SHSC 2019 online candidate survey questions

What is your name?
Cathy Tuttle

1. For which position are you running?
Seattle City Council District 4

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

The largest basic unmet human needs in District 4 are those of the people experiencing homelessness. This is a large group of people, including many people under 25, families, seniors, and people with disabilities living in a variety of unhoused situations. The U-District in particular is host to hundreds of people who do not have places they can afford to live in. There is no magic solution to dealing with the numerous complex public health issues driving homelessness. It requires money, plain and simple. Anyone who says homelessness and attendant mental health and substance abuse issues can be solved without additional revenue is not serious about addressing the issue. I will partner with a wide range of constituencies to craft a revenue package highly targeted to solving the problem, supported by a clear and realistic plan for how the money will be used. A variety of short- and long-term solutions are needed, including meeting basic World Health Organization standards for refugee camps for people experiencing homelessness, improved funding and access to social services, strong renter protections including the measures just brought up by Councilmembers Mosqueda and Herbold improving renter protections, and the construction of thousands of affordable and deeply affordable units over the next 5 years. We also need to fully staff and train Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections department so that permitting is streamlined and sensible, foreclosure is avoided, renters are better represented, and clear built models of how our city can grow sustainably are promoted and described to the public. To stem the flow of more residents on the street, we must keep people in their homes. That means we need to extend eviction notices from 3 to 14 days and notices of building closure to 180 days. We need 20,000 new workforce housing units
built or under construction, equitably distributed across all Seattle districts, by 2024 as well as 5,000 deeply affordable units for chronically homeless residents of this city. Reflecting deep unaffordability in Seattle, the people who work in my district have many unmet needs. Small business owners and employees are left out of housing, as well as people who do service, teaching, and health care jobs in my NE Seattle district. These folks often want to live closer to their workplaces but cannot afford to do so. Not everyone wants to or can commute from far away. It is critical that we amplify the voices of people in the workforce -- through stories, videos, photos, and press releases. Many owners and employees of businesses that people in my district consider integral to the community cannot afford to live in district, or in Seattle. The teachers and staff at our district schools as well as service providers are increasingly experiencing a lack of affordability and long commutes. Hearing from people who work in my district but have extremely long commutes will help to inform and elicit support for local workforce housing from people who are fortunate enough to live in Seattle. District 4 also employs many domestic workers and gig workers. The Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights is an excellent first step to recognizing the needs of domestic workers - a similar Bill of Rights should be developed for gig workers. The people who work in District 4 deserve support and recognition, as well as the people who live in District 4.

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

I am running to represent the people of District 4. I am not a career politician, and I am not beholden financially or otherwise to any interest group, corporate or otherwise. I am simply representing this district, this city, and this bioregion. I am fortunate to have had educational opportunities that put me in a position to work for the past several decades in public service. I have been able to learn about Seattle and District 4 as a City of Seattle employee, nonprofit director, and homeowner. When I decided to run for office, I was privileged enough to be able to do so full time. This has given me the opportunity to knock on thousands of peoples’ doors all over the district every day, many hours every day - I have knocked on doors in nearly every precinct in the district. This is how I have become deeply familiar with the problems people across District 4 face, from the food desert in Eastlake to housing affordability concerns in Sand Point. Every person who runs for office understands their own perspective and their own privilege. My privilege
affords me the time to speak to everyone whose perspectives I am not familiar with, and to listen and learn. This is what will impact my role as a candidate and a councilmember: the privilege and power of familiarity with local city systems and power brokers, the education and status that makes the powerful people of Seattle listen to me, and the ability to bring all voices into decision-making at the city level - something I have been doing my entire career.

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 been listening to and amplifying community voices the vast majority of my career. When I worked for the Seattle Parks Department building 40 parks and community centers starting in 2002, I was the only person in the department - I believe in any city office - who made sure all materials were translated into several languages, who did workshops with communities alongside translators, and who made sure to go to community gatherings instead of insisting people come to meetings on City time and in city meeting places. I continue to believe this is the only way to work on projects, policies, and priorities that are good for the people most impacted by them: by going to people and asking what they think and what they need. When I founded Seattle Neighborhood Greenways (SNG) in 2011, I took this experience, perspective, and strategy with me. When I started, most of the city budget was dedicated to street safety improvements was directed toward the most wealthy neighborhoods, where people -- who all deserve to be safe -- already had the safest streets in Seattle. During my time as director of SNG, I directed $100 million in safe street infrastructure throughout the city with an eye on equity, with large amounts of funding going to Rainier Valley, Duwamish Valley, Delridge, and Lake City. I hired community outreach directors who lived within neighborhoods advocating for safe streets infrastructure. In fact, one of these outreach directors now is even running to represent her own district on City Council. I am deeply aware that it is people with time and money who historically have been able to advocate for funding, infrastructure, and policy that positively affect their communities. People without as much time and money are less able to influence policy decisions and articulate their needs from the city. I’ve demonstrated a lifelong commitment to bridging that gap. I base my policies and priorities on how to best build a more functional, compassionate, and climate-forward city. This means making sure
every person in my district and city has a voice - not just the people who can pick up the phone and call the city or attend an evening community meeting or City Council meeting downtown during the day, but also people who need the city to work directly with them.

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?

Councilmember Mosqueda is doing excellent work in this arena. I would partner with her to implement and expand her plan to address the health care needs of our city. It is also critical that there not be a transportation barrier to health care access: I would work to expand the Orca Lift outreach program so all low-income people have access to subsidized transit, as well as ensuring free transit passes for all people under 18.

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?
As the Department of Homeland security works to push through policies to consider immigrants who use federal social services a public charge and thus ineligible for permanent residency or citizenship, it is critical that all immigrants and refugees feel safe using health and human services. While budgets are already limited, I would work with city, county, and state officials to increase non-federal funding for health and human services programs, so threatened communities would not have to worry about participating in federal programs to receive needed services. This would also require considerable outreach to immigrant and refugee communities by service providers, explaining the programs that are safe to use. I will also continue to support all state-level efforts to sue the federal government to prevent policies and laws that threaten immigrant and refugee communities from being enacted.

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?

Yes, of course. I am excited by the work the Seattle Renters’ Commission is doing - in fact, one of the commission members is on my campaign team. There are a number of actions that need to be taken, from increasing the amount of time renters are notified before a building sells or they are evicted to having more publicly and nonprofit owned buildings to keep rents affordable. One group deeply impacted by quickly rising rents are seniors who are evicted from their buildings after decades of residency, and are left on the street with no resources or access to housing. Voter outreach to renters is also a critical part of renter protection - there is little work done to ensure renters are registered at their current addresses, or outreach by candidates to renters in multifamily units. My campaign is doing dedicated outreach to renters and I would extend this outreach into
office. We must support renters’ rights to participate fully in city life by making sure all renters have access to stable living situations.

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?

First, the City of Seattle can stop sweeping homeless encampments, which cost at minimum $10 million a year. These funds can be put towards building housing or funding social services for people experiencing homelessness. Second, I support increasing the number of Residential Parking Zones in the city and charging market rate for RPZ permits - currently they cost less than $100/year, far below the cost to park on a downtown street. Finally, we need to explore raising funds by having corporations pay a per parking spot fee per day. Many larger corporations have massive parking lots for employees taking up valuable real estate space, and a parking spot fee would quickly raise funds to address homelessness.
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 spoke with a young mother of two in Ravenna a few weeks ago. She and her husband both worked as teachers and she was packing up her condo to sell because she and her husband could no longer afford to pay both childcare costs and their mortgage. She was in tears, leaving a community and a home she loved. We need more childcare centers. We need to look at the permitting process, which should be rigorous, but can likely be streamlined. We also need to look at incentives and subsidies for employers to provide free or deeply reduced cost childcare in the workplace. To address low wages for childcare workers and childcare centers in the short term, we can consider prioritizing childcare workers on lists to get affordable housing.

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?

These are deeply complicated problems that can be addressed but not solved by a single city. Regarding gender-based violence, I would focus heavily on domestic violence, and particularly its intersections with homelessness and gun violence. Domestic abuse survivors often live with their abusers because it is their only housing option, or experience homelessness. We need increased affordable and deeply affordable housing units that can house families, more shelters that accept and are safe for families, refugee and immigrant communities, and gender non-conforming people.
We also need outreach to domestic violence survivors from trusted community members, rather than city bureaucrats, providing information about services available for survivors. We also need to address gun violence and gun ownership, following the very successful program in Oakland that has significantly reduced gun violence. Regarding criminal justice, I will look towards the Community Policing Commission recommendations. I would also like to see the foundations and principles used in Oakland to address structural oppression and racism in criminal justice institutions.

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?

I have worked closely with Seattle P-patches, Solid Ground Lettuce Link, and Community Kitchens throughout my career to address precisely these problems. I would continue to work with and expand programs. I would also like to work on a city program that delivers fresh food boxes to community centers throughout Seattle and King County, bringing food to people instead of people to food. We also must work to reduce the number of food deserts by improving and investing in very local community infrastructure: every person should be able to walk or roll to a grocery store within ¼ mile of their home, and have access to a space where they can prepare food.

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 my work I have often used restorative justice to address incidences of traffic violence, which disproportionately affect communities of color and immigrant communities. While hate crimes are not the same as traffic violence, I believe restorative justice programs are the best tool to address crime without criminalizing affected people or communities, and, at the same time, building communities less likely to see an increase in such crimes.

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 plan on having one staff member who works fully in District 4. I will have an in-district office that will work closely with my constituents to identify and address their needs. This will allow me to represent the city as a whole. I will be able to speak with my fellow councilmembers to address needs that cross district boundaries, while having a representative who can help clarify how the needs of District 4 are affected by my decisions. My job is to represent the city as a whole.

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. That is a reasonable proposition.