

**Confirmation Questions for Kiersten Grove
Director of the Department of Finance and Administrative Services**

General

1. *What are your major goals for Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) over the next five years?*

FAS has an incredibly diverse portfolio that serves both internal City departments and the public. Work includes the design and construction of new buildings; renovating, updating and maintaining existing buildings; purchasing and maintaining the City's vehicles; running the Seattle Animal Shelter; leading purchasing and contracting policies and processes; implementing the City's consumer protection laws and running the City's Customer Service Centers. Each of these lines of business have important operational goals in the coming years, but of particular importance to me are building and fleet electrification, strengthening customer service within our communities and leveraging funding opportunities for the Seattle Animal Shelter.

The City has ambitious goals to reduce fleet greenhouse emissions, be fossil fuel free by 2030 and to remove fossil fuel systems and appliances from buildings by 2035. These efforts are expensive to realize but Seattle is leading the nation in this work. In the next five years, I will seek to maximize City and grant funding opportunities to prioritize and direct de-carbonization efforts where they have the most impact. For Customer Service, I would like to continue the strong work of our neighborhood Customer Service Centers and utilize emerging technologies to help streamline work and assist our Customer Service Representatives in getting information to the public. And finally, I would like to better equip the Seattle Animal Shelter (SAS) to tell their story effectively and leverage grant and fundraising resources to support animal care. As an example, SAS recently began planning for the Furry 5K event to take place on June 8, 2025. This is the first time in many years that SAS has independently hosted this event, and we see it as an opportunity to share our work and further build community around animal welfare in Seattle.

Beyond the operational goals above, over the last two years I have led with a focus on customer service for both our internal and public facing work. My leadership style balances structure and efficient decision-making with a focus on encouraging collaboration and open sharing of ideas. This balance has strengthened our organizational culture and has resulted in improvements in the quality of service FAS provides.

2. *What do you view as your major achievements as Interim Director of FAS?*

FAS and the City have set and met ambitious women- and minority-owned business (WMBE) spending goals over the past two years. Under my leadership, FAS has increased outreach efforts to small and minority-owned businesses and has just convened the second WMBE advisory council of community stakeholders. Last year, FAS launched the City's first ever free pet vaccination clinics in

neighborhoods throughout Seattle. Our incredible team at the Seattle Animal Shelter brought veterinary care into Seattle communities, serving over 1,500 animals in 2024. My FAS team and I also worked in partnership with the Mayor and Council to update the City's Priority Hire legislation to expand access to apprenticeships across the broader region. This new legislation has the potential to create up to 14,000 construction career opportunities for people of color, women, veterans and residents living in economically distressed neighborhoods. And in 2024, FAS put the City's 500th electric vehicle into operation. We've reduced fuel consumption by 500,000 gallons over the past 10 years. On a broader scale, I implemented leadership training across the department; first for our people leaders and then more broadly for individual contributors. The goal of these trainings, and our continued implementation, is to shift towards an organizational culture of collaboration and growth, with an emphasis on integrating an equity lens into all we do.

3. *What are the biggest challenges facing FAS?*

Given the unique and diverse services provided by FAS, divisions can have a range of challenges. However, the two issues spanning across the department are escalating maintenance and repair costs and recruitment and retention of skilled trade positions. For the two largest divisions within FAS, Facility Operations and Fleet Management, rising costs in the construction industry and in vehicle purchase and repairs stress our annual budgets. Our existing funding does not go as far as it once did due to increasing inflation, and our needs are increasing; a condition that is true across the City's services. For Facility Operations, FAS owns and maintains over 120 buildings. Costs for system upgrades for HVAC, elevators and fire safety systems can be in the millions of dollars for our larger buildings like SMT, City Hall and the Justice Center. And while we work to maintain and extend the life of these systems, parts often become unavailable, and technologies are no longer supported. Additionally, as our buildings age, unexpected maintenance and repairs become more common, further stressing our staff and budget resources. These conditions can make the work environment for our employees in our skilled trades – mechanics, HVAC technicians, carpenters, plumbers and electricians particularly challenging. To address this, my team and I are working with CBO to identify upcoming needs and repairs, so that we can proactively plan for major projects within the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

4. *What has been your approach to promoting the City's equity goals in FAS?*

Centering equity is essential to the operations of any department within Seattle. In promoting the City's equity goals, I've focused on integrating an equity lens into our everyday operations, and how we set department and division goals and priorities within our annual workplan. This work is personally important to me as I've focused much of my career on improving racial equity outcomes whether through my teaching career, my time in Chicago working on transportation safety or my work here at the City of Seattle. I believe strongly that the internal, often unseen work of City government has the ability to catalyze the most significant change. And this is the work that FAS

does. This materializes in different ways across the department and has included improving our performance on WMBE goals, fostering opportunities in City-owned space for Black-owned businesses, bringing regulatory licensing services into our customer service centers to better serve communities or realigning our animal foster program at the Seattle Animal Shelter.

Focusing on our internal practices, FAS Change Team leads are a part of our Leadership Team. We encourage Change Team membership from each of our divisions, not to be solely responsible for considering equity within the division, but to build capacity and give opportunities for growth and leadership development. We've added changes to our hiring processes, including how we recruit and how we think about interview questions throughout our candidate selection processes. Finally, we've integrated training across the department's 500 people to further empathy and respect with a focus on equity, encouraging our employees to recognize and grow from the ideas and experiences that each member of FAS brings to their work.

5. *How has and will FAS continue to align with Council Districts, each having unique needs, and improving your communications, education and outreach?*

Council Districts each have individual needs that are important to consider in how services are delivered. FAS operates Customer Service Centers in Southeast, Southwest, Central, Ballard, the University District and Lake City. Each of these service centers provides general information, payment options and passport services. In addition to the standard services offered, our Service Centers also function as community hubs for meetings, offer specific licensing services if requested, and where space is available, also host Council offices, providing a dedicated space for community members to work with their representative. In addition to these services, the Seattle Animal Shelter hosts vaccination clinics in south Seattle furthering the reach of the shelter's Interbay location. For our internal services, FAS is installing vehicle charging stations for City departments so that they are better able to serve neighborhoods outside the downtown core. And finally, FAS builds and maintains fire and police facilities throughout Seattle neighborhoods ensuring the community has access to critical public safety resources. I appreciate inclusion of our work in your district newsletters and am committed to continuing to share our work with Council offices to help us further share our services.

6. *How does your past work in transportation shape your work at FAS?*

Transportation is fundamental to our community, to safety and opportunity across the city. My work both here in Seattle and in Chicago shaped my approach to leading FAS in a variety of ways. First, and most broadly, because I've worked in a number of City departments, I have a good sense of their operational needs and how FAS as an internal services department might help them achieve those goals – for example, vehicle electrification, facility improvements or contracting needs. My work in transportation also included both policy development and capital project delivery. FAS' portfolio

includes both of those functions, and I feel comfortable working with our teams and thinking critically about how to improve processes. And finally, most directly, I first began working with FAS more than 10 years ago while I was at SDOT. At the time, my role was to help develop a regulatory framework for taxi and Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) that would meet SDOT's goal to provide more transportation options. The experience helped me better understand the complicated relationships between consumer protection, economic opportunity, marketplace options and operating expenses.

7. *What do you see as the role of FAS in effectuating the Transportation Levy passed by the voters?*

The new Transportation Levy is a huge undertaking that will deliver so many essential projects for the residents of Seattle. My team and I at FAS are excited to be a part of it. There are three primary areas where FAS may assist in the implementation of the transportation levy. SDOT has already begun project planning and FAS will support them in securing the needed space for people working on the levy. This could include office space or space proximate to project sites. Additionally, FAS would play a role in acquiring any new vehicle or machinery needed for the scale and scope of the levy. And finally, FAS' Purchasing and Contracting division will work with SDOT on public works contracting for capital projects.

Facilities Management

8. *What are the maintenance and refurbishment plans for Benaroya Hall and the Garden of Remembrance? Are there developments yet?*

Benaroya Hall and the Garden of Remembrance are an incredible asset for the people of Seattle. While the City owns the underlying land and building, Benaroya Hall is completely responsible for operations and maintenance of the facility and the Garden of Remembrance. The separate and independent Office of City Finance maintains the City's relationship with Benaroya Hall, sits on their board, reviews their capital plan and administers City funds that support their ongoing maintenance (in 2025, \$491,962 for Benaroya and \$242,537 for the Garden of Remembrance) as well as capital repairs for the Garden of Remembrance such as the \$50,000 to study the Garden's membrane. Benaroya is required to provide a list of building changes to the City that may affect the exterior of the building or require a permit and these include the following:

- Replacement of five pairs of exterior doors on 3rd Ave. arcade with matching storefront
- Replacement of the exterior marquees with digital signage screens and related electrical modifications
- Renovation of exterior poster boxes on 3rd Ave. and Union St. to house digital screens and related electrical modifications
- Upgrades to exterior lighting at northeast and southeast entrance canopies

- Structural, HVAC and electrical modifications to expand and reconfigure the Level 4 Balcony, East 1st Tier and Bar area into a new lounge
- HVAC and electrical modifications to renovate the 3rd Ave. arcade and reconfigure the existing box office, coat check, retail, and concessionaire outlets, into a new community room, lounge and concession area and concierge counter
- Electrical modifications to relocate the bars at Level 3 Grand Lobby and to enhance existing bars at Level 4 West and East 2nd Tiers and Recital Hall Lobby
- HVAC and electrical modifications to reconfigure a portion of Level 4 East restrooms to be all-user restrooms

9. *What policies guide lease agreements with for-profit companies on city property, e.g. at City Hall or the Seattle Armory?*

Managing retail space within City buildings can include balancing a number of factors. FAS has jurisdictional authority over the City's downtown office buildings, including Seattle City Hall, Seattle Municipal Tower and Seattle Justice Center. In those buildings there are several storefront spaces that provide amenities to the tenants of the building, usually City employees, and to the general public.

FAS considers a variety of factors when determining a potential lease. Factors include amenities potential lessees would provide to building tenants; variety and complement of tenancies on the property; anticipated and historical level of foot traffic; potential WMBE businesses that the City might attract as potential lessees; past leasing practice; past structure of leases; rent charged for current tenants; duration of desired lease; and the longevity of lessee in business. Prior to the pandemic, FAS retail tenants were stable and retail space was fully occupied. During and post-pandemic, SMT and SCH experienced turnover including continued vacancies despite rent reductions and significant attempts to retain tenants.

Besides FAS, a number of City departments have jurisdiction over buildings including CEN, SPL and SPR. Each department has jurisdictional oversight over their properties and will have similar but perhaps slightly different considerations in determining tenancy in their spaces.

Consumer Protection Division

10. *What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the Consumer Protection Division and what are your plans to address them?*

FAS' Consumer Protection Division is charged with protecting consumers across 25 industries including short-term rentals, retail cannabis sales, network company operations, taxis and the for-hire industry, weights and measures and many others. This work is personally important to me

because it's central to the work of good government – protecting people while also ensuring economic opportunity. The biggest challenge in doing this work effectively is balancing the needs of the consumer, the needs of the business and the cost of regulation. To illustrate this challenge, some recent work my team has done related to the taxi/for-hire industry is a good example. In any regulatory framework, we do our best to recoup costs from the regulated industry so that the General Fund is not needed to support ongoing regulation. Historically, the taxi industry was a heavily regulated industry, but as Uber and Lyft entered the marketplace, historic taxi regulation unintentionally burdened the industry. Over the ensuing years we worked to bring more parity and in late 2023 we worked alongside King County to create a streamlined and simplified regulation process that included changes to technology requirements. We moved towards requiring taxi companies to adopt digital application dispatch systems to improve the customer experience and make City regulation of the industry simpler.

11. How can the City of Seattle, including the Seattle City Council, help better empower the work of the Consumer Protection Division?

I would like to thank you all for the work your offices have done to date. My team and I have appreciated the opportunity to work with you and provide operational context as new consumer protection legislation is explored and drafted. FAS is charged with implementing the regulatory frameworks established by the Mayor and Council and our role is to meet the legislative objectives of the ordinance. Working collaboratively has been invaluable as it establishes the best foundation for us to begin effective and clear implementation of new laws. In addition to early coordination, we also recognize that Councilmembers are a voice for the communities we serve. If anything, please keep engaging with us as you develop new legislation that involves FAS. We understand that you often hear from constituents on opportunities for better communication and coordination. We value you sharing those with us to improve our programs for our communities.

12. Can you describe the mechanics – in terms of time, FTES, etc. – that come into play when FAS has to collect new fees and establish new licensing schemes required in legislation? For example, what challenges has FAS faced as it prepares to begin collecting the \$0.10 per delivery licensing fee on app-based delivery companies that Council approved in 2023 to enforce the deactivation ordinance, and what is the status of the work?

In establishing a new regulatory license, several items are necessary to ensure the success of timing and execution. First is the identification of a technology solution – in the case of the network company fee, Accela, an existing City resource which Seattle IT manages and implements necessary changes. Next is finding adequate staffing, aside from Seattle IT staff that includes project management staff to coordinate the development of the technology with internal CPD staff and train CPD staff on the use of the technology, as well as strategic advisors to become experts in the legislation, help shape and form the technology needs, create any needed Director's Rules and

coordinate with affected City departments and external stakeholders. Once those items are complete, Customer Service staff do outreach to the affected industry and assist with first-time licensees, ongoing licensing questions and annual license renewals. Inspectors both review and enforce compliance with the new law. Lastly, technology upgrades, staffing and outreach all take time in ensuring success.

In terms of the most recent network company fee, the legislation provided necessary staffing resources and time to allow for CPD to begin accepting applications in October 2025 and for the City to begin collecting fees beginning in January 2026, per the Council-approved legislation. Currently, FAS is working with IT and has completed the design phase of the development of the IT project. The project will then be sent to an internal IT developer in April and expected to be ready for testing in the summer. FAS is simultaneously hiring two positions – a License and Standards Inspector and Customer Service Representative, both expected to begin this month. FAS has been working with OLS on the coordination for the roll out of the new fees since passage of the legislation in anticipation of the October 2025 application deadline.

Animal Shelter

13. There have been news reports of issues with culture, understaffing of behaviorists and foster coordinators, and insufficient facilities at the shelter. What do you see as the biggest needs at the Animal Shelter, and what has and needs to be done to address them?

First let me say how much I respect, appreciate and admire the work of our team at the Seattle Animal Shelter (SAS). SAS is the only open admissions shelter in the city, meaning we take in any animal in need. Animals in our care may be there because their owner may no longer be able to keep them because of financial or health issues, they have suffered abuse, may have bitten someone, may be lost or the police have placed them with us. SAS' Animal Control Officers, Customer Service Representatives, Veterinary care team, Behaviorist, Foster and Volunteer Program Coordinators and leadership have extensive experience working with animals who are under stress or have experienced trauma. Our goal is to protect the public and ensure that animals receive the best care available, recognizing that the most successful outcome for animals is to be placed in a home as soon as possible. To both care for animals in and out of the shelter, we have extensive volunteer support including those who clean kennels, feed animals, do laundry and foster volunteers who care for animals in their homes.

We serve thousands of people and pets annually and are incredibly proud of the work that the SAS does. That said, the facility itself is over 40 years old and has not been significantly expanded since it was built. Operationally, we have a larger staff, bigger volunteer base, see more animals and most significantly are able to rescue more than 90% of the animals we take in. Given this, providing the level of service that we do within the existing building is challenging. We keep only about 50% of

animals at the SAS facility itself and whenever possible, work to house animals in volunteer foster homes. The Animal Control Officers, Behaviorist and Foster Care Coordinator are instrumental in evaluating an animal to determine whether it can be placed in a home and which placement will be the most successful. We rely on these positions to ensure that the facility is not overcrowded and that the animals who must remain in the care of the shelter have the space available. At this time, we are also starting the planning for a new Seattle Animal Shelter, engaging with the Mayor's Office to identify locations, needs and service delivery options.

14. Please detail how staffing of behaviorists and foster coordinators or insufficient facilities affect operations.

When an animal first comes to the shelter, our team works to get a behavioral assessment on the animal. The veterinary care team then addresses any medical needs and the Behaviorist evaluates this information and works directly with the animal to understand if a foster placement is possible. The Foster Care Coordinator then works with our volunteer foster families for placement. Because it is a best practice to keep animals in a home environment, we try to place animals that are healthy and behaviorally acceptable for a foster home as quickly as possible to leave enough space in the shelter for animals whose medical or behavioral condition makes foster or immediate adoption difficult.

These roles are critical to the operation of the SAS and are integral into animal health and adoption. Currently both positions are funded through grants or donations. We are actively exploring opportunities for fully funding both positions on an ongoing basis and expanding services to include more hours of operation. Also, as stated above, FAS is actively exploring a new building for the animal shelter.

15. What support from the City of Seattle, including the Seattle City Council, to achieve those goals?

First thank you to the Councilmembers who have supported our work to add additional permanent staffing to SAS operations and for the opportunity to discuss this here. I also want to extend my thanks to Councilmembers who have adopted pets from us and supported animals in need in our communities. It is meaningful to our team in so many ways. More than anything, we appreciate the opportunity to acknowledge and discuss the incredible work of the staff and volunteers at the Seattle Animal Shelter.

Customer Service

16. Please detail past and ongoing work to improve the Find It, Fix It app and the responses to issues people report through it. How do you believe it's working now? What were some problems in the past, and what has been done to make it more successful?

Find It, Fix It (FiFi) is a widely used app for reporting issues to the City. It's a great tool to quickly share minor maintenance issues throughout the city. Many large cities across the country use a version of this app, customizing it to meet their specific needs.

Where FiFi excels is in handling the entire workflow within the app. When an issue is reported, it is assigned to the appropriate department, dispatched to a worker, and marked as completed once resolved. The app then notifies the user that their issue has been addressed. Challenges remain when an issue must be routed to a larger department with its own separate work management system, such as Seattle City Light (SCL), Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR). The City is currently working on integrating FiFi with department work management systems, starting with high-volume service requests in Parks. This effort will enable near real-time updates, so users are notified when a job is completed. A similar process is being explored for streetlight repairs.

Last year, the City completed a major app upgrade to improve usability. Additionally, the City is working with Motorola to meet accessibility requirements by April 2026. The team has also added the six most requested datasets to the City of Seattle Open Data Portal for greater transparency.

17. *What is your vision for the Customer Service Bureau over the next five years?*

First, I cannot say enough about the amazing work of FAS' Customer Service Division. The work they do to connect people with services throughout the city is critical to the health of our communities. Our team does this by centering the customer experience and approaching their work with empathy and respect. In FAS this team is composed of two customer service groups. The first is the Customer Service Team, which manages the City's main line (206-684-CITY), assigns online general service requests to the appropriate departments, and researches issues as needed. This team also has access to the language line, enabling communication with customers in 240 languages.

The second group consists of six customer service centers, one in each Council District (the City Hall kiosk and department kiosks in SMT function as a District 7 in-person touchpoint). These centers provide essential in-person services, with first-time passport applications being the most common request, especially as other government locations have discontinued passport processing. Additionally, they offer services such as utility payments, compost bag distribution, and assistance with City-related requests.

I am proud to say that our customer service staff regularly receive positive feedback from residents for their exceptional service. To continue and enhance this great service, there are opportunities to improve accessibility and innovation to ensure seamless, responsive service. By leveraging data

analytics to better understand what our customers need, we can adjust service delivery. Additionally, there is significant potential to integrate digital and AI solutions to support staff with more streamlined access to information. This can allow us to get information to people more quickly and serve a wider range of customers. As technology continues to evolve, my team and I will look for opportunities to implement new tools that enhance efficiency while maintaining our commitment to excellent service.