

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2011

TO: Councilmember Jean Godden, Chair
Finance and Budget Committee

FROM: David L. Stewart, Acting Personnel Director

SUBJECT: Responses to Questions Regarding Seattle City Council Confirmation

Experience

Your most recent experience has been with the State of Washington's Department of Labor and Industry where you were the Assistant Director of the Office of Human Resources for the Department of Labor and Industries.

- **What are some of the notable accomplishments you achieved in that position?**

The Civil Service Reform legislation eliminated the use of registers for state hiring. Agencies became responsible for creating replacement recruitment system. I established a vacancy-based recruitment program that targeted qualified candidates for recruitment in the absence of an active state recruitment program. Hiring manager survey results demonstrate the effectiveness, with 98% satisfaction.

I oversaw the development of a leadership program that trains new supervisors on performance management, corrective actions, union agreement administration, ethics, fiscal accountability and employment law. The program continues with training for experienced supervisors in the Capstone program, a 2-day per month, 6-month program for leadership development. Topics covered include project management, strategic planning, visioning, self-awareness, analysis and critical thinking.

- 41 supervisors have completed Supervisory Essentials; 108 are currently enrolled in the program.
- 54 employees have completed Capstone; 15 are in progress.

I managed the development of an advanced leadership training program based on mentoring relationships and strategic problem solving, however, the program was tabled in favor of the agency's Lean transformation.

I directed the development of an online reporting system to bring workforce metrics to managers and supervisors. The system reports leave use statistics, evaluation and other performance evaluation completion and workforce demographics. The system will soon

report eligibility for retirement, age and job class composition for use in workforce planning.

I established the first regularly published monthly Human Resources newsletter to agency staff. It had a readership of over 1,600, including Human Resources managers outside the Department of Labor and Industries. The newsletter contained information of value to general staff and to supervisors and managers. Topics included survey results, safety and wellness announcements and reminders about ethics issues and policy reminders as well as introductory stories and HR staff changes.

I established an online exit survey for staff leaving positions at Labor and Industries. The survey gathered searchable comments and reasons for leaving. At my departure, 610 responses had been logged in its 3-year life, reporting "Opportunity to advance" as the number one reason for leaving. As a result of survey comments, I directed the development of a Careers program through which employees could map career progression and monitor promotional opportunities.

I managed the first agency-wide employee engagement survey to test how well employees understood agency mission, vision and values and how well their work contributed to achieving that mission. The department scored 6.84 on a scale of 10. Respondent comments indicated that direct, meaningful feedback from supervisors was the number one shortcoming in their employment experience. The Office of Human Resources scored 8.13.

I instituted a policy establishing a single annual date by which performance evaluations were due, rather than using employee anniversary dates, eliminating confusion and excuses over due dates. I published completion statistics and discussed them at leadership team meetings. Rates of completion increased from 63% to 96%.

I unified component programs in the Office of Human Resources to a single, outward-focused strategic purpose, rather than on compliance and internal process. The shift was evidenced by the change in greeting to "How can I help you," from "OK, here's what you have to do."

- **Please provide an example that illustrates your strategic planning and management abilities.**

I wrote and oversaw the implementation of the first-ever business plans for the Office of Human Resources, setting its priorities and directly addressing its contributions to the agency's strategic objectives. Key strategic initiatives were succession planning, customer focus and safety.

I addressed succession planning by directing cross-training of HR staff and by using multi-disciplinary teams for projects. HR Consultants became involved in training,

payroll and reporting; HR trainers were involved in data analysis, and HR consultations; payroll staff were involved in consultations, training and reporting.

I addressed customer focus by establishing an ongoing single-question customer survey and by inviting customer feedback at each transaction; by observing customer interactions and using them as discussion and coaching topics.

I addressed safety by setting an example of involvement in departmental safety programs – I served on the department Safety Council, the division's safety committee, and participated in safety-related walk-arounds and visits. The first item on every agenda was a workplace safety discussion.

I conducted the first customer survey of staff, supervisors, managers and executives on behalf of the Office of Human Resources. Results were used to establish a reference point against which the results of the single-question survey could be measured.

I conducted the first employee engagement survey to test how well employees understood agency mission, vision and values and how well their work contributed to achieving that mission. Those results were provided to agency program managers for consideration and to be included in their program business plans for 2011-2013.

- **What are some of the things you hoped to accomplish but didn't?**

I made the decision to postpone delivery of an advanced leadership development curriculum in favor of Lean transformation training to not overburden agency leaders. The agency made a commitment to Governor Gregoire to adopt a Lean management philosophy and begin reviewing its business processes for improvement. The training required was extensive and deemed of higher priority.

I planned a written workforce report but had not gathered all the data before I left. Following the installation of a new, statewide payroll system in 2005, theretofore unavailable data was collected and made reportable. The earliest available reports demonstrated the unreliability of the data due to nonstandard data entry. I directed Information Technology staff to identify areas where data could be correctly re-entered, and payroll staff to make the corrections. That work was completed and was being validated when I left.

I would like to have implemented an automated performance evaluation system. The one similar complaint from supervisors and managers involved the bothersome use of paper forms. I had begun the procurement process to select an automated solution to the paper issue. It was not completed before I left.

I would like to have implemented new agency-wide policies, systems and standards for imaging personnel documents. The Department of Labor and Industries depends on the

availability of paper employee files to process personnel and payroll transactions. Business contingency planning demonstrated the need for electronic or distance-independent access to those records. Financial constraints prevented the budget request.

I would like to have conducted a follow-up customer survey to see what improved. In September 2010, the Office of Human Resources conducted a customer survey as part of the Washington State Quality Award application process. Thirty percent of respondents said they had no contact with the Office, or had no knowledge of its purpose beyond payroll. Sixty percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the variety and quality of HR service. Ten percent were unsatisfied with HR service and related stories as old as 10 years as bases for the dissatisfaction.

Based on survey results, I directed a counter-card survey that asked a single question "What could we do differently to improve?" offered to each person at the end of each transaction. I directed the same question to be posted to the HR website for response by visitors. I directed the inclusion of the same or a similar question in an e-mail signature blocks. I introduced each section of the program individually in successive Human Resources newsletters. I very much miss not being present for a follow-up survey.

The City of Seattle's personnel system is very complex. An employment situation may be governed by the civil service system, city personnel rules, city, state and federal laws and a collective bargaining agreement.

- **What experience do you have managing a personnel system of comparable complexity?**

Seattle's personnel system is indeed complex. I have worked in two similar public personnel systems. The City employs over 10,000 employees covered by civil service rules, city ordinance, state and federal laws and, perhaps, one of 27 union agreements representing 47 bargaining units.

Washington State's Department of Labor and Industries' personnel program covered 2,700 employees who were subject to collective bargaining terms, civil service terms, agency policy and state and federal law. Labor and Industries had two collective bargaining agreements, covering employees in three unions.

The State of Alaska employed 14,000 employees who were also covered by collective bargaining, merit system rules, agency policy and state and federal laws. Alaska negotiated 13 collective bargaining agreements with 12 unions. Part of my job with the Division of Personnel was responsible for overseeing and maintaining the civil service rules and the state's personnel laws.

The notable exceptions to the structural similarities of the systems I have worked in are that Seattle self-manages its Workers' Compensation Program and is self-insured for health care benefits. My recent experience with Labor and Industries is helpful because the Office of Human Resources was the employer's representative to the Workers' Compensation insurer, Labor and Industries, and the office managed the agency's return-to-work and stay-at-work programs for injured workers. The Stay-at-Work program creates alternate employment opportunities for injured workers who might otherwise be on time loss, decreasing the impact on premium costs.

The complexity of Seattle's personnel system is not dissimilar from personnel systems I have worked in previously. The scope is broader and challenges exist. I am confident that my prior work experience has prepared me to adapt quickly, building on those earlier experiences.

The current Department of Personnel has five main areas of expertise; City Union Relations, Classification and Compensation, Employee Health Services and Benefits, Employment and Training, and Citywide Personnel Services.

- **What experience and expertise do you bring to these areas? Please be specific and provide examples.**

- **City Union Relations**

The Union or labor relations is an area of particular interest and expertise for me. During my employment in Alaska, I served as a chief spokesperson for the State, representing management to six unions. I consulted with the Governor and Chief of Staff over bargaining strategies. I was management's representative to Alaska's largest public employee union to plan, organize and conduct collaborative training with shop stewards and agency supervisors over dispute resolution, and the rights and responsibilities of all parties to labor disputes. The objective was to improve the working relationships among state agency representatives and union representatives. The number of grievances filed decreased by more than 30% in the first year following the training.

In Washington, I advised the executive management team at Labor and Industries on collective bargaining issues and recommended positions for statewide bargaining, disputes, strategies and union contract implementation. My office was staff to the department's labor management committees.

- **Classification and Compensation**

In Alaska, I reviewed job descriptions and classified jobs for the Alaska's Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a department of 450 employees. Later, I managed the state's Classification and Compensation section for the Alaska Division of Personnel,

affecting over 14,000 employees. I managed wage studies of varying scope for public service job classes. I managed a special compensation study comparing men's and women's earnings in Alaska state service at the request of the state Legislature and presented the results to Legislative committees. The results did not require legislative action.

In Washington state government, position review and classification analysis were delegated to some agencies. I managed classification staff for the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. I reviewed classification decisions for quality and consistency and participated in complex studies and analyses.

I have had formal training in compensation theory and programs from the *World at Work* compensation program, an affiliate of the International Public Management Association.

- **Employee Health Services and Benefits**

My experience in health services and benefits is peripheral. In Alaska, I served in advisory capacities to the state administrative division that was specifically charged with managing retirement systems and benefit programs. I advised decision-makers on the collective bargaining strategies for wellness and health benefit programs. I also provided cost information for similar programs for non-covered employees used for drafting financial legislation.

- **Employment and Training**

This is another area of special interest and experience for me. I established Labor and Industries' recruitment program in the wake of civil service reform, eliminating registers and eligible lists in favor of vacancy-based recruiting. I directed for establishment of a career training program for agency employees who desired to expand their careers and career options.

In 1988, I was hired as a trainer with the Alaska's Department of Labor and Workforce Development. I wrote and presented three courses on supervision and management, two on performance appraisal, one each on corrective action, just cause and due process. I also delivered curricula on personal development and coaching. I remained involved in training programs for the balance of my career with the State of Alaska. I managed the establishment of a Supervisory Academy for basic supervisory training, prior to leaving Alaska.

I continued to be involved with training when I joined Labor and Industries. In the course of my employment there, I designed and presented a 3-day risk management program to over 600 supervisors and managers, a supervisory essentials program, a mid-manager training program and I managed the creation of an advanced leadership

program. In addition, I presented self-development seminars using *Myers-Briggs, Strengths in Leadership* and related material.

- **Citywide Personnel Services**

As a result of working in both central and agency personnel programs, I developed expertise in collaboration and mutual interest-based endeavors. While working in Labor Relations, I involved the affected agencies in addressing operational language bargaining, implementation of pay, or pay-related terms such as benefit contribution levels, leave, work hours and institutional concerns. While working as a trainer, I included agency-specific examples in training programs, such as using that programs' specific jargon or technical references, using program-specific examples for familiarity, and, wherever possible, references to program-specific situations or transactions. Prior to finalizing the results of classification and wage studies, I verified with affected agencies and bargaining units the results of a study and potential impacts.

I have served on both sides of centralized/decentralized personnel services program delivery in two state governments. The tension created by the apparent inability of centralized authority to recognize and provide for the individuality of city departments and the inconsistencies of application of central policy by city departments is not unique to Seattle city government. The needs of managers in city agencies with diverse purposes require a collaborative central personnel authority. My objective is to provide citywide personnel services that maximize city agencies' abilities to achieve their respective goals.

- **How would you approach learning the areas of the City's personnel system that you are currently unfamiliar with?**

I regularly read sections of the Municipal Code and City Charter to become more familiar with the legal and historical bases for actions and decisions I am responsible for. I have met with most agency directors to discuss their respective lines of business and how City Personnel is involved in, can be involved in, or can facilitate their work.

I have subscribed to electronic learning programs offered by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans. These short presentations vary from basic health benefit program management to retirement fund management and fiduciary responsibilities in represented and non-covered workplaces. In addition, I am meeting regularly with city investment professionals and council staff, I am actively researching opportunities to gain profound knowledge in the areas of fund and investment management, specifically to serve the City in my capacities as member of the boards for retirement and deferred compensation systems.

The Director also has primary responsibility for the developing and managing the department's budget.

- **What is your experience developing and managing a department budget of approximately 12 million and 120 employees?**

For the State of Alaska, I assisted with budget preparation and managed project spending plans. The annual budget was approximately \$4M, with 38 employees. I managed a separate \$1.7M allotment covering the Labor Relations Program of 16 employees.

For the Washington Department of Labor and Industries, I prepared and presented a budget proposal each biennium, then developed and managed the respective spending plans. The biennial budget was \$7.4M, with 46 employees.

The Personnel Department budget is larger than appropriations I have worked with in the past, and the funding streams are more varied, however my experience managing moderate public budgets has prepared me for the growth that this personnel program budget provides.

- **What is your experience developing and implementing budget reductions?**

Increments and decrements are elements in any budget system, public or private. In times of plenty, public and private entities take on more work of mid-range importance, system upgrades and shorter-term project work. In leaner times, many agencies, public and private, will reduce their work and workforces, occasionally without due regard to their core body of work.

In Alaska, I chaired a labor-management committee charged with closing a state institution. The facility provided important, but not essential, services, and so was earmarked for closure. In addition to providing residential care, the facility was a community activity center. The committee worked for a year to plan gradual reductions of force, community care of residents, facility use and community access. Eventually, only one employee was laid off; the other 59 were re-employed without breaks in service. All the residents were placed in community homes and the facility decommissioned but left intact for community use.

In Washington, the budget changes were not so forgiving. When I joined the staff at Labor and Industries, the Human Resources Program employed 57 employees. That number increased to 62 during the implementation of Civil Service Reform legislation. For fiscal 2005-2007, the number of employees declined to 56. Most of these reductions resulted from finished projects and temporary hire departures.

Hiring freezes, wage freezes and intentional staff reductions in 2008 and 2009 further reduced the Human Resources staff to 47 employees. These reductions required careful review of mission and purpose, core work redefinition and redistribution of activities.

Internal Safety and Health moved from HR to the Director's Office and was downsized. Human Resource Consultant services in field offices were consolidated. Each consultant served two regions, rather than one. Central office consultants were reduced and caseloads for the remaining consultants increased. Two management positions were eliminated – an Operations Manager was eliminated and the Field and Central Office consultant supervisor duties were combined into a single position.

These experiences taught me the breadth and interrelatedness of budget reductions. I learned how to move to the outermost impact and work toward the center, rather than to work from the center outwardly, so that little or nothing is overlooked. In developing budget reductions, managers must not lose sight of their core strategic objectives and refrain from valuing personalities rather than contributions of knowledge and skill.

The Personnel Director is a member of the City's Retirement Board.

- **What experience and expertise do you have in the area of retirement, particularly public retirement systems?**

My experience in retirement system management is limited to a peripheral advisory capacity. When retirement issues were due to be collectively bargained or examined by Legislative committee, I advised the appropriate senior staff on bargainable issues, financial impacts and payroll-system implementation issues.

Retirement fund management was assigned to the Division of Retirement and Benefits, separated from personnel programs and other financial management. In Washington State Government, retirement funds are managed by the Department of Retirement Systems, also removed from central and agency personnel programs.

I have enrolled in e-learning programs through the International Federation of Employee Benefit Plans and I have reached out to the National Association of State Retirement Administrators for additional background and networking.

I have been meeting regularly with investment and fund management staff from the city's Department of Finance and Administrative Services and council staff to become current on issues and concerns related to retirement programs, benefits and fund management.

- **What experience do you have in the area of investment strategy and the financial management of retirement system assets?**

As with retirement fund management, my experience is peripheral. Other than in my personal life, I have not had responsibility for investment strategy or financial asset management. That is not to say I do not understand my role as trustee for these assets, or that I cannot appreciate the earnestness with which those duties must be executed.

I meet regularly with staff from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services and council staff to and the other trustees to learn and to be directed to further learning.

Counsel for the Retirement Board, in a presentation on fiduciary roles, mentioned that board members should not be persons of “Good heart, but empty head.” I will not be that person.

- **What challenges do you see for the City’s Retirement System over the next five+ years?**

Primary among issues appears to be an accumulation of retirements, deferred by the recession, over the next two years. Retirement System staffing, fund stability and liquidity are component issues. The Board is studying a variety of options for ensuring fund stability and liquidity. I am pleased to be part of those discussions.

Basic retirement education for city employees is a carryover issue from my state employment. In my experience, most employees are not prepared to retire, until retirement looms in their immediate futures. Personnel and Retirement Systems must collaborate to introduce retirement planning as early as new employee orientation, and keep the message in front of employees for the span of their careers.

A secondary issue facing the City’s Retirement System is the maintenance of institutional knowledge and history, both of which contribute to staff bench strength and capacity. Effective succession planning will provide opportunities to record and maintain institutional knowledge and history among new and continuing staff.

Vision

- **What is your vision of a well functioning City Personnel system?**

My vision for the Seattle City Personnel system is straightforward – to be an employer of choice, or the employer of choice in King County. Employers of choice are sought after by skilled and eager employees. They provide varied development opportunities and career advancement involving knowledge transfer. Employers of choice offer challenging work, fair pay, safe work environments, easy, meaningful communication and flexibility.

To achieve this status, Seattle needs to have clear public service objectives, consistent and sustainable application of policy, rules and contract terms across the City and supervisors and managers who develop and maintain a culture of accountability in city government.

Seattle has clear public service objectives. City Personnel and agencies need to review our policies, rules and contract terms to make certain they are responsive to business needs and flexible for the future. The Personnel Department is responsible for many of those policies and rules and all of the contract terms. It is incumbent upon me to lead the review of citywide policy and the personnel rules with stakeholders to ensure that they are responsive and flexible, yet compliant within the intent of city law and Charter.

Once the mid-year budget work is completed, I will begin scheduling projects to review the Personnel Rules and guidance documents, our internal procedures and limitations placed on city agency decision makers, with staff and agency personnel representatives. These projects will prioritize the rules and other documents for revision.

Part of the review process will be to determine where tasks are better performed – City Personnel or agency personnel.

Goals

- **What are your major goals for the City Personnel System in the next four years?**

It may be soon to set *strategic* objectives for the City Personnel System, but not too soon to set some short-term goals. The first goal I have set is to stress the value of workforce and succession planning to city administrators. The Personnel Department will provide data, tools and instructions for simple or complex workforce analysis and plan development.

The second goal is to have a uniform understanding of how individual work efforts contribute to achieving City goals. One key to employer-of-choice status is a solid connection between the work performed by employees and the ultimate goals of the employer. That connection is also the basis for effective performance evaluation and employee development. Through training and accountability, supervisors and managers can learn or re-learn how to set goals for employees, communicate them, measure the results and evaluate the comparison of goals to results. Consistent application of development or corrective action for those employees who do not achieve their performance expectations can also be learned or re-learned.

I have set a goal to begin exploring options and variations of sustainable classification and compensation programs that provide flexibility *and* consistency yet remain agile and responsive to changes in business demand.

Classification plans are related to but not synonymous with compensation plans. Ensuring a responsive compensation strategy is another key to employer-of-choice status. Civil service and flexible pay are not often used in the same sentence, but, with Council and Executive support, I believe we can craft options to consider that effectively marry the two.

Finally, I have set a goal to begin strategic HR planning on a citywide basis.

- **What are your major goals for the Personnel Department in the next four years?**

I am an advocate for walking my own talk, so the first goal for the Personnel Department is to create a culture of accountability by setting clear expectations, related to city objectives, reinforced by frequent opportunities for feedback on performance.

My second goal is to model succession planning by promoting cross-training, building bench strength and archiving institutional knowledge.

My third goal is, with stakeholders, to develop an HR strategic plan that can model, or be the model for, a City HR strategic plan.

Finally, I will create a unified service model for the Personnel Department, based on a shared understanding of technical expertise and customer-focused interaction – one organization providing a variety of services, but with a single purpose – service.

Managing the City's Personnel System

- **What do you see as the primary challenges in the next four years?**

The Personnel Department is similar in kind to the elephant discovered by visually impaired persons – to the one touching the tail, the elephant is like a rope; to another, touching a leg, the elephant is like a tree, and to another, touching the trunk, the elephant is like a snake. City Personnel is identified by the nature of employee interaction – to some, we are gatekeepers, denying a reclassification or pay change; to others we are warden, imposing disciplinary actions, and to others, we are invisible because there are no direct interactions with City Personnel. Even our role in health benefit administration is masked by the Administrator. The first challenge, I believe, is identity. City Personnel needs to create and maintain an identity. That identity is separate from, but interrelated with agency personnel. I propose we begin by modernizing and branding our publications and electronic presences, increasing our visibility in City operations and by working together with agency HR staff.

Preparation for the future is another challenge to be faced early on. Data-driven decisions about succession planning, personal development, capacity-building and organizational design are important issues to tackle. Looming retirements, possible skill gaps and missing development activities must be verified and solutions explored. I have asked data management staff to begin collecting and sorting information into report format for publication as early as 4th quarter 2011. The data should help agencies identify job classes at risk for mass exodus or higher turnover, so that development activities can be planned and organized.

One particular area of challenge is likely to be future leadership and management of agency programs. Leadership and management development programs in city government have been

inconsistently prioritized. I strongly support continuous management development to assure a varied and skillful pool of candidates for supervisory and management vacancies whenever they occur. More intense development activities can be planned to quickly create qualified candidates for short-term needs identified by workforce and succession planning, while longer-term solutions are engineered for sustained candidate development.

These and other challenges are best met with the collaborative strengths of City Personnel and agency management, with Council and Executive support. Working together, we can identify and prioritize the services we each provide, assure the resources to identify and satisfy consumer needs and develop the capacities to sustain those efforts.

- **Are there systemic changes that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the City's Personnel system?**

It is early, yet, to declare with specificity what systemic changes would improve the effectiveness of the City's personnel system. I am comfortable saying, however, that clear role definitions are needed for central and agency personnel functions. Careful, cogent review of services provided by agencies and central personnel will reveal which are best provided or governed by central authority and which are best left to agency customization. In any event, clear goals for the city's personnel system are needed, and measures for those goals identified.

These clear goals need to address current concerns by both Executive and Council such as workforce and succession planning and consistent application of policy, union contract or personnel rules as well as future concerns such as the adequacy of classification and compensation policy and systems, strategic performance and employee engagement.

- **How would you approach this work?**

I strongly support exploring the varied roles of City Personnel and agency personnel offices, and establishing short and long-term strategic human resource objectives through dialog and conversation. I have begun this process by convening a study group composed of representatives from large and small city agencies and myself.

My preference, generally, for developing strategic objectives, is the classic Cambridge Strategic Planning model. Stakeholders and principles meet to evaluate and agree on values, beliefs and mission; then explore the desired "future." Groups are formed, each given an assigned goal. They meet to study the present condition and map the steps necessary to achieve the future condition. Groups present their maps to the re-assembled large group, who evaluates and validates the plans. The resulting 'book of maps' becomes the Strategic Plan. Regular, annual review and biennial revision keeps the plan current.

The City, like many employers, has a significant portion of its workforce eligible to retire in the near future.

- **How would you approach the City's need for workforce succession planning?**

Workforce planning is a management responsibility and should be part of a well-orchestrated performance management system. Key, or strategic outcomes should be mapped to outputs and activities, then further divided into jobs. Jobs are staffed by qualified workers, coached and evaluated to peak performance.

Critical jobs and skills should be identified. Important institutional knowledge should be identified. Holders or keepers of the institutional knowledge should be encouraged to share their experience with others or to write it down to preserve it. Critical job skills should be shared and developed in less experienced workers or shared in less critical jobs. Special arrangements for sharing skills or knowledge should be planned and supported. All of the knowledge and skill transfer needs to be the result of conscious effort and planning, not left to chance.

Top-down accountability is needed to assure these efforts are part of agency management plans. Training may be needed to teach the skills and provide the tools. City Personnel can and should provide some of the training and the tools. I propose to begin by developing value for workforce planning and by providing the tools and information to create and analyze workforce and succession plans. The Personnel Department is a perfect place to begin.

- **How can the City become the employer of choice for workers of the future?**

In my opinion, the first step to becoming an employer of choice is to promote job stability. Employment instability is an expected part of economic recession; however the continual slow erosion of jobs and career opportunities creates fear and disinterest and serves to disengage current and future employees from an employer's work. Management plans should prioritize work so that work is eliminated with positions, rather than have positions slowly disappear by reducing hours or funding. Candidates will choose an employer where there is a sense of stability.

Few workers will comfortably perform the same work for an entire career. Employers of choice develop skill over time, investing in their employees. Work is divided in ways that promote growth and development. Cross-training is encouraged. Learning is encouraged. Workforce and succession planning will identify ways to change the way work is divided, if necessary, and will identify critical knowledge and skills for cross-training and employee development.

Employers of choice individualize employees. Most employees do not want social relationships with their supervisors or managers; however they do expect some consideration of themselves as individuals. Successful managers know the names of their employees, and, to the degree permitted by working arrangements, something of their personal lives. Coaching efforts, recognition and consideration of flexible working arrangements at employers of choice are individualized to the extent possible. Even if denied, individualization adds value to the employment relationship.

Employers of choice engage their employees in decisions, studies and planning activities. Employees are stakeholders to employers. Strategic planning, succession planning and related activities should include employees to the extent allowed by rules or collective bargaining. Engaged employees are more likely to use discretionary time to perform the employer's work instead of personal work.

- **How can the City actively welcome more people of color, women and people with disabilities to the City workforce where they may not have been traditionally represented in large numbers?**

Seattle is a leader in addressing race and social justice issues. By appearance, Seattle city employees reflect the diversity of its population. To broaden our welcome, I strongly suggest that City and agency personnel examine their respective recruitment sources to make certain that we advertise or post vacancies in ways that reach underrepresented populations.

Successful placement is, though, only the first step. Occasionally, women and minorities may be appointed to vacancies but find the work culture unwelcoming. The ability to transcend gender, age, race or ability bias is called *cultural competence*. Seattle is well on the path to cultural competence. The City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, and the Workforce Equity Planning Advisory Committee are two significant reasons for the City's success. I am pleased to participate with both programs in active roles.

Continuing work must include reviews of promotional policies, pay administration and other elements of employment to assure continuing equity. Cultural competence should be a matter for management accountability.

Managing the City's Personnel Department

- **How would you describe your management style?**

I am a classic manager-by-walking around. It is very important to me to know what those I lead do, whether they have the resources they need and whether their leaders are providing leadership. I will develop a personalized relationship with every employee. I will know how best to coach them, to recognize them, to correct them and to manage them. I will know what skills they have and which they need to achieve their career goals.

In leading, I try to avoid prescriptive expectations in favor of goal-setting conversations, but I can be prescriptive as needed. I have frequent conversations with staff about goals and progress. I will find and build on individual strengths to create capacity, encourage individual and professional growth and settle for nothing less than their very best.

- **Please provide an example that illustrates your leadership style.**

In building the Leadership Development program at Labor and Industries, I shared with the developers my vision for the program – what would be different as a result of the program, the popularity of the program, how the program might be delivered. The program co-sponsor shared her vision for the mechanics and objectives of the program. The two visions differed.

We spent some valuable time arguing which was correct; which would prevail. I spoke with each member of the development team, the co-sponsor and executive stakeholders. In the end, I suggested that we let the developers do their jobs, setting only this expectation: “Build a world-class, L&I-focused leadership development program, using the Governor’s management framework and project management as core principles.”

The result is a soon-to-be nationally recognized program of classroom learning, self-discovery and mentored experience that matches neither sponsors’ original vision of the program but which has produced 54 graduates who have earned 16 promotions in just three years.

- **How do you resolve conflict?**

I believe that the most effective conflict resolution is conversation. Often, the reasons for conflict are not what they appear, and can be relieved through discussion. Occasionally there are barriers to effective conversation. I use principles I learned in *Crucial Conversations*. *Crucial Conversations* teaches that one needs to recognize the conversations (or lack of conversation) that are keeping you from moving forward. Stay focused on what you need and maintain the dialog. Watch for signs that the dialog is failing. Regain or maintain mutual purpose. Speak persuasively. Make it safe for others to speak.

In my opinion, the most destructive action or reaction to conflict resolution is defensiveness or the failure to recognize defensiveness. Collaborative conversation, with mutual purpose, is the key to conflict resolution.

- **How do you provide for clear two-way communication and employee involvement in key department decisions?**

There are several layers to providing clear two-way communication. First is individual understanding. Everyone must have an understanding of the purpose, goal or objective. Second, an opportunity for discussing that understanding must be provided. I hold weekly management staff meetings where issues are discussed. We use the time to explore our individual and mutual understanding of events, decisions and actions.

I have scheduled quarterly all-staff meetings to hear and talk about goals, objectives, decisions, rumors and events with department staff. In my daily contact with staff, I have learned that some are not comfortable speaking in open forum so I have invited staff to visit privately to

discuss their understanding or concerns. I also test for understanding when meeting with staff during walk-arounds.

I attend the monthly HR Managers' meetings to listen to reports by agency HR staff. I have and will continue to probe for details of complaints or issues that require follow-up or research. I am working to build strong collaborative relations with agency HR staff through the HR advisory group recently convened. Ultimately, I expect the trust developed in this group to generalize to the HR Managers' meetings and change the nature of that forum going forward.

- **What processes do you use to set priorities among competing needs?**

For me, prioritization is a two-step process. I evaluate competing needs into categories: mandates and, customer value. For mandated items, I will further separate them by the nature of the mandate – law, contract, and policy. Legal mandates have high public risk and so rank highest. Contractual mandates have higher internal risk, but can be precedent-setting, and so rank second. Policy mandates have the least risk, as policy can be changed, and so are ranked last.

Prioritizing customer needs is less objective. To prioritize these needs, I will review the customer's own priorities, timelines and resource limitations, scope of impact and nature of return. For example, a customer need based on their own legal mandate or funding requirement may be prioritized ahead of an agency-imposed project deadline. Dialog with affected agencies is mandatory. Often, competing priorities can be resolved through negotiation.

- **How would you approach budget reductions?**

Funding reductions, especially unanticipated funding reductions, create unique management situations. Deciding which work to continue, and which work will no longer be performed is among the most difficult decisions a managers will make. The difficulty can be reduced by preparation such as work or business planning, and prioritization. Decisions are also made slightly less difficult when some work can actually be stopped. Personnel Department business plans will include work prioritization.

Sometimes, though, managers do not have that option and work must be redistributed and workers reduced. Dialog with affected or potentially affected staff or programs is critical. This early communication provides awareness for employees who may face job loss, but also to employees whose workload may increase or whose jobs may change. Continued communication through decision-making, enrolling staff in implementation decisions and careful follow-through are also important.

Earlier, I mentioned stability as a characteristic of employers of choice. Employers of choice communicate with employees about change, positive and negative, continually.

- **What role do you see the Personnel Department have in helping to manage budget reductions and associated personnel cuts across the City.**

City Personnel should be the clearinghouse for laid off employees, training or retraining, apprenticeship programs and career development. In common purpose, city agencies should be open to placement from among laid off employees and freely support training, retraining, career development, workforce planning and apprenticeship programs if appropriate.

Through programs like Project Hire and our recruitment system, career counseling and similar services, City Personnel should collect and post, advertise and refer employees with necessary skills and abilities to vacant jobs.

Working with other City Departments

- **What opportunities do you see for improving collaboration between your department and other City departments?**

The week I arrived I began meeting with Directors and deputies from other City departments to discuss their visions for personnel management, their views of the respective roles of City and agency personnel programs, and our mutual needs to be successful.

I have invited several personnel professionals from City departments to meet with me regularly to discuss our mutual and divergent interests, to brainstorm and evaluate options and opportunities and to develop recommendations to keep City personnel programs agile and responsive.

I will form *ad hoc* or needs-based special interest groups to examine and evaluate unforeseen or emergent issues as the need arises, and use standing committees or groups as their expertise provides.

Immediate opportunities exist to explore performance management, collaborative problem solving and HR role definitions. Future opportunities will exist to explore revisions to the Personnel Rules and system reviews.

- **How will you ensure you are receiving feedback from other city departments on how well the Personnel Department services are meeting their workforce needs.**

Face-to-face communication is, in my case, the most effective means of receiving feedback on workforce and workplace issues. Interest group or stakeholder meetings are second. I have also found that being in or experiencing an interaction or encounter allows for profound understanding of issues and interests. In addition to face-to-face meetings, group discussions and direct experiences or observations, I intend to use surveys and continuous Internet feedback opportunities to evaluate our performance and our service.

- **How will you approach making potential changes.**

I will approach change with the same deliberateness and thoughtful planning one uses to manage projects. Change should always have a clearly defined objective or purpose. First, I will formulate a clear objective – decide what needs to be different *then*, compared to *now*. I will use stakeholders, including those affected by potential change. To avoid accusations of unilateral decision-making, I will make every effort to outline or identify the decision-making criteria before meeting with stakeholders. I will make certain that everyone involved has a chance to voice an opinion or express an interest or point of view.

- **How can the central Personnel Department best coordinate with human resource staff in city departments to ensure information and resources on city benefits is provided?**

Every city employee is entitled to the current, accurate information concerning benefits, changes to benefit programs and enrollment procedures. To best expect our message to be the message delivered by city agencies, we must provide agencies with current, accurate information and make certain the agency is willing and able to pass the information on to employees.

As Seattle works toward status as an employer of choice, agencies will collaborate on an image for our benefit-related messages. Such branding will assure all benefits-related communication is uniform and consistent.

Secondarily, City Personnel must also provide the information in convenient form, available in a variety of accessible formats, in easy to find locations, whether that is at the worksite or on the Internet.

Working with the Council

- **How do you define the roles of Executive and Council with respect to the Personnel Department?**

As the City's legislative body, the City Council has responsibility for enacting legislation that draws boundaries around the behaviors and actions of City departments and City employees. The Executive is the management body of City government, responsible for managing how the legislative mandates are accomplished.

The Personnel Director administers the City's personnel system, mandated in the City Charter. Council and the Executive have crafted city law, according to the Charter, that outlines the City's civil service system. The ordinance also prescribes "uniform procedures" for hiring, developing and maintaining an effective workforce, defines the civil service system and the

specific duties of the Personnel Director. The key to the administration of an effective personnel system is the phrase in 4.04.040 (3) "Act as the City's central agency for establishing standards for personnel practices which are uniform as is practicable from department to department."

To me, this section of law requires a high degree of mutuality among the Executive, the Council and city agencies. It is incumbent upon the Personnel Director to see the effective use of that mutuality for the benefit of the City, city employees and the City Council and the Executive.

- **How will you communicate with the Council if there is a difference of opinion between the Executive branch and the Council?**

Building on the mutuality mentioned just previously, I believe it is incumbent upon the Personnel Director to open and maintain clear communication among the Executive, the Council and central and agency offices. Personnel-related operational concerns of city government are separate and distinct from related policy concerns, but may change based on those policy concerns. I am committed to minimizing the effects of policy disagreements by providing information, data, facilitation, history or past, best or promising practices so that operational services continue.

I am also committed to providing the best data and other information I can to Council, Executive or stakeholder so that decisions are informed and timely. To assure an uninterrupted flow of information, I will meet regularly with members of the Council or with designated staff. I will invite staff to participate with Personnel Department and agency representatives in research projects and planning exercises.

- **Can you describe a work experience where you were in that situation and how you handled it.**

In 2000, an Alaska State Senator introduced legislation requiring a study of the wages earned by male and female state employees, on the premise that there was a disparity between earnings. The bill specified a "comparable worth" study to determine the extent of the problem. In the vernacular of compensation systems, "earnings disparity" and "comparable worth" are two separate concepts. Studying one will not necessarily reveal a problem with the other.

Rather than provide testimony against the bill, I met with legislative staff to focus on the issue or problem the Senator intended to resolve. Senate staff and I re-drafted the legislation, identifying a "pay equity" study, which I subsequently oversaw. The results of the study were presented to the Senator and Legislative committees. There was no identified disparity in wages earned by men and women in the same or similar job categories.

- **How will you ensure Councilmembers and their staff receive the information they need from your department to make policy and financial decisions?**

Data, policy and position or employee information is, and will continue to be provided as requested by Councilmembers or staff. Regular communication through Labor Relations Policy Committee meetings, and Labor Management Leadership Committee meetings will continue. I, and members of my senior management team, stand ready to meet with Councilmembers, committees or members of Central Staff at any time.

The Chair of the Finance and Budget Committee, Councilmember Jean Godden, is also the Chair of the Seattle City Employees Retirement System Board, a Board upon which I have a seat. Issues of retirement, workforce planning and performance management will be regular topics of update and discussion at regularly scheduled meetings between Councilmember Godden and me, with others attending as necessary or needed.

Workforce and related planning data will be distributed regularly to designated staff and agency management. This information will be useful for workforce and succession planning. Other information is and will be available on an *ad hoc* basis.

Other

- **Is there anything we haven't asked that you think it's important to know about your experience, expertise or management style.**

I am a collaborative manager, strategic thinker and visionary leader who loves human resource management. I believe that relationships are of paramount importance to achieving objectives. Relationships promote trust. Trust promotes open communication. Trust, openness and communication are ingredients of success.

The personnel system that I have observed this past month is a good system; not broken by any means. It is a system that requires a direction and a voice that speaks louder than past practice.

There are problems to solve. City Personnel is thought to be too narrow-minded, too rigid in its interpretations of law and policy. Classification and compensation systems are spoken of as too rigid to adapt to business needs. There are too many steps; too many forms; too many rules. Agencies are thought to be carelessly inconsistent in their application of personnel rules. It is said they ignore the rules of classification to achieve compensation objectives. Unresolved differences create defensive strategies, leading to blame. No one talks about solving the problems.

I would be pleased to accept your confidence that I can and will begin to address the issues that separate central from agency personnel.

