City of Asheville
City Council Vacancy Application Form

Your name: Dema Badr Home Phone #: 8282806627

Street Address: 1312 Heathbrook Circle City: Asheville Zip Code: 28803

Mailing Address (if different): _____

Employer: Scout Boutique- Self Employed

Position: Owner Office Phone # 828-505-1984

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

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

Race: Caucasian Sex: Female Age: 37

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)

eSigned via SeamlessDocs.com
Dema Hashim Badr
Key: 0959955faaf58d01d33d35162fadd62a4c

Applicant Signature
Date: 08/17/2020

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

Dema H. Badr

Email: demabadr@gmail.com

Phone (828) 280-6627

1312 Heathbrook Circle
Asheville, NC 28803

Hands-on and communicative Business Developer with track record of success in B2B sales, retail, line building/editing, costing, pre-production, time/action development calendar implementation, material/vendor sourcing, factory liaison, wholesale, private label/licensing agreements, and team building

Education

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Bachelor of Arts, PR/Mass Communications, 2005

Professional Experience

Owner, Buyer
Scout Boutique **Asheville, NC** **(04/15-Present)**

- Created concept and business plan for an independently owned women's clothing and accessories boutique
- Plan, budget and merchandise seasonal clothing and accessories assortments
- Research new trends and brands suitable for the Asheville market
- Manage 3 time employees and social media interns
- Organize sales, events, and trunk shows featuring local or emerging designers

Product Developer, Consultant
Nicaland Group **Asheville, NC/ New York, NY** **(06/14-01/16)**

- Worked with independent product development agency specializing in women's handbags/fashion accessories
  Projects include women's leather handbags, business/tablet cases, costume jewelry and home goods
  Clients include Alice and Olivia, House of Harlow, Fabrique, and Katie Kime
- Sourced/Developed leathers, fabrics, hardware, and embellishments for clients' designs
- Developed first samples and prototypes with overseas factories
- Tracked and submitted client-changes to prototypes to factories before sales/photography samples are made
- Booked material yardage, custom hardware and notions for bulk production
- Monitoed cost changes in materials and labor, production calendar, packaging and quality issues
- Outsourced technical and graphic design work when clients do not have full in-house staff
- Edited/Managed 2 seasonal collections of PU and Leather handbags available for private label, and distributed to chain retailers in Europe and

Sr. Product Developer/Account Manager
Y. Jessi Shoes and Accessories, H.K. Ltd **Guangzhou, China** **(06/11-06/14)**

Notable Accomplishments:

- Hired to conceptualize and launch new handbag and costume jewelry categories
- Transformed 65% of company's existing"shoe customers" into cross-category customers and built 3M wholesale accessories sales after 4 seasons
- Helped launch Jessi DTR in 2013- a new Direct to Retail business that offers Men's, Women's and Children's branded footwear and accessories; learning brand licensing and distribution policies- clients included Fashion Television Network, Kardashian Accessories, and Hello Kitty+Harajuku

- **Production:**
  - Oversaw design and development for multiple private label and licensed brand accessories
  - Managed timeline calendar: material sourcing, costing, samples, design/quality evaluation
  - Ensured goods will comply with international customs standards and clients' metrics
- **Sales:**
  - Managed handbag/jewelry sales to 50+ international accounts, generating 3M+ in sales
  - Edited private label assortments by material/price point for key clients in different countries
  - Communicated with buyers/licensees, utilizing merchandising info to drive sales growth
  - Liaised with international showrooms/brands managers to plan showroom placement
  - Followed sales orders to ascertain deliveries were properly prepared for port by team
  - Attended industry trade shows, including Riva del Garda, GDS, and Canton Fair
  - Managed sales team and merchandisers and collaborate with design and technical teams

Assistant Merchandise Manager

Coach International- Asia Pacific New York, NY (07/10- 05/11)

- Supported line planning/ development process with understanding of business unit needs of the Asian consumer market, including China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand
- Prepared weekly/monthly/ seasonal reports including weekly/monthly sales, and margin trend recaps
- Presented information/ conclusions drawn in weekly business review meetings to Manager and team
- Partnered with Retail/ Design to develop seasonal line plans exceeding financial goals/ investor expectations
- Communicated with external licensee throughout conceptual process to understand assortment desires
- Liaison to all facets of Asian sector business from Planning, Production, Product Development
- Organized and edited presentation prep for visual merchandising planning
- Attended product edit meetings with Senior Design and Merchandising teams
- Provided support at Line Presentations and participated in all International Buying meetings
- Managed offline order process to ensure goods were delivered to quality standards, on time
- Reported conclusions on style performance to identify similar trends and impact future assortments

Senior Assistant Buyer, E-Commerce/Catalog
Anthropologie/Urban Outfitters Inc Philadelphia, PA (10/08-04/10)

- Reported directly to DMM of E-Commerce/Catalog Apparel and Accessories, providing support in areas of buying, merchandising and e-commerce promotional strategy, including development of "web exclusive apparel", as well as the assortment of print catalog with distribution of 18 million subscribers.
- Helped maintain and grow sales and profit margin for a $90 million e-commerce apparel business.
- Planned web promos of catalog-features, contributing to the FY09 16% comp increase results for e-commerce
- Responsible for buying, assorting and developing all soft-woven categories for monthly catalog
- Managed approximately $4 million of monthly receipts by constant inventory tracking and partnership with both outside vendors and company's distribution center
- Negotiated price, delivery, and exclusivity to support business objectives and meet target IMU
- Increased company-wide sales in soft-wovens by implementing "web exclusive testing", finding new contemporary designers, and product development collaborations
- Presented email ideas to art director/visual ops teams to ensure syncopated messaging across all POS venues
- Collaborated with contemporary designers to create private/branded labels for new/exclusive product launches
- Reviewed channel and point-of-purchase reports for feedback on alignment of sales and marketing
- Utilized early selling info of "e-commerce runner styles" against retail to replenish under-stocked merchandise, preventing lost sales and backorders

Boutique Owner
Zakya Boutique Asheville, NC (06/06-07/08)

- Created concept for contemporary clothing and accessories boutique, sourcing unique brands from local and international markets
- Voted "Best New Business" by Asheville Downtown Association in 2007
- Selected as Asheville Citizen Times "Style Expert" for locally published fashion editorials
- Collaborated with local, up-and-coming designers for trunk shows and events
- Responsible for all merchandising and displays, window dressing, and selection of seasonal packaging
- Ensured store website/blog were in sync with in-store marketing and displays
- Followed weekly/monthly sales goals and performance reports

Related Skills

- **Business:** Possess excellent organizational, analytical, verbal/written communication skills- work well independently and on teams, local and international sourcing skills
- **Creative**: Product development, pre-production product reviews (fit, etc) merchandising, trend forecasting, marketing materials/presentations. Understand fabrics, material content, washing techniques, dying
- **Languages:** Fluent: English, Arabic Proficient: Spanish

Community

- **Boys and Girls Club of Buncombe County- Board Member 2018, 2019**
- **WNC Community Foundation- Volunteer- Current**
- **United Way of Buncombe County- Volunteer- Current**

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.**

Although I do not believe that Policing in America created systemic racism and oppression, I do believe that police brutality and harm are results of a system that has yet to absolve racism and structural oppression in our country. Reparations to the Black Community are necessary in order for Black citizens in Asheville to thrive and exit the cycle of poverty and dependency on inadequate public housing, and those reparations will need to be deeply rooted in reforming our education system in both Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools.

As a city, we will never reach our highest economic or public safety potential if we do not confront the mistakes of urban renewal in the 60's and 70's, and provide well-guided programming that will promote diversity in education and business. I also feel as though we need to have a clear understanding of where this funding will be coming from. The conversations around de-funding the police and paying reparations seem to be tied together at the moment, when the truth is that even if you de-funded the entire police department, it would not free up enough funding to generate programming that would resolve healthcare, mental health, education, and housing disparities. Many of these discrepancies are happening at a state level, but we have to focus on repairing the flaws of our education system on the city and county levels first. Our failures within our education system are a mirror of systemic racism in Asheville, as a whole.

While the City Manager is tasked with establishing processes to develop short, medium, and long-term solutions to address the creation of generational wealth and opportunity in the Black Community, I feel that the foundation to each solution will be investing in education, and maintaining a measure of accountability for each level of success.

I don't really know what short-term would look like, but for medium, I would like to see Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools work to consolidate systems, students and resources. It is a move that is long overdue, and can effectively save the futures of our students, our education system, and our workforce. Local and state taxpayers' supplemental contribution to the Asheville City Schools' budget and Federal grants could then be applied to Head Start programming and affordable housing for teachers. This would be a HUGE conversation to have supporting our education system driving social equity in a real way. The conversation would engage parents, teachers, both school boards, our commissioners, small business owners...

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?**

I do not support Black Asheville Demands for immediately defunding the police by 50%, although I DO believe that we can begin to divest some funding from the APD to invest in other programming, if we can identify areas that will reduce the scope of responsibilities that officers currently have. It appears that most of the APD budget is spent on personnel, insurance, and vehicles, which makes reducing the budget by 50% impossible without firing nearly 100 officers and staff.

There is a possibility that Asheville does not follow the national trends of major metropolitan areas, that identify cities as being over-policed and overstaffed, and that police reform and more accountability from our leadership is what is needed to make the most significant improvements right away. There is also a possibility, that by asking the right questions, we find that we need to maintain our police budget, but decrease the number of staff. Paying fewer officers higher salaries may lead to a higher quality of training and greater levels of accountability.

If we are insistent on pursuing divestment, the percentage of divesting, at the soonest budget cut will need to be based on the mathematics of effective public safety for a city our size, with a seasonally fluctuating population, and a rapid rate of annual population growth.

As a citizen of Asheville, residing in a safe area in South Asheville, I do not know the recommended ratio or national average of officers "needed" per 90,000 residents, and have hardly felt the pressure to know. I feel that the case may be very different for the city's most vulnerable citizens, living in the highest crime zones, who may suffer the most if we do not have adequate amounts of officers and staff, to achieve the highest level of emergency service.

I believe the City Manager's Community Engagement meetings leading up to the September budget amendment will be a pivotal time period for reaching out to these specific areas, and gaining a clearer understanding of what their needs are, before we can assign a viable amount from the APD to be reinvested elsewhere. The results must be truly data driven. We cannot speculate on the collective needs and desires of our public housing communities.

Furthermore, if we prematurely de-fund the police and create more stress on our public housing communities, the success

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

I would like to serve on City Council so that I can be a voice for small businesses and downtown Asheville as our most prominent business district. I would also like to help ensure support or restructure support for our social services in a way that allows small businesses to survive, our locals to prosper educationally, and live comfortably, while attracting new resources of development for a more sustainable economy.

I am a first-generation Arab American, native to Asheville, and I view Asheville through the lens of a second-generation small business owner here. My childhood home was in Haw Creek, but I feel as though I grew up downtown, where my parents opened and began to build their independent pharmacy in 1982. I earned every "Summer Reading All Star" sticker available from the Pack Library, watched as the gangs of pigeons decreased, and the number of mom-and-pops businesses increased.

Downtown became a vibrant community! And then people actually started LIVING downtown, and buying condos, and art, and way better food than you could get your mouth around in cities that were three times our size! And then the tourists came, and the hotels followed. And the tourists bought homes and became locals. And commercial rents became more expensive, and mom-and-pops could only hold on if the tourists kept coming, continuously, all year long.

Covid-19 has been very eye opening. Although I gripe about issues that plague small business in Asheville, an abrupt halt to tourism sheds light on the fact that tourism alone is not sustaining industry for our city. The cost of living and the cost of doing business is too high for small business owners and our large percentage of hospitality-driven workforce. As we continue to develop and grow our city and our economy, I would like to see different types of companies and investments made in our city; diversifying our economic portfolio and job security. We also need to do whatever we can to improve education in our city. The students at our school are the future of the Asheville workforce and entrepreneurship.

Our central business district has also become a frequent scene of loitering, panhandling, and illegal drug use; creating undesirable public safety and sanitation issues. Locals that once "drove into town" to spend the afternoon shopping with our retailers and dining with friends no longer wish to frequent downtown because of these issues. We cannot afford to lose local support for small businesses, and we must maintain a level of sophistication in our appeals to tourism, by keeping hotel quality and competition high, lest we become some sort of crazy "spring break" town. While I recognize that there is a mental health crisis, homelessness issues, and a drug epidemic behind this scene, these issues have to be

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 plan on investing genuine one-on-one time learning about each of the other Councilors, and understanding why they serve, how their Asheville lenses may be different than mine, and respecting and valuing differing opinions. I already have a great deal of respect for the Mayor and Council Members for serving and leading our city through a turbulent social and economic transition.

I love to talk, listen, learn, and ask questions--A LOT of questions. I care A LOT. And I collaborate A LOT. Having a background in product development and fashion has molded me into a mediator type. When you work in the apparel industry you deal with lots of "creative types" and "big personalities" , and the "factory guys", and deadlines, and dilemmas--mostly dilemmas. I had to work alone a lot, and then come back to a team and present ideas, or kindly shoot some down, and establish goals, and meet those goals.

As a small business owner, I manage the monies, and customer service, and marketing, and staff. I also work with the City to plan and execute events in Biltmore Village, and am a Chair Member of the Historical Biltmore Village Association.

I am considered to be creative and business savvy. A rare hybrid! I'm also friendly, a tad nerdy, supremely optimistic, and a perpetual do-gooder. I will champion any cause related to kids. I have served on the Board of the Boys and Girls Club of Buncombe County, continue to volunteer with The United Way, and review scholarship applications for the WNC Community Foundation. Short of a dance marathon situation, I like to promote the education and mentorship of Asheville's youth.

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?**

A city's diversity is what gives it character and resources to grow in cultural and economic directions, but when diversity is viewed through an "us versus them" lens, public dialogue quickly lends to a shaming culture and a blaming-rhetoric, polarizing our city into sub or fringe communities in discord.

I believe Asheville is undergoing this type of social crisis, which is cultivating a sense of distrust of the government, and a sense of urgency for change. We have recently gone through an isolating period of mandated quarantine and business closures, followed by civil unrest and chaos that we have not experienced before, and will be met by continued economic downshifting. Our existing identity as a peaceful and prosperous city has been upended, and the spotlight is on what is broken.

We are facing demands for divestment, reinvestment, reparations and economic sustainability. As a governing body, we have to address these issues, but the first step is to ASK MORE QUESTIONS to those that will be the most affected by our actions. The ask, and the learn, and the entire process leading up to a decision to fund or defund any of our social services has to be completely transparent.

It is only with transparency, that we can have real, measurable standards for accountability for real change in our schools, our police department, and our citizens' support.

Strong communities require strong leadership, and Asheville Government has to be dedicated to being heard, even if what they have to say is uncomfortable, and hard to hear. The citizens of Asheville need to feel that they are represented by their elected officials, and that their needs are being met.

Posting city council meetings and hoping that folks read the minutes or sit through the entire YouTube video is a tad antiquated, and alienates people that want to be informed, but do not want to hunt and gather their information. It specifically alienates millennials and our youngest audiences. We can make more efforts via social media and a government podcast to share more.

If we dedicated ourselves to fact sharing as loudly as others dedicated themselves to broadcasting criticism and negativity, our voting could always be rooted in progress, and not placating short-term agendas. Demands are not always heard because they are made to serve the greatest good, but because those making the demands are dedicated to being heard--which is, for the most part, an admirable quality! We are fortunate that the demands we are facing right now are requiring us to ask more questions. Because only is asking more questions, will we discover information, and in turn, trust, accountability, and long-term, positive change.