

Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church

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Pastor J.W. Matt Hennessee, M.Div., D.Min.(c); Senior Servant

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*Mr. R. Glenn Ward, Chair
Board of Deacons*

*Mrs. Patricia H. Montgomery
Church Clerk*

*Mr. John Frazier, Sr., Chair
Board of Trustees*

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

The Honorable Ted Wheeler,
Mayor, City of Portland

The Honorable Members of the Portland City Commission:
Commissioners Nick Fish, Amanda Fritz, Chloe Eudaly, & JoAnn Hardesty

Portland City Hall
1221 S.W. Fourth Avenue, Suite 110
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Wheeler & Members of the Portland City Commission:

It was my hope to join you today to make an in-person presentation regarding the great work of Venture Portland and the Williams Avenue Business District. Unfortunately, as Chair of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Board of Directors, I am engaged in leading an all-day annual meeting. Therefore, I apologize for my absence. If I could have done differently today and been there in-person, I would have.

My purpose in writing is to support the great work of Heather A. Hoell and the great volunteers and staff at Venture Portland. One of our members, Historian Raymond Burell, III, has been an instrumental part of the Williams Avenue Business Association. Late last year he had to curtail his activities due to an illness. However, before he was an active participant on behalf of Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church. Each month he and I would sit down and he would share the great opportunities and stories regarding the work of the Association.

On the day after Thanksgiving I had the pleasure of joining Commissioner Fish and members of his staff as we walked and talked with business owners on Williams Avenue—and of course in keeping with the spirit of the day—spent money!

As you may know, Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church has been a member of this community for 75 years at its present location since the Spring of 1951. Though we share the same sorrow many do regarding the gentrified nature of our community we made an intentional decision to get to know our new neighbors, cater to the businesses in the area, and lend voice to the importance of sharing Portland values, and leaving no one behind. We also do a great deal of outreach in our community.

We are grateful for Venture Portland and believe we will have more opportunities to collaborate in the future and urge you to continue to support their many efforts on behalf of our City. We will also replace Brother Burell on the Association Board so we can continue a great relationship.

Respectfully submitted,

J.W. Matt Hennessee

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"The Church where everyone is welcome"