SHSC 2019 online candidate survey questions

What is your name?
Tammy Morales

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?

Our list of unmet needs is long: Housing and services for our chronically homeless Affordable housing and assisted living facilities for our seniors Home health care services - especially in languages our immigrant and refugee community members understand Clean air and water for families living along the Duwamish and in Beacon Hill My commitment to the families in my district is that I will fight like hell to alleviate poverty in our city. I’m running to make sure that we reprioritize our City budget so it reflects our values as a Human Rights City.

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 privileged to have a good education, experience working alongside others with power, and a family situation that offers time and support for running a campaign. My lived experience also includes growing up in Section 8 housing, spending nights away from my mom when she had to work many jobs - or going with her because she couldn’t afford childcare. I worked multiple jobs myself until well into my 30s - despite having a master’s degree. Living paycheck to paycheck is not an abstract concept to me, it’s part of my lived experience and the reason I will fight so hard to alleviate poverty in our city.
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’ve worked in coalition with Rainier Beach Action Coalition, South CORE, and the Seattle Human Rights Commission to center low-income communities and communities of color to convene neighbors and advance policies that reflect D2 priorities. As a commissioner I worked with the Office of Civil Rights to address the City’s racial equity work and to ensure that communities of color are at decision-making tables about how our neighborhoods change and grow. The organizing principle of my campaign and of my work is to center communities of color and low-income communities. I’m running to build power in D2 by bringing the voices of our economic, climate and racial justice coalitions into city hall to declare our right to the city.

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?

There are many things we can do to advocate for better statewide coverage and to advance local solutions: We can continue to work on increasing enrollment for Apple Healthcare in Washington. Advocate for single payer healthcare statewide. Allow safe consumption sites and provide greater addiction support services. Recruit service providers from within our communities of color and immigrant communities to diversity the workforce and provide culturally relevant care Advocate for a sustainable funding plan at the state level for basic public health services like WIC, immunization, maternal/child health services.
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 should present a unified voice across jurisdictions that our local governments will protect immigrants and refugees. This includes creating data collection systems that protect privacy and training agency staff on the importance of what to collect, what not to collect and why. Increasing funding for community organizations that are trusted advocates and funding to libraries which are safe spaces for communities to convene and learn their rights. It could also include creating or supporting local benefits programs that don’t rely on federal funding and educating communities about their ability to access programs.

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?
The state just expanded the notice to 60 days and allowed for the courts to have some discretion in eviction cases. As a council candidate I’m committed to protecting renters by implementing this and expanding other protections like the right to return, ensuring renters have legal representation at eviction court, and enforcing protection against harassment.

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?

We all know our city works best when we invest in the infrastructure we all need to thrive. But when wealthy elites and corporations starve our city of resources, and push the burden of paying onto those who can least afford it, we pit neighbor against neighbor, and we all suffer. We need to identify better sources of revenue where the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share. I will dive into new options, and find the right mix — like taxing the unearned passive income wealthy people make on their investments, or increase the real estate excise tax on mansions, or make our taxes on
businesses more progressive, to make sure Seattle can invest in the infrastructure and services our neighbors need. The progressive taxes that seem most promising: Increase the commercial parking tax downtown and spend the money on transit/ bike/ ped infrastructure. Tax capital gains on unearned income. Get the state to allow us to do a local option REET (additional 0.25%) on luxury homes (above $1 million?) Put disincentives on purchase of homes that are not a primary residence, or vacant properties, or flipping, and use the proceeds to fund affordable housing. Local estate tax. 1% payroll tax on large corporations.

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?

To close the opportunity gap for our littlest Seattleites we must: Increase the subsidies available to families so that they can afford quality childcare and get themselves to work. The City of Seattle must work with Olympia to advocate for an increase in reimbursement rates and must advocate at the federal level for an increase in funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant. Offer more support for homeless parents who need childcare by providing diapers, transportation and set-aside slots or specialized rates to incentivize providers who take homeless kids. Incentivize employers to help tackle this problem. Businesses are the biggest group not contributing to finding a solution, and yet they benefit the most from having workers who can rely on quality, affordable, accessible childcare. As a council member, I’ll advocate for community benefit agreements for employers to provide on-site child care. Employers should also contribute to employee childcare spending accounts the way some contribute to Health Savings Accounts. Invest in building new child care facilities. Last year we had close to 130k children under age 5 in King County. But only 63k slots in licensed facilities. The state PSTAA has $300m coming to King County - we should use some of it to fund new child care facilities and streamline the permitting process to get these centers online. Invest in the workforce – Olympia is working to increase wages for childcare providers and provide stable income for providers who accept subsidies. The City of Seattle should be advocating for these policies and prioritizing them in our city legislative
agenda. Create an infant/toddler fund within Seattle's Preschool Program to supplement pay for providers caring for 0-3 – Our Preschool Program offers important access to care for children 3-5 years old. While it's great that preschool educators get more funding, one unintended consequence is that these providers are compensated more than those who care for 0-3 year olds, who are typically women of color. We should increase compensation for those caring for infants and toddlers so that they don’t shift to preschool programs and leave a provider gap for 0-3.

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?

Gender-based violence often ends in gun shots. I would expand the ammunition tax to increase funding for violence prevention and violence survivor services; invest in service providers that are culturally appropriate and community driven; address the rise of LGBTQ harrassment. I would also work with SDOT to use a gender equity lens in planning around streets, transit stops, light design to make walking and public transit safe. I'm also interested in working with the school district to expand programming around toxic masculinity in youth programs.

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?
Both HSD and OSE have important programs to increase food security in the city. At HSD, funding for the emergency food system supports food banks, meal delivery programs and student food bags for low-income people of color. It’s troubling that Latinx are not included in the priority populations for these programs so I will be interested to learn why. OSE manages the Fresh Bucks program, which improves access to fresh produce at farm stands and farmer markets. My previous work as a food systems planner makes me especially committed to increasing food security among our vulnerable populations; that means ensuring that funding sources are not siphoned off back to the general fund and shifting funding so that our city budget reflects our declaration as a Human Rights City.

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?

The increase in hate crimes and the willingness to be explicitly intolerant is a result of the hateful rhetoric coming out of the federal administration. Here in Seattle, our community has responded with an array of community-centered actions meant to increase understanding and acceptance of diversity. Organizations like OneAmerica, CAIR, the Drag Queen Story Hour are hosting programs that allow folks to meet, have lunch or coffee and talk with people who are different from themselves. Those who commit hate crimes must be held accountable and participation in anti-bias education and community programming should be part of their sentencing.

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?

My priority is serving low-income communities and communities of color regardless of which district they are in. I plan to have a strong constituent services program with an office in my district, but my vocation is to fight for economic justice and alleviate poverty.

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.