City of Asheville
City Council Vacancy Application Form

Your name: Nina Tovish Home Phone #: 828-407-0898

Street Address: 701 Brookshire St. City: Asheville Zip Code: 28803

Mailing Address (if different): _____

Employer: Self

Position: Real Estate Broker / Writer Office Phone # _____

Resident of City of Asheville (required): ● Yes ☐ No

Registered Voter in the City of Asheville (required): ● Yes ☐ No

Race: White Sex: Female Age: 62

Residence location (check one) Central ____ North ____ South ● East ____ West ____

Additional Information Required:

1. Resume
2. ½ page response to the essay questions below: (not attached)



Applicant Signature
Date: 08/20/2020

All applications and attachments must be
Returned by **Noon, Thursday, August 20**, 2020 to:

Maggie Burleson, City Clerk
PO Box 7148
Asheville, NC 28802
Email: mburleson@ashevillenc.gov
Phone: 828-259-5601

tovish.

Nina Tovish
701 Brookshire St.
Asheville, NC 28803
tel: 828-407-0898
nina@tovish.com

skills.

COMMUNICATION

Writing copy & editing
(articles, press releases, reports)
Social media
(facebook, twitter, instagram, blogs)

ART & DESIGN

Photography
Graphic design
Web design
User interface design

TECHNOLOGY

Office suite software
Photo editing software
(Photoshop, Lightroom)
Presentation software
(Keynote, Powerpoint)
Database design & maintenance
Publishing & web software
(InDesign, WordPress)

ORGANIZATIONAL

Project management
Scheduling
Team coordination
Strategic planning

INTERPERSONAL

Active listening
Patience & compassion
Collaborative problem-solving

LANGUAGES

French (excellent but rusty)
Spanish (mediocre and quite rusty)

history.

REAL ESTATE BROKER
2013-present

I conduct my real estate activities with the aim of ensuring that my clients feel confident that they have made great choices throughout. I listen to their needs and dreams and offer my expertise and responsive, personalized service to realize their goals. I believe in adhering to the highest ethical standards while advocating zealously for my buyers and sellers. Originally, I was affiliated with Preferred Properties of Asheville; now I have my own business: At Home in Asheville.

LUCID DESIGN
1997-2013, Washington, DC

As owner of Lucid Design, I offered interactive software design for the web, personal computers, and standalone kiosks. Clients included Booz-Allen & Hamilton, Cable in the Classroom, St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Folger Shakespeare Library, the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, InterMedia Survey Institute, the National Security Education Program (Department of Defense), and Ovation TV/PBS Online. I also provided communications support and print design for non-profits such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

Under the name Quellebelle I offered luxurious artisan silk scarves. I designed them, then had the fabric digitally custom-printed. I also created Frame This Magazine—an inexpensive way for people to decorate their homes with great photographs.

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM (formerly: National Museum of American Art)
1993-1997, Washington, DC

As New Media Producer, I managed the development of a broad range of projects aimed at making the museum's resources accessible and meaningful to the public, and developed museum standards and procedures for digital media acquisition and presentation. Among other projects, I designed exhibit websites, was the Senior Producer for NMAA's award-winning software app, and brought a demonstration printmaking studio—the Digital Atelier—to the museum, earning a Computerworld Smithsonian Laureate award for innovation.

PREVIOUS

In the earliest years of my professional life, I worked as an editor and writer for the consulting firm Arthur D. Little in Cambridge, MA. Later, I was a freelance business communications consultant for clients including Greenpeace International. I subsequently completed a certificate program in photography and became a freelance photographer specializing in environmental portraiture, fine art, and event documentation.

personal.

THE WELL-CRAFTED GIFT
Craft show for local artists

THE CONVERSATIONAL MUSE
Coaching service

PAX PARINDA
Fine art & apparel for the whole soul

education.

M.F.A. IN VISUAL STUDIES, SUNY BROCKPORT, 1993
While earning my degree, I taught photography and artists book-making, and curated a major exhibit of artists books. I also wrote art reviews for the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. My thesis exhibit included sculptural books and interactive software.

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY, 1981
Henry Fellowship in Philosophy, Clare College

B.A. IN LITERATURE, YALE UNIVERSITY, 1980
Summa cum laude. Awarded Best Senior Thesis in Literature Major.
Elected Phi Beta Kappa ('79).

The following questions may be answered directly on this form, or responses uploaded as attachments upon form submission.

1. With the death of George Floyd the country was thrust into a new civil rights movement. Policing in America was scrutinized even more and even here locally reparations were passed. Please explain if you believe that systemic racism and oppression exist, if yes do you or do you not support reparations and what it all means in the context of equity and Inclusion.

I affirm that systemic racism absolutely exists in our society, regardless of whether or not any particular individual "believes" it does. The evidence is clear in our housing patterns, justice system, health and educational outcomes, and our economy in general. The structural faults that lead to discrimination and injustice are baked in, and those who benefit from their perpetuation—whether knowingly and intentionally or not—have done nowhere near enough to reverse them. I do not exclude myself from that assessment; I strive to continually learn to do better.
When an entire group of people has had their wealth, their labor, their opportunities and even their lives stolen from them for hundreds of years through force of law and cultural supremacy, the only just and equitable remedy is reparations. I don't pretend to have ready answers about the form those reparations should take, how they should be administered, and over what time frame they can be realized. I do, however, insist that—going forward—decisions before City government must be evaluated through a lens of equity and inclusion, with a goal of restoring and sustaining the health, wealth, and power of Asheville's Black community. Use of the City's property holdings and tax revenues to redress the generational damage that City government has done to its African American citizens is an appropriate way to make reparations. I look forward to a swift, robust, and searching accounting of harms done, followed promptly by a substantive plan crafted in close collaboration with Black residents to realize the goals outlined in the Reparations Resolution passed by City Council on July 14th of this year.
The Asheville Office of Equity and Inclusion should be consulted for its input on the impact of every budgetary and policy matter that comes before the City Council. The Commission described in the Reparations Resolution must be constituted and empowered speedily, and its recommendations should be brought to Council and addressed without delay. City government must conduct every step of this process in the most transparent, inclusive, and accountable manner possible. Citizens deserve to understand how government is making decisions to build a stronger, fairer, and more equitable community.

2. Do you support Black Asheville Demands call for defunding the APD by 50%? If no, please explain why and if yes, what sort of timeline do you envision to reach that goal?

Policing in Asheville needs a thorough overhaul.
Currently, the police bring the option of deadly force and often an antagonistic, escalating presence to situations and circumstances that would be much better served by other kinds of intervention. Citizens end up mired in the criminal justice system when what would truly address the problems at hand are (for example) housing, drug addiction treatment, or mental health services. We are asking police offers to intervene in situations for which they are not properly trained and that many may be temperamentally unsuited to manage. The tools at their disposal are force and the threat of incarceration. The primary model is control—not persuasion, support, and problem-solving.
The number of citizen interactions that call for an armed response is a very small proportion of current policing activity. We can redirect resources away from the maintenance of a large number of armed and patrolling law enforcement officers, and toward the creation of alternative community support services and personnel. It may be that some current police officers would welcome the opportunity to acquire education and training that would allow them to transfer into such roles. (I certainly hope there are many who would welcome the opportunity to serve and protect in ways that don't rely on the use of force.)
If I could wave a magic wand to get us from the current policing model to a much leaner police force that only brings force into play when every other option has been exhausted, I certainly would. Even a significantly reduced law enforcement cadre will, however, require extensive training in de-escalation, conflict resolution, and emotional self-governance. Ramping up the much-needed alternative social support services and hiring new personnel (or retraining LEOs) will take time and money. Current Asheville Police Department employees should, over some reasonable period of transition time, be offered the opportunity to participate in a social services capacity if they have the desire, aptitude, and willingness to learn new skills; those who don't find a place in the smaller police force or the new social services positions should be provided severance and job search assistance.
An immediate 50% reduction in budget for the APD would result in the abrupt unemployment of a large number of personnel, and won't on its own resolve any of the community's justifiable concerns about over-policing, racial disparities in policing, and the inappropriate use of force. Instead, I want to see City government move with all possible speed toward reallocating half the policing budget to alternative social services and personnel. I want to see a thorough review of current police policies and training practices, in collaboration with Black Asheville and the whole community, to identify what role

3. Explain why you want to serve on City Council.

Compared to many of the applicants you are considering, I'm a relative newcomer to Asheville. I moved to this city on November 1, 2012, drawn by Asheville's vibrant cultural scene, beautiful environment, relatively progressive politics, and its amazingly hospitable people. After nearly eight years, my original naive enthusiasm has tempered to a deep-seated, enduring love for this city and its tremendously community-minded citizens.

My real estate brokerage does business as "At Home in Asheville" and that name embodies what matters to me and why I would be honored to serve on City Council. I want to represent the people for whom Asheville is home—the people who need jobs that pay enough to keep living here, who need a government that transparently and accountably works for and answers to them, who want their children to get a great education, who are counting on a thriving economy that serves them as well or better than it does those who are just visiting.

I have a long work history in various roles in the arts: as a manager of new media initiatives at one of the Smithsonian museums, as an independent designer helping craft messages for a broad range of clients, and as an artist and entrepreneur for myself and others. Asheville is home to so many creative people—they too deserve someone on Council who recognizes their vital contributions to this community and advocates on their behalf.

My work here in real estate has given me insight into the struggles people face in finding affordable housing. My recent experience as a gig writer and a part-time bookseller has enhanced my understanding of the hardship so many experience in an economy that undervalues their contributions. On Council, it will be my responsibility to listen to and speak up for the folks who make Asheville our unique and wonderful home.

4. If selected, how do you plan to communicate and work with the other Council members? To help us understand, please give examples of your working collaboratively in the past.

I believe that just about everything worth doing with others is a form of communication, and that includes politics and government. For me, listening with a wide-open mind, engaging in constructive conversation, deliberating candidly, and telling the truth clearly and directly are fundamental values.

Effective communication is also the foundation of all education and learning. As a new Councilmember, I'll have so much to learn—and I look forward to the opportunity to learn from everyone, from fellow Councilmembers to city staff, not-for-profit organizations and business groups, law enforcement and firefighters, planners, engineers and maintenance staff.

Every phase of my professional life has been shaped by the need to communicate and collaborate to achieve shared goals. Whether carefully interviewing business clients to understand their goals and craft a persuasive message for their audience, or helping real estate clients to uncover their most essential wishes for a new home and negotiate the right deal, finding common ground and mutual understanding has been the basis for a lifetime of productive collaborations. Shepherding a complex interactive software app through design and engineering to delivery requires elaborate teamwork and coordination, as well as accurate and carefully documented communication.

Responsive collaboration includes showing up reliably for person-to-person and group conversations, as well as responding in a clear and timely manner to written communication, whether in print, via email, or text message.

Collegiality and mutual respect in the workplace—whether as businesspeople or as public servants—make even the most difficult challenges more manageable (and I expect City Council to face some really thorny choices in the next few years).

5. What do you consider the most pressing problem, need, or cause for the citizens of Asheville today? How would you approach its resolution or champion the cause?

Our nation as a whole has gone through a rough experience in the last several years and the challenges aren't going away any time soon. People's confidence in government and belief that their elected representatives truly have the citizens' best interests at heart has greatly declined, and for good reason. That's why the transparency, accessibility, and accountability of local City government is so important. That's why respecting people's choices as expressed through elections is critical in a democracy.

The one concern facing Asheville that encompasses all the others is that of Good Governance: responsive, equitable, inclusive, transparent and accountable, sustaining and sustainable. The citizens of Asheville need to see government working for us, making policy and supporting programs that respect our wishes and meets our needs. Because Asheville is our home, we need a City government that puts us first: spending resources on our priorities and committing to policies and programs that build a just, secure, creative, and joyful community.

Good governance requires careful, collaborative, and inclusive processes to craft solutions that genuinely serve the greater good. Where competing interests must be reconciled and balanced, openness and transparency in the process make it possible for citizens to trust in the integrity of the outcome—and to hold their representatives accountable for their decisions.

Good governance takes the long view, planning and preparing for a future far beyond the next election cycle. The citizens of Asheville know that our infrastructure requires generational repair, that our environment requires protection and restoration, that our development must be managed with sustainability and equity in mind, and that racial justice cannot be achieved without responsive and accountable governance. Our city deserves government that acknowledges the economic realities of the most vulnerable and is committed to growing the resilient community we all need to prosper and thrive.

As a City Council member I will hold regularly scheduled public "office hours" at least fifteen hours a week (either in person out in the community, when that's possible, or virtually) to give people an opportunity to air their concerns, ask questions, challenge my views, and help me learn how to better represent them. I'll continually communicate my thinking on the issues before Council so that citizens know what to expect from me. I'll work to make information about governmental policies and practices, communications, and data readily accessible to the public in easily usable formats. And I'll ensure that citizens of Asheville are frequently and fully informed of the status of actions promised and investigations undertaken by Council.

Esteemed Councilmembers, you've no doubt seen the Op-Ed published August 9, 2020, in the Asheville Citizen-Times and co-signed by me and fellow applicant Andrew Fletcher. I hereby reaffirm the pledge I made in that article: "If appointed, I will serve honorably as caretaker of the duties of a Councilmember until the November election, and then step down in favor of the election's fourth-place finisher to be appointed by City Council."

I take this "Our City, Our Choice" pledge knowing full well that it likely reduces any chance of appointment to the Council's vacant seat. It is emblematic of my commitment to the principles of democracy and accountable, transparent, responsive, and representative government. I strongly believe that good governance demands this action on the part of anyone appointed by City Council, and that Councilmembers owe it to the citizens of Asheville to respect the will of the people as expressed in a free and fair election.