

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Property Acquisition of 2200 Ashland Street
Date: Tuesday, August 15, 2023 3:03:18 PM

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hello, my name is Sabena Vaughan, I am a resident of Ashland, OR and my address is [REDACTED].

I am writing to you today to request that there be a delay in the vote to acquire the property at 2200 Ashland Street tonight, and I am requesting that Council organizes a town-hall style forum, seeking input from our community, before there is a vote.

I was asked by a friend yesterday if I knew about this proposed land acquisition, and I had not heard about it. The shelter, which I am in favor of, being so close to where I live and my children attend school, will have a direct and daily impact on myself and my family. So I was confused, and not feeling great about not even being given the information sooner.

I expressed to Councilor Bloom that I didn't like that residents were not informed, and asked if there could be a delayed vote and that a town hall could be arranged so more people could give input. I don't think this is possible, but I asked because it's important to me that our City Council does some due diligence with our community and do some sort of a town hall to communicate, discuss issues, proposals, and possible solutions to any issues that will be a part of implementing such a shelter into an established community space with two schools within walking distance to the shelter. And, let me be very clear about this right now, I am not against a shelter. What I want to ensure for all residents of this town — housed and unhoused — is safety for all, AND adequate supports around a group of humans who need it most as they rebuild their lives.

The problem is, there isn't a plan already in place for appropriate supports for the shelter. It is only roughly outlined in, "Next Steps". The problem is not the shelter, it's the lack of planning surrounding supports. When I asked about who would be running the shelter and who would be providing support personnel, councilor Bloom told me that right now there are plans for the new residents of this community shelter to be self-governing, with perhaps (OHRA) to be monitoring the new shelter and property, but that the City doesn't have an agency contracted yet, and no agencies have stepped forward. I understand the urgency surrounding this, but it's irresponsible for the City to do all of this in the reverse, and especially without including surrounding community, businesses, and liaisons from at least both schools who will have students walking and riding regularly in the immediate area.

Also, the self-governance model for the shelter doesn't seem like such a wise idea. There needs to be a two-tiered approach here in that, not only are there shelter/beds provided, there should *also* most definitely be accessible support people, mentoring, financial supports, mental health supports... so, so many supports... happening right there at that particular space (and not just down the street at OHRA), and especially if there is to be camping on property there. I want people to not just be housed, but be very much supported in escaping the bonds of poverty, mental health issues, and addiction, if they are even afflicted with this. Not all unhoused people are addicts, as you well know. There should be skill building, and wrap around care ensured for this type of facility to work properly. There should also be very good communication with the neighborhoods surrounding, because that is just good practice, heads off conflict, and provides open pathways of communications and possibilities for collaboration, for all. So, yes, I'm disheartened to hear that none of that is happening, or even being planned for. Anyway, I just want to state again, as I go further into this, I am not against a shelter. This isn't a NIMBY issue, or even a complaint on my behalf. I am simply stating my concerns as a resident on this street, in this area, and town. I went on to outline these issues with Councilor Bloom yesterday, when I met with him in person:

- There is inadequate street lighting on middle Clay Street, and especially under the bridge, and along the bike path.
- There has been an increase of crime, bike theft, open drug dealing and doing (which we witness ALL the time in the parking lot of Clay Street Park), vandalism, mail theft, and tagging with spray paint under the bridge and on the bike path, and onto cars, mailboxes, and signage on this portion of our street.

•There are consistently humans sleeping in the Clay Street park and in particular in the ditch. There are no public bathrooms there, so there have been toileting activities in the park, and on our street. This isn't safe for anyone, including the children in the area, because The Siskiyou School sits right up against the park, and this section of Clay street serves as a major pathway for children to ride or walk to Bellview Elementary, and in the opposite direction to both AMS and AHS . To be clear, more policing isn't the solution.

•I have been saying this next piece for a loooong time, and with or without a shelter this issue is extremely problematic. Bi-Mart's accessibility of weapons and ammunition within walking distance of two schools is not only problematic, it's irresponsible to not have some sort of safety measures in place for this one issue alone. I understand that the City cannot compel a business to regulate what they sell, but perhaps city officials and community members could connect with Bi-Mart about this, and create policies that work in the name of safety for all people? I don't know... but it's still a concern, and one of the issues I discussed with Councilor Bloom.

•Fires. I am concerned about any fires being used at the shelter site. My street has an over abundance of blackberry bushes. This is partially on Union Pacific railroad property, but also along the bike path, and continuing up the TID drainage that runs down our street, and also on the edge of our street. We do not have any sidewalks on our street, so the bushes are right up to, and sometimes on to, individual properties and the street itself. Another quirky issue on our street is that we have flag lots. There are multiple houses on mostly each driveway up the street. On my driveway we have three homes on our drive way, but only one faces the street. There is only one way of egress for my family, and it is down the long driveway, past two other homes, and out onto middle Clay Street. If there were a fast moving, blackberry bush fire such as the Alameda Fire, my family and I would certainly perish. I requested from Councilor Bloom that some sort of connection be made with Union Pacific, and the county to ensure our safety, and/or get a plan for blackberry and dead tree removal. But also, what assurances and safety measures will be put in place with the camping shelter residents? Doesn't my family deserve to know? Where is the communication?

•What about the people who don't have a bed space at the shelter? Where will they go, or want to congregate? What about the people who can't qualify to be at the shelter because of mental illness, and/or not wanting to be living there? They may want to stay near by, but that isn't safe for them or for us. What is the plan for that? How are shelter residents screened for registered sex offenses, being so close to schools, and small communities in the area?

I told Councilor Bloom, if the City of Ashland doesn't consider all the "what-if's" before hand, they are going to end up with someone being hurt or worse. This goes both ways, housed and unhoused.

If we are going to provide shelter and housing for our unhoused residents, we MUST have open lines of communications, and proper supports for those folks who need it the most. Property acquisitions, and plans for shelters without adequate support systems for its intended residents isn't good, in my opinion. Neither is being out of communications about this with our whole community.

To conclude here, I'm grateful for the time I spent with Councilor Bloom, and his willingness to discuss issues, hear concerns, and I do believe that he has a good heart, and cares about doing the best for the people here in Ashland. I am hopeful that our Mayor and City Councilors will continue to improve on the communication with us all, and to build trust, as it is so badly needed all the way around.

I am interested in holding the City accountable for the safety and well-being for all of our residents, housed and unhoused. This needs to be a well-rounded and resourced plan. I hope we can get there. Will you please consider out of good faith postponing your vote to acquire, and to also do the due diligence of opening up a town-hall for our community to be able to have a venue to be heard.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this 11th Hour request.

Warmly,

Sabena Vaughan

