

# Debra J. Smith

September 11, 2018

*Via Email Only*

Teresa Mosqueda  
Seattle City Councilmember, Position 8  
Chair – Housing, Health, Energy, and Workers' Rights Committee  
City of Seattle  
600 Fourth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

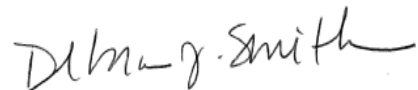
RE: Seattle City Light General Manager Appointment

Dear Councilmember Mosqueda,

I was honored to be nominated by Mayor Durken to be the next General Manager/CEO of Seattle City Light. It's an important job and I am energized by the challenges ahead and the opportunity to contribute to the City's continuing success. I look forward to talking with you and other committee members at the hearing scheduled for this Thursday.

Attached are answers to the first 21 of the 34 questions posed by the Council. I appreciate you allowing me the extra time and I will submit the remaining answers on or before next Tuesday, September 18, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra J. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra J. Smith

## Background

- 1. Much of your prior experience is with managing smaller utilities with workforces and budgets of less than ten percent of Seattle City Light. Can you expand more on how you believe your experience would enable you to effectively transition between such smaller utilities and Seattle City Light?**

*My experience over the last five years has indeed been as the General Manager of a smaller utility. Prior to my time at Central Lincoln, I spent 17 years at the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), Oregon's largest public utility. Although both Central Lincoln, EWEB, and the communities they serve, are smaller than Seattle City Light; EWEB is a fully integrated utility with multiple generation facilities (primarily hydro but also wind), a "long" power position, a trading floor and at the time I was there, 550 employees. I worked my way up and through the organization and "scaled" my approach as I went. When I left for Central Lincoln, I was the Assistant General Manager and all operational functions reported in to me including electric and water operations, generation, power operations, engineering and customer service.*

*I recognize that Seattle City Light is a larger organization with considerably more customers and employees than either EWEB or Central Lincoln, but the functions are very similar. At Central Lincoln, with a small non-operational staff, I often self-performed key functions while developing the skill in others. My management style is to set a clear tone at the top, establish expectations, support my people and insist on accountability. Those are skills that are easily scalable. Just as it was at Central Lincoln, a big challenge at City Light will be to establish solid working relationships and establish mutual trust with key staff members, as well as the folks who will hold me accountable.*

- 2. What is the most publicly controversial issue you have dealt with in your career? What role did you have in the situation, and how did you contribute to its resolution? What lessons did you learn from the experience and what would you have done differently?**

*While at EWEB, I was the Telecommunication Development Manager and we looked at several different options for providing broadband or gigabit service. The fiber backbone that had been built for system control purposes had considerable excess capacity and the initial thought was to do a universal service overbuild. Ultimately, we chose to go with a much smaller project that would bring high-speed capacity to areas of Eugene with commercial concentrations. Although EWEB has a separately elected board of commissioners, the City Council approves issuance of debt and therefore use of proceeds. To proceed with MetroNet, the Council had to approve the business plan and use of remaining bond proceeds for phase I of the build-out.*

*The telecommunications companies were very vocally opposed, and I appeared in front of the council multiple times. Ultimately the council approved the use of the telecom bond proceeds and we thought we had a project. Then came September 11, 2001 and the recession that followed. I became concerned about the softening economy and potential impact of reduced customer demand on our business model. I brought our outside consultant back to re-validate the revenue projections and we updated the expense and capital projections based on new information. The ten-year return on investment moved from a positive 28% to a negative 9% and I recommended we defer the project in its entirety until the economy and associated business model improved. That was an incredibly tough recommendation for me to make after literally years of effort and it was not popular with the Board or community. But it was the right recommendation and I believe it saved the utility millions of dollars. Ultimately the remaining bond proceeds were used to expand our system to serve the water filtration plant and redeem customer bonds.*

*I don't believe I would do anything differently, but my learning was that you do the right thing, even when it's hard and transparency is critical.*

- 3. Seattle City Light has an essential advisory panel, the City Light Review Panel, that provides advice to the Utility, as well as to Council. This all-volunteer committee is vital to the democratic process that residents of Seattle enjoy. What is your experience working with community oversight committees, and what commitments about collaboration can you make to the Review Panel?**

*I was functionally responsible for Public Affairs at EWEB for many years and while under my leadership, we adopted the "IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) Spectrum of Public Participation." The IAP2 construct helps organizations match the public participation goal (inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower) with the level of public impact. It's easily scaled and works just as well for small engineering projects as large community-wide events. Citizen advisory committees are a preferred tool when the goal is collaboration and developing viable alternatives.*

*Two examples of projects at EWEB where I was directly involved in selecting the type of community input and chartering the group, were the MetroNet project described above and the Riverfront Master Planning project. Both used citizen advisory committees comprised of individuals from identified communities of interest. I believe direct community involvement is critical to gaining and maintaining public support for local government and I also believe in the value that community volunteers bring to the decision-making process.*

- 4. Seattle City Light not only distributes power to residential and commercial customers; but is also a major generator through a series of hydroelectric dams, and an active participant in wholesale energy markets. How has your experience prepared you for**

**managing a utility that provides generation, transmission, and distribution, as well as selling energy in the market? What steps do you believe Seattle City Light could take to be more effectively engaged in the western energy market?**

*As previously discussed, my career at EWEB included responsibility for hydroelectric generation, primarily on the McKenzie River, which was also Eugene's sole source of drinking water. Stewardship and source protection of that natural resource were critical. My portfolio of responsibilities also included power operations and the trading floor where EWEB's long position and BPA "slice" of the system were managed for the benefit of our customer-owners. I represented EWEB at the Public Generating Pool (PGP) and participated in the Northwest Power Pool's Members' Market Assessment and Coordination Initiative. At the time, that was the group that was evaluating the possibility of a Northwest Market, independent from California. Early in my career at EWEB, I helped develop the first set of power risk management guidelines when the market was just developing.*

*As a Public Power Council Executive Committee member, I am well-versed on market issues and the due diligence work Bonneville will be undertaking to consider participation in the Western Energy Imbalance Market (WEIM). Seattle City Light is on track to join the WEIM in Spring 2020, which puts them ahead of BPA in the decision-making process. I believe the Northwest region is at a critical point with respect to market development and adoption; Seattle City Light can and should be a leader in the work ahead. The SCL staff members who are currently engaged in these efforts are smart, collaborative and well thought of by their peers. If confirmed, I'm looking forward to working with them on City Light's participation in the WEIM.*

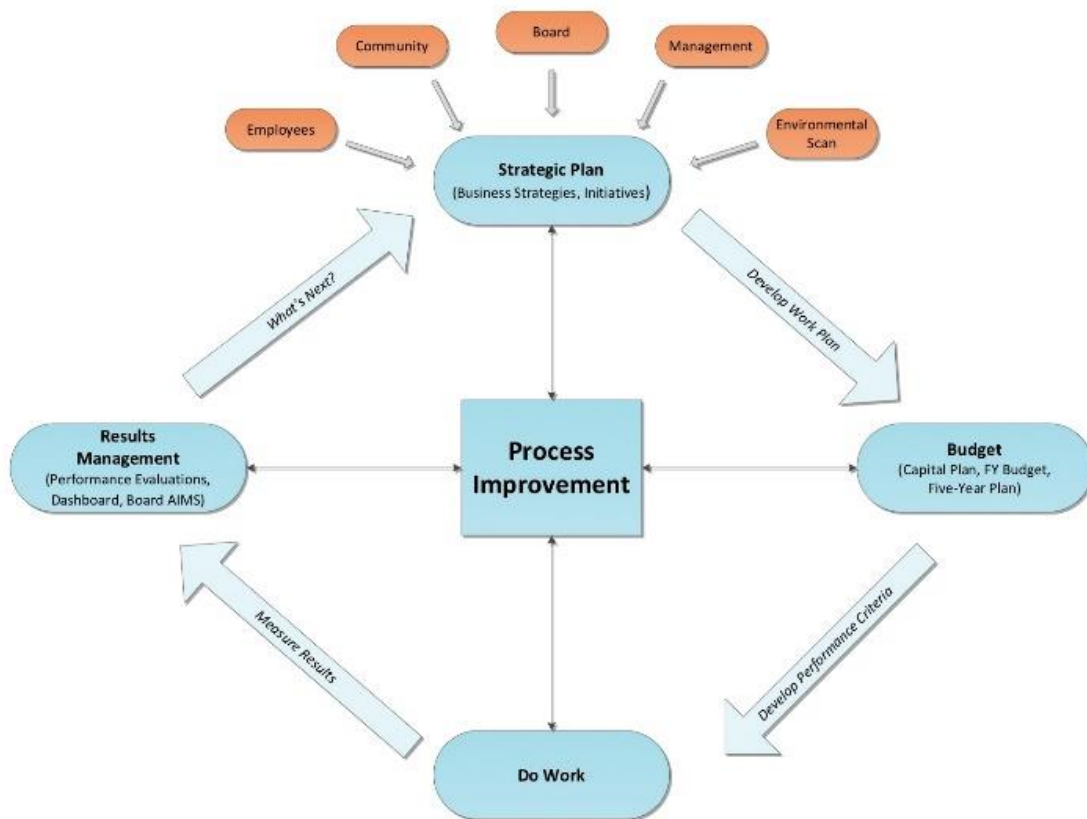
**5. Seattle City Light is embarking on a mid-term rate design update for their Strategic Business Plan. What experience do you have guiding enterprise-wide business planning? What are the key elements to developing an authentic and disciplined business plan for the Utility?**

*I've reviewed Council Resolution 31819 and briefly reviewed the City Light Review Panel's proposed work plan for the rate design project included in the Resolution. As noted in their August 23, 2018 letter, it's a big project with a very tight timeline. Narrowing the scope to developing policy level alternatives puts the focus on a critical component of the work; and one where citizen volunteers, with stakeholder and community input, seem best positioned to succeed. Allocation of costs across customer classes is typically a utility "cost of service" activity and establishing the revenue requirement is of course a huge task that drives the whole process. That work is ongoing I'm sure, as City Light staff looks for ways to deliver the additional capital and O&M expense reductions that are required as part of the Strategic Plan.*

*I previously mentioned my work at EWEB as the Telecommunication Development Manager. When we put the MetroNet project on hold, I had excess capacity and started doing work*

*directly for the General Manager. We had not directly resourced strategic planning since a retirement several years prior and so I picked up where we had left off and began facilitating the organizational effort. I consider myself a self-taught strategic planner and although we eventually added dedicated staff to the effort at EWEB, when I moved to Central Lincoln, I again assumed a lead role. I've been actively engaged in strategic and operational planning for the last 17 years.*

*I believe strategic planning sets direction and operational or business planning brings that direction to life. Although plans are updated with pre-determined regularity, change happens far more frequently in response to emerging issues and lessons learned as work is completed. The model I've used at both EWEB and Central Lincoln is described in the diagram that follows.*



*One of the things that I've learned along the way is that employees must be able to see themselves in the business initiatives of the organization. Understanding how they will be impacted and how they in turn, can impact results, is critical. Cascading goals are a great tool for establishing connection.*

**6. 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?**

*My approach to managing projects of any sort is consistent with my overall management philosophy – I insist on accountability, transparency and intentionality from the teams and people I lead. The three legs of project management (money, time and scope) are often challenging to balance and things change. What doesn't change is being accountable for results, being honest and transparent about things that do and don't go well and intentional when timelines or budgets are at risk.*

*I've already discussed the MetroNet project which would have been a large-scale technology project had we moved forward. My handling of the change in circumstance was accountable, transparent and intentional. I will also mention two projects Central Lincoln has completed in the last year and a half that provide a contemporary view of how I manage large pieces of work.*

*In August 2017, Central Lincoln moved into a new Operations Center that rolls trucks for the North part of our system and houses the shops, warehouse and fleet operation for the whole system. It was a big project and a significant investment in a non-operational asset. We developed a comprehensive communication plan which included open houses, regular community briefings and monthly reports to the Board. The project came in on time and under budget; just last month, we provided a final report to the Board on both the project and the alternative procurement method utilized.*

*During the same timeframe, we implemented a fully-integrated enterprise software system that replaced numerous legacy systems including our financial and customer information systems. We spent considerable time upfront talking with other utilities and putting a project management structure in place that would support a successful implementation. We trained and retrained employees and developed contingency plans to meet every imagined scenario. But a project of that scope invariably has customer impacts and no amount of planning could mitigate for them all.*

*Customers who were inconvenienced were dealt with promptly and respectfully. We empowered customer service reps to resolve problems in the moment and we kept the Board well-informed. The data conversion necessitated a hiatus in our collection activities and once resumed, we discovered inconsistencies in the way our "old" procedures had been applied that once resolved, created an initial increase in bad debt write-offs. We spent considerable time discovering root causes, putting additional controls in place, and communicating with the Board. Less than a year later, there was very little change in customer satisfactions ratings and the Board was more comfortable than ever with the flow of information and the impact of our practices on customers.*

## Philosophy and Vision

### **7. What do you view as the greatest challenges that public utilities currently face, and what do you see as the potential steps to address these challenges?**

*Utility Dive, an online source for utility information, lists physical and cyber grid security, distributed energy policy, rate design reform, aging grid infrastructure and the reliable integration of renewables and distributed energy resources, as the top five issues facing electric utilities today.*

*Seattle City Light's Strategic Plan identifies the following five challenges as transformative over the next decade: new technologies that are transforming how people use electricity, declining retail energy consumption, changing power supply assumptions - aka low wholesale prices and increasing costs of hydro power, loss of institutional memory due to the rapid rate of retirements, and the impacts of climate change and increasing value of carbon-free energy sources.*

*I believe our industry is in a state of rapid change and the landscape is shifting daily. We know that carbon-free, renewable resources are both what our customers want and what is best for us in both the long and short term. We balance that against customer affordability and are challenged to find ways to provide critical products and services to customers who struggle to keep the lights on. Rate design is critical, and reform must include fixed or demand charges that don't disincentivize conservation or unfairly burden low-income, low consumption customers.*

*At the same time, we know that competition will come from new entries to our market and if we don't change, we will become providers of last resort. Employees are understandably fearful of the changes ahead, and yet if we don't help them embrace change, they will ultimately pay the price. The business model is evolving, and we are all figuring it out together. Collaboration with customers, suppliers, and even potential competitors is critical. Ten years from now, we may truly be service providers who install and maintain solar panels on our customers' roofs and receive a monthly revenue stream to provide back-up service when the sun doesn't shine.*

*The key to utility success in the future is being flexible, adaptable, and nimble.*

### **8. What immediate challenges do you anticipate in attempting to be successful in implementing that vision, and what are some steps you would take to overcome such challenges?**

*I think the biggest challenge is the traditional utility mindset that focuses on “the way we’ve always done it” and the struggle to embrace the case for change. Success requires a culture shift. People generally don’t change unless and until they see how it benefits them, or how not changing, hurts the people they love or jeopardizes the things they believe. I see that happening daily in the electric utility industry. Jobs are changing because the way we do work is changing. Our work is changing because the things our customers want are changing. And what our customers want is changing because our climate and environment demand change, and our customers fear for their kids and grandkids. I know I do.*

*Moving beyond the status quo is hard and it requires conversation, curiosity and asking big questions. If confirmed, I will encourage employees throughout City Light to engage in an intellectually honest discussion about the future of our industry and how they can contribute to our success.*

- 9. In 2014, President Obama declared that broadband access was so necessary as to justify treating broadband as a utility. Do you agree that broadband access should be treated as a utility? If so, what role do you see Seattle City Light having with implementing broadband as a utility?**

*I agree that broadband access today is an essential service and the digital divide is a real problem that communities are dealing with everywhere. The City of Seattle is fortunate to have multiple service providers and Seattle City Light can and should support access to broadband for its community-owners. The most effective ways are through collaboration with private telecommunications utilities to improve the deployment process and by supporting programs that provide additional access to underserved populations. For example, Central Lincoln is a regional member of the Connect Americans Now Coalition which is using “TV white spaces” to provide broadband access to underserved, primarily rural, communities. We also make excess fiber capacity available to telecommunications utilities whenever possible, and we are in preliminary discussions with the Oregon Fiber Partnership to provide dark to serve the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz.*

*I understand the City of Seattle has previously looked at the feasibility of municipal broadband models and if confirmed, I’d be interested in reviewing the analysis.*

- 10. Prior to Jorge Carrasco, the City Light CEO/General Manager position was referred to as the City Light Superintendent, ostensibly to reflect the utility being operated more like a municipal department than a business. What is your perspective on the value of public utilities, and how and whether that should be reflected in titles?**

*I believe public utilities provide significant benefit to the communities they serve, and I’ve been proud to be part of public power for almost 23 years. Regardless of the governance structure*



*(municipal, PUD, co-op), public, aka community-owned utilities, represent the interests and priorities of their customer-owners and they are motivated by a sense of public purpose and community spirit over profit. Local control means local decision-making and customer-responsiveness. I'm indifferent to titles in general, unless lack of clarity makes it challenging to recruit qualified individuals. That's true for the GM/CEO/Superintendent, but also for other key positions.*

**11. Having reviewed the Strategic Plan and the resolution adopting it, what initiatives are you most excited to take on? Are there some that you believe should be a lower priority at this time?**

*First, a couple of general comments. I think the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan creates a compelling case for change and the number and focus of priorities and initiatives is reasonable and achievable. The work that was identified in the plan is timely and while some initiatives are more urgent, all are important.*

*That said, I believe successful change will only happen if workplace culture issues are addressed resulting in a more engaged and productive workforce. My background is in finance and accounting and my passion is around people – customers, employees and stakeholders, so I would tend to prioritize affordability and customer service modernization as a potential tool for reducing operational expenses. Completion of the AMI project is a pre-requisite for that work, so the timing is less flexible.*

*As is true for BPA, City Light will struggle to create a financially sustainable future without growth in revenues and consumption trends are not apt to change. I would prioritize other revenue-enhancing initiatives including electrification of City transportation and opportunities that emerge through participation in the Western Energy Imbalance Market. Rethinking rate structures is critical to ensure adequate revenue recovery and maintain social equity.*

*I believe we pay attention to the things we measure so setting specific and measurable goals is critical, as is benchmarking for performance. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Mayor and Council priorities and City Light's plans to move those priorities forward.*

**12. Stability in leadership remains a concern. What can the ratepayers expect as a commitment from you to staying with the Utility if confirmed?**

*I'm not a woman who is uncomfortable sharing her age and I will be 58 in January. I would hope and expect this to be my last position and I will serve for as long as I have the Mayor's and Council's confidence and am able to bring value to our customer-owners.*

**13. What role or value can Seattle City Light 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?**

*Economically disadvantaged customers spend proportionately more on utilities, housing, food and other essential items. Seattle City Light offers significant help for customers with qualifying incomes or who struggle to pay bills, and that's an important part of being a community-owned utility. In the long run, however, the very best thing a utility can do to support its limited income customers, is to keep rates as low as possible for everyone.*

*Seattle City Light's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan correctly identifies affordability as one of the highest priority items for utility success. If confirmed, one of my first priorities will be to work with staff to understand City Light's financial picture and to identify capital and O&M expense reductions consistent with the approved plan. I've been successful doing that at both EWEB and Central Lincoln and I'm confident I can help curb the growth in utility expenses and help make Seattle an affordable City for all.*

**14. What would you like to accomplish in your first year of office? What vision would you bring to the utility for the coming five, ten, and twenty years?**

- *You can expect me to come in every day, make an honest assessment of how I can bring the most value to my organization, and then do it!*
- *You can expect me to have a clear plan and vision but to be willing to change that vision often in response to new information or changes in the industry.*
- *You can and should expect me to work hard and take my responsibilities very seriously.*
- *You should also expect me to have fun and look for ways to contribute outside of the department I've been charged to lead.*

*In my first year at Seattle City Light, I would expect to invest much of my time getting to know the people who have a stake in our work. Customer groups, employees, my peers at the City and of course the Mayor and Council. As I learn, a plan will crystalize; of that I'm confident. The issues, concerns and trouble spots – many of them publicly known – will of course be reflected in that plan. But so too will the strengths, opportunities and areas of excellence that we can build on to make Seattle City Light even better. It would be inappropriate of me to know what I want to accomplish in the first year because I have much to learn, but I am so excited to figure it out.*

## **Workforce**

**15. City Light has multiple unions representing workers of various trades and skills. What is your experience working with organized Labor, particularly with a diverse group of unions and perspectives?**

*Employees at both EWEB and Central Lincoln are represented by the I.B.E.W. Local 659. At EWEB, most union members were engaged in electric and water operations work; employees did not organize until the early 2000's. In 2006, at the first contract renewal, employees voted to strike, and an 11-day work stoppage followed. I was a member of the Executive Management Team at the time and once everyone was back on the job, we worked hard to find ways to move the union-management relationship forward. We brought the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations to Eugene for interest-based bargaining training. We also put a Labor Management Committee (LMC) in place and committed to its success. During the great recession, our shared commitment to customer affordability resulted in a wage concession from employees which was negotiated in the LMC.*

*Central Lincoln has a very long held relationship with the I.B.E.W. and membership includes customer service reps and accounting clerks. When I joined the utility, there was a 20-year old unresolved grievance and no LMC. The utility's practice was to hire an outside negotiator to bargain contracts and there was a great deal of friction between employees and management as well as inside and outside employees. I immediately established a relationship with our Business Manager and we went to work changing the culture. Today, Central Lincoln has a high-functioning LMC that also serves as a bargaining team. The last contract had a five-year term and most issues are resolved by the LMC. Although I don't have experience working with multiple unions, I believe I will successfully navigate that transition by discovering shared interests and cultivating a sense of mutual respect. Philosophically, I support the right of employees to unionize and I don't view union employees as any less "my employees" than any others.*

**16. From front line workers and union leaders, we continue to hear concerns about safety in the workplace. Seattle City Light safety ratings are not the best in the nation. What will you do to change policy and practice so that norms and behavior change? What has your experience been with changing the culture of a workplace to address systemic issues around workplace safety? What is your philosophy on engaging with workers on implementation of workplace safety policies?**

*I believe managers and supervisors have a responsibility to care about the employees they are entrusted to lead and the most important way to show you care is to make sure that everyone goes home safe and sound. I understand that Seattle City Light's leadership has put considerable effort into workplace safety initiatives and before making specific recommendations, I would need to understand what is currently being done and where the opportunities for improvement remain. I will say that many workplace injuries have as a root cause, overconfidence or complacency, mental distractions, and a culture that supports taking "short cuts." The leadership changes at City Light over the last number of years may well be contributing to these root causes.*

*At Central Lincoln, we went through a period two years ago, where complacency and carelessness became concerns. Although we'd not had a serious accident, it "felt" like conditions were ripe for one to occur. We did several things that together sent a strong signal to our employees. 1. We called for a reset. We brought all employees together, I led the discussion and we all shared concerns and thoughts about what was and wasn't working. 2. We changed how safety meetings were run so there was additional, less structured time for near-miss and post-incident discussion. We established an expectation that employees involved in a near miss, would lead the discussion to make it personal and relevant. 3. We added resources to our safety group. For Central Lincoln, that meant dedicated staff and it also meant improved content and appropriate tools. 4. We developed a safety discipline policy and procedure that would ensure consistency across the organization. We made it clear that while near misses wouldn't necessarily result in discipline, clear safety violations would. We've used a small group approach ever since, to evaluate the appropriateness of discipline in specific situations. 5. Lastly, we elevated safety at the senior manager level. Weekly Leadership Team meetings all include a safety topic at the onset and we get regular briefings on trends and areas of concern from the Safety Coordinator.*

*It takes consistent commitment over time to change an organization's safety culture. I look forward to learning more about the initiatives currently underway at Seattle City Light.*

**17. The City of Seattle has long expressed a commitment to race and social justice, and implementation of policies through a race and social justice lens. Over the last year, the impact of gender- and race-based harassment at City Light has become more and more apparent, suggesting that not all in the management chain share this value-set. How will you renew the commitment to race and social justice in Seattle City Light, and what can we expect from you with respect to how you will work with the entire management chain to not only make policies, but ensure they are being equitably enforced? What are some initial steps that you would take to change the culture that allows these issues to permeate, and ensure that the entire management chain is engaged in reforming norms in order to change inappropriate behavior?**

*I moved to Oregon in 1983 and have called it home ever since. Eugene and Newport are both racially homogenous places and I've experienced that as a loss after growing up in the Chicago area. I value diversity of all types and I believe the best decisions are made when people of different backgrounds, experiences, and cultural norms, all bring what they know to the table. I used to teach a class called "Crucial Conversations" and the model we taught referred to the "pool of shared meaning" – meaningful dialogue encourages as much input to that pool as possible.*

*While interviewing for this position, it became clear that the way employees experience City Light's culture is very different from the way leadership intends. At least that was true for the folks I met and talked with during the process. My first step would be to understand this*

*difference of perspective and “unpack” the conflicting views. I believe City Light surveys employees on a regular basis and I would review recent surveys and follow-up with new information as appropriate. I would also likely engage the help of an outside consultant to align the leadership team and establish shared expectations. From there, I would lean into my management philosophy – transparency, accountability and intentionality – to create new norms.*

*I pride myself on being a team player and I believe in the power of people working together. But I’m not particularly patient or tolerant of people – particularly in leadership roles – who don’t feel the same. I’m a woman in an industry that has traditionally favored white men. Any success I’ve had has been based on being my true self and valuing the authenticity of others. I would absolutely expect that of my team and I do believe this is an area where “tone at the top” is most important.*

**18. What is your experience with implementing race, social justice, and equity practices at a workplace?**

*Eugene is a community that places significant value on social and cultural competency and inclusivity and yet, people of color represent a relatively small percent of the population. That was true at EWEB as well and “ignorance” by people of privilege can be a dangerous thing. Traditional training models, while informative, typically don’t create the “experience” required to change a mindset.*

*Following the work-stoppage in 2006, I began working in collaborative ways with represented employees to solve organizational challenges. Forming a “Diversity in the Trades” group was an initial step. The purpose of the group was to explore how we could bring people of racial and gender diversity into non-traditional roles. After discussing the impacts of CDL license requirements on people of color with the local NAACP chapter, we broadened our view and decided to bring the “Understanding Racism Study Circle” concept to EWEB.*

*The model brought EWEB managers and supervisors together with people of color from the community for a conversation led by trained facilitators. The group met one evening per week for six weeks and the goal was dialogue and an experiential understanding of the challenges people in our community were dealing with daily. It was powerful, raw and over time, the majority of EWEB’s managers and supervisors participated. The Diversity in the Trades Group evolved into the “EWEB Diversity Team” with representation from across the organization. The Team developed tools for managers and supervisors to use and promoted and hosted EWEB and community events. I served as EWEB’s Diversity Chair during this time.*

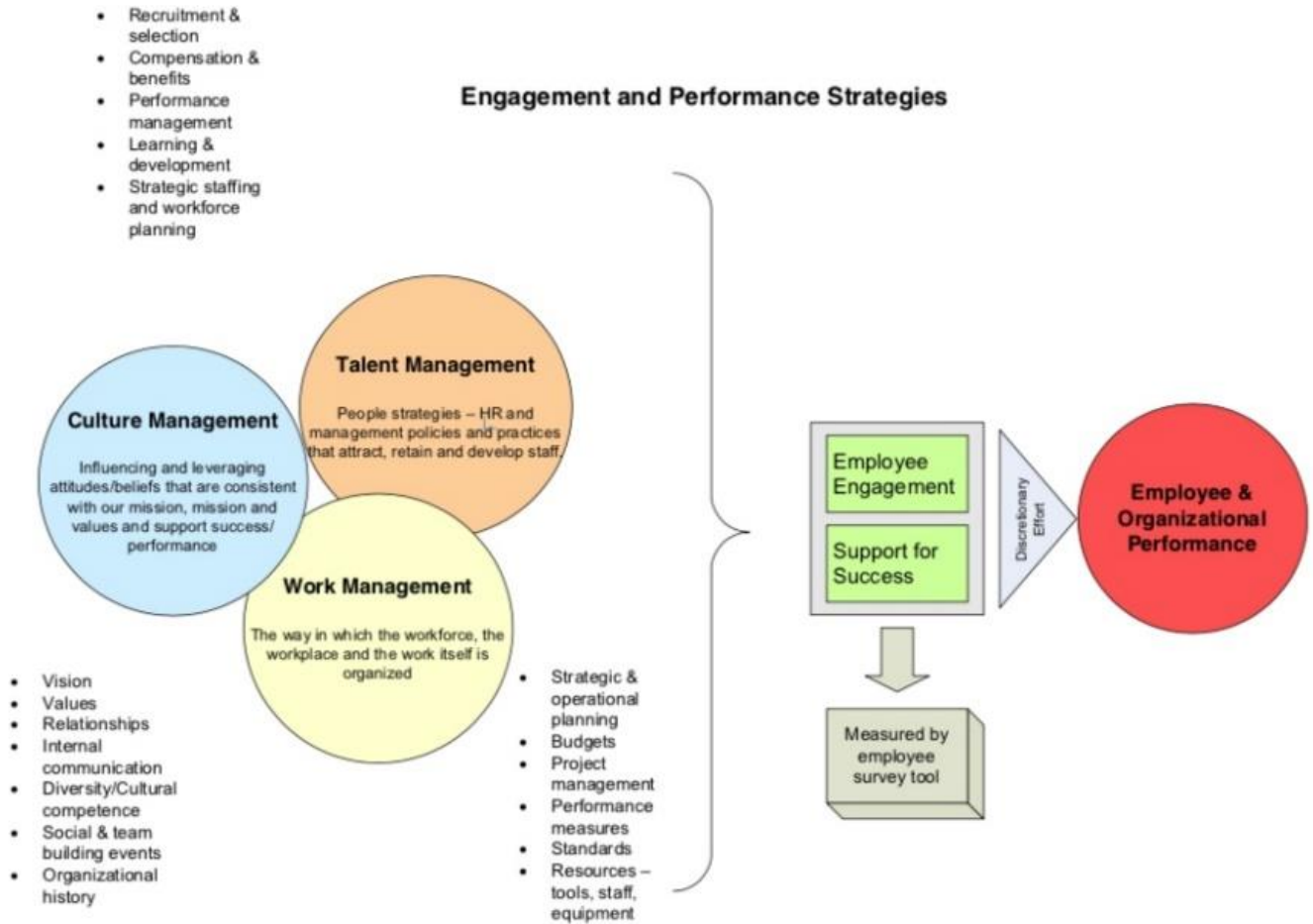
*By providing a means for managers and supervisors to better understand their own deeply held biases, they were able to explore ways to make their own workgroups safer and more*

*welcoming for everyone. That translated into a more diverse and inclusive workforce, which in turn provided benefit to employees and customers. Developing collaborative relations with local tribes is also important and while not an area of specific expertise, I have had some success along the way. At EWEB, during the relicensing of our largest hydroelectric project (Carmen Smith), my environmental manager and I chose to engage and maintain partnerships with local tribes, although they did not have prescriptive rights under the relicensing process. The investment was valuable, and our tribal partners supported the final settlement agreement. At Central Lincoln, we serve parts of the City of Siletz and our community outreach efforts have included participation in the annual Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow.*

*Organizations always benefit from diverse views and experiences and should “look like” the communities they serve. I applaud the commitment to social and equity practices that the City of Seattle and City Light have embraced and would be pleased to provide other examples of work I have led in this important area.*

**19. What is your approach to workforce development? What is your experience and approach to managing labor relations in an organization with as diverse group of worker classifications as Seattle City Light?**

*Workforce development is a very broad topic and one that has always resonated with me. Helping motivated employees grow as people and develop their potential is one of the things I enjoy most about being a leader. I believe in the power of an engaged workforce and consider employee engagement to be a two-way covenant between an organization and its employees. The organization agrees to provide the tools, environment and training that will foster good work and in turn the employee puts forth the discretionary effort which results in outstanding customer service and operational excellence. Of course, workforce development is but one “input” to engagement – but it’s an important one. The diagram below is one I developed while at EWEB and I’ve used ever since to describe the inputs and value of an engaged workforce.*



*The “gray tsunami” that is such a force in the electric utility industry today is another compelling reason to prioritize workforce development. It is not uncommon for 40-50% of utility employees to be eligible for retirement in a five-year window and growing new leaders, as well as skilled craftsmen and journeymen, is critical. I believe Seattle City Light’s projected retirements are consistent with industry norms.*

*As discussed elsewhere, Central Lincoln’s represented employee group includes a variety of classifications, including customer service reps and accounting clerks. Interest-based bargaining and high-performing Labor Management Committees are essential in ensuring that the issues or priorities of any one group or classification not overwhelm those of another.*

*I would also note that I’ve been actively involved in workforce development activities for many years and have served as a member of the local Workforce Investment Board in Lane County (Oregon) and a five-county area that serves the coast and northwest Oregon.*

**20. Employees want to know their CEO. How much time will you spend getting to know employees in all areas of the utility?**

*As much time as it takes. Getting to know my employees and creating new relationships are things I'm looking forward to once confirmed. Certainly, this is an area where size and scale matter and I've given quite a bit of thought to how I'll approach the task. Some initial ideas include regular blogging about my work and personal life, field and worksite visits, all employee meetings, employee advisory committees and ride-along visits. Those are all strategies I've used at EWEB and Central Lincoln and I generally have productive and positive relationships with my employees. I'm also a big believer in personal cards and thank you notes and while 1,800+ birthday cards per year is not in the cards (I currently do send each employee a card on their birthday; at EWEB, I sent each employee in my reporting structure a card on their work anniversary), I will find appropriate ways to scale the sentiment.*

*The job of a leader includes making decisions and taking positions that are sometimes hard. It's much harder to vilify someone you "know." Investing in relationships makes work more fun and trust in the bank is critical when challenges come.*

**21. Unions have reported experiencing delays in receiving responses to grievances; how will you work with the unions and Seattle Department of Human Resources to ensure the utility meets the timeline in union contracts? Sometimes, issues that are addressed and seemingly resolved with settlements crop back up within weeks of resolution. How can you ensure that settlements are honored, and unions and the utility are not back discussing the exact same issue again and again?**

*Meeting commitments and agreed upon timelines is incredibly important to building and maintaining trust. I would do whatever I could to make sure that grievances are handled expeditiously and in ways that provide clarity for all involved. At Central Lincoln, I'm personally responsible for responding to grievances and there have been remarkably few since I assumed my role as General Manager. I believe effective Labor Management Committees and well-supported Shop Stewards can go a long way towards resolving conflict. I would work collaboratively with the Seattle Department of Human Resources to ensure that we have shared expectations for the grievance process.*