

**RESPONSES TO COUNCIL QUESTIONS OF ANDREW LEE
NOMINEE FOR GM/CEO OF SPU**

MAY 20, 2022

Background and Vision

1) Why do you want to be the General Manager and CEO of Seattle Public Utilities? What are your primary goals for the Department?

Seattle has been my home for the past 17 years. Four of my five children were born in Seattle, and I have a personal stake in this city being a place where both current and future generations thrive. This includes addressing the systemic and institutional racism in our city, keeping our neighborhoods safe, maintaining affordability of housing and services, and protecting the environment that we cherish.

I want to be the General Manager/CEO of SPU because my values align with the City's values. I believe in serving the most vulnerable in our community. I have a firm commitment to making sure SPU's rates are affordable for all our customers. I believe it is our responsibility address historic injustices, such as sewage overflows and sediment contamination in our waterways. I also believe we have an obligation to restore and protect the environment.

I want to be the General Manager/CEO of SPU because it would afford me the opportunity to use my experience and provide leadership to an amazing organization that is at the forefront of addressing our country's greatest water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste-related challenges. I returned to SPU in 2019 because I missed the complexity and intensity of the challenges facing Seattle, which have produced the most innovative organization I have ever been a part of. I am excited to bring my 23 years of utility experience to lead an organization with the brightest minds and empower them to deal with challenges of affordability, historic pollution, waste management, climate change, systemic racism, environmental injustice, water supply, and seismic resiliency.

My primary goals for the department are fivefold:

1. Lead with equity: In all our work and the services we offer, we must work to provide equitable access to services and quality of life, dismantle systemic and institutional racism and address historic environmental injustices.
2. Deliver high quality, affordable essential services: We must deliver high quality, reliable, and resilient drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste services at the lowest possible cost, continuously look for opportunities to innovate, and keep rates affordable, especially for the most vulnerable in our city.
3. Sustainably protect public health and the environment: We have an obligation to protect public health and the environment from the impacts of waste, historic pollution and environmental degradation.
4. Serve our community: We are obligated to work alongside and empower our community to understand and address their needs.

5. Engage and empower employees: We are at our best when all 1,400 employees at SPU are engaged and empowered to bring their creativity, innovation, and experience to their daily work.

2) What have you learned during your years of service at SPU and the past few months as acting GM/CEO?

I am in a continuous learning and growth process, and I believe it is incredibly important to approach every day with humility and openness to feedback. During my professional experience at SPU, I have grown in so many ways – from my deepening environmental stewardship ethic to my appreciation of the importance of robust program and project management discipline to my understanding of the effects of racism in our country. I owe so much to the learning that I have accumulated during my 11 years as a City of Seattle employee.

As a leader, my greatest lesson is that I need to focus on both the “business” and the “organizational or human work culture” of SPU. Oftentimes, leaders are commended for their strategic thinking or their bold initiatives. However, I have learned that focusing solely on the “business” (i.e., strategy, budget, project and service delivery, new initiatives) can leave an organization with severe gaps that can limit the effectiveness of the organization. I have learned to emphasize the importance of a healthy organizational culture from day one, and this value has only been reinforced through the COVID pandemic. Employees need to know that I value them and am committed to creating an environment of equity, engagement and empowerment for all employees.

Another key lesson I have learned is I need to be willing to adjust my approach to bringing about change and transformation in the organization. My natural propensity is to work with my leadership team to cast a compelling vision and then empower employees to deliver a desired change. However, there are circumstances where change can only occur through strategic disruption, which sometimes involves significant disruption to an existing organizational structure. I find myself reflecting frequently on what is the most effective means to effectuate change in a manner that is sensitive to employees but also recognizes the necessity of embracing new ways of doing business and not growing stale.

In the past few months as acting GM/CEO, one of my most significant learning reflections has been on SPU’s relationship with community. I have found that some of our relationships with community-based organizations or tribal governments have been paternalistic in nature, where we serve as a “gatekeeper” to being able to access a desired goal. I have seen that we sometimes use our technical or scientific knowledge to derive a sense of superiority over community interests. It is my intention that as General Manager/CEO, I will challenge the organization to continue to improve our relationship with community – one where we are better listeners and advocate and empower community to realize their goals, rather than standing in their way.

3) What do you think are the biggest opportunities and challenges for the Department? What would you like to accomplish in your first year as permanent General Manager and CEO?

SPU's single greatest challenge is keeping our rates affordable for our customers while addressing service inequities and long-term resilience. Utility rates have risen substantially in the past 20 years, and they are poised to increase at an equal or greater pace with the rising rate of inflation, the costs of addressing aging infrastructure, increasingly stringent environmental regulations, and the need for greater resiliency of services. The greatest drivers for increasing rates will undoubtedly be the costs for cleaning historic pollution, complying with siloed wastewater and stormwater regulations, and the costs for replacing or renewing aging infrastructure. I believe there are opportunities to address these challenges, but none of the pathways are easy. Those opportunities include advocating for additional Federal, State, and regional funding partnerships; investing in smart technologies that can reduce costs; looking for opportunities to shift costs back to manufacturers and polluters; investing in research and development on decentralized wastewater treatment and stormwater solutions; and aggressively pursuing drinking water conservation. Each of these opportunities is described in greater detail in my response to question #4 below.

The resiliency of Seattle's utility systems will be tested over the next 30 years, whether due to an earthquake, a cyber-attack, or global warming. Already in the past decade, we have seen the effects of climate change on snowpack and water supply, particularly in 2015; the intensity of heat, wildfires and smoke the past two summers; and the increasing intensity of rainstorms in January this year, coupled with sea level rise. It is imperative SPU is prepared to address all these potential threats through strategic and fiscally conscious investments. Seattle's current efforts to incorporate climate change data into water supply planning and operations and the design of stormwater infrastructure is an excellent example of taking proactive steps to improve resiliency; the utility must not waiver in its commitment to these programs in the next 20 years.

In my first year as GM/CEO, it is my goal to lower SPU's trajectory of rate increases, without compromising services or resiliency or deferring needed expenditures to future generations. I will continue to strongly advocate for greater Federal funding for water infrastructure, producer responsibility for waste and toxins, and for sustainable and predictable rates with our partners at King County. I hope to lead SPU towards a continuous improvement culture, which includes greater adoption of "smart water" technologies. I also plan to reinforce the utility's investments to address regulatory compliance, aging infrastructure, and resiliency of our services. Lastly, with respect to equity and environmental justice, I will continue advocating for greater flood control, protection against sewer overflows and sewer backups, and sediment clean-up for communities along the Duwamish Waterway.

Rate Impacts to Customers

4) How can SPU best provide its mandated services to its customers at the lowest possible cost?

I believe providing the highest quality water, sewer, stormwater, and solid waste services to our customers at the lowest possible cost is a necessity. Living in this region is already unaffordable for many, and the cost of utility services should not be another reason why lower-wage earners are driven out of our city. Addressing rising utility costs will be extremely challenging in the next 20 years, because environmental regulations are becoming increasingly siloed and stringent, and aging infrastructure must be rehabilitated or replaced. The Washington Department of Ecology's recently issued nutrient general permit alone may require billions of dollars of investments in wastewater treatment plants that could triple or quadruple wastewater bills over the next 30 years and still leave stormwater pollution problems unaddressed. With that as a backdrop, I believe SPU must be engaged and innovative on a local, regional, and national level to focus investment efforts and drive down the costs of utility services with the goal of passing those savings onto our ratepayers. However, pursuing cost-saving measures should never come at the expense of those who are most vulnerable in our community. Potential actions SPU should consider include the following:

- **Promote Alternate Sources of Funding**: I commend Congress and President Biden for passing the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act, providing hundreds of millions of dollars in Federal funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. However, much more is needed to address the future infrastructure funding gap and past pollution that every U.S. city is facing. Additional Federal funding will be necessary, and consideration should be given to implementing a Federal or State carbon tax to address the cost of mitigating the impacts of climate change on extreme weather and invest in ecosystem-based and climate-adaptative solutions. Recently proposed State legislation on producer responsibility is another avenue to address pollution and carbon impacts in the solid waste arena.
- **Research and Development on Decentralized Wastewater Treatment and Stormwater Solutions**: I believe the future of wastewater treatment is not in large, centralized treatment plants, but in small, decentralized wastewater treatment systems that are operated remotely and reclaim water for reuse. As the cost of replacing wastewater infrastructure grows, the costs of these decentralized solutions will decrease. There will be a time when decentralization becomes more affordable – and therefore viable – as a widespread alternative to our current approaches. The same applies to stormwater. I believe utilities have an obligation to prepare us for this transition.
- **Focus on Smart Technology Solutions**: Much has been reported on the potential transformation of the transportation industry, with the wave of autonomous vehicles on the horizon. Automation and “smart” solutions are poised to make an impact in all industries, including the utility industry. I believe we need to invest in smart technology solutions that offer the potential to reduce our operating costs

substantially and provide better information to customers to manage their bills. This may include smart water meters, satellite technology for detecting water leaks, and even sensors for detecting how full trash cans are filled.

- Pursue Product Stewardship Legislation: The utility industry, particularly on the wastewater, stormwater and solid waste sides, continues to be the recipient of man-made chemicals that pollute our environment and cost billions to clean up and dispose of. Added emphasis needs to be placed on working “upstream” with manufacturers to find alternatives for the most impacting chemicals and packaging. The utility industry should also aggressively pursue more polluter pays legislation to hold companies that have profited from the chemical industry accountable for the costs of cleaning up their pollution.
- Aggressively Focus on Conservation: Continued population growth in the greater Seattle metro region is guaranteed, especially as climate migration increases in the next 20-30 years. Seattle has been able to avoid developing a new drinking water supply source for the past three decades, despite significant regional growth, through one of the most successful conservation programs in the country. As growth continues, it is imperative we take an aggressive approach on water conservation and rainwater capture, with the goal of deferring a new water supply source as long as possible and preferably avoiding the need altogether.
- Adopt a Continuous Improvement Culture: Organizations that have adopted a continuous improvement culture with a strong emphasis on process improvements, performance tracking, and using visual management tools are able to realize higher performance at lower costs while improving employee morale. I believe SPU should be at the forefront of adopting a continuous improvement culture in everything we do, from large capital projects to small work processes.
- Negotiate Favorable Long-Term Service Contracts: Over 23% of SPU’s costs are associated with long-term services contracts. These include contracts with King County for wastewater treatment and disposal, as well as multiple contracts for solid waste collection, hauling, and landfilling. It is important that SPU negotiate contracts that are favorably priced and provide the City with adequate governance authority.
- Advocate for More Integrated Regulatory Compliance: The regulatory framework is siloed, with separate permits governing wastewater and stormwater regulatory compliance. SPU must continue to advocate for more integrated regulatory compliance tools, with the goal of wholistically and systemically improving water quality with the most optimal suite of investments.

5) What actions do you propose for SPU and the City to ensure that those least able to pay for escalating utility costs are able to stay in their homes and businesses?

I am strongly committed to SPU’s customer assistance programs and the underlying value of financially supporting those who are least able to afford their utility bills. SPU’s Utility Discount Program (UDP) enrolls approximately 40% of the households who are eligible for the program based on their income, reducing their SPU bills by 50%. This is one of the highest participation and discount rates in the country. Yet, we must do more to ensure our customer assistance programs are accessible to our most vulnerable customers.

First, I believe deeply our most vulnerable customers should not be driven from their homes when they cannot afford to pay their utility bills.

Second, coming out of the COVID pandemic, we must exercise extreme sensitivity and care to allow customers who have past due balances to catch up on their utility payments gradually. I strongly support SPU's approach to offer customers with arrearages up to 36 months to repay their past due balances.

Third, SPU must work to increase access and reduce barriers to participation in the UDP. Options that are being considered include extending cross-enrollment with other government programs, engaging in more direct outreach to customers, and/or implementing a single city-wide or county-wide income verification program. While our assistance programs cost ratepayers about \$22 million per year, we must also consider expanding our criteria for income-eligible households.

Fourth, we must aggressively pursue Federal and State funding assistance to help provide financial support to our most disadvantaged customers. I commend the State legislature for approving \$100 million in low-income residential customer utility arrearage funding earlier this year. The recently passed Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) also included authorization to continue the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), which provides financial assistance to low-income households for water and wastewater bills. These are important, positive steps, and yet they are not nearly enough. The Federal government must make LIHWAP program and funding permanent. In addition, the eligibility criteria should be expanded to taken into consideration the higher cost of living in areas such as Seattle.

Lastly, it is important that SPU continue to look at opportunities to expand its financial assistance programs beyond bill assistance. In 2021, SPU launched a side sewer assistance program in partnership with Office of Housing to help fund costly side sewer repairs as an anti-displacement tool for low-income homeowners. In the coming years, SPU will look at opportunities to expand this program to drinking water service lines.

- 6) Utility rates are essentially regressive so, in addition to managing its own costs, what can Seattle / SPU do to minimize the rate increases passed through by King County for wastewater treatment that comprises a large percentage of each SPU customer's bill? For example, just months ago King County had originally promised to raise wastewater rates by 4.00%, but King County Executive Dow Constantine is asking the King County Council to follow the recommendation of the county's Wastewater Treatment Division to raise OUR customer's rates by 5.75% instead.**

The recently proposed 5.75% rate increase from King County is very concerning for individuals, like myself, who have been engaging with the County for years on the costs of their services and have repeatedly requested more transparency on rate increases. I recognize the County is facing incredible pressure from both existing and new regulations, aging assets, population growth, inflow and infiltration, and the costs of complying with their combined sewer overflow (CSO) consent decree. However, I still have tremendous concerns about the absence of a robust long-range comprehensive plan, a strong asset management strategy, a

meaningful approach to regional engagement, and long-range financial rate projections. Most concerning, however, is the distinct inability for jurisdictions, such as the City of Seattle, who pay 40% of the wastewater rates for the County, to have true governance authority to affect any of those gaps.

The single most important thing the City should do is to work to increase Seattle's governance authority on decisions related to planning, policy, capital improvements, finances, and rates. I applaud Councilmember Pedersen for initiating the Statement of Legislative Intent in 2020 to analyze alternative governance approaches for the regional wastewater system. I believe that it is an ideal time to analyze whether the existing governance structure is suitable as we head into the next 50 years of investment in the wastewater system.

In addition to advocating for governance changes, I believe it is imperative that the City have a strong presence in both the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) and the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) to advocate for greater transparency on finances/rates and a stronger influence on the currently paused King County Clean Water Plan.

Executive and Staff Management

- 7) SPU has more than 1,400 employees implementing a Council-approved budget of \$1.3 billion. What will you focus on as General Manager and CEO to ensure effective, efficient, and equitable delivery of drinking water and processing of solid waste for your over 1 million customers (both within the Seattle city limits and other customers)?**

SPU's ability to provide effective, efficient, and equitable delivery of drinking water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste services begins with our employees. My first job as the GM/CEO is to provide a healthy organizational work environment and culture where employees are engaged and empowered to provide their best thinking, innovation, creativity and dedication to work every day. This comes from an unwavering commitment to a culture of support, feedback, humility, continuous improvement, innovation, integrity, and equity. It is absolutely essential that I emphasize the importance of a healthy organizational culture from my first day as GM/CEO and work through training, mentoring, and modeling to achieve that culture throughout the organization. It is also critical that I continuously lead the utility in centering our work on equity. We have an obligation to dismantle racism in our department and our city and to right historic injustices.

Leadership begins with vision, and I plan to reinforce SPU's vision for being Community Centered, One Water, and Zero Waste:

- **Community Centered**: As a community-centered utility, we must be in relationship with community. Our work must include listening to and advocating for community interests. If we are successful in adopting this mindset, then our communities will come away with a strong sense of empowerment.

- One Water: The challenges facing the water industry are incredibly complex and costly. We must develop multi-faceted, multi-benefit, systemic solutions that recognize the value in all water resources.
- Zero Waste: We must strive for a future where we are not producing waste. This means intense recycling/reuse, reducing packaging and food waste, and adopting and seeding new ways of doing business and circular economy (e.g., deconstruction vs. demolition).

Reaching our goals will require long-range planning and strategic maneuvering. In areas such as drinking water supply planning, I will work to initiate aggressive conservation planning to address the potential wave of climate migration to the Pacific Northwest. Regarding wastewater treatment, I will lead planning for a future transition away from centralized treatment plants to a future where small-scale decentralized treatment plants are the norm. In the arenas of stormwater pollution and solid waste, I will work to move upstream to manufacturing to prevent pollutants from reaching our waterways and waste from reaching our landfills.

Adopting a continuous improvement culture will be the key to delivering services efficiently and effectively. Organizations that have adopted continuous improvement cultures have an intense focus on data-informed decision making, work processes, and value-added outcomes for customers. They are constantly innovating with the goal of improving performance. As GM/CEO, I will work to adopt a culture of continuous improvement.

Excellent service delivery at the lowest cost possible will be an important goal for the utility. However, it will not be our only goal. I will continue to prioritize the City's value of delivering services to the most vulnerable in our city, whether through customer assistance programs or services to the unhoused population.

Lastly, I will maintain an eye towards implementing solutions that are sustainable and resilient. This will mean a growing focus on delivering more holistic, programmatic and nature-based solutions.

8) What is your general philosophy for working and communicating effectively with the City Council? How do you plan to ensure that Councilmembers and their staff receive information from your department to make policy and financial decisions? How will you be responsive to Council requests, specifically regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch?

All of us who work in public service face competing and sometimes conflicting priorities. When I am faced with such a dilemma, my touchstone is to ask what do the people of the communities who rely on us expect?

During my 16 years of service at both Bellevue Utilities and Seattle Public Utilities, I have always sought to model transparency, authenticity and integrity with policymakers and the community we serve. I believe strongly that open and honest communication improves

engagement and it is always my intention to communicate with Council in a clear, respectful, and collaborative way.

City councilmembers have the unique advantage of continuous day-to-day interactions with community that provide a rich perspective on issues and potential solutions to problems. From my experience, councilmembers – given their problem-solving abilities and broad experience across City government – oftentimes prompt those with technical skills to expand the universe of what is possible.

If I am confirmed by receive the City Council as SPU’s General Manager/CEO, my staff and I will respond to information requests from Council offices as promptly and completely as possible. When SPU does not have the information immediately available, we will explain why and propose alternative solutions. Mayor Harrell embraces this transparency completely. Similarly, I will strive to reach out to the council proactively to alert members of issues or incidents affecting SPU services in their districts. My goal is for councilmembers to always be aware in advance of service disruptions and priority work SPU is performing in their district.

We are in service to the people of Seattle and seek to perform our duties with respect, even while navigating the various policy priorities of the Council and Mayor. The Executive and Legislative branches are co-equal, and I have a duty to diligently serve the people’s elected representatives from both branches.

9) What is your overall philosophy toward management of your team? Describe your philosophy toward managing a team, developing and implementing a budget for your department, overseeing data collection and performance measures, addressing internal personnel issues, and ensuring that work plans are followed?

My philosophy towards managing my team revolves around “co-leadership” and “shared leadership”:

- Co-leadership is the concept that each member of my executive team (E-team) comes to the table looking out for the interests of the entire utility. In other words, every E-team member must have the General Manager’s frame of reference.
- Shared leadership is the concept that leaders should share their decision-making authority with their subordinates, so that decisions are made at the most appropriate level within the organization. In other words, every person within the organization is empowered to make decisions that are appropriate to their position.

Both co-leadership and shared leadership philosophies center around empowering employees. I believe the most effective organizations are ones where employees are not seeking direction every day, but rather bringing their creative thinking and innovation to their jobs to solve problems. This happens when employees are empowered. In organizations where co-leadership and shared leadership are done effectively, leaders spend 80% of their time coaching, mentoring and providing intent, and only 20% of the time making decisions.

With respect to developing and implementing a budget, I am a proponent of “Results Based Budgeting”, which centers on developing outcome-based budget proposals and weighing them against one another. SPU currently does more incremental budgeting, although at times in the past 15 years, we have done zero-based budgeting. I am comfortable operating with all three approaches. However, in upcoming years, my strong preference is to transition to a methodology that provides an opportunity to solicit meaningful community input and feedback loops from groups and organizations, including but also beyond SPU’s Customer Review Panel. It is my belief that budgets are value statements and soliciting public feedback – especially from marginalized or historically underrepresented groups – will help to ensure the values of those groups are better represented in the utility’s budget decisions.

On data collection and performance measures, I am a strong proponent of Lean Methodologies for continuous improvement and root-cause problem solving. Performance measures should focus on value-added outcomes for customers. The utility should continuously monitor and report on those value-added outcomes, with the goal of continuously improving them through process improvements or other remedies. The past two years, SPU began the journey of embracing a continuous improvement culture through a Lean pilot program, and we are poised to expand this program to additional parts of the utility in coming years. Already in the first couple of years, we have seen improvements in areas such as contract procurement and front-line worker response times.

With respect to addressing internal personnel issues, I am a strong believer in personal growth opportunities and that discipline should generally be restorative. There are absolutely exceptions to this, where an employee has crossed a line. In those cases, I believe termination is the best option. In most other cases, the utility should follow a pathway that includes coaching and counseling, verbal/written warnings, and performance improvement plans, followed by increasing levels of suspension. When all attempts at restoration are exhausted, then the department should proceed with terminating an employee. In cases of interpersonal conflict between two employees, I generally encourage employees to resolve the conflict “at the lowest level”. When there are barriers to doing this, I encourage manager/supervisors to get involved or to bring in the Employee Ombuds Office or a 3rd party mediator.

Finally, I am firm believer in basic work management. All employees should have workplans with well-defined goals that are agreed upon with the employee’s supervisor. Employees should also have competencies they are seeking to improve upon, as well as plans for career growth and development. Workplans should be reviewed on a monthly or quarterly basis, with opportunities for the supervisor and other employees to provide the employee with feedback. Performance reviews should be conducted on an annual basis, and there should be no surprises at the annual performance review.

10) How will you cultivate partnerships and find time/cost savings with other City departments, such as Department of Transportation? What opportunities do you see to enhance delivery of City projects in right-of-ways?

Cultivating a “One Seattle” partnership with City departments is important to delivering the best possible service and investments at the lowest cost. SPU has interconnections and potential for cross-collaboration with Transportation, Seattle City Light, Parks and Recreation, Construction and Inspection, Finance and Administrative Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Office of Housing, Office of Sustainability and Environment, Information Technology, Neighborhoods, Planning and Community Development, City Budget Office, Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Office for Civil Rights, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, not to mention Police and Fire. It is my responsibility as the General Manager / CEO to cultivate relationships with all the City departments and both initiate and remove barriers to collaboration.

In my first six months as Interim GM/CEO, I have made it a point to have introductory and regular meetings with other department heads. Our conversations have become the launching point for addressing challenges, identifying potential areas of collaboration, and pursuing improvement initiatives. It is my responsibility to maintain clear and open lines of communication with other department heads. I also make it a point to have a broader City lens, as opposed to only wearing my SPU hat, when I am working through an issue with another director.

With respect to service delivery opportunities, there are several SPU is working on pertaining to SDOT, use of the right of way, and other City departments:

- Affordable Sidewalks: SPU and SDOT are working together to analyze and potentially pilot design templates for installing low-cost sidewalks in neighborhoods that are lacking them.
- Improved Capital Project Coordination: SPU and SDOT continue to enhance the early sharing of project planning and related project information to look for opportunities for collaboration. This includes coordination on Federal and State funding submissions, especially for green infrastructure/drainage improvements and fish-passable culverts. This type of coordination is often viewed favorably by the State and makes grant applications more competitive.
- Improved Street-use Permitting: SPU and SDOT are evaluating a return to more blanket permits for straightforward work in the ROW on non-arterial streets. Many utility projects occur on neighborhood non-arterial streets that are fairly simple with respect to traffic control plans and maintaining pedestrian, bike and vehicle flow. SPU would follow guidelines and fees established by SDOT. SPU could complete these projects faster and SDOT could save resources on their end to address the more complex projects where there is significant value added by SDOT plan reviewers and traffic control reviews.

- Affordable Housing: As part of the City’s Housing Task force, SPU is working with Office of Housing and other departments to look at ways to remove barriers and support affordable housing development in the city. In the last six months, SPU, in collaboration with the Office of Housing, was able to successfully support an application for over \$6.5 million in State Department of Commerce’s Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program (CHIP) funding. Our work together with Office of Housing also includes advocating for future funding from Commerce.
- Enhanced Ratepayer Customer Assistance Programs: Together with SCL and HSD, SPU is continuing to explore ways to enhance ratepayer customer assistance and remove barriers to affordability access.
- Coordinated Graffiti Abatement: SPU is working together with SDOT, SCL, Parks, and Department of Neighborhoods to collaboratively abate graffiti citywide, both on private and public property.

11) What will you do to ensure that SPU is an inclusive, supportive work environment for its 1,400 employees?

I have emphasized the importance of a healthy organizational work culture from my first day as GM/CEO. The absence of a healthy organizational culture will compromise our ability to accomplish our work successfully, and therefore it is imperative that we give appropriate attention to our work culture.

My desired culture for SPU is captured in three words: Engagement, Empowerment, and Equity. I believe if we are successful at adopting these three qualities across our utility, then we will see incredibly high performance and outcomes from our workforce.

The pathway to achieving a culture of Engagement, Empowerment, and Equity comes through:

1. Clear communication of these values from leadership;
2. Training, coaching, and mentoring for managers/supervisors on how to achieve these qualities;
3. Regular mechanisms for soliciting feedback from employees; and
4. Accountability with managers/supervisors.

Ultimately, much of the burden for achieving organizational culture relies on the effectiveness of managers and supervisors to adopt these values. I oftentimes say that “People don’t quit their jobs, they quit their bosses.” I believe in this statement, and we must invest in our managers/supervisors to create healthy work settings for our employees.

In my first six months as interim GM/CEO, we have communicated our values for organizational culture, we have initiated training for managers and supervisors (scheduled to occur during Q3/Q4 2022), and we have also begun the process for executing an annual employee survey (scheduled to occur during Q3/Q4 2022).

Feedback loops such as the employee survey will be important tools for determining whether we are headed in the right direction on organizational culture, or if we need to exercise course-correction. As we collect feedback, it will be incredibly important that we respond to the feedback with appropriate efforts to improve our culture and simultaneously hold managers/supervisors/directors accountable when we are underachieving with respect to our desired culture. Through this feedback loop, the goal will be that employees feel supported, engaged, empowered, and committed to the work of equity in our workplace.

Race and Social Justice

12) Please discuss how you will further incorporate the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative into SPU's governing procedures and organizational culture, and into your leadership of SPU. How will you improve racial equity through your management of the Department?

Leading with equity at SPU means centering every aspect of our work on serving the marginalized and dismantling systems that prevent individuals or groups from accessing our services. It means addressing historic injustices and ensuring that every person in Seattle receives the equal benefits of our drinking water, drainage and wastewater, solid waste, and clean city services.

I believe that I have a tremendous responsibility to set the tone for the department with respect to racial equity work. Every day, I must show up to work with a mission to dismantle institutional racism in our organization, city, and country. I have this expectation not only for myself, but for every member of my Executive and Leadership Team.

That said, the work of dismantling racism is everyone's responsibility within the department and must be embedded in all that we do. SPU has a rich history of promoting structures that empower anti-racist work in the department, including the Branch Equity Teams, the Change Team, Affinity Groups, the Anti-Racist White Caucus and groups such as the Silencebreakers. I will continue to promote the work of those groups and look for common goals and coordination across groups through umbrella structures such as the Equity Bridge.

These groups in partnership with SPU leadership will do the difficult work of dismantling racism both within SPU and outside of SPU. We will continue to address disparities in hiring and promotions and work to remove barriers for people of color. We will swiftly address any incidents of discrimination or harassment in the workplace. And we will work to create a common understanding of the importance of equity work in our organization.

SPU's anti-racism work must be centered on relationships with community. If we are successful in our equity work, then community will come away with a sense of empowerment. I will provide leadership to the organization in how we interact with community, taking a humble and thoughtful approach to listening to those who are most affected by racism and environmental injustice and helping work alongside community towards pathways to action.

Building a culture focused on equity will require that we allow community values to affect our budgeting practices. I am committed to seeking input from community in our budget development, including but also beyond the involvement of SPU's Customer Review Panel. I believe it is essential that we listen to the voice of community, especially the most marginalized and underrepresented in our city, to help establish our budgeting priorities. We have an opportunity to do that in the development of our next Strategic Business Plan in 2023-24.

Lastly, having a relational framework for equity work does not mean that we will be lacking in measurable goals and objectives. Our equity work must have measures to ascertain whether and how much progress we are making. That will include hiring and promotion goals, women and minority-owned business enterprise (WMBE) utilization goals, goals for customer assistance programs, and service level goals. Through measurement, it is my hope that we will see progress in the change that are hoping to effectuate.

13) How will SPU identify and address environmental justice issues in the provision of its utility services?

The past six months, I have been intently focused on environmental justice and what that means for SPU. I have come to define environmental justice as the process of addressing the environmental and social damage that has resulted from historic activities, whether by government or industry. Environmental damage in Seattle looks like:

- Flooding, sewer backups, sea level rise, and sediment contamination, all affecting South Park, a neighborhood that already has lower air quality, lower life expectancy, and a higher percentage of people of color.
- Fewer claims for sewer backups and flooding paid in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of people of color.
- Higher volumes of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the Duwamish, compared to Lake Washington or Lake Union.
- Inequitable investment in infrastructure.
- Lower tree canopy in areas of the city with higher concentrations of people of color.
- Absence of property sanitation, garbage collection, and clean drinking water for the unhoused.
- Declining fish runs for tribal communities because of environmental pollution and habitat degradation.

Uncovering environmental justice issues is made possible by the City's modern mapping tools. Seattle Public Utilities has used City Equity and Environment Initiative mapping to identify environmental justice issues with respect to service provision. This includes disparities related to sewer backups, flooding, water quality issues, water pressure issues, sediment contamination, and/or missed trash collection.

Addressing environmental justice issues requires a number of important commitments from government, all of which I am prepared to do. First, SPU must involve impacted communities in our decision-making processes. This includes our budgets, our policies, our planning, our capital decisions, and our partnerships with others. This means going out of our

way to provide access to BIPOC communities, disadvantaged communities, and tribal leaders. It also means respectfully listening, understanding, and advocating for community values, as opposed to dismissing their concerns or finding reasons to stand in their way.

Second, SPU must recognize that addressing systemic racism is at the core of environmental justice. In the same way that dismantling racism requires undoing power structures and governance systems, we must do our part to undo the structures and systems that have led to environmental justice issues. Those systems may include our methodologies for identifying issues, our systems for prioritizing problems, our decision-making processes for which projects to budget, and our ways for working within and with community.

Lastly, SPU must recognize that our goal is not simply equality – or making sure that we treat everyone or every neighborhood equally. Our goal is justice – righting historic wrongs and proactively fighting to make sure that those wrongs never occur again.

I believe that if we commit to these principles, then communities will feel empowered, and we will be on the pathway towards bringing about environmental justice in our city.

14) City leaders should ensure that all residents, including those with limited English proficiency, immigrants and refugees, or those who might not be fully documented, have access to City services. How will you manage SPU to ensure all these demographics are well served?

I have a strong personal interest in serving those with limited English proficiency, including immigrants and refugees. My parents came to the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s as immigrants and I understand the risk of being marginalized because of language, cultural, or institutional barriers. It is critically important to me that SPU ensures access to our services, programs, and opportunities for immigrants and refugees, because they oftentimes are the ones with the greatest need for the services and programs we offer. This includes assistance with paying their utility bill; help with emergencies or other problems; getting information about repairs and construction; understanding inspections and enforcement; and accessing programs, rebates, or claims.

SPU strives to provide inclusive and accessible programs and services to those with limited English proficiency and we work diligently to improve our access for all demographics. Good examples of our work include:

- Help With Utility Bills Campaign: materials were in all of Seattle's Top Tier languages to help reach all customers.
- Urgent Notice and Shutoff Notices: we recently reworked notices into plain language and translated into the top seven languages.
- Community Connections: we have contracts with community organizations that serve those with limited English proficiency, immigrants and refugees.
- Construction Projects: for the recently completed Pearl Street project, we translated construction information into Spanish for neighbors and our bilingual project manager responded to community in their preferred language.

- Cultural Competency Training: we recently held Cultural Competencies training events for staff in our Customer Cares division.
- Services for People Experiencing Homelessness: we operate hygiene trailers, the purple bag program, and the RV wastewater pump out program.

As GM/CEO, it will be my responsibility to lead our teams in continually improving access to our services, programs, and opportunities for our most marginalized customers. We will continue translating all critical utility-wide materials available in Top Tier languages. Neighborhood-specific materials will be translated when 5% or more of the population speaks languages other than English. We will leverage our partnerships with community-based organizations through our Community Connections Program and the Department of Neighborhoods' Community Liaisons to build relationships with immigrant and refugee communities. Our customer engagement programs will continue hiring multilingual consultants who can transcreate materials and provide culturally competent engagement. We will make every effort to publicize our services through ethnic and community media. Lastly, we will continue applying Racial Equity Toolkits to every one of our customer-facing programs and include race and access in our long-term investment planning conversations.

I have already had the opportunity to meet with Hamdi Mohamed, the Director of the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA). I am excited to partner with OIRA to discuss other ways that SPU can improve our services to the immigrant and refugee community, including providing access to job opportunities.

Environment and Sustainability

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

SPU must be at the forefront of protecting and restoring the environment in our city. This includes being a leader in the region and the country at turning the tide of climate change, as well as preparing for its impact, reducing stormwater and sewage pollution to our waterways, adopting zero waste goals, growing circular economy, cleaning up historical legacy pollutants, conserving water and restoring our streams and natural waterways.

With respect to climate change, it is imperative that SPU reduce carbon emissions through a comprehensive approach involving minimizing direct fossil fuel consumption, modifying our purchasing and contracting practices, and promoting waste reduction and reuse. We must simultaneously develop sustainable and resilient methods for addressing the impacts of climate change in terms of extreme precipitation, heat island effect, drinking water supply, and stream health. These methods should center around restoration of natural hydrology through sustainable approaches such as green stormwater infrastructure, floodplain reconnection, and restoration of tree canopies.

SPU must continue its decades-long programs to reduce sewage overflows and stormwater pollution to our waterways. Programs should ideally transition towards more “green” approaches, such as green stormwater infrastructure. Recognizing that the public right-of-way constitutes only a portion of the impervious surfaces in the city, SPU must continue to work through codes as partnerships with private developers to incentivize or mandate the use of natural drainage solutions, preventing polluted runoff from entering our waters. The recent partnership with developer Mark Grey to treat stormwater runoff from the Aurora Bridge serves as a model for future public-private partnerships to sustainably treat polluted stormwater runoff. The complexity of pollution continues to increase, however, and SPU must also bolster its “upstream” approaches to control pollution “at the source”, by working with legislators and manufacturers to stop producing “forever” chemicals that persist in the environment and create harm for fish and people.

SPU is a leader in the solid waste arena, with per capita waste production lower than any other major municipality. SPU has paved the way for other jurisdictions to ban single-use plastics, adopt weekly composting of food waste, and steadily increase the recycling rate. The future of sustainability in the solid waste arena, however, lies in an intense focus on reducing the amount of waste that people generate and creating more circular economy. This will affect packaging, food waste recovery, the textiles industry, construction demolition activities, and many other aspects of how we reuse waste.

SPU must continue to lead the country in water conservation. The past three decades have been an incredible success story when it comes to avoiding the development of new water supply sources through concerted water conservation efforts. While population growth and climate migration continue to put pressure on our region’s water supply demands, SPU must be equally as aggressive in pursuing water conservation measures that will enable the region to avoid or delay costly future water supply investments.

Cleaning up our polluted waterways is a central part of SPU’s mission. This includes removing contaminants in Superfund sites such as the Duwamish and Gasworks Park and working to prevent recontamination of these waterways through robust source control programs.

Restoring our Cedar and Tolt drinking water watershed, as well as associated rivers, streams and natural waterway ecosystems, is also an area where SPU must lead the city. Seattle’s five streams (Thornton Creek, Longfellow Creek, Piper’s Creek, Fauntleroy, and Taylor Creek), in addition to the Cedar and Tolt River and Duwamish Waterway, offer habitat for salmon and other species that is vital to the Puget Sound ecosystem. It is essential that SPU work to ensure river, creek and waterway ecosystems provide suitable habitat for our aquatic species. To that end, fish barriers must be removed, instream flows maintained, natural floodplains restored, and harmful pollutants eliminated. SPU must work diligently in partnership with community to see these goals realized.

In all these areas, community relationship building, environmental education, and volunteer opportunities serve as the catalyst to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people who work and live in the greater Seattle area to advance our shared environmental goals. Simply put, SPU must continue to educate, involve and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders and employees through proactive environmental programs and partnerships in schools, neighborhoods, and businesses. These programs will ensure that the next generation of Seattleites are engrained with new social norms on waste generation, land-use, water conservation, and pollution prevention. We must amplify our efforts to educate and work with businesses, knowing that waste generated by businesses is enormous. Lastly, we must be incredibly creative and lead with equity in our education strategies. Our efforts must focus on BIPOC communities and we must use all available channels (video, social media, documentaries) to share and tell our collective environmental stories. Only by successfully educating and involving our public can we hope to have any chance at affordably achieving our environmental goals.

16) What experience do you have developing resilient, forward-thinking policies around climate change (including climate resiliency/adaptation) and what role does SPU play in implementing those policies? How do you see SPU's role evolving in the next five years in the midst of climate change?

Climate change has had increasing impacts on utility infrastructure for the past two decades of my professional career. Since the early 2000s, I have been involved in long-range planning to mitigate and adapt to the effects of extreme precipitation from climate change on drainage and wastewater infrastructure. This planning included partnerships with academic institutions, such as the **Climate Impacts Group** at the University of Washington, to develop **long-range precipitation forecasts** that were then applied to the **design of combined sewer overflow (CSO) infrastructure from 2008-2014**. During that same period, I also oversaw the launch of the city's **green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) program to address CSOs**, with the goal of expanding the use of natural drainage systems as a more sustainable and climate-resilient alternative to traditional infrastructure solutions. That work laid the foundation for the **City's current goal of managing 800 million gallons of stormwater through GSI**.

In 2016, during my tenure at Bellevue Utilities, I was a contributor to the Regional Water Supply Forum's work on resiliency threats, which included climate change, seismic events, and wildfires. Since rejoining SPU in 2019, I have served as the Executive Sponsor of SPU's latest greenhouse gas inventory, as well as a study of sustainable energy generation alternatives from water and wastewater infrastructure. This includes the use of microturbines at SPU's drinking water pressure reducing stations and sewer heat recovery. I have also served as the Executive Sponsor of the South Park Water Quality Facility Project, which is currently being sited along the Duwamish Waterfront and will serve as an anchor property for sea level rise mitigation.

Climate change in the form of changing water cycles, extreme precipitation, and flooding in vulnerable communities is already impacting SPU planning and operations. I've experienced this first-hand in my public sector experience in San Francisco, Bellevue, and Seattle.

Climate change has amplified the environmental challenges and inequities we are facing as a city. SPU's climate policy work involves assessing the implications of a changing climate on our assets, services, and business functions. We must then develop climate justice, adaptation, and mitigation strategies that can be integrated into our operations, capital planning, and overall decision-making processes.

The changing climate requires that SPU invest now in water system and operational adaptation and flexibility, from increasing pipe sizes as part of the Ship Canal Water Quality Project to investments in natural ecosystem resilience and nature-based solutions such as Green Stormwater Infrastructure. Simultaneously, SPU must not only seek to reduce its operational carbon footprint but also, as the City's waste manager, reduce Seattle's consumption and waste-generation emissions, building a more circular economy and making reuse and waste prevention a priority. SPU's role in responding to climate change will continue to grow and evolve along these lines in the next five years.