

SHSC 2019 online candidate survey questions

What is your name?

Mark Solomon

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?

As a Crime Prevention Coordinator for the past 29 years, I've worked to address the needs and concerns of this District. For many, basic needs of food, shelter and safety are barely attainable. Many I've worked with are housing insecure, food insecure and are concerned if they can live in this city because of rising costs, rents and taxes. They are also concerned about crime and violence, many feeling they need to leave Seattle because they feel unsafe. I've seen so many of our neighbors who are suffering with addiction, untreated mental health and those experiencing the trauma of living unsheltered. Also importantly, many feel that their city government is not responsive to their concerns. We must come together as a community to improve the quality of life for all our neighbors, regardless of their origin, income, citizenship or identity status.

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 not a person of privilege and power. I'm a regular working man who was born and raised here. I have experienced the changes and challenges first hand and I am committed to serving my community. If it were not for the Democracy Voucher program, I would not be able to run for this office, and I am grateful this program is available. As for how my background impacts my role in this position, I have the experience in working in city government; I know how it works, what we do well and where we fall

short. I also know who to work with to get things done for the community in a timely manner. Being a native who lived in the Central District when it was 75% Black to seeing it now, being a kid who knows what it's like to use food stamps to pay for groceries,... all these life experiences are what I bring to this position.

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, seeking input and working with people across our communities to affect positive change is what I do daily. This is the work I've been doing for 29 years; making sure people are heard, that their concerns are addressed and that they are included in the discussions about things that impact their communities. As the city councilmember for District 2, I pledge put the interests of the people of District 2 first. Their input and concerns will be front of mind. I want to community input early on in the decision-making process, not as an afterthought.

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 believe health care is a right for everyone, regardless of citizenship, immigration or economic status. I have endorsed Whole Washington's effort regarding Universal health care. Let's take care of our people locally, regardless of what happens on the federal level.

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 build trusting relationships. We must reassure our immigrant and refugee neighbors that as a City, their status is not a barrier to receiving services. That message needs to be clear from every city department, and that starts with city leadership. Further, we must reaffirm the message from Seattle Police Department policy; Seattle Police will not ask about a person's immigration or citizenship status, nor will the Police Department involve itself in matters of immigration enforcement. What's happening right now with ICE raids I find appalling.

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. I think we need to look at rent stabilization strategies. While rent control is not allowed per the State constitution, we can look at the model recently enacted in

Portland where rent increases are limited by how much they can be raised percentagewise upon lease renewal.

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, I would look at current spending allocations to see if we can make smarter use of the funds we currently have. Next I would use the policy platform of the Nonprofit Leaders for Housing as a framework for how we can permit, design and build 4,000 units of affordable homes, completing them for occupancy in the next 12-24 months. This framework includes the use of land grants, increasing debt capacity while decreasing demand for public funding, creating a separate funding mechanism for infrastructure. We can pursue public-private partnerships, and even the development of Public Bank to make up the shortfall in funding.

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?

This strikes home personally because friends of ours moved to Louisville Kentucky to be close to family because of Seattle childcare costs. There need to be more safe, affordable and available childcare options. Perhaps our large employers and the City of Seattle can offer incentives, allowances or stipends to help offset childcare costs. Just as we have flexible spending accounts for health-related items, perhaps we use a similar system to offset childcare costs.

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?

All violence in our community concerns me. It is not just a matter for law enforcement or the courts. Addressing violence takes all of us, working together, recognizing each other's humanity and dignity, and checking ourselves on how we respond to our own anger and modeling the behavior we want to see. We can acknowledge that institutional racism is real and we have to work to address it. We need to actually use our Race and Social Justice tool kit, not just hype the fact that we have one. We need to acknowledge and recognize that we all have bias and that we call it out when we seeing it play out in criminal justice settings. It's not enough to be Woke; we must act.

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?

District 2 has a number of food assistance programs already in place (Rainier Valley, Beacon Hill, SODO, Georgetown). I would support community investments to bring more food options into the community and incentivize them to stay through lower commercial space lease rates, for one example. In my Crime Prevention role, I've worked in many neighborhoods that were food deserts and know about their struggles trying to lure grocers into the community. I've also worked with grocers who are concerned about remaining in the community because they've suffered so much loss from theft that it's not penciling out for them to stay. That concerns me greatly.

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?

Call it out. In my neighborhood, there is a supposed White Supremist family that is making life uncomfortable for everyone in the neighborhood, not just People of Color. The cool thing that's happened is the community as a whole has come together, supporting each other and not letting this fringe element break us apart. We respond to hate crime for calling it what it is; let's not sugar coat it or call it free speech or free expression. We can't confront it if we are not willing to name it.

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?

As I mentioned before, I will put the needs of the people of my district first. Some of the nonprofit services that are needed in District 2 are underrepresented, yet they are very present in other districts. That being said, District 2 is not an island. As a council, we need to balance the needs of our Districts with the needs of the City as a whole. We can do both; it just takes collaboration and working towards a common goal.

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. This is necessary because those front-line staff doing the work are among the hardest working, most caring individuals I've ever met. Yet, they are not too far away from being in need of services themselves because of their income level. We need to pay these people what they are worth, or at least come close to it.