**CITY COUNCIL
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
RESPONSES 2016**

The Bend Neighborhood Coalition asked this year's candidates for City Council to address important issues affecting neighborhood livability. We thanked them for their time and thoughtful attention to the following questions, and said we would circulate their answers, as written, to our members and other interested citizens.

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1) **Name:** Bruce Abernethy

2) **Why did you decide to run for City Council? What are your priorities?**

I have a Masters in Public Policy, and while people can certainly argue whether I am any good at it, this is kind of what I have been trained to do and actually what I like to do! Although obviously related, policy is quite different from politics. While politics is about being focused on a goal/ outcome and doing whatever one can to make it happen, policy is about gathering a wide range of opinions and views, understanding the tradeoffs, and then crafting a policy that is fair and equitable. To a policy person, compromise is not a 4-letter word. As a policy person, I tend to see a lot more gray while others may see only black and white.

I really enjoyed being on Bend City Council from 2000-2008 and care very much about this community (I've called Bend home since 1993). Priorities would include the usual suspects – affordable housing, public safety, maintaining neighborhood livability, maximizing the benefits of our 4-year university and community college, creating a robust business environment, helping bridge the east-west divide, and of course sustaining our commitment to a clean environment. The issue (and this is almost always the issue with public agencies) is how you try to provide more services and programs than people are willing to pay for.

Another reason for running is I believe I can bring a more civil tone to the Council meetings and discussions.

3) **How do you differ from your opponent (if you have one)? If you were the second to file for the position, how did you decide to challenge the person you are opposing?**

N/A — I am running unopposed.

4) **Some city officials have said that livability is hard to define or that everyone has a different definition, making it difficult to do anything to improve livability. What role do you think the city should have in keeping Bend livable? Please list specific areas of city policy that you feel apply.**

While I agree that people can certainly have different criteria for what makes this city livable, here is how I approach the topic. Bend has received more than its fair share of accolades for having a high quality of life. And I certainly agree. One aha that I had while on City Council earlier was that there are actually two qualities of life in Bend, and they do not always overlap (and may be in direct conflict in some instances). There is the "environmental quality of life" – characterized by clean air and water, abundant parks and open space (including the feeling of space so this would include

minimal traffic congestion, etc.). There is also the "economic quality of life" which is characterized by affordable housing, good paying jobs, high quality schools, etc. I got on City Council really only aware of and caring about the environmental quality of life. I left City Council recognizing that was too narrow an approach. One is not better or more important than the other, and they each need to be addressed.

5) **With more density on the horizon, what changes in policies or code enforcement do you think would help protect the quality of life in Bend's residential neighborhoods?**

A lot of this is covered in questions 6 and 7. Areas that I would like to look at or explore include noise, a university district, parking districts, and planning for entertainment districts.

6) **Regarding the noise ordinance and special events, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following:**

a) Reducing decibel levels in the noise ordinance to more closely match other cities
   Agree strongly

b) Requiring a permit for outdoor music venues (including restaurants and pubs)
   Agree somewhat

c) Shifting responsibility for enforcing the noise ordinance from the police to a sound technician
   Agree strongly

d) Requiring that noise and event permits be spread out in terms of frequency and location
   Agree somewhat

e) Requiring that event permits have a community focus, rather than a private commercial focus
   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly agree

7) **Regarding these land use issues, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following:**

a) Establishing parking districts in areas where nearby uses (commercial, educational, etc.) create excessive demand by non-residents
   Agree somewhat

b) Creating neighborhood compatibility zones to buffer residential areas from the offsite impacts of adjoining commercial and mixed use areas (through a step-down in permitted uses)
   Agree somewhat

c) Establishing a university district to concentrate campus-related development in adjoining mixed use zones, while protecting the character of nearby residential neighborhoods
   Agree strongly

d) Terminating the ability to transfer non-conforming short term rental permits on sale
   Agree strongly

e) Planning for one or more entertainment districts where outdoor amplified music and late-night entertainment is concentrated and allowed to operate under more relaxed guidelines
   Agree somewhat

f) Directing staff to encourage property owners and developers to plan projects in line with the comprehensive plan and development code, and to reduce spot-rezoning and variance requests

Agree somewhat

g) Adopting an occupancy limit or high occupancy permit as a means of avoiding single family homes being used as rooming houses or stealth dorms or mini-dorms

Neutral

8) **City staff frequently bring the Council a single solution or preferred scenario or final draft for discussion and an up/down vote. Critics charge that this dilutes the Council's role as a policy-making body, and that staff should instead present alternatives, with an analysis of pros and cons. What is your view on whether the Council should insist on practices that strengthen its policy-making role?**

Agree. It is better to be brought options with tradeoffs explained.

9) **Momentum is building for a charter amendment to change the form of governance in Bend to one like other similarly-sized cities. As a leader in the City, what changes in the governance structure do you believe are needed as Bend continues to grow?**

As a matter of principle, I support a charter review, especially after such an extended period of time (plus there are a number of people in the community who are now calling for one). But, I am actually fairly neutral as to whether a change in governance model is needed. The three areas that I have seen the most discussion include:

Directly elected mayor – I am neutral to slightly opposed to this (but I would not actively campaign against if this was part of the package sent to voters). Some of the advantages of our current system is that generally the mayor will not be someone from either the far right or far left but will be someone more in the middle. If it was a directly elected position, we would open our community up to potentially big money races and the possibility that someone could be elected mayor and have had no experience even serving on City Council! Finally, under the current charter, the Mayor doesn't really have any more power/authority than other council members, so unless that was changed, I'm not sure I see the point or how it would be a significant improvement over what we have now.

Council seats by geographic regions – I could see some of the seats (for example, 4 seats) being determined by geographic wards, but would be opposed to having all seats that way because of the obvious problem that you may have a number of really good candidates and because they just happen to live in the same geographic ward only one would be able to serve. That would be a loss for the city. I could support a hybrid model that had some seats by geographic representation and others at-large.

Paying Councilors more – I can see both pros and cons. You certainly would get a larger pool of applicants and that's definitely positive. Paying Councilors more would obviously cost the City more and last I checked, budgets were pretty tight. Plus, paying more implies more expectations (and time commitment) on the part of Council members. There is no question that Council members are now spending more time in the position. I'm not sure we as a community have answered the broader question of how much time we actually want Council members to spend, given that we have a paid staff.