

Harold Scoggins
Mayoral Nominee for Fire Chief
Seattle Fire Department
Confirmation Questions
2015

1) What, in your opinion, are the most critical, immediate issues facing the Seattle Fire Department?

The Seattle Fire Department has an excellent national reputation, but like fire service agencies around the country, there are multiple challenges that lie ahead. The most critical issues facing the Seattle Fire Department are:

- Having adequate resources to meet the increasing demand for emergency medical services (EMS)
- Hiring to fill a high number of entry level firefighter vacancies
- Developing targeted recruitment to achieve a more diverse workforce
- Developing leadership and planning for succession

It is important to understand that each of these issues present individual challenges, but also impact one another. Meeting the rising need for basic EMS is challenging with the Department's current level of resources. The Department will need to add resources to meet that demand, while finding ways to reduce the high number of non-emergency calls that expend valuable fire department resources.

The Department has 83 firefighter vacancies with a large number of expected retirements over the next few years. Maintaining staffing levels will be a challenge. In addition, the firefighters hired must reflect the diverse community they serve. The Department will need to target recruitment efforts to address gender and ethnicity gaps. Focusing on existing programs that develop individuals to become future firefighters, as well as creating new programs that can provide additional opportunities for learning will be critical to our success.

Future leaders will need to be identified and developed to ensure continued success of the Seattle Fire Department. The Department's formal and professional promotional requirements will need to be reviewed. Creating promotional requirements that better prepare personnel before they assume leadership positions will assist in creating well rounded supervisors and managers. Acting and or interim position opportunities to create future leaders will need to be explored further.

2) How will your approach setting priorities for the Department and address the possibility of leaner budgets and public demand for consistently high-quality emergency services?

The Department's priorities will be centered on meeting its core mission of saving lives and protecting property. Having an effective emergency response model, an active and

engaged fire prevention bureau and a public education division that communicates public safety messages are all critical to success.

As budgets become leaner, the Department will need to identify areas where costs can be reduced or offset by bringing in additional revenues. We will also need to look for new and innovative ways to deliver services to the community.

With the rapid growth and development that is taking place in the City, providing a leaner budget may be difficult with the competing need to increase services in many areas of the Department. As the Fire Chief, it is my responsibility to manage these conflicting priorities and clearly communicate with the Mayor and Council on significant Department needs as well as areas where we can create more efficiency.

3) How do you plan to ensure that councilmembers and council staff receive the information needed from your Department to make policy and financial decisions?

Good communication is key to ensuring councilmembers and council staff have the information needed to make policy and financial decisions on fire department related issues. The Department has had ongoing positive relationships with past and present Public Safety Chairs, councilmembers and council staff. We are committed to maintaining those relationships.

4) What issues do you believe are most important in maintaining or improving emergency response times?

As the community grows and the number of emergency responses continues to rise, maintaining and/or improving response times will become more challenging. Having resources strategically located throughout the City and becoming innovative in the way these resources are deployed is critical to meeting this challenge.

We will seek out innovative solutions. Fire departments around the country have launched a number of different pilot programs to address rising EMS call loads ranging from deploying firefighters in smaller vehicles to partnering with social service agencies to reducing non-emergency calls. Developing different ways to deploy our resources will be important to our success in maintaining emergency response times.

We will also need to utilize data analytics and technology to help guide our deployment decision making. Having current and relevant data can advance our efforts in the real time setting. Technology can be used to assist in identifying trends or spikes in certain emergency types and additional resources can be deployed in a rapid manner to meet an immediate need.

It is also necessary to maintain a strong firefighting force to meet the complex needs of a community with multiple risks, but we should always be seeking new ways to deliver excellent service to the community.

5) What is your view of an ideal relationship between the Mayor, City Council, and Fire Chief?

I expect to have a healthy relationship with the Mayor and the City Council that is based on trust and open communication. Strong working relationships are critical particularly when dealing with emerging situations or crises. It is my goal that each councilmember feels free to reach out to me should they have questions, comments or concerns regarding the fire department.

I look forward to establishing a structure where consistent updates can take place between the Council and SFD. This will be especially important when presenting new projects and/or programs, or providing incident updates. Please know that I will make myself or my staff available to answer questions or provide briefings when particular issues affect council and council constituents.

As a direct report to the Mayor, I would also keep him informed on communications between the Fire Department and Council. This would allow for the openness and transparency needed to accomplish the goals of the Department and the City.

6) Seattle is a culturally diverse community. What strategies would you use to make the Seattle Fire Department more representative of the community it serves? How would you implement those strategies in Seattle?

Achieving a diverse workforce will be an ongoing process as the Department moves into the future and the community continues to change. This process starts with a review of the Department's existing recruitment, outreach and marketing strategies. A comprehensive evaluation will help us identify any potential gaps in the different programs.

After the evaluation, a targeted outreach plan can be developed and implemented. Timing is critical since the firefighter application process opens in May of this year. Our recruitment efforts have to allow individuals access to the needed information to become successful in our process. Our outreach efforts have to include one on one mentoring. These are relationships that success will be built upon.

Finding the right individuals inside the Department to become primary recruiters and creating an understanding that every member of the SFD is also critical to our success. Our members will continue to visit recruitment and job fairs, reach out to university and college programs, visit community and neighborhood groups, make personal contacts when out in the community and work to develop the individuals in our internal programs.

Finally, our marketing has to create an interest in the proud profession of firefighting, but it also has to say and show that all are welcome to apply. We will need to use social media (Facebook, twitter, YouTube, QR codes...) to reach today's youth, because these are the primary ways they communicate. We will need to create short video messages with individuals from diverse backgrounds in multiple languages that will appeal to youths as

well as their parents. These messages will show that the Seattle Fire Department is a career option for them and it will let their parents know firefighting is an honorable profession.

7) A study released in 2013 by the [National Partnership for Women and Families](#) revealed that across the nation, women earn just 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. In the Seattle metro area that number drops to 73 cents for every dollar – the worst pay gap in the nation. At the City of Seattle, the pay gap among City employees is significantly smaller, with women earning 90.5 cents for every dollar a man earns. This gap widens when race is taken into account. To address gender and race inequities at the City of Seattle, last year, the Mayor and the Council introduced a [joint resolution](#) that instructs the City, among other things, to:

- Develop training and strategies that address gender and race equity in the workplace
- Identify policies and practices that may contribute to disparities
- Create a citywide leadership and management development program for employees and provide opportunities for career growth in under-represented employee groups

What steps would you take to address gender and race inequities, if you were confirmed as Chief?

The first step I will take is to clearly identify and understand what gender and equity deficiencies currently exist in the organization. Meeting with the Department's Human Resources division and RSJI Change Team members is a critical starting point. Gaining clarity in our organizational makeup is a must in identifying the gaps in the Department.

Education and training on gender and race inequities has already begun within the Department. Once the training is completed, we will have to continuously evaluate our policies and ensure they are inclusive. We will also need to ensure our practices are relevant and in alignment with the City and community expectations. It will be important to evaluate the feedback from Department members to identify if the desired message was communicated and received.

Developing more information access points and more widely communicating Department information will lead to increased exposure to the career of firefighting in underrepresented communities. Access to information and pre-training opportunities can be critical to the success of individuals who have had no previous exposure or access to the fire service. Developing leaders in underrepresented areas within the Department often starts with current leaders believing in the skills and abilities of their employees.

8) In a Seattle Fire Department employee survey, roughly 90 percent of the participants said leadership and officer development training is important to achieving the Seattle Fire Department's mission. Recently, the Department has established new training programs to develop leadership capabilities. However, 22 percent of the employees (which includes a significant portion of the Department's current management) are eligible for retirement, resulting in the loss of key experience and skill over the next five years. Please

describe for us your view of the responsibility of the Fire Chief to develop leaders. Tell us what you have done in your previous work to meet this challenge.

Because firefighters are generally hired in groups, there may be a high number of retirements occurring simultaneously. The retirements can appear to be overwhelming, but when managed correctly can become recruitment opportunities.

Developing leaders within an organization is a challenge faced by many professions. This development starts from day one, hiring individuals who have the motivation and capability to become the next leaders inside and outside of the organization. During the course of my career I have had the opportunity to participate in several areas of leadership development including modifying promotional requirements to prepare tomorrow's leaders, creating leadership training programs inside the organization and participating in regional leadership development.

I have had experience working with Human Resources, Labor and represented management to modify promotional and entry level requirements to better prepare individuals for the positions they were pursuing. This required the implementation of professional and formal education requirements phased in over a period of time.

I have participated in the creation of Leadership Development training for multiple positions (Engineer/Driver, Captain & Battalion Chief). The training was designed to prepare the individuals for the position, give them a realistic understanding of the roles and responsibilities and provided an opportunity for them to gain insight from those experienced in the different positions. I have also had the opportunity to develop and participate in regional officer and executive training.

It is important to note that SFD has already started the process to develop its next generation of leaders. It will be my responsibility to support the current efforts and provide the assistance in developing future efforts to grow our personnel.