SHSC 2019 online candidate survey questions

What is your name?
John Lombard

1. For which position are you running?
Seattle City Council District 5

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

I know more than the typical resident, but less than I would want to know if elected. I attended the North Seattle Human Services Summit last fall and have read the related reports developed for the North Seattle Human Services Coalition. I have met with directors of many different human service agencies in District 5 as part of my campaign. One of my closest advisers, Cathy Moray, was formerly the Executive Director of the Center for Human Services and has held top positions with the Seattle Housing Authority. I volunteer at the Bitter Lake Food Pantry. I know that affordable housing is the most widespread and fundamental unmet human need across District 5, followed by mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment.

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

I have been a community leader in District 5 for 17 years, most recently working with other leaders across the district on issues like affordable housing, pedestrian safety, and transit. My career has focused on environmental policy, and I have worked in government or with government clients for most of the last 20+ years. I wrote the book “Saving Puget Sound.” I also served as the Mayor’s liaison for homeless services in the City of St. Louis early in my career. If elected, I am committed to work in partnership with community leaders, including those from under-represented communities, to address the most important needs in District 5 together.
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?

Listening to and amplifying community voices was fundamental to the purpose of the D5 Community Network, the only association of community groups across an entire City Council district in Seattle, which I helped organize and lead. From my perspective, the first test of any political policy or priority should be that it helps address the needs of those it most impacts. If it does not, then it should be given up for something better.

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 State of Washington is in the best position to serve as a bulwark against federal backsliding on the ACA. I have endorsed the “Whole Washington” campaign for universal health care in Washington. I would work closely with our state legislative delegation and other members of the City Council to try to ensure that Seattle residents and others across the state see their health care coverage expand in coming years, even if the federal government takes steps to contract it.

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?

We need to broaden the City’s community liaison program so more members of immigrant and refugee communities are paid directly by the City to serve as interpreters and ambassadors for City-funded services available to their communities. We also need to empower those who play such roles to provide two-way communication. The City should look to them for advice about unmet needs in their communities and potential improvements in City programs and communications that could help serve their communities better.

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 am a renter myself, in an unsubsidized affordable apartment that is likely to be destroyed within a few years as part of a redevelopment project. I would absolutely support expansion of just cause protections for renters at the time of lease renewals. I also have testified in favor of Councilmember Lisa Herbold’s proposed ordinance to require one-for-one replacement of affordable units lost to redevelopment. I believe that ordinance should be expanded to, at a minimum, cover all urban villages that the City has found are at “high risk of displacement,” which would include the Northgate Urban
Center and the Lake City, Bitter Lake and Aurora-Licton urban villages in District 5. Currently, Councilmember Herbold’s proposal would apply only to Bitter Lake in District 5.

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?

I’m not in a position at this time to identify specific revenue options, particularly at the regional and state levels, to meet our housing needs. To get specific revenue sources adopted and capable of withstanding potential political and legal challenges requires extensive discussion with many other parties as well as with the public. This discussion would need to consider specifically how the funds would be spent, in addition to how they would be raised. The Seattle area is experiencing a drug crisis as well as a housing crisis, in addition to having long-standing unmet needs for mental health services. All of these come together in what gets called the “homeless crisis.” While I agree with the “Housing First” philosophy, it does not mean “Housing Only.” We need a
more comprehensive regional approach, assisted by the state. Then we can determine how it would best be funded.

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?

The existing City levy that supports affordable child care and early learning programs should be the starting point for discussing solutions. However, the affordability of child care is a nationwide problem. If the Democrats win the Presidency and both houses of Congress in 2020, there should be a chance for some progress at the federal level. That would make it easier to make progress at the state, regional, and local levels.

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?

I would look for recommendations on these issues from the City’s Human Rights Commission, Community Police Commission, Women’s Commission, LGBTQ Commission and other relevant advisory bodies. I would support directing more City resources to restorative justice programs as one means of helping reform structural oppression and racism in our 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 would support expansion of food banks in District 5 to include Northgate and Aurora-Licton, in addition to the existing ones in Lake City and Bitter Lake. Given the vast inequalities in wealth in our society, I doubt that we will ever achieve equal access to adequate, culturally appropriate, healthy food. But we can do a much better job than we do now.

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?

Since people of color are the most frequent victims of hate crimes, the law needs to do a better job of protecting them, not somehow blaming or criminalizing them. To the extent hate crimes exhibit patterns that might lead to a source (e.g., I have been told that young Amazon employees have frequently been the perpetrators of anti-LGBTQ hate crimes on Capitol Hill, although I don’t know if that is true), then preventive efforts can be targeted accordingly. (If, for instance, what I have been told about Amazon employees is true, the City should work directly with Amazon to address it.) More generally, elected officials and supportive community members need to stand together against hate, with public statements, public events, and support for enforcement of anti-hate laws.
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?

While I would be directly responsible to residents of my district to do my best to ensure their needs are met, as one of nine members of the City Council I would do this in the context of supporting an equitable provision of services across the City. That is not only morally right, it also provides the best basis for working in coalition with other councilmembers to get important needs met across the City. Given the large concentrations of need in District 5, City-wide equity should provide well for District 5, too.

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 seems fair.