

Seattle City Council Confirmation Questions & Answers

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September 10, 2018

The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) is, in many ways, the backbone of City government. The services it provides directly to the public and to other City departments as they perform their respective functions, are critical good governance.

1. What is your vision for FAS over the next 3 years?

FAS serves many critical functions across the City, with diverse customers and constituencies that include City departments, elected officials, businesses and the general public. As FAS director, my agenda is simple: provide leadership, vision, support and alignment to ensure each FAS division provides timely, responsive and efficient services to our internal and external customers while reinforcing the principles of a safe, respectful and equitable work environment. To that end, I have identified five priority areas that will guide all FAS work:

- *Excellent customer service*: Break through silos and traditional ways of doing business. Challenge FAS staff to think innovatively about how to achieve desired outcomes that can be more efficient, streamlined and responsive. Reinforce an organizational culture of proactive and transparent communications with internal and external customers, including the Mayor's Office, City Council, customers, residents and stakeholders.
- *Respectful and equitable workplace*: Heighten organizational awareness and reinforce collective accountability for promoting equity, respect, civility, integrity, inclusiveness and fairness of opportunity for all employees.
- *Continuous improvements and financial accountability*: Provide strong oversight for all public resources, including prudent rate setting for internal departments, reasonable and appropriate user fees for the public, and fostering an organizational culture of continually pursuing efficiencies and innovations.
- *Economic opportunity through City contracting*: Ensure measurable progress is made to promote critical economic development opportunities for underrepresented populations by setting firm targets, sharing transparent results and challenging FAS staff to continuously build upon prior progress.
- *Stewardship of City assets*: Right-size the City fleet to meet important climate and operational efficiency goals. Ensure FAS is maintaining City facilities prudently and developing a strategic and long-term vision for the City's real estate holdings.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges to FAS in the coming years?

The City is at a critical juncture in terms of its staggering population growth and new

construction development. As demands for City services increase in volume and complexity, FAS will need to further its goals for providing the highest quality internal services and infrastructure support to City departments to facilitate their delivery of effective and efficient services to the public.

For example, one immediate challenge facing the City is the homelessness crisis. Due to FAS' facility and real estate responsibilities and interdepartmental coordination expertise, the department had been deeply involved in organizing and executing the City's emergency response to homelessness, and since 2016 had led encampment outreach and cleanup efforts. With the recent reorganization of many of these activities within the Human Services Department (HSD), FAS is phasing out its lead operational role and is returning to a support role related to homelessness. Many operational responsibilities have already transitioned to HSD or are in progress, including Navigation Team operations (i.e., outreach and cleanup), media response and formal reports to City Council and the City Auditor.

FAS will continue to facilitate the City's homelessness response through its regular lines of business, such as: 1) facility and real estate support for encampments and shelters; 2) facility and fleet resources for City employees involved with homelessness response; and 3) managing contracts that support the work of the City's Navigation Team.

3. What steps will you take to ensure that you work effectively with the City Council?

As I lead FAS, accountability and transparency will be critical in gaining and maintaining the trust of City Councilmembers, their legislative aides and Council Central Staff. This will be accomplished through comprehensive, accurate and timely responses to requests for information. I look forward to building relationships with Councilmembers and pledge to work transparently with Council to fully inform their analysis and development of policy priorities. In particular, I will leverage my experience working eight years in county government to my new FAS role in serving and supporting the City Council.

4. How will you ensure that Council members and legislative staff receive timely information needed from your department for Council to make sound policy and financial decisions?

In my first few weeks at FAS I have already made organizational changes to facilitate a more structured and coordinated flow of information so that Council requests will come directly to a designated Council liaison within the FAS Director's Office. That request will be tracked and routed quickly to the appropriate division for expert advice and information. The responses will then be returned through the same channel in the FAS Director's Office to ensure completeness and consistency with policies and goals before being transmitted back to Council. By adopting a more structured process, the FAS

Director's Office will be better able to ensure timely and responsive follow-ups to Council requests for information.

I believe my leadership experience and success with other complex organizations, including the U.S. Small Business Administration where my team and resource partners were spread out among 78 local offices, has positioned me well to serve the diverse interests and priorities of the City Council and its associated constituencies.

5. How will you be responsive to Council requests, in particular regarding priorities that may differ from those of the Executive Branch?

As a City department, FAS has a duty to assist both the Mayor and City Council in pursuit of policies benefiting the residents of Seattle. At times priorities may differ between the two branches of government, but it is our responsibility to residents and other constituencies to ensure our policymakers have the relevant and complete information they need in reviewing and developing programs, policies and laws. I expect FAS will provide timely and accurate information to support those efforts and we will be effective in doing so as described in the previous two questions – by building relationships through transparency and accountability, and by effectively organizing the flow of information through our department back to the Council.

6. In your position, how will you support the implementation of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative? Can you provide some specific examples?

I see the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative as one of our most critical efforts in undoing institutionalized racism. I will strive to enhance FAS' work in furthering the initiative's goals across all of our divisions. Specifically, I am elevating the role of racial equity in the Director's Office by repurposing an existing FAS position to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff for Equity and Policy. This position will lead coordination of policy issues and equity work in FAS, including some of our key programs, such as WMBE, Priority Hire and community workforce agreements.

In addition, FAS staff will continue the critical work it has already undertaken this year in implementing Racial Equity Toolkits (RETs) with robust training, leadership support and coordination across divisions with teams that include policy staff, subject matter experts and RSJI Change Team members on each project. As FAS enhances these efforts, we will build staff expertise on RETs and partner closely with the leaders on our Change Team to improve racial equity across the department and the broader City government.

7. What steps will you take to ensure that the FAS maintains a welcoming and safe workplace for City employees? Can you provide some specific examples?

I am committed to fostering a workplace that emphasizes equity, respect, productivity, inclusiveness and fairness of opportunity. I expect all FAS employees to act with civility and integrity. To achieve this, I am committed to updating policies, ensuring training opportunities and soliciting ideas directly from staff. We all deserve to feel valued and respected, and by doing so, our customers will receive the high level of service they deserve.

To reinforce my department-wide expectations, I have asked FAS HR to prioritize workplace culture as part of its ongoing work plan, and discussion of these critical issues will be a centerpiece of monthly FAS team meetings, composed of two dozen leaders and senior managers throughout the organization.

Promoting inclusiveness and empowerment have been central throughout my career, particularly in my role leading the U.S. Small Business Administration in the Pacific Northwest, where I focused on expanding support to women-owned, New American-owned, LGBTQ-owned, and minority-owned small businesses. Additionally, as a past member of the Board of Directors for the Greater Seattle Business Association, the nation's largest LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, I continually focused on inclusion and eliminating barriers.

8. What is your organizational management approach? How will you review internal operations at FAS to determine if they warrant improvement? What is your leadership approach?

As noted above, I recognize FAS is one of the most critical and diverse City departments. Leading up to my first day at FAS and in the weeks since, I have met over 150 FAS employees and have learned about the organization from individuals doing the day-to-day work at all levels of the department. I have visited the Seattle Animal Shelter, several customer service centers, the Charles Street and Haller Lake facilities, as well as walked the FAS floors in the Seattle Municipal Tower. I believe in a collaborative leadership approach, encouraging my executive team to provide as much input as possible and empowering them to share in collaborative decision making.

With the help of key staff, I have already implemented organizational changes within the Director's Office to foster a more collaborative and better-coordinated workplace that elevates equity and inclusiveness in policy and practice throughout the department. I believe these changes will improve policy development and coordination with internal and external stakeholders, the Mayor's and Councilmembers' Offices.

Philosophically, I also believe change is inevitable in how we need to adapt to the evolving and growing needs of our internal and external customers. As a newcomer to

the department, I will be an active learner regarding FAS' internal operations and will bring fresh eyes in challenging our department to continuously innovate and work smarter and more efficiently. I believe FAS has some of the most dedicated and knowledgeable public servants throughout City government. As the department leader, my job will be to champion the goals of innovation and efficiencies, invite feedback on opportunities for continuous improvements, and provide leadership support and an organized structure for implementing and managing business changes and improvements.

9. Give an example of your strategic planning approach and explain the result. What did you learn?

I believe in collaboration, transparency and a results orientation in how I approach all of my work. For example, as the Regional Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration, one of my key priorities was to improve program accessibility to underserved entrepreneurs, specifically women-owned, New American-owned, LGBTQ-owned, and minority-owned small businesses. Recognizing service deficiencies, we proactively sought input from business owners, prospective entrepreneurs, educators, government partners, civic leaders, nonprofit executives and community activists. Based on that feedback, we created the *Empowering All Entrepreneurs* action plan, which included concrete steps to expand culturally appropriate technical assistance, improve communications and broaden community outreach efforts.

The lesson I took from that effort is that the outcome is vastly improved when we proactively include impacted stakeholders in defining the issue, positively engaging them on collective outcomes we all want to achieve, and then soliciting their invaluable insight, ideas and partnership on what will work best for them. I am proud of that work due to the collaborative process, but also because it was action- and results-oriented where SBA saw loan volumes increase for underrepresented small business owners.

10. For each of the functional areas that FAS is responsible for (customer service, regulation and oversight, financial services, and operational services), what is working effectively and what changes will you make?

In my first few weeks at FAS, I have been actively learning about the department's four functional areas and have a deep appreciation for the great work underway. Based on preliminary observations, I look forward to partnering with FAS leadership to further enhance customer service, business innovations and efficiencies, and race and social justice goals within the four functional areas, such as:

- *Customer service:* FAS has been successful in creating a structured approach to quickly and efficiently forwarding public requests for services and information to appropriate City departments. An important next step is to work with departments to develop feedback mechanisms regarding the specific disposition of forwarded inquiries.
- *Regulation and oversight:* With key input from impacted stakeholders, FAS successfully implemented regulatory authority over important industries, such as marijuana, transportation network companies, and in cooperation with other City departments, nightlife businesses. In line with my emphasis on social justice and equity, FAS will be conducting Racial Equity Toolkits on marijuana licensing and nightlife enforcement to analyze and mitigate disparate impacts on minority-owned businesses.
- *Financial services:* FAS led a Citywide effort to establish new financial standards in concert with a new PeopleSoft system implementation. I will be partnering with Glen Lee, the City Finance Director, to ensure appropriate training and documentation are in place and continuously updated so that departments will continue to have central support in adapting to new business standards and system changes.
- *Operational services:* FAS provides effective building and fleet operations in support of City workers. I want to build upon FAS' success by developing a more long-term vision for stewarding the City's real estate holdings, and by working collaboratively with City departments to ensure our fleet program meets critical climate protection and efficiency targets.

11. One of the more unusual responsibilities of the director of FAS is the Seattle Animal Shelter, which enforces animal control laws and also provides care and placement to abandoned animals. Do you have goals for the shelter and the laws its staff enforce over the next four years?

I look forward to supporting the Seattle Animal Shelter (SAS) and the great work it does saving pets and promoting animal welfare. I already made a visit to the shelter to meet staff and learn more about its operations, and I had the pleasure of participating in the popular fifth annual Kitty Hall held a few weeks ago.

In building upon a much beloved City operation and community resource, the City has not performed a comprehensive review or update of Seattle's public safety, compliance and animal welfare laws since 1985. As such, Seattle lags behind many other jurisdictions across the nation that have adopted laws supporting 21st century approaches to more effectively and humanely address public safety and animal welfare issues. I will engage with the Executive and Council to explore potential legislative changes that will allow the City to implement a more equitable approach that reflects Seattle's values and offers SAS' field and shelter staff with the tools they need to provide more responsive services to our diverse communities.

Additionally, I am interested in furthering our partnerships with King County and non-profit animal welfare organizations to identify opportunities for increased coordination and/or economy-of-scale efficiencies in delivering animal control and animal welfare services.

12. What specific and measurable outcomes should FAS look to when measuring success?

Since starting in late August, I have met with FAS leaders and managers to understand the different lines of businesses and begin considering ways we can ensure FAS is on track with ensuring excellent customer service, fostering a culture of continuous improvements and innovations, and safeguarding race and social justice goals in the delivery and administration of our work. Over the next few months, I will be working closely with the FAS leadership team to more fully develop measurable outcomes and indicators for specific goals listed below:

- *Quickly answer 206-684-CITY customer calls.*
- *Work with departments to ensure customer service requests are responded to promptly.*
- *Prioritize electric vehicles in the City fleet.*
- *Reduce energy use in City facilities.*
- *Save shelter animals' lives.*
- *Increase the diversity of City contractors.*
- *Provide real estate services to support the Path to 500 homelessness response plan.*
- *Ensure transparency for budget, scope and schedule of FAS capital projects.*
- *Partner with the City Finance Director to support departments' adaptation to the PeopleSoft financial system and new financial standards.*
- *Ensure community workforce agreements are achieving desired outcomes.*
- *Apply information from Racial Equity Toolkits to department programs and policies.*
- *Implement annual performance agreements for APEX/SAM employees in FAS.*
- *Update HR processes to reinforce expectations for equitable and respectful work place.*

13. The City Council recently adopted [Council Bill 119310](#), to clarify immunity regarding the potential offering of socially responsible investment options for participant-directed investments in the Deferred Compensation program. The legislation clarifies immunity from liability for participant's selection of investment options offered under the Deferred Compensation Plan. What next steps do you plan to take to implement offering a socially responsible investment option(s) in the Deferred Compensation program?

The Director for the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) is responsible for administering the City's Voluntary Deferred Compensation Plan and Trust, and therefore

would lead the planning and implementation efforts around the changes outlined in Council Bill 119310. As a member of the Deferred Compensation board, City Finance Director Glen Lee is prepared to leverage the expertise of the City Finance Division and other FAS staff to support the SDHR Director with any staff analysis and recommendations as needed.

14. Why do you want to be the FAS Director?

I believe FAS is an incredibly dynamic and exciting department where we can facilitate and enable the smooth and efficient delivery of core City services and operations. From payroll and accounting, tax collection and investments, to contracting and purchasing services, property and fleet management, to design and construction of new essential facilities, FAS' work touches every single City department and every single employee behind the scenes.

FAS also has its own external responsibilities, including providing the customer service interface to the City's constituents, licensing all businesses, regulating certain industries for consumer protection and promoting public safety and animal welfare such as caring for more than 5,500 animals a year.

I have dedicated my public service career to ensuring everyone has shared access to opportunities by advocating and promoting equity, inclusiveness and empowerment. I see this FAS leadership role as a capstone to all of my past efforts. I have already witnessed first-hand the hard work and dedication of FAS' employees and it will be an absolute honor to lead this department.

I look forward to using my experience to support the great work FAS does for all City employees, residents and other constituents across Seattle.