What is your name?
Abigail Doerr

1. For which position are you running?

King County Council District 4

2. What do you know about the unmet basic human needs in the district you would represent?

The most urgent unmet basic human need across Northwest Seattle and all of King County is a lack of affordable housing. Many of our neighbors are experiencing homelessness (11,199 people according to the 2019 point in time count) who also don’t have reliable access to medical care, behavior health care, affordable public transit, affordable childcare, and more. There are many more of our neighbors who are experiencing insecure housing and are on the edge of homelessness. A lack of affordable housing and adequate housing supply is the reason why people experience homelessness. There are complex and contributing factors that escalate one’s ability to be stably housed including but not limited to: poverty, income inequality, mental illness, trauma, our foster care system, our criminal justice system, addiction, job loss, domestic violence, and more. I have spent my career working to expand public transit across King County and the Puget Sound Region and know that access to reliable transportation is a critical tool to help people escape poverty. King County Council District 4 is the only district that is entirely in the city of Seattle that is one of the more expensive districts to live and uniquely reliant on quality transit. This district deserves a transit and housing champion who will prioritize and fight for expanding affordable transit and housing. The King County Affordable Housing Taskforce spent 18 months outlining that King County needs to create 244,000 units of lower income-affordable housing (0-50% AMI) by 2040 to meet the housing demand of this region and prevent more people from being pushed out of this District 4 and King County or becoming homeless. It is clear to me that the County is not on track to meeting this goal and if elected I will push for the County to
create stable and dedicated sources of revenue and implement a long term funding plan as soon as possible.

3. What has afforded you the privilege and power to run for office, and how will it impact your role in this position?

Much of who I am is a result of growing up in a three generational household. My grandfather moved in with my parents just after I was born and helped raise me and my two older sisters. Grandpa was a retired butcher and janitor and much of his limited life savings was spent supporting my uncle who struggled with schizophrenia. Grandpa lived off his social security and was the recipient of many beloved social services including Meals on Wheels, which not only fed him healthy lunches but also provided important social interaction. I am where I am today because of my grandfather and the people who cared for him including my own hard working parents and the great public services like Meals on Wheels. As a kid, my dad and I would spend Friday’s volunteering with Meals on Wheels to give back what they gave to our family and this became a driving force for why I decided to pursue public service. I saw what happened when we took care of each other and they way public resources could support someone’s life and their families. My privilege as a white, cisgendered woman has helped me get where I am today. The odds of my success have been stacked in my favor. Acknowledging my privilege and the systemic advantages I’ve been afforded is critical for leadership, policy makers, and community members to break down the institutional and historic racism that is unfortunately stitched into our social and political fabric. These barriers have systematically kept people of color, low-income people, tribal communities, immigrants, people with disabilities, and lgbtq people from achieving the same successes I have. Every decision I make and policy I advocate for is rooted in this foundational truth and any policy I fight for must also be part of an effort to interrupt and dismantle this reality of white supremacy. Today, I’m able to run for office for many reasons. My social-economic privilege as a white college educated person from a middle class family has afforded me the ability to take this major leap. I’m lucky to have a part time job that pays me enough to pay my rent and other bills to run for office. Running for office is out of reach for many people without flexible jobs, significant savings, and family support. This is a major reason why we don’t see a diverse pool of candidates running for office and why most of our elected officials have historically been
older white men who are independently wealthy. My personal experience growing up with my grandfather and my experience having the means to run for office will influence how I’ll be as an elected official. And it’s why I have spent my career bringing together coalitions of labor, business, communities of color, environmentalists and more to tackle some of our regions biggest challenges. I led the campaign to pass Sound Transit 3 and to bring more Metro Bus service to our neighborhoods. I led the statewide initiative 1631, a first in the nation effort to hold large corporate polluters accountable for the harm they’ve caused our communities and equitably address climate change by placing a fee on pollution. I am committed to building healthy, thriving, and equitable communities and will fight to ensure King County is moving forward on housing and homelessness, public transportation, and our environment. We need fresh energy, new ideas, and bold leadership on the County Council to tackle these challenges.

4. What experience do you have in listening to and amplifying community voices? In what ways do you base your policies and priorities on the needs of those who will be most impacted by them?

Coalition building and amplifying marginalized voices is critical in any policy making. I have worked over the years to bring together diverse coalitions to tackle some of our regions biggest challenges, and one of the most critical ways to address our racist and biased past is to ensure that the voices of communities of color, low-income people, LGBTQ people, women, and tribal communities are at the table and influential in how decisions are made. In every campaign I have led, not only were diverse voices at the table but the policies we were fighting to approve were structured to be centered around those who have been historically marginalized. For example, at Transportation Choices Coalition we were successful at ensuring race, income level, and health impacts were part of decision making for transportation, housing investments, and land use planning made at Sound Transit and the Puget Sound Regional Council. We worked hard to transform Sound Transit’s transit oriented development policies for how affordable housing must be included in the station area planning but also making space for how the community can lead the development of station areas to prevent displacement. By listening and amplifying community voices, we were able to create and implement better policies that were rooted in equity and uplifting the most vulnerable in our region.
5. The cost of health care increases every year. Recent federal policy changes have threatened the long-term sustainability of Medicaid — such as attempts to reduce funding or turn the program into a block grant — and have aimed to undermine the viability of private health insurance markets — such as eliminating the individual insurance mandate from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or not defending the ACA in court. Given so many barriers being placed at the federal level, how would you work to improve health care access at the local level to ensure stronger and more vibrant communities?

The King County Council must be deeply engaged in ensuring healthcare is affordable and are fighting for the long-term sustainability of Medicaid. One important strategy the County must be strengthening is ensuring all of our public benefits are coordinated with our health care enrollment and leveraging additional resources to go even further. While working at Transportation Choices Coalition, I was proud to support the creation of Metro’s ORCA LIFT (Low Income Fare Ticket program). Metro partners with Seattle King County Public Health and leverages outreach resources to coordinate health care enrollment with ORCA LIFT enrollment. Instead of creating separate outreach and engagement programs, King County Metro added additional resources to existing health care outreach happening to stretch outreach efforts further. By doing this, we helped make enrolling for health care more accessible for people and helped streamline the process for enrolling in ORCA LIFT. Enrolling for public resources can be confusing for many and there is so much coordination and streamlining that must be done to make these benefits more accessible to those who need them. We must do all we can to eliminate barriers to basic human needs such as healthcare, public transportation, utility discounts and more by leveraging more resources and expanding enrollment.

6. Federal policies over the last few years have created a climate of fear for immigrant and refugee communities across the country. Even Washington State, long a welcoming environment, is no stranger to these challenges, as the recent Department of Licensing scandal showed. This climate of fear impacts immigrants and refugees of all statuses, and new research shows this fear is driving immigrants away
from health and human services programs they are legally eligible to participate in. What would you do to leverage local systems and resources to bring immigrant and refugee communities back out of the shadows?

I am proud of the work I have done with immigrants and refugees while leading transit and environmental policy. I have made it a point to center the voices and the experience of our immigrant and refugee communities when developing policy solutions to some of our regions toughest problems. Without their input, our policies would not be as strong or impactful. Immigrants and refugees should be able to access health and human services programs without fear. We must do all we can to build trust with immigrants and refugees by increasing educational resources and outreach that explain how to enroll and access these public services. We also need to foster a welcoming environment in King County so immigrants and refugees can feel like they can reach out for help and will trust that our public services will be there for them. I will work to ensure that immigrants and refugees in King County can safety participant in public programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, Low-Income Subsidy, Housing Assistance, CHIP, and more. If elected, I would also fight to leverage local systems and resources to expand voting rights to immigrants and refugees. King County runs our elections office and has the power to become the first in the nation to move forward policies to enfranchise people who are not citizens but nevertheless still deserve the right to vote and have their voices heard in the electoral process. Just because someone isn’t a US citizen does not mean they are not impacted by the decisions our governments, elected officials, and voters make and therefore they deserve the right to have a say in those decisions. The immigrant and refugee experience needs to be heard every election cycle and the only way we can ensure that is by expanding the right to vote to them. King County would be setting an example for other county governments across the County and would send a welcoming message to our immigrant and refugee community that their experience matters and that we they shouldn’t live in fear.

7. Over half Seattleites and over 40% of people in King County are renters. Currently in most of Washington State tenants can be forced to move with only 20 days’ notice and even within the city of Seattle,
there is no guarantee that a landlord will renew a tenant's lease. [For King County Candidates] As part of the King County Council, will you enact just cause protections to give tenants stability? [For Seattle Candidates] As part of Seattle City Council, will you expand just cause protections for renters with fixed term leases who are up for a lease renewal? [For both] What are your plans and strategies to protect renters?

If elected, I am committed to enacting just cause protections to give tenants stability. As a renter myself and when elected I would be the only person who doesn’t own and never has owned a home on the King County Council, I know how challenging it is to afford to live in this city and the power landlords have over their tenants. The experience of depending on landlords to maintain our housing is a critical voice that is missing on the County Council. Along with advocating for just cause protections, I would advocate for tenant right protections that exist in Seattle to be expanded County wide. Additionally, King County needs to its part to implement bold solutions to keep people in their homes including: - increased funding of diversion programs for tenants at risk of eviction - creating new local rental-subsidy programs - develop a centralized process for obtaining rental assistance - providing a more in-depth relocation assistance for individuals facing evictions or displacement - build more housing for no-income and low-income people and especially with family sized units As a Council Member for King County, I will work to ensure that our local resources are able to meet the needs of our community while pushing for the bar to be changed at the State and Federal levels.

8. In 2018, the consulting firm McKinsey and Company conducted an extensive analysis of the current crisis response and homeless housing programs in Seattle and King County. They found that our region dramatically under-invests in housing and other system-wide responses, while the numbers of people experiencing homelessness grows. They found that between 2014 and 2017, the number of households accessing homelessness services grew by an average 11
percent a year, while funding grew by an average 2.4 percent a year. The McKinsey analysis estimated an additional investment of between $360 and $410 million per year for at least ten years is required to make and maintain progress in solving homelessness. Such added resources would bring our community in line with sister cities and counties addressing homelessness and affordable housing crises. What are three specific revenue options (local, regional, and state) you would use to generate the necessary funds to fill the gap between current local, state, and federal dollars, and the housing and service system investments required to do the job for Seattle and King County residents experiencing homelessness?

According to the King County Regional Housing Affordability Task Force, Countywide we need 244,000 units of low-income affordable housing by 2040 and as of now, King County does not have a financing plan (or implementation plan) to meet that need. Similar to our approach on Sound Transit 3, it is my priority to develop a 20-year housing plan with meaningful funding mechanisms to meet our goals and a clear and thoughtful plan for how and where the money would be invested. For Sound Transit 3 we used all of our political might to address an issue that should have been tackled decades earlier. We rolled up our sleeves to do the hard work to map out the funding and revenue needs, obtained authority from the legislature, and then worked hard to get voter approval (which approved revenue for ~$1 billion a year). I believe King County needs to demonstrate the same political might to address the affordable housing crisis and we desperately need leaders who are willing to take on that fight. First, King County (and in partnership with the Puget Sound Region) must be fighting for additional progressive revenue options from the State Legislature. Continuing to increase sales taxes and property taxes will exasperate affordability that hits low income people the hardest and are not sustainable in the long term. I’m supportive of creating capital gains taxes, income taxes, business and occupation taxes, and more progressive property tax structures. I am not naive about the challenges funding authority from the state legislature. I have been told by many in the generations before me that this is not a reasonable option and I fundamentally reject that premise. I am not ready to give up the fight for progressive funding tools: we must be smarter and more strategic, better coordinated, and relentless in our fight for progressive funding for much needed
affordable housing. Second, King County has the authority for a 0.1% sales tax for affordable housing that we must be utilizing. While sales taxes are regressive, it is crucial that we secure revenue sources for funding housing. I believe King County made a mistake when they decided to put an arts funding proposition on the 2017 primary ballot. Arts access is important, but if we are truly in an affordable housing crisis, we would have leaders county Council to have a sense of urgency around securing revenue for more affordable housing. I would propose that the County pass a 0.1% sales tax to generate funding for low income affordable housing (and leverage the funds generated with King County’s ample bonding capacity). This would generate ~$70 million annually until we can generate more stable revenue. Additionally, King County must move forward with utilizing HB 1406 - where KC would impose a sales tax that would be credited against the state sales tax. These tools together would generate about $140 million annually that King County could leverage with their bonding capacity. Third, the businesses that have grown and expanded in King County in the last decade have helped or region’s economy thrive but have also contributed to why we are lacking adequate affordable housing across our region. While the growth is welcome and I am supportive of these businesses, it is clear to me that major corporations are benefiting from our strong quality of living and educated workforce but have not made their fair share of investments in ensuring our region can be affordable, especially for the most vulnerable in our community. Last year, the head tax polarized our city and the whiplash and of the policy passage and repeal is still reverberating in our communities. Our campaign has knocked on over 13K doors and there is clear frustration that our elected leaders and community leaders do not have a plan to address homelessness and build the affordable housing we need. While I think there is support for a policy similar to the head tax, I think such a policy is only feasible if we are working collaboratively and diligently with our business community in mapping out a multi-year plan to invest in housing. I believe if we responsibly engage corporations as a critical player in helping address our housing crisis they will meet us there. We need to bring together business, community groups, elected officials, non-profits, and more to map out what investments are necessary to address this crisis and how we are all going to pay for it - and to pay for it we all need to do our part to invest in affordable housing. In recent weeks and months Microsoft, Amazon and others have made direct private investments in affordable housing - while that is laudable it does not replace the need for additional taxes on our major businesses to pay for such investments. I’ve seen first hand how we can work together to address these major regional challenges - it’s what we’ve done on transit, on minimum wage, and HALA.
9. Seattle and King County are in the midst of a child care crisis because child care is expensive and unaffordable for many working families. At the same time, some child care providers cannot afford to pay workers a living wage and stay in business. What ideas do you have for solutions?

I am committed to working to see that all families have access to quality and affordable childcare. While middle income families I know and love are struggling to balance working and affording to pay for affordable and quality childcare, low income women and women of color are disproportionately impacted by the high cost and availability of child care. Child care also compounds through a transportation and housing issue through cost and the time and money it takes to reliably get around our region. We need universal child care statewide and in the interim I would support the creation of such a program locally. To address affordable childcare in King County we must be moving forward child care policies that: provide facilities and child care for King County workers as an employee benefit; plan for child care facilities in all transit oriented development and in County operated office spaces; provide subsidies and direct investments in child care for no-, low-, and middle-income families; develop tools and resources for working families to connect with providers of quality child care; and partner with higher education institutions to develop training and education programs for child care workers.

10. Survivors of gender-based violence frequently enter the criminal justice system due to their victimization, but criminal justice responses are woefully inadequate and problematic for most survivors for a variety of reasons, especially Black, indigenous, and other survivors of color, refugee and immigrant survivors; and gender non-conforming survivors. What specific solutions will you bring forward for addressing issues of gender-based violence in our city? What mechanisms would you employ to shift the structural oppression and racism, specifically in criminal justice institutions?
Survivors of gender based violence deserve to feel safe when reporting incidents and we must employ policy to end institutional racism in our criminal justice system. We must also implement measures to prevent gender based violence in the first place so survivors can avoid maneuvering the criminal justice system and address how structural dangers have made immigrant and nonwhite communities more vulnerable to gender based violence. I support divesting funds from our criminal justice system to invest in community based and community driven solutions. I am a strong supporter of diversion programs and restorative justice work and have participated in the programming the County currently runs and recognize the important work that needs to be done to expand these programs. We need to significantly increase our investments in these programs along with upstreaming the investments. We’ve seen the King County Council set ambitious goals to get to zero youth detention and then seen them do very little work to get there. Reforming a broken system takes a significant level of engagement, support, and leadership. For the Council to set ambitious goals and not do the hard work to follow through is emblematic of what this Council has become and I will interrupt it. I also oppose King County using any form of facial recognition surveillance by our law enforcement officers and would immediately move forward legislation similar to San Francisco’s legislation to prevent the use of facial recognition by our King County Sheriff’s. King County also needs to recognize and address the ways in which race, ethnicity and citizenship status can shape gender violence intervention for nonwhite communities. Native Americans and Indigenous Alaskans have a higher rate of gender based violence, with more than half of women experiencing at least one instance of sexual assault. Instead of accounting for the harms colonialism have had on Native Americans such creating the reservation system which exposes Native Americans to human trafficking, anti-violence will implement interventions that focus on individual choice and fail to change the larger structural dangers. With two reservations in King County and the thousands of indigenous people living in our urban areas, our council needs to focus on addressing how structural dangers make Native Americans more vulnerable to gender based violence. King County must also be leading the nation at addressing the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women across King County and Washington State. Undocumented survivors of sexual assault cannot make reports of domestic violence or assault because they fear deportation. Citizenship status can cause people to especially vulnerable to gender based violence. US immigration policies leave women vulnerable to sexual violence by immigration authorities,
traffickers and border patrol. It is unacceptable that in Washington over half of ICE arrests are made with the assistance of local jails. I am supportive of the example County Executive Constantine has set for other counties by designating King County as a sanctuary county and signing an order directing King County International Airport to ban flights of immigration detainees chartered by ICE. I think the next step is for the County to pressure the State and other Counties to declare themselves sanctuary regions as well. We also need to invest in educating immigrant populations on how to report gender based violence in King County and build trust between these communities and local government.

11. Describe how you would represent your constituents to ensure there is a pathway to emergency food services for all who need it. What policies and investments would you support so that residents across Seattle and King County have equal access to adequate, culturally appropriate, healthy food?

As I mentioned above, my grandfather depended on public resources such as Meals on Wheels and I learned how crucial these services are to some of the most vulnerable in our community. King County needs to invest public funds into food banks, meal programs, and high-need schools, and create programs for kids in our communities when school is not in session. King County needs to address the root cause of hunger such as income inequality and we need to ensure King County doesn't cut any of parts of their budget that funds programs that support low-income communities. I am committed to expanding funds for programs that increase food security for people so low income people can have their basic needs met and we can expand access to nutritious food. If elected, I will partner with organizations and community leaders who are already leading the fight against hunger. I am committed to using the lobbying
power of the King County Council to: expand access to fruits & vegetables for SNAP & WIC households, eliminate the co-pay barrier to school lunch for low-income students, adequate lunch time for all students, hunger-free students’ bill of rights, stability for WSDA’s farm to school & farm to food pantry programs, and more. Local government also needs to address the ways in which immigration status can lead to food insecurity. Public Health officials in King County found that the Department of Homeland Security’s plan to make it more difficult for undocumented immigrants to come to the United States and receive public services will cause an increase in hunger and food insecurity which will lead to long term health issues from malnutrition. In 2018 after the White House made the announcement that they planned to make it harder for undocumented immigrants to receive public resources from programs such as SNAP, Public Health clinics saw dozens of clients either asked to terminate services or declined services they were legally eligible to receive. They even saw pregnant women declined nutrition services and parents removed children from health insurance. As I mentioned in a previous answer, King County needs to ensure immigrants and refugees can safely participate in public programs such as SNAP and should advocate for additional counties to become sanctuary counties. In King County, 270,000 people struggle with food insecurity. Families across the region fear they won’t be able to put food on the table, students aren’t receiving an adequate amount of food this Summer, and members of our immigrant community aren’t participating services they have every right to receive. This is unacceptable, and if elected, I will do everything in my power to address the causes of food insecurity locally and state-wide.

12. According to a 2017 FBI report, nationwide reports of hate crimes increased by 17% from 2016 to 2017; by 32% in Washington State, and 198% in Seattle. Within Washington State, 38% of reported hate crimes were in Seattle. The City Auditor analyzed data that reported hate crimes doubled from 2014 to 2016 and doubled again from 2016 to 2018. 54% of the crimes related to race/ethnicity and 32% sexual orientation. What are your ideas for responding to hate crime in our region without criminalizing communities of color?
In King County, 71% of the county’s general fund goes towards criminal justice. That level of investment does little to reduce rates of bias crimes as evidenced by the tragic spike of hate crimes in recent years. Our criminal justice system targets people of color and our LGBTQ+ community and hate crime law fails to recognize the ways in which it doesn’t actually serve the people it is trying to protect but in fact supports the systems that destroy their communities. Rather than investing and relying on our criminal justice system to address hate crimes against communities of color and the LGBTQIA+ community, King County needs to do more to prevent hate crimes in the first place to prevent communities of color and the LGBTQIA+ community from needing to interacting with the criminal justice system. I’m a strong supporter of King County’s Best Starts For Kids and would work to see those resources invested in upstreaming programs for anti-harassment, anti-bullying and tolerance related education programs in schools. We must expand these investments to make more upstream approaches that prevent the seeds of hate from taking root in the first place. In addition, we must monitoring hate groups in and around King County such as Proud Boys and the Patriot Front and help stop their efforts to recruit young white people in our region. Hate groups have been seen recruiting homeless white youth to join them with promises of providing them the basic resources they are missing such as shelter. Hate groups are also recruiting on our local college and university campuses. King County needs to do more to intervene and prevent vulnerable young people from joining these hate groups by investing in programs that address homelessness and it’s root causes and by working with school districts and local universities to enact curriculums that educate our white youth on tolerance and acceptance.

13. As a city, we have moved to district representation. However, the needs of our residents are not necessarily most efficiently and effectively addressed by district. Nonprofit services most often cross multiple districts and people who make use of the services interact with providers throughout the city. How will you work to represent both the needs of your district as well as Seattle as a whole?

Our campaign has knocked on over 13K (as of 6/5) and while I have learned so much and value the perspective of the people I have met, I am very cognizant of the privilege of the perspectives I hear. A majority of the people I meet at their doors are
homeowners, white, and are generally older. This demographic is not representative of all of King County and some of their opinions and perspectives on issues such as homelessness, transportation and the environment are worthwhile but not the only perspective I should be listening to. Ensuring I am hearing the voices of people who are unhoused, people who can no longer afford to live in NW Seattle, renters who I can’t access are just some of the perspectives I miss when I go door to door. I will do more to represent the needs of every demographic and community in King County and prioritize the needs of those who are most vulnerable. I’ve spent my career bringing people together from unions and tribal communities to business. I know that the work is better if we come together and I am dedicated to working with various interests across the County and uplighting the voices and experiences of those whose interests have not been centered. I’ve learned that ending Youth Detention is not the number one concern of residents of district 4, however, it is still something I am committed to seeing through while representing district 4 if elected. While running for office, I have made it a priority to meet with groups outside of the district 4. I’ve met with Tribal Groups, attended peace circles and have worked to ground myself in the issues that extend district lines.

14. Will you support an automatic annual inflation adjustment tied to the CPI-W for the City's human services contracts so providers can maintain current levels of service as costs of doing business increase?

Yes. I strongly support our human service workers and will ensure that they aren’t at risk of entering homeless and are compensated fairly with inflation. I am passionate about ensuring that workers, including human service workers, have comprehensive benefit packages such as fully subsidized transit passes. King County needs to build a fare structure for obtaining transit passes that is financially feasible for human service employers.