

REVIEWED

By City Clerk's Office at 11:27 am, Feb 08, 2021

Clean Beaches & Ocean Parcel Tax Citizens Oversight Committee Applicant

Ashley Oelsen

Application Date: 02/05/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 16

Registered to vote in Santa Monica: yes

Hold an elected position: no

If yes, please specify:

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

Community activities:

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Contributing Conservation Biologist,

Santa Monica Beach Clean Up,

Photo Identification of Santa Monica Dolphin Population,

Directorate Fellow for United States Fish and Wildlife Service,

Board Member at World Education Connection,

Volunteered at Jones Animal Hospital, Veterinarian for the Santa Monica Animal Shelter (Pre-Covid),

United States Green Building Council Leed Certified,

National Wildlife Federation Eco Fellow

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

After earning my degree in History at the University of Southern California, I was responsible for USGBC corporate sustainable office solutions for Haworth. My team completed the first gold-certified LEED office space in Santa Monica at The Water Gardens before transitioning to the non-profit sector and founding a 501c3 organization. After enrolling in a Graduate Program at USC, I began my fieldwork in Tanzania studying chimpanzee behavior and illegal forest activity. In 2018, I continued my research, focusing on orangutan conservation in Borneo. I sit on the Board of Directors for World Education Connection and am an environmental policy consultant for corporations with sustainability initiatives. In 2019, I was awarded the Earth & Environmental Science Research Grant from UPenn and the Water

Center Fellowship in Botswana, addressing watershed issues; engaging in research on wetland and dry-land ecosystems while tackling pressing water challenges. Subsequently, I accepted a Federal Policy Fellowship at International Fund for Animal Welfare, working on Capitol Hill with Congressional staff on environmental legislation.

Currently, I attend the University of Pennsylvania, earning a Ph.D in Environmental Science with a concentration in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation while working closely with The Water Center. I am currently writing my thesis and no longer need to be in Philadelphia to finish my degree. Since 2020, I have been developing a course for Penn Veterinary School of Medicine. The curriculum focuses on analyzing problems in an ecological context to comprehend the connection between ecosystem health, human health, and animal health gaining a greater understanding of global climate change and the wide-ranging influence of human effects on the planet. The aim is to understand this connectivity allows us to critically think about methods for protecting natural resources, contributing to sustainable, long-term solutions for our community through the lens of ecological significance and environmental health. I recently completed a Directorate Fellowship position with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service working on land protection, water protection, and the Endangered Species Act. Although the project ended, I remain working two days a week for the USFWS.

At the University of Pennsylvania, my research focused on groundwater contamination, environmental toxins from human waste and litter, plastic pollution, water resource scarcity, and preserving biodiversity. I also studied Environmental Law and Policy at Wharton School of Business. At Wharton, my studies' focus was Environmental Governance consisting of finding regulatory solutions for ecological problems. This covered prescriptive regulation, mitigation options, public-private partnerships, taxes and penalties, persuasion, litigation, and legislation. My current research project includes Photo Identification of Santa Monica's Dolphin Population.

Goals:

From my time in the field, I learned environmental issues is not effective unless it involves close collaboration with the governing body and community. Conservation efforts should seek solutions for Santa Monica residents, addressing topics such as urban runoff, economic business opportunity, and land management. I often contemplate the various environmental threats and how I am best suited to contribute to the community in which I live. Understanding this connectivity allows us to critically think about methods for protecting biodiversity, contributing to sustainable, long-term solutions for preserving marine life and clean oceans through the lens of ecological significance and environmental health.

Therefore, I was thrilled to learn of the Clean Beaches & Ocean Parcel Tax Citizens Oversight Committee. I want to contribute to the mission of the City of Santa Monica, to restore a healthier balance between the urban environment and the natural ecosystem, including the Santa Monica Bay, by reducing the pollution in urban runoff, reducing urban flooding, and increasing water conservation, recreation opportunities, open space, and wildlife and marine habitat.

I aim to be an informed advocate for sustainable practices to solve environmental challenges in my community through innovative thinking analysis and knowledge of environmental issues and policy. I hope to promote community value in preserving the environment and understanding that the impact that is preserving our natural resources and oceans increases economic development for our city.

I possess a diversity of experience beneficial to developing a strategy, especially when faced with complex issues such as environmental preservation, human development, and water. I am self-motivated with a passion for social responsibility. I am not afraid to take ownership of groundbreaking projects and resourceful when faced with a challenge. As a resident of the City of Santa Monica, I am confident my knowledge will be an asset to the Clean Beaches & Ocean Parcel Tax Citizens Oversight Committee.

Vision:

Over the last two decades, human populations have grown continuously and expanded, increasing pressure on natural resources such as water, quite often at the cost of our beaches, resulting in marine life becoming increasingly at risk worldwide. I aim for the committee to analyze problems in an ecological context to comprehend the connection between ecosystem health, human health, and animal health gaining a greater understanding of the wide-ranging influence of human effects on the planet. A healthy environment is essential for citizens to flourish, a necessity for business enterprises and conservation efforts to succeed. Understanding this connectivity allows us to think critically about protecting biodiversity, therefore, contributing to sustainable, long-term solutions in addressing our urban environment, natural resources, and clean beaches. By recognizing the ecological significance of a healthy environment to human health, we can create sustainable solutions to improve Santa Monica residents' lives.

I want to build a public awareness campaign that educates our community on topics such as urban runoff, what it is, and small ways we all can modify our behaviors and contribute to a more eco-friendly lifestyle. I believe that most people in our community are not well informed or even think about how the chemicals and toxins we use in various ways can harm our oceans. I am sure a project like this isn't necessarily in the budget, and resources are limited in scope, but I believe we can find creative and fun ways to solve problems.

Personal Qualities:

I believe in leadership through purpose. Today, our world is not appropriately addressing the serious environmental challenges we face — pollution, climate change, species extinction, deforestation, exposure to chemicals and hazardous waste, ocean contamination, ozone depletion, and, unfortunately, many others. These issues will require unique accommodations to the way we do live, conduct business, and govern. Our society must become more educated about environmental problems—the genuine danger they pose adapt to mitigate them— and to do this, we need people who are mainly specialized in environmental disciplines when taking on leadership roles.

I believe in leadership through teamwork and collaboration. As the complexity of environmental issues and the velocity of change in the ecosystem and industry/markets, and the human population increase,

the need for such collaboration must extend beyond leadership to include partnerships between academics and practitioners in environmental policy development.

I believe that success is in the details of communicating a vision. I believe that success lies in sharing and detailing a clear vision. Setting clear and concise goals with a clear intended purpose helps others understand the objective they're working towards.

I have had first-hand exposure to the complexity of environmental threats in the most economically impoverished countries in the world. These experiences provided a deeper understanding of the ecological risks facing biodiversity. For example, to help answer questions about primary forests and threats facing wildlife, I collaborated closely with researchers from around the world, local and national government institutions, as well as conservation NGO's working in western Tanzania. We provided critical data on chimpanzee distribution and habitat prioritization for village land-use planning across the region. Afterward, I traveled around eastern Africa, exploring, hoping to identify sustainable solutions to complicated issues surrounding the human-wildlife conflict while being respectful to culture and tradition. I provided education awareness to local villages and schools, promoting the community's economic value if nature is preserved.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

On the City's website (smgov.net or santamonica.gov)

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: Directorate Fellow in Conservation Biologist

Business name: US Fish & Wildlife Service

Business address: Marketing & Branding for Eco Product Group & RS Foods

Business phone: