

Ashland City Council Business meeting Statement 09/03/19
Re: Ashland Canal piping Project

I feel the issue before council tonight represents shared values and shared concerns. I'm certain we are all feeling the fragility of our environment in the light of climate change which serves to heighten our sense of responsibility to be the best stewards of our land and water resources, and to find solutions to environmental problems that make sense. I believe that protecting natural resources for ourselves, and our children, is a value we all share, and we all agree a solution to the problems with the Ashland Canal must be enacted. We just differ in how to enact those solutions.

The city's Public Works staff has defined plans to meet our shared value of conserving our precious water from evaporation and seepage and reducing the amount of contaminants in the canal water. And I commend their work and motivation to protect our water supply. However, there are additional and also very important values that the community has repeatedly expressed. We have stated that we also value:

- having finite costs and finite risks to the environment and properties over, under and adjacent to the canal
- the historic nature of the open canal that has been here since 1929
- the enjoyment of the healthy trees and existing ecosystems along its banks
- safety in knowing that the canal water can be immediately accessed by the fire department
- safety in knowing our economic resources are being used wisely and in the most conservative manner possible
- the beauty of the canal as a unique open space with flowing water

Regrettably, the proposed solution (Alternative 1) recommended by staff does not reflect the community values I just stated. In fact, staff has categorically dismissed these values as NIMBYism. To me, that indicates a big problem. City staff and community members need to listen to one another and work together to create solutions that respect and protect our common values.

Many community members have provided documented testimony, hard science, research and studies describing a common sense alternate solution that will safely protect the water running through the Ashland Canal without burying it. A solution with finite costs to both the budget and the environment. I believe their work needs to be included as part of a common sense solution that the city's Public Works staff and community can support together.

Mr. Mayor and members of city council, I believe you should not dismiss community values as NIMBYism. As elected officials promising to represent us, I ask you to include them as you consider the proposal before you as flawed and incomplete and vote NO and I urge you direct staff to craft a proposal that reflects our community values while meeting our shared values of protecting our resources, conserving water and reducing contaminants in the water of the Ashland canal. City staff and community members need to work together.

Kacky Hoffman, Ashland