



City of Seattle
Seattle Public Utilities

Date: September 9, 2016
To: Councilmember Lisa Herbold
Chair, Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts Committee
From: Mami Hara
Nominated Director, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)
Subject: Answers to Council Confirmation Questions

Question 1

A. What is SPU's role and responsibility with respect to environmental issues, particularly environmental education, and sustainability?

SPU's role is critical to the environmental health and sustainability of Seattle. Its many lines of business – drinking water, storm and wastewater management, solid waste management, recycling, and composting – all fit under the umbrella of environmental resource management. SPU, and the entire community that partners on its work, are recognized across the U.S. for exemplary stewardship and enhancement of the local water environment, source water and watershed protection and delivery of exceptionally high quality drinking water, resource recovery including recycling, pollution control, environmental education, and climate change planning. Given this remarkable track record, it's clear that SPU takes its environmental stewardship, education and partnership roles seriously and is committed to continuous improvement. It is also important to note the exceptional stewardship role over its source waters that SPU is able to have, thanks to Seattle's ownership of the surrounding lands.

B. What experience do you have developing resilient, forward-thinking policies around climate change and what role does SPU play in promulgating those policies?

In both my private and public work, I have worked with cities on a range of aspects of sustainability that have direct bearing on climate policy and planning including green infrastructure, sustainable economic development, community cohesion, and environmental education. For example:

- I developed a national knowledge-sharing network for communities managing green infrastructure programs (SPU is an active member).
- I was on the planning and review committee for Philadelphia's citywide climate adaptation plan, [Growing Stronger: Toward a Climate-Ready Philadelphia](#), which examines assessment and

minimization of risks, needs for coordination around food supply, power grid, transportation, emergency services, water services, neighborhood investment, and other critical systems.

- In my private practice, I led development of [GreenPlan Philadelphia](#), an overall sustainability plan for the City's open space networks, which influenced the development of a shared sustainability agenda for the City's agencies as well as the development of [Green City Clean Waters](#), Philadelphia Water's landmark green infrastructure program.
- Later, I assisted with planning and implementation of [Green City Clean Waters](#) and was an advisor on the development of Philadelphia Water's Climate Planning group and its work.
- While at Philadelphia Water, I helped to initiate and foster a new Citywide Task Force for Flood Risk Management, in response to expected increases in flooding due to climate change.

My professional and advisory work included advancing the positive day-to-day opportunities for communities around resiliency investments, such as the many potential benefits that come from green infrastructure, food access and environmental restoration such as green jobs, increased access to open space, flood management, neighborhood level investment and other economic, social, and environmental benefits. I have been an advisor to several organizations on policy, program and/or publication development such as Green For All, The Conservation Fund, National Resources Defense Council, Sustainable Cities Design Academy, Community Design Collaborative, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Network on Water Quality Trading, Urban Land Institute, and others around these topics.

The range of relevant climate adaptation policies and approaches for SPU to evaluate, innovate, and/or adopt is as broad as it is critical. It is encouraging that SPU is widely recognized for its strong scientific and analytical approach toward developing climate resiliency. SPU has important adaptation efforts already underway in the areas of water conservation and green stormwater infrastructure.

C. How do you see SPU's role evolving in the next five years?

Over the next five years, SPU's preparation for the challenges and opportunities of climate change will need to include fostering, sustaining, and integrating new skills, knowledge, and networks. SPU's and Seattle's climate resiliency work should consistently integrate scientific knowledge into policies, programs, and projects. Sustaining such integration will require strong working relationships among governmental departments, tribal partners, NGO's and residents, and I very much look forward to continuing and building those relationships and collaborative efforts.

SPU also has much environmental work that will require sustained commitment and innovation, including:

- The Cedar River Watershed [Habitat Conservation Plan](#) (HCP), a 50-year, ecosystem-based plan to address declining populations of salmon, steelhead, and other species of fish and wildlife in the Cedar River basin, while protecting our drinking water supply;
- [Protect Our Waters](#), the City of Seattle's commitment to take actions and promote partnerships that protect and improve creeks, lakes, the Duwamish River, and Puget Sound;

- The various and critical components of the [Solid Waste Management Plan](#), which includes waste prevention, reuse, sustainable building, organics, product stewardship, recycling, and the Clean City program; and
- SPU's Green Stormwater Infrastructure program, specifically its goal of managing [700 million](#) gallons by 2025.

Environmental justice is a key consideration in any environmental and resiliency work. I aim to build upon SPU's recognized racial and social justice efforts and fully weave environmental justice into utility services. I also look forward to working with Mayor Murray, City Council, and sister agencies on the City's new Equity and Environment Agenda.

Among the many opportunities to advance environmental justice that SPU will pursue in the future, the utility has a notable opportunity in its work along the Duwamish.

SPU is key partner in the efforts to clean up the Lower Duwamish Waterway, an EPA-led Superfund cleanup. EPA's 2014 record of decision on the best remedy, considered environmental justice explicitly and put forth the first-ever Environmental Justice analysis by the Superfund program. The City is currently partnering with King County, Boeing, and the Port of Seattle on preliminary design studies and those partners are working to bring in other potentially responsible parties to partner on design and construction.

In addition to the Superfund work, I understand that City departments are coordinating to better serve the Georgetown and South Park communities along the Duwamish River and I look forward to being part of the collaboration to address those neighborhoods' quality of life and environmental justice issues.

As with any large, important agenda, our expanding efforts around environment, resiliency, and equity must be unified by a clear vision and shared by agencies, partners and residents. I truly look forward to working with other agencies and residents to develop and implement a comprehensive and impactful environmental vision.

Question 2

SPU employees are your partners in providing excellent service and meeting the challenges of a growing city. What is your approach to workforce development? What is your experience and approach to managing labor relations in an organization with a diverse portfolio such as SPU?

Based upon the understanding that every role within such an organization is essential and that the safety of our community relies on unbroken chains of responsibility and communications, I am committed to fostering a learning organization – one that that is diverse, mission-driven, informed by data, able to manage adaptively, and focused upon continuous improvement.

A focus on workforce development and a commitment to shared goals are essential to this approach. A diverse, adaptable, and cohesive workforce requires a range of training opportunities, multiple workforce entry points, and intersecting career ladders that allow for professional development and cross training.

For example, during my tenure at Philadelphia Water, we developed a series of lauded, intersecting programs to increase access to water related jobs:

- PowerCorpsPHL, a nationally recognized and now imitated model for training and employing at risk youth, done in partnership with the Mayor's Office and Parks + Recreation;
- A Departmental Apprenticeship Program to prepare local youth for entry level jobs within the Department;
- Reinvigoration and expansion of training at all staff levels;
- Examination and revision of civil service titles;
- Significant reduction of vacancies toward the achievement of departmental goals;
- Expanded management diversity;
- Improved employee data tracking; and
- An employee communications program.

I have day-to-day experience at Philadelphia Water working with unionized labor and coordinating with labor representatives on ad hoc issues and specific agendas. Their 1,900 employees manage drinking water, stormwater and sanitary water, including wastewater treatment/resource recovery, an extensive capital program and an environmental restoration program.

Question 3

The Race and Social Justice Initiative institutionalizes the City's commitment to eliminating racial disparities and inequity in Seattle. Mayor Murray has directed each department to conduct a minimum of three [Racial Equity Toolkits \(RETs\)](#) each year. SPU is seen as a leader amongst departments at identifying and completing RETs on their projects. Based on your experience, what are three areas of application for RETs you would consider for SPU in 2017 and how do you plan on maintaining SPU's leadership in conducting RETs?

It is exciting to join a City that so roundly supports racial equity and to join a utility that has a strong, renewed commitment to providing equitable services, cultivating a diverse work force and eliminating institutional racism.

I understand that SPU applies the Racial Equity Toolkit to major projects and completed several earlier this year. Each branch of SPU also is working to identify at least two policies, projects, or programs that would benefit from the application of the Racial Equity Toolkit by the end of the year. I am very interested to learn more about this work and the priorities identified and will be eager to share the results when the branches complete their analyses.

At this stage of my understanding of SPU's slated projects, three possible applications for the coming year include:

- The update of the SPU Strategic Business Plan, for which planning is underway and for which application of the Racial Equity Toolkit is will start in the fall.

- The impacts of capital construction projects on communities. The information gleaned could help identify tailored actions to minimize negative impacts and provide equitable treatment to neighborhoods across the city.
- The expansion of the Clean City program (graffiti removal, illegal dumping, litter collection). These services are important to maintain the quality of life in all neighborhoods.

Excellent practices in service equity and promotion of diversity will reap significant long-term benefits to our customers and staff, so I will continue and enhance SPU's efforts to ensure that diversity, race and social justice, and service equity are central to our work and fully embedded within the structure and practices of the utility. I will work with SPU staff and partners to ensure the necessary strategies, innovations, workflow, and oversight; I will demonstrate my personal commitment to racial, social, and environmental justice by continuing to learn, grow, and adapt – and to encourage SPU's leaders and staff to model their commitments as well. Additionally, I very much look forward to learning more about Mayor Murray's new Equity and Environment Agenda and being a key part of advancing that effort.

Question 4

SPU and Philadelphia Water provide similar services with the exception of solid waste collection. What are the principal differences between the two utilities? What are the differences in governance between the utilities?

There are many important areas of comparison between the two utilities, expanded upon below, but in a snapshot, the three largest differences between Philadelphia Water and SPU are:

- Solid waste management is not part of Philadelphia Water's responsibilities;
- Philadelphia Water treats the sanitary water that it collects and has an aggressive resource recovery program in parallel with treatment processes, including a bio-solids partnership, cogeneration, and thermal energy; and
- Philadelphia has much greater need for and level of treatment for drinking water, due to lower quality of source water than Seattle.

Solid Waste

While solid waste is not within Philadelphia Water's purview, my understanding of SPU's goals around resource recovery, conservation, minimization of negative impacts to residents, partnership with customers, responsible land stewardship, and rate affordability resonate with my own goals and experience. I will focus on those goals in concert with the best routes to achieving the program's targets.

Wastewater to Resource Recovery

Philadelphia Water manages wastewater for the city and several suburban districts via three wastewater treatment plants that are being enhanced through a series of energy recovery and generation projects including cogeneration, thermal energy and solar energy. The utility also has undertaken a public-private partnership to facilitate an upgrade to Class A bio-solids pellets. As you know, Seattle's sanitary water is treated by King County. Philadelphia has more than twice the length of sewers lines than Seattle at 3,000 miles vs 1,421 miles.

Drinking Water

As with many cities, Philadelphia's drinking water supply starts far outside the city, flowing through urban, industrial and agriculture lands, treatment plants, and other sources of pollution. Philadelphia Water shares SPU's commitment to watershed and source water protection, but with much less ability than Seattle to regulate inputs and manage headlands. With ownership and control of nearly all of the watersheds supplying Seattle's drinking water, Seattle has less need for the types of drinking water treatment necessary in Philadelphia and ensures water quality through state of the art water testing procedures.

In addition to supplying drinking water to the city's residents, SPU supplies water to 19 suburban water districts and the Cascade Water Alliance. Philadelphia Water also provides wholesale services to several suburban districts, with the key difference being that the great majority of its contracts are for management of sanitary water instead of provision of drinking water.

Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflows

Seattle and Philadelphia both have separated and combined parts of their drainage and sanitary collection systems and Seattle also has areas of partially separated infrastructure. For both, there is a strong commitment to preventing water pollution. Both cities are regulated under the Clean Water Act via NPDES permits – and are also tackling combined sewer overflows through federal and state-approved Consent Decrees/Agreements on Consent that include a focus on green stormwater infrastructure as well as traditional (gray) storage (the plans are called, respectively, The Plan to Protect Seattle's Waterways and Philadelphia's Green City Clean Waters). Both cities are leaders in green stormwater infrastructure, which is a passion of mine, and I am excited to build upon Seattle's tremendous legacy in stormwater management and to share lessons learned from Philadelphia and from my work with programs around the country.

Community Partnerships

Both utilities have community partnership programs; I look forward to learning more about SPU's and will bring my experience from Philadelphia in order to find ways to further enhance community partnerships and involvement with SPU.

Climate Adaptation Planning

Both utilities are engaged in climate adaptation planning (a critical area of work) but Seattle's program is much more established and supported by a larger staff. The formal development of Philadelphia Water's program began about two years ago.

Strategic Planning

SPU has a [Strategic Business Plan](#) that includes an overall rate path. Philadelphia has two separate guiding documents: a Strategic Plan and a Strategic Financial Plan and both were new instruments instituted during my tenure at Philadelphia Water. Our aim was to integrate the two into a Strategic Business Plan through a process much like SPU's in the next update cycle.

Governance

SPU and Philadelphia Water have several similarities with respect to governance. For both utilities:

- Federal and state regulators set a range of environmental regulatory requirements that drive utility programs and investments;
- The office of the Mayor provides oversight;
- City Council provides critical reviews, approvals, ordinances, and other governance;
- An executive team collaborates on departmental governance; and
- Citizen Advisory Committees inform departmental policy and programs.

In terms of differences:

- SPU handles its own billing and related services but the Philadelphia Water Revenue Bureau (WRB) handles most aspects of the water and sewer billing operation, including billing, and providing some related financial services to Philadelphia Water Department customers such as management of rate relief assistance. Philadelphia Water participates in policy setting and program development with the Water Revenue Bureau but administration of billing is handled by WRB.
- SPU operates the Customer Contact Center for SPU and Seattle City Light customers while Philadelphia Water manages a customer call center for service issues. Most billing related calls go to Philadelphia's Water Revenue Bureau.

Question 5

What are two examples of the most controversial issues you dealt with during your time at Philadelphia Water? How were these issues resolved? What strategies did you employ to bring the matters to a successful conclusion?

Philadelphia Water Participation Rate

The primary metric for equitable contracting that is measured in Philadelphia is the participation rate – the percentage of contract dollars awarded to disadvantaged businesses across an agency's capital, consulting and procurement contracts. When I first joined Philadelphia Water, the agency's annual participation rate tended to be in the low teens – below the citywide target – which was of considerable concern to Council. In follow-up, I responded by:

- Learning about barriers to participation;
- Improving departmental processes;
- Hiring and training staff (unlike SPU, there were no staff dedicated to departmental participation and inclusion); and
- Working closely with staff and partners on the development of:
 - Employee education;
 - Contractor education;
 - Contractor bonding and certification programs;
 - A participation newsletter to Council and industry that included data, announcements, and opportunities; and

- Improved tracking and reporting approaches that other departments came to adopt.

These and a number of other efforts brought Philadelphia Water's participation rate up steadily over five years from the low teens to 30%.

Flooding

The increasing threat of flooding was highlighted in Philadelphia, during a flash flood in September 2011.

We responded by undertaking:

- In-depth modeling and other analyses of flood prone areas to identify the best capital program approaches;
- Engagement and surveying of community members;
- Development of outreach and education materials and programming;
- Grant applications to expand available funding;
- Signage at areas of possible flash flooding; and
- Most importantly, the creation of a multi-agency, Citywide Flood Risk Management Task Force charged with developing early action strategies, project prioritization, communications and education programs, a building owner's guide, funding plans and coordinated action and response plans.

Question 6

SPU is embarking on a mid-term update of their Strategic Business Plan. What experience do you have guiding enterprise-wide business planning? What are the key elements to developing an authentic and disciplined business plan for the utility?

I oversaw development of Philadelphia Water's Strategic Plan (its first in over 20 years), the department's Strategic Plan update in 2015, and also initiated development of its first ever Strategic Financial Plan. SPU's approach of integrating both efforts is superior and it was Philadelphia Water's goal to achieve that integration in the next planning cycle. Since these were the first strategic planning efforts for most employees of Philadelphia Water, we first needed to clarify the role of strategic planning, identify utility goals, expand internal financial literacy, and allow for in-depth efforts on the financial plan. Advantageously, the utility had long term experience with rate planning and capital program financing. We managed all of the work in-house in order to cultivate additional planning capacity within the department.

In the most basic, general sense, a strategic business plan needs to be built upon understanding the needs of customers, the needs for and cost of doing business including probable future costs, and a sustaining vision for the utility. All planning work must be underpinned by considerable engagement and data, in order that the plan reflect the needs, values, and goals of the people a utility serves. Internal and external engagement should be facilitated by clear, objective information and honest assessments of the issues, opportunities, and needs facing the utility, including its community and surrounding environment.

The basic elements of a strategic business plan include:

- Vision, Mission, Values;
- Assessment of Current Conditions, Future Needs and Priority Issues;
- Organizational Structure;
- Strategic Goals, Service Levels and Targets;
- Key Activities and Programs;
- Demand Forecast;
- Cost Forecast;
- Revenue Needs; and
- Rate Plan.

After the plan is initiated, it is supported by regular progress tracking.

Developing reliable cost, demand, and revenue forecasts are a critical and difficult component of a strategic business plan. Many unexpected events can disrupt the anticipated rate path, which is heavily predicated upon the cost and demand forecasts. The recent loss of the Port of Seattle as a drainage customer is an example of an impactful, unexpected event.

Typically, a cost of service model and cost forecast is built for each utility line of service. It should include the cost of financing capital projects, replacement and renewal of infrastructure, operations and workforce requirements, retirement obligations, service equity, probable costs in meeting regulations, necessary buffers against possible contingencies and emergencies, and market/pricing changes.

No such planning process or plan can be perfectly prescient, given the wide range of data and concerns that must be anticipated, weighed and accommodated. But both the strategic business planning process and resultant plan are essential to sustainable utility operations and to supporting informed adaptive management by all stakeholders.

Question 7

What experience do you have contacting and involving community stakeholders in infrastructure projects, public works, and policy development? What is your approach to identifying and managing community impacts and what strategies will you use to ensure input from underrepresented constituencies?

My career's work in planning, urban design, policy development, utility management, and network development has been predicated on continuous community engagement with a wide range of constituencies across the U.S.

Assessing possible community impacts can be informed by a number of analyses, such as:

- Modeling and mapping;
- Direct engagement, inquiry and gatherings;
- Review of relevant precedents and similarities or dissimilarities in context;

- Economic analyses;
- Review of socio-economic data and ethnographic studies; and
- Iterative analyses as projects/programs/policies are implemented.

The strategies I most often rely upon are designed to ensure inclusion, accessibility, engagement, and aggregation of useful data. Primary considerations include:

- Range of media and formats;
- Language accessibility;
- Convenience of formats, locations and hours;
- Encouragement via fun, food, community building;
- Relationship building;
- Relevance and respect;
- Engagement partnerships; and
- Clarity of inputs and outputs.

Example strategies include the use of:

- “Un-meetings” where information exchange stations allow for flexible arrival and departure times, as well as direct engagement;
- Supervised activity stations for children, allowing their parents to participate;
- Meetings at senior centers and recreation centers during highly frequented times of day;
- Consultation with community partners on locations, formats, activities and food for meetings;
- Partnerships with community based organizations, particularly those engaged with underrepresented constituencies;
- Language accessibility through translation services and communications materials in relevant languages;
- Accessible and interesting presentation of relevant background information to facilitate informed decision-making or consultation;
- Space and time for other community work to be accomplished; and
- Listening and listening some more and then get back to people – let them know they have been heard.

Question 8

How do you plan to build public trust and how will you communicate with the City Council on major projects and decisions?

Public Trust

Demonstration of commitment to the public’s values through sustained action supporting their values is essential to retaining trust. The public must see that SPU staff continually puts their expectations and interests at the fore of utility investments and activities. Maintaining an understanding of the public’s values, needs, and expectations requires continual engagement, supported by transparency and

accountability. My role is to foster those characteristics in the culture of SPU, among all employees and to place the public's interest at the fore.

The utility's engagement must be with the full public; trust must be built through inclusion. We must find ways to meaningfully engage our diverse customers in decisions affecting them – in the impacts of construction projects, the type and level of services and the establishment of rates.

The City of Seattle and SPU have strong reputations for identifying and removing economic and cultural language barriers to accessing City services. I will build on those efforts as we aim to increase access for historically excluded people.

City Council

I will work with the Mayor and Council to develop and commit to an effective project identification and communication process. We will only know the best approach after collaborating on one but in my previous experience, I have found that clear communications on major investments and decisions can be assisted by:

- Supportable and clear project plans and budgets at the onset (if supportable estimates are not yet feasible during project conceptualization, that must be made clear, in order to align expectations about project costs).
- Vetted reporting formats that allow for rapid legibility and that include details on schedule, performance, spending, and any cost over-runs. Foremost, reporting formats must be useful for policymakers in their oversight role.
- Regular reporting at agreed upon intervals (and that go beyond a traditional annual capital projects budget review).
- An agreed upon process for necessary future remedies.

Question 9

How will you cultivate partnerships with other City departments, such as Department of Transportation? What opportunities do you see to enhance delivery of City projects in right-of-ways?

To support Seattle's vibrant urban environment and to deliver on SPU's [Customer Promise](#), SPU must help cultivate One-City partnerships that broadly and holistically advance the City's needs. My role will be to facilitate effective partnerships and to model best practice partnership approaches.

I will encourage close communications, joint problem solving, and collaborative opportunity building across all staff levels in concert with SPU's sister agencies, as well as regional and state partners such as King County, Port of Seattle, Department of Ecology, tribes, and our wholesale water customers. At the City level, I anticipate working closely with the following departments, among others:

- Seattle Department of Transportation – to align our infrastructure planning and coordinate our work in the right of way to achieve the City's green infrastructure goals;
- Office of Planning & Community Development – to align growth planning and utility infrastructure needs and to advance environmental justice and equity goals;

- Seattle City Light – to coordinate utility functions, customer service and billing;
- Office of Sustainability & the Environment – to closely align environmental strategies and investments;
- Department of Neighborhoods – to align neighborhood, service equity and community inclusion strategies;
- Department of Parks & Recreation – to coordinate joint property use, property impacts, and projects; and
- Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections – to align permitting functions.

Enhancement of project delivery in the right of way is a multi-dimensional issue that can prompt several possible shared goals, such as:

- Minimizing negative impacts to businesses and communities;
- Creating opportunities for disadvantaged businesses, local businesses, and residents;
- Advancing education on the mission and work of the project partners;
- Including community goals in project development; and
- Furthering innovation in projects in the ROW in order to increase the value of projects, reduce costs, increase efficiency or effectiveness, and ensure equity in public investment and/or other key aims.

Identifying shared goals and opportunities such as these can lead to new ways of working together to benefit Seattle, such as breaking down of barriers and identifying the capacities, limitations, and resources that each partner can bring to bear in achieving mutual goals. I will collaborate robustly to build goals, strengthen relationships, and build strategic alignments with SPU’s sister agencies and across all levels of government.

Question 10

What role or value can SPU provide in making Seattle an affordable city? What opportunities do you see to control the growth of utility expenses and minimize the financial burden on ratepayers?

Maintaining excellent, safe, reliable drinking water and utility services is a critical contribution to sustained public and economic health of Seattle. We must always provide great value to our customers, strive for greatest efficiency in our work, and ensure affordability for all, including our low-income customers. In order to achieve those goals SPU has an adopted six-year Strategic Business Plan and initiated an update. I will be guiding that effort.

Managing expenses to keep rates low while ensuring service and also assisting low-income customers requires in-depth consideration of:

Value – Achieving the highest value for customers’ rates entails maximizing returns while keeping costs down. Additionally, our customers need to know what they are paying for and why. For example, SPU has numerous, costly regulatory requirements. Finding ways to meet those requirements in ways that are cost-effective for customers is critical, as is sharing an understanding of those requirements with our customers.

Efficiency – I know that SPU has been identifying efficiencies through a number of review and analysis processes and will continue those efforts. Efficiencies can be found at all scales of a utility’s work. At the largest scale of impact, identification of priorities is key; alignment and prioritization of capital and operational needs with strategic planning is a critical area of work. SPU’s ongoing customer and employee engagement efforts have the potential to lead to useful efficiency opportunities. At a more granular level, SPU’s new performance metrics program should provide data necessary to identifying and monitoring further process improvements and business streamlining practices.

Low-Income Customers – It is important to help our most vulnerable customers using programs such as the Utility Discount Program (UDP) and Emergency Assistance Program and any other tools that are available to us. From my understanding, the City has doubled the UDP enrollment from 14,000 to 28,000 two years earlier than the 2018 goal, primarily due to automated enrollment of Seattle housing authority tenants. This is a big accomplishment. I will continue efforts with City partners to improve access and reduce barriers for all who qualify to enroll in the Utility Discount Program. Where UDP and other existing programs are not enough, we will strive to ensure that low-income customers can afford to pay for essential utility services.

Question 11

SPU and Seattle City Light (SCL) share a common billing system known as the New Customers Information System (NCIS). The project is over budget and behind schedule. What experience do you have working on large-scale, municipal technology projects? What strategies will you employ to maintain public trust and keep the Council informed of major shifts in project direction?

Seattle City Light and SPU customers rightly expect the two utilities to implement a high quality, cost-effective system and Council rightly expects transparent, readily legible reporting on the status of major projects. I have not personally shepherded a technology project the size of the NCIS system but during a staffing gap, I directly managed the IT Department for Philadelphia Water and gained a relatively deep understanding of the issues, needs, and opportunities around IT for utilities. During my overall tenure at Philadelphia Water, we:

- Oversaw the complete overhaul of the Department’s data center, including retirement of antiquated systems;
- Streamlined processes between the Department and Central IT;
- Attained significant improvements, professionalization, and modernization of IT services;
- Developed a new version of our Capital Program Information System (CAPIT);
- Created protocols and processes for reporting on projects and levels of service;
- Conducted an assessment of billing system capacity and needs;
- Secured reliable digital surveillance of our plants; and
- Provided necessary training and expanded job opportunities for IT staff.

I have been responsible for oversight of IT services in both my private practice and public service. The need for the collaborative relationships required to deliver effective technology assets is similar to what is needed for delivery of traditional public works projects.

As noted in Question 8, timely notification of risks and changing costs is key and I truly understand the desire to identify and examine budget changes in advance. I believe deeply in openness and accountability in public service, so, one of my first priorities will be to develop honest, open communications with my committee chair and other council members, as well as quickly comprehensible communications materials.

Question 12

What would you like to accomplish in your first year of office?

I will aim to:

- Learn as much as possible about SPU, its customers, people, work, regulatory requirements, projects, partners, needs, and opportunities;
- Gain a deep understanding of the interests and needs of Seattle residents and their representatives and to understand the potential to support those interests through the work of the utility;
- Ensure development of a forward thinking and effective Strategic Business Plan, underpinned by SPU's vision and mission;
- Assess the risks and existing factors that may impact the current rate path and consistently communicate assessments with the Mayor and Council;
- Identify areas for research on how to best leverage SPU's investments and activities to bring maximum benefit to customers, to streamline the work of the utility and to create efficiencies;
- Facilitate the development of an equity and environment framework for the utility, and initiate any early action opportunities;
- Develop open and trusting relationships and shared agendas with sister agencies, our customers, regulators, tribal partners, representatives, labor, and local media;
- Convey the continuity and expansion of SPU's strengths, key programs, and fiscal responsibility;
- Evaluate the role of the utility in both positive and negative community impacts;
- Understand all aspects of the Racial Equity Toolkit and expand upon its use and performance such as through increases in participation, inclusion, opportunities, and benefits;
- Participate in the development and implementation of an effective capital projects reporting protocol;
- Understand the opportunities and barriers to green infrastructure, recycling, and other resource recovery;
- Complete implementation of SPU's metrics and reporting program; and
- Understand opportunities to collaborate for high performance investments in Seattle's right-of-ways.