba and Company, to develop relationships between Americans and Soviet Georgians.
- 1981-1986 Teacher and trainer in Intercultural Communication
Designed and taught 36 week curriculum in Global Issues, Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Communication for high school students at the Center for International Studies, North Fulton H.S., Atlanta. Also consulting on intercultural communication and career development for businesses and non-profits.
- 1977-1978 Director of Student Development, Oglethorpe Univ.
Advised, oriented foreign students, supervised student activities, managed the student center.
- 1975-1976 Faculty Advisor, Friends World College, Kenya
Advised and evaluated 25 American students doing independent study projects in Kenya.
- 1973-1974 Assistant Director, International Education, State U. College, Buffalo
Advised foreign students, coordinated study abroad programs.

EDUCATION

Masters in International Administration, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont 1976
B.A., University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 1967
Graduate courses in counseling and social psychology, GSU 1980-81
Certified as a mediator by Justice Center of Atlanta, 1984
Trained to lead NCBI prejudice reduction/conflict resolution workshops, 1991
Trained to lead Essential Peacemaking: Women and Men workshops, 1993
Trained in Divorce Mediation with Carl Schneider, 1992
Training in Special Education Mediation, Mediation Network of NC, 1999

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Since retiring and returning to Asheville in September 2007:

- ✓ Board member of Building Bridges, chairing the Outreach Committee and coordinating facilitators.
 - ✓ Led trainings in conflict resolution for Jubilee community youth and adults
 - ✓ Joined the Congregation Beth Ha-Tephila social justice committee
 - ✓ Co-secretary for the Mountain Area Interfaith Forum and moderated panels at the Reuters Center
 - ✓ Actively supporting the Pisgah View Community Garden
 - ✓ Assisted in formation of a chapter of the National Coalition Building Institute
 - ✓ Attended the National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation and the White Privilege Conference
- In Asheville from 1994-2002:
- ✓ Co-Chairperson of the Task Force on Community Consensus for the Asheville/Buncombe VISION Project
 - ✓ City Council appointed member of the Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council Board
 - ✓ Mediator/facilitator for an inter-ethnic conflict between African-Americans and new immigrants in a public housing development.
 - ✓ Small group facilitator, steering committee member, co-chairman and trainer of facilitators for Building Bridges (interracial dialogues) workshops
 - ✓ Board member of the Center for Diversity Education
 - ✓ Volunteer, Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration planning committee, developed a new element (dialogue)
 - ✓ Participated in Leadership Asheville class 17.

As president of the Atlanta-Tbilisi Sister City Committee, managed a program to bring 40 Georgian performers and dignitaries to Atlanta for 2 weeks in September 1991. Organized cultural events to raise money for youth groups to the USSR. Successfully wrote grant proposals for funding for three youth exchanges. Created and led first one in 1986.

PUBLICATIONS

Help Increase the Peace Program Training Manual. Revised the 200 page manual into a 300 page manual and published it in winter 2004-5.

TRIBE: A curriculum for teaching Conflict Resolution to Middle and High School Students. Written with Dee Edelman, et. al. and published by The Mediation Center of Asheville, N.C., 1994; high school version published by the Mediation Network of North Carolina in 1995

"Spreading Cultural Awareness with Intercultural Communication," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals; Reston, Va., September 1984, pp. 123-126

"A Course in Intercultural Communication in a Multicultural Classroom," The International Schools Journal; London, England, Autumn 1984, pp. 33-38

Booklet: Georgia on my mind: an introduction to the Republic of Georgia. (Self-published, 2000 copies sold and distributed.) 1989 (used as orientation materials for Friendship Force exchanges)

1. What motivates you to apply for this position?

It appears to me that the City has made an increased effort to involve citizen participation in decision making. I would like to help the Council be less caught in a tug of war between opposing positions. One of my main interests in government is to reduce the amount of energy spent with people trying to exercise influence over elected officials for their point of view and increasing citizen participation in framing the questions which will be answered by legislation. My experience indicates that there are usually more than two points of view through which any problem is experienced. I would like to take a role in City Council of helping citizens reframe the question we are seeking to address until it includes as many concerns as possible and appeals to as many people as possible. Rather than arguing in a dualistic yes/no arena, I would like to see us have a more inclusive conversation which allows people across the spectrum to feel welcome and involved. There are many techniques for doing this to which I have been exposed through my work in mediation and facilitation.

I am also concerned that most citizens are not aware of the many ways they can participate in government decision making. I would like to participate in government in a way that enables more community dialogue and less rhetoric. From this dialogue, proposals can be brought to city council that are already worked through. Then the Council can pass resolutions which already have support of the citizens. (I saw this happen in a decision that needed to be made about the disbursal of funds for affordable housing when I worked for The Mediation Center.) It pains me to see the amount of resources wasted on groups with common concerns (i.e. land use and development) but different points of view opposing one another when they could find common ground and work together toward solutions that work for everyone and make better use of time and energy. Knowing that City Council will take their recommendations makes it more appealing for people to participate.

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

I am a conservative in terms of fiscal policy and a liberal in terms of social policy. I believe strongly in meeting the needs of everyone in the society and I believe that we have to have a balanced budget. This is demonstrated by the way I handle my own money and time. I am not interested in give-aways and encourage people to contribute according to their ability and to do so in return for having their needs met. I appreciate the things we have in return for our tax contribution: streets, schools, water service, libraries, police force, etc. I know that business contributes to the tax base which makes these things possible. I also believe that every human being has a right to decent housing and medical care as well as food and education.

I believe that the financial health of the city is going to be a key issue in the coming years as our economy goes through a correction from the rash policies of the past 8 years. We need to be compassionate toward those who will be most severely affected by these changes while continuing to build our community in a rational way. We need to find ways that people can participate in developing our infrastructure and being compensated for their efforts as well as developing green businesses.

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?

Certainly, the development of downtown is a pressing issue for City Council. I see a sincere attempt on the part of the City to come up with a master plan that many people can buy into. I would like to see more effort to include those in the community who often feel excluded. I would like to see mediated conversations among those who perceive themselves to be in direct opposition to one another. I know people on both sides of the issue who still don't talk with each other. I see in the Citizen Survey that one of the four key issues is land use and planning. The city needs to have clear goals and policies and they will be best received if generated through public dialogue as you have been doing. Appropriate development can increase the tax base without destroying the qualities which attract people to Asheville as tourists and residents.

The next issue which I believe will require a mediation approach is the issue of shared costs of providing water to the residents of city and county. It is a shame that so much money has been spent fighting each other over this issue. I do not at this time know all the details of the situation, but surely there is a place where it would be less expensive for both governments to settle this question without using lawyers and trying to force the other to do what is wanted. I see in the budget that there is continuing costs associated with financing the debt for providing a water system adequate to the needs of the community. This needs mediation.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need to figure out how to respond to the economic changes which are taking place in the country and will affect us locally. Not only is this a fiscal issue, but it will involve social policy. We need to prioritize and we will also need to consider how to better build community as a way of meeting our needs, We need to figure out how to keep people employed in ways that build rather than detract from the social good. We need to be cautious not to create new physical buildings which cannot be occupied. We need to increase the tax base without overtaxing the infrastructure.

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?

The cause I wish to champion is the cause of community collaboration. As an active member of the committee of VISION responsible for the Dialogues, I believe that we accomplished a great deal by bringing city and county residents together to discuss important issues: transportation, health care, living wage, etc. I don't think any one of us has the "right" answer, but I think that together we can co-create answers which will suit most of us. I believe that time spent at the front end of a process crafting a proposal will lead to less time spent later in trying to implement it. When we waste our energy fighting each other we decrease the energy available later on for making it happen. One area I am particularly interested in is highlighted in the citizen survey as a key issue: the schools. Making the schools more welcoming is important in how the community is seen as welcoming.

Learning to collaborate is a way for people to become more self-reliant, less dependent on government and more dependent on each other.

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?

I think the question of balancing the budget is a tough question for an outsider who has not heard all the arguments pro and con. I see that the budget for 2008 -2009 has already been designed to reduce some of the costs of staffing by not replacing 10 FTEs in various departments as well as changes in the staffing of the fire department. These are details which can only be seen when doing a close analysis of the budget with conversation with department heads.

I saw in the presentation on Nov.18 that sales tax revenues will decrease and property taxes are not expected to increase. A \$3-5 million shortfall is going to require some serious belt tightening. City employees are best able to make recommendations as to where this can be done and the Council will have to set priorities and make decisions.

There may be ways of getting some tasks done using volunteers especially through the Reuters Center or other ways to bring in the skillful retirees in our community to pick up some of the tasks which are now done by paid city staff.