What is your name?
Ari Hoffman

1. For which position are you running?

Seattle City Council District 2

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

People need more than just a space to pitch a camping tent or to park a car. The current city council’s approach of simply letting people live in squalor is not compassionate. We need to invest in dignity and we start by providing real tangible services. I will work to provide free public hygiene services such as bathrooms, showers, and laundry services. I will push for immediate funding of short and medium term supportive housing to get people off the streets now. I will divert funds from non-performing programs and increase mental health and drug treatment options.

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

I was fortunate to be raised in upper-middle-class family and did not know how lucky I was until my parent’s divorce which resulted in me requiring scholarships to attend a prestigious high school I had qualified for before money became an issue. While I have worked hard to get where I am, my father did help me pay for college and my in-laws helped me start my businesses which, fortunately, have been very successful. I understand the ways in which I have been fortunate in life and I want to do whatever I can to give the same opportunities to everyone in my district.
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?

I have a great deal of experience working with the local Jewish Community and youth of our area. In fact, one of the main reasons that I got involved in local politics was that my community was not being heard when we needed help from our political leaders. 3 years ago community members asked for my help in stopping the Green Space camping ordinance. Last year residents from all over the city asked for my help in repealing the “Head Tax” I pride myself on listening to and talking with everyone. I will always make sure that all voices are heard on any particular issue and my first priority in making decisions on the City Council will be to represent the people of our city that are impacted by city policy.

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?

I am excited that Washington State has taken the first step in creating a public option for our residents. I look forward to building on that step and will advocate for more funding for public health clinics with a special focus on expanding access to mental health and drug treatment options in our city.

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?

It is inexcusable that people who add to our greatness with their labor, their culture, and their tax dollars are afraid to call the police when they need help or to participate in services that would improve the health and well-being of their families. We need to make sure that we are reaching out to immigrant communities and ensuring that they not only feel safe to participate in society, but that there are mechanisms in place to guarantee that safety and to come to the aid of immigrant communities when they are in need.

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?

I do think we still need greater specificity in some of the just cause language in Seattle. I would like to see greater options for renters to challenge a breach of the rental agreement and to have unreasonable rules contained in rental agreements amended out of agreements that may have been signed during a time of stress. I also want to
look at policies to protect legacy tenants for both residents and small businesses so as to protect the character of Seattle’s neighborhoods.

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?

State: Reduce the regressive property taxes and cut wasteful spending. Regional: The County is fairly restricted as to what types of taxation they are able to implement. City: Increase in-lieu fees/vacant units fee and audit where our tax dollars are going, specifically agencies receiving city funds. De-fund non performing agencies and fund needed solutions such as on demand drug treatment and mental health treatment.

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 would like to start a program to offer tax breaks and other incentives to businesses that offer on-site child-care to their employees that could even be expanded and offered to their neighbors. I would also offer incentives for companies to expand tele-commuting opportunities. Another driver of the shortage of child-care options is the physical lack of facilities, so we should prioritize new child-care facilities in the permitting process.

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?

We need to work with our law enforcement partners in the Seattle Police Department and King County Sheriff’s office to expand the mandate of the gender-based violence task force so it can truly be there for victims - adding social workers, victim advocates, and others to the task force is one step that I believe would immediately help to address their needs. As to criminal justice reform, I believe this is one area in which we can see why diversity in policy making is so important. There are some issues that cannot simply be intellectual exercises of political leaders, but require the perspective of a diverse community. We need victims, former criminals that have been through the system, members of a variety of communities of color, immigrant communities, and members of the LGBTQ community to come together with the shared goal of building a criminal justice system that has as its core priorities; dignity, equity, and rehabilitation.
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 someone who observes a strict Kosher diet, I understand how important it is for individuals to have access to quality culturally appropriate food. I consider investments in access to fresh, healthy, and culturally appropriate food to be very important for our community and I will prioritize these investments in the city budget.

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?

My family and I have recently been the subject of death threats, threats of violence, and anti-semitic slurs on the infamous website 8-chan; this is very personal for me. Hate must be called out in all its forms and we must not ignore a growing problem until it erupts into violence. All of our leaders, our public institutions, and members of our community must come together and commit themselves to denouncing and shedding a light on all instances of racism, prejudice, sexism, and intimidation. We must ensure that our law-enforcement agencies are full trained and prepared to investigate hate crimes in all their forms.

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?

I have been a candidate that listens to and will talk with everyone; that will continue when I am a city council member. While there are certainly priorities I have for my district and the neighborhoods within, I will be a willing partner with stakeholders across our city to tackle issues that require a more regional approach. The most important factor for me will be; what is the best way to do the most amount of good for the people of our city?

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.