

Jennifer Benda

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RE: Beautification Commission

To Whom It May Concern:

I am so excited to be able to apply for the Beautification Commission! I have been a Valdez resident since 1980 and I love my home. Upon my graduation from the University of Alaska Anchorage, I began working at Ship Escort Response Vessel System (SERVS) as a Contingency Plan reviewer. I then worked at Regional Citizens Advisory Counsel before landing at the Valdez Small Boat Harbor. All these jobs focused on compliance and incident management. While I loved working and training in the environmental industry, I took a job with Valdez City Schools, as the schedule worked better for my young family. After fourteen years with the district, I moved over to the State of Alaska as the Clerk of Court for the Valdez Court. I am in the PERS system, and my goal is to retire from the State of Alaska. I have recently transferred to the Department of Environmental Conservation and am working as an Environmental Program Specialist.

Why you are looking for me:

- *Decision Making:* My last three years as Clerk of Court have taught me to think on my feet. I have had to make critical decisions under pressure while fully understanding the ramifications of my choice. To accomplish this task, I have studied the judicial system and have taken on extra training to become confident in my ability to act under pressure.
- *Customer Service:* When I was not in court, I helped customers at the counter. Often, they are in a particularly difficult time of their life. I can be understanding while guiding them through the confusing world of the court system. I make sure they are heard and leave with all the tools they need to move forward in their case. I believe that everyone just wants to be heard. Listening to people is a key component of customer service.
- *Scientific Research:* While I had a brief stint in college majoring in Natural Resource Management, this is an area that I am eager to train and learn more about. As a librarian I would guide students through the steps of research papers and online resources, citations, and inquiries. Earning my Bachelor of Arts in Literature was the beginning of a never-ending career in proof reading and editing professional documents. I help draft letters for the administrative team and proofed the Valdez City Schools Threat Assessment Form. Throughout my years of employment with Valdez City Schools and the City of Valdez, I have co-authored reports, developed brochures and designed webpages. I am extremely proficient in Word, Excel, and Outlook. I am also a quick learner when it comes to learning new software.
- *Compliance:* I access the Rules of Court, Alaska Administrative Code and Statutes and Bulletins daily to properly process case filings. I also research the proper law that must be listed on charging documents. I believe that I would apply similar research techniques to assess and evaluate compliance with Federal laws and regulations.

• *Incident Management:* I have trained in Incident Management through the Fishing Vessel Training Program, the City of Valdez, and the Valdez City School District. I am currently trained up to level 400.

Minimum Qualifications:

• *Problem Solving:* Over the years, I have become the “go-to” problem solver for my employers. I have always been able to stay calm and work through the steps of problem solving. Once I identify and analyze the problem, I begin to look for the causes. Once I have a grasp of what is going on, I can move forward with different solutions. Often, it takes a couple of attempts before reaching a workable solution. Depending on the environment, a debriefing, meeting or even notes help make sense of what happened and ensure that others facing a similar problem will have a map to work from.

• *Research:* I have vast experience with researching and analyzing books, works of literature and textbooks. While working at the City of Valdez Small Boat Harbor I had to work within the City’s policies and procedures and understand how to apply them to harbor users. Knowing how to find and evaluate sources is important when researching any topic, and I honed those skills while working as a librarian.

• *Oral Communication:* Like good customer service, the key to communicating efficiently is to be an active listener. Often, people are emotional when they come to court, so asking for clarification allows them to further explain what they need. Watching for non-verbal cues can help recognize confusion and frustration. When appropriate, humor can ease tension and get people to open up. Knowing when to talk, and when to listen can make all the difference.

• *Critical Thinking:* Connecting different ideas is the key to critical thinking and plays an important role when problem solving. In the Court System, I analysis and interpret filings to properly docket them. Often, especially in Civil Cases, nothing is clear cut, and I must research and analyze the case as a whole to figure out where each piece fits.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Beautification Commision. You may call me at (907) 255-9008 or email me at jenbenda23@gmail.com. I appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to serving the City of Valdez.

Kind regards,

Jennifer Benda