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February 22, 2013

Salem City Council  
City of Salem  
555 Liberty St SE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear City Councilor,

I understand Mayor Peterson is making a motion at your Monday city council meeting to remove me from the Downtown Advisory Board.

I felt it would be helpful to understand some background regarding this motion, so you can make an informed decision.

As a result of my in-depth study of the Parking District and Urban Renewal budgets, and subsequent questions and recommendations, several positive actions have occurred during my tenure on DAB.

In 2011, I found \$400,000 in the Downtown Parking Fund being spent on "security" in the downtown garages while no other city owned garage required ANY security. Councilor Bennett, and council, used some of those funds to retain 2 city police officer's jobs this fiscal year. This was a positive outcome.

In 2012, I identified several million dollars in the Downtown Urban Renewal budget being "carried forward" each year. These funds were budgeted for projects never completed. Councilor Bennett used these funds to move the Minto Footbridge project forward. This also is a positive outcome.

Both positive outcomes were a direct result of my involvement and comments as a DAB member.

During my last appointment to DDAB, I proposed the City's Toolbox Loan and Grant program - the most used program of Salem's Urban Renewal programs. The City received many awards for this program and has copied it in several of its other Urban Renewal Districts. At the time I proposed this program, staff were extremely hesitant to accept this new idea and I was treated much as I am being treated today - as a hindrance and an irritant. But my proposal proved to be the most successful program ever for downtown revitalization.

On June 14, 2011, in a private meeting at City Hall, Mayor Peterson threatened that "if I did not find a way to reach consensus and vote with the rest of the DAB board," she "would have me removed." I do not feel it is the duty of an advisory board appointee to "vote with the rest of the board" if they do not agree with the opinion of the board. Since her June 2011 threat, the Mayor has attended DAB meetings and sat directly behind me, which I find to be very unsettling and intimidating behavior from an elected official.

If my behavior is so egregious, why has the Mayor waited 14 months to make this motion? My first term ends in 10 months, I would like the courtesy to fulfill my term. I do not understand why one person, with a differing opinion, can be seen as such a threat. I am one person, with one vote, on a board whose only ability is to make a recommendation to City Council.

Most of the Mayor's complaints center around the fact that she feels I ask too many questions at DAB. The Operating Principles listed on the City's website for DAB members states one of the Board's responsibilities is to "review and provide comments on draft reports and recommend policy." How do citizens "review, provide comments and recommend policy" without asking questions?

Under the Operating Principles, the DAB is charged with:

- ◆ Policy issues related to the implementation, or amendments to, the Riverfront-Downtown Urban Renewal plan,
- ◆ Tax increment fund allocations - including the priority, scope and scale of urban renewal projects within the Riverfront-Downtown renewal area,
- ◆ Monitoring and potential courses of action relating to state and federal legislation and programs affecting implementation of renewal project priorities.

Citizens cannot fulfill those responsibilities without the freedom to ask in-depth questions from time to time.

Recently the new chair of DAB told me she plans to implement a policy requiring board members to seek board approval before staff expends time to "conduct research and provide answers". Although this policy has not been adopted by the board, I have refrained from asking further questions. Personally I believe this policy would be in conflict with the current "Purpose and Operating Principles" for DAB members to "communicate questions, issues and suggestions to staff" (Page 3 of Operating Principles).

The Downtown Urban Renewal District pays over \$500,000 annually for "Project Coordination and Support". I was not aware, or warned, my questions to staff were excessive, or were causing a financial hardship for the City. Everything I requested is public information.

If my behavior has been offensive to staff, I apologize. I become frustrated when staff do not answer my questions and I am forced to ask the question multiple times. I am fully committed to downtown and have over 20 years of experience serving on boards/commissions. These should be positive assets for the Board and staff.

I find it frustrating when important items come before DAB and we are not allotted adequate time to understand, discuss, and make meaningful recommendations to Council. I realize many other members of DAB do not choose to ask questions during, or after, our meetings in an effort to keep meetings short. I respect their choice to do so. I would appreciate their respect for my choice to fully understand an issue before I vote.

Advisory Boards provide a level of checks and balances in government. Thomas Jefferson said: "The majority, oppressing an individual, is guilty of a crime, abuses its strength, and by acting on the law of the strongest breaks up the foundations of society".

Removing an appointed citizen from an advisory board will send a message to other citizens serving, or considering serving, on city boards to not provide comments, recommend policy, or ask questions. I do not believe this is a positive, or collaborative, message to send the community. I do believe this is a personal issue for which the Mayor has "fanned the flames" to remove someone for which she has a personal dislike. If you believe I am not contributing to the advancement of the downtown, I will respect your vote to remove me.

Respectfully,

