

COUNCIL CONFIRMATION QUESTIONS FOR JILL SIMMONS FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT (OSE)

Please return written responses to these questions by Thursday, September 9, 2010. Please send your responses to Council President Richard Conlin, Phyllis Shulman, Rob Gala and Meg Moorehead.

1. Please describe your unique qualifications for the position of OSE director. Include details of the last three major positions you held along with your primary responsibilities in those positions.

I bring to the position of OSE Director a track record of city leadership, intellectual rigor, strategic thinking, creative problem solving, and dedication to sustainability. In particular my previous City experience provides me with an insider's understanding of how the City works and where OSE can add the most value. I have strong working relationships with the Mayor, City Council, and City department staff. In addition, I have experience bringing internal and external stakeholders together to advance the City's environmental goals. And above all, I have a deep love for Seattle and I am committed to making Seattle a model of sustainability that the rest of the region, nation, and world can be inspired by and follow.

My previous two positions with the City of Seattle have well-positioned me for the role of OSE Director. As OSE's Climate Protection Program Manager, I oversaw implementation of the Climate Protection Initiative, including policy development, community outreach, and performance measurement. Because climate protection strategies touch so many different parts of our community—livable communities, transportation choices, clean vehicles, building efficiency, community engagement—my work on implementing the Climate Action Plan has provided me with a broad view of the key sustainability issues for the City.

The subject matter expertise I gained as Climate Protection Program Manager is complemented by my experience as Fiscal and Policy Analyst for the City's Department of Finance, where I served as the budget and policy liaison between City departments and the Mayor for environmental issues. In that role, I gained a deep understanding of the City budget process and how to maximize outcomes even during difficult budget times. I also provided centralized coordination of new programs and investments to support the City's environmental priorities. My experience at DOF has helped shape a lot of my thinking about what coordination functions OSE can provide to produce the most efficient investment of City resources coupled with better environmental outcomes.

In addition to my five years of service at the City, I have spent an additional seven years working on urban growth, sustainability, and community development issues. Before moving to Seattle in 2000, I spent three years as a core member of Northwest Area Foundation's program staff and was responsible developing strategic plans for long-term, multimillion dollar partnerships with the Foundation to reduce poverty through sustainable community development in two communities in Oregon and Minnesota.

2. What are some of the notable accomplishments of your agency over the past year that you helped achieve? What are some of the things you had hoped to accomplish but didn't?

For being a small team, OSE has had a number of significant accomplishments over the last year, all of which I helped our team achieve. Some of the most notable are:

- Securing \$20 million of ARRA funding for a state-of-the-art neighborhood-based building retrofit program, Community Power Works.
- Creating a Community High Road Agreement that provides a framework for ensuring that the jobs created through Community Power Works are living wage jobs that provide employment opportunities for those in the community that need them the most.
- Developing the Energy Performance Score Home Rating System, which provides a compelling way for homeowners to evaluate the energy efficiency of their home and identify ways to improve it.
- Developing the 2008 Community GHG inventory, which tracks Seattle's progress toward meeting its climate protection goals.
- More than doubling the number of trees provided to Seattle residents through the Seattle ReLeaf's Trees for Neighborhoods program and focusing these in lower-income areas with less canopy cover and good planting potential.
- Launching the Carbon Coaches and Seattle Climate COOLective programs that train residents and community organizations to do climate action outreach in their communities.

While we had a lot of significant wins, there were a few things we were not able to accomplish, including:

- Completing the 2008 municipal GHG inventory. (2008 and 2009 inventories will be completed later this year.)
- Developing a citywide Climate Adaptation Plan. (An adaptation plan will be part of the 2011 Climate Action Plan update.)

3. What are your major goals for OSE over the next four years? What challenges will OSE face in meeting those goals?

OSE has a very big name—the Office of Sustainability & Environment—that, in its most liberal interpretation, would lead someone to think that the Office does implements all of the City's environmental sustainability programs. With a core team of six staff and a general fund budget of just over \$1 million, OSE can't and shouldn't be the center of the City's environmental sustainability work. In fact, one of OSE's greatest successes over the last 10 years has been the development of capacity in City departments to work on environmental sustainability issues. As a result of this success, over the last few years, there has been some confusion about what OSE's ongoing role should be to advance sustainability in Seattle. One of my goals is to clearly define what OSE's role is over the next four years to advance sustainability in Seattle.

However, at the organizational level, my primary goal for the next four years is to clearly define OSE's role as one of providing coordinating support to other department's efforts and innovation to bring in and test out new ideas for advancing sustainability in Seattle. To that end, I propose focusing OSE on the following program areas:

- **Environmental Sustainability Coordination:** Coordinate interdepartmental work on environmental sustainability programs, policies, and outreach to advance the City's environmental goals. Within this program area, my goals are to:
 - Create a citywide inventory of environmental sustainability programs and provide a venue for departments to identify opportunities to coordinate and strengthen their efforts;
 - Provide centralized coordination of City environmental priorities that are not within the defined function of a single department and require significant interdepartmental coordination (i.e., urban forestry); and
 - Creating decision making tools that will help departments consider the City's environmental goals when making program and resource decisions.

- **Environmental Sustainability Innovation:** Select priority policy areas for two to five years of focused effort to incubate innovative programs and policies. For the last three years, OSE's focus area has been building energy efficiency, with our work resulting in more than \$26 million of federal investment in the Community Power Works program. Within this program area, my goals for OSE are to:
 - Stimulate lasting demand for energy efficiency retrofits through the Community Power Works program, which will save energy, reduce carbon, and create living wage, green jobs;
 - Develop a sustainable model for the Community Power Works program that enables it to live beyond the grant period (June 2013) and to continue on without support from OSE; and
 - Begin research and development on the next priority policy area, most likely identified through the 2011 Climate Action Plan update process.

- **Climate Action Planning, Measurement, and Policy:** Lead the development of the Seattle Climate Action Plan, including goal assessment, action planning, community outreach, and performance monitoring. Within this program area my goals are to:
 - Create a state-of-the-art Climate Action Plan that provides a strategic framework and action roadmap for meeting the City's climate protection goals; and
 - Lead a public engagement process that provides meaningful opportunity for broad public input to guide the City's climate protection goals, plans, and actions.

It's not particularly original, but like most City departments, the most significant barrier for OSE over the next few years will be resources. The opportunities for OSE to support environmental sustainability coordination, innovation, and climate action greatly outstrip OSE's budget and staff capacity. Every day I am approached by city staff or community partners about exciting opportunities. Given this fact, it is important that OSE work very closely with Council and the Mayor to ensure that OSE's limited resources are focused on their priorities.

4. What if any major changes do you anticipate making in the coming years in order to increase the efficacy of OSE? Are there any specific ways that the Council and or Mayor can better support the work of your office?

As outlined in question three above, I want to tightly manage OSE's work plan around three program areas. A lack of focus and definition for OSE's work puts the Office at risk of not making the most strategic use of its skills and expertise. The Council and Mayor can support our Office in this effort by working with me to further refine OSE's role and program areas so that there is a unified vision how OSE best advance the City's sustainability goals.

In addition, OSE is the lead on implementing the Community Power Works program, an extremely ambitious and cutting-edge program to achieve deep energy efficiency and create green jobs. One of the main goals of the grant is to create a sustainable program that can outlive the grant funds. The Council's and Mayor's support will be critical in developing and implementing the program's sustainability plan.

5. How do you define OSE's responsibilities in serving the Mayor and Council? What do you see as the challenges in meeting those responsibilities equitably?

OSE supports both the Council and the Mayor to advance the City's environmental and sustainability goals. OSE provides both the Mayor and Council with action planning, policy development, and interdepartmental coordination for their environmental priorities. There are numerous examples of where Council and the Mayor share the same environmental priorities, and OSE works with both parties to ensure we are providing the support needed. (An example of OSE's work with both Council and the Mayor is to plan for the 2001 update to the Climate Action Plan.) However, given scarce resources, challenges could arise if Council and the Mayor had significantly different environmental priorities for a given year. In those cases, working closely upfront with both Council and the Mayor to develop OSE's work plan will identify those conflicting views and provide a venue for negotiating how OSE can support both Council and the Mayor in its work.

6. What opportunities do you see for improving collaboration between your agency and other City departments?

By its very nature as a small policy shop, OSE can only be successful if it has good working relationships with other departments. One of our Office's strengths is our strong relationships with sustainability staff in other departments, and we coordinate a monthly Environment & Sustainability interdepartmental team to discuss cross-departmental issues. That said, I believe that OSE could play a stronger role in coordinating and tracking the City's sustainability programs across all departments, including developing an annual snapshot of all of the City's environmental sustainability programs. Developing a citywide inventory of programs would daylight opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration and opportunities to leverage one another's investments. At a time when City budgets are significantly strained, making these connections could preserve and enhance the City's environmental work without requiring significant new resources.

7. Describe a process for engaging internal and external stakeholders in defining a plan for moving the City toward its vision of urban sustainability.

We have an opportunity through the next Comprehensive Plan update to reframe Seattle's vision and framework for urban sustainability. The City has many laudable environmental and sustainability goals, but they are not packaged together in a way that compellingly tells the story of what it means to be a sustainable Seattle. I believe the Comprehensive Plan is the right internal and external process for developing that vision because, as the City's guiding plan for the future, it allows us to take the broadest view of sustainability, one that focuses on creating vibrant communities that respect nature's limits. Once the framework is set, it will be important to orient all of the City's action plans—for example, the Climate Action Plan—building off of that vision and working toward those same goals. OSE will be working closely with DPD during the Comprehensive Plan update to support development of a sustainability vision and framework and ensure the Climate Action Plan is well aligned with that vision. In addition, the Climate Action Plan update provides the City with good opportunity to engage with the community to identify the best ideas and actions to help Seattle move toward its vision of sustainability and carbon neutrality.

8. What do you see as OSE's role in helping the City achieve carbon neutrality?

I see that OSE has four primary roles in promoting climate protection in Seattle.

The first role is to support the development of the City's climate protection goals, and to translate those goals into action through the City's Climate Action Plan. This year, OSE is working with a consultant team to provide recommendations for a goal of carbon neutrality and to develop the analytical framework for action planning around that goal. In 2011, building on the analysis done this year, OSE will be leading an internal and external process to update the Seattle Climate Action Plan.

The second role is to monitor the City and community's progress toward meeting our climate protection goals. Our work to monitor progress includes completing municipal and city greenhouse gas inventories, tracking non-emission measures, such as per capita energy use or vehicles miles travelled, that tell us whether we are headed in the right direction, and producing regular progress reports.

The third role is to lead research and development for the next generation of climate actions. While it doesn't make sense for OSE to lead all of the City's action development, OSE has a role to play to develop actions that are a dramatic departure from business as usual (i.e., development of district energy systems) or require centralized coordination because implementation is inherently interdepartmental (i.e., development of electric vehicle infrastructure).

The fourth role for OSE is coordinating the City's community outreach on climate change. In 2011, OSE will be conducting extensive community outreach as part of the Climate Action Plan update, and will be working with other City departments to coordinate climate action communications across the City, ensuring that the City uses consistent messages and leverages outreach opportunities.

9. How will you manage the Energy Efficiency Block Grant effectively while maintaining work on other OSE and City priorities?

OSE is fortunate that the EECBG grant provided funding for program administration, including staffing, that is sufficient to put together a strong implementation team without redirecting any existing OSE staff. That said, with a budget of more than \$20 million and a staff nearly the same size as OSE's general fund staff, implementation of the Community Power Works program will be a significant part of OSE's work plan over the next three years. At the same time, OSE will also be undertaking several other significant initiatives that are priorities for Council, including the 2011 update of the Seattle Climate Action Plan and coordinating the Urban Forest Management Plan and Urban Forestry Commission.

10. Are there emerging sustainability trends or activities that you think the City should pursue?

The concept of "sustainability" is open to a number of different interpretations, but I think one common mistake is to assume that sustainability is only about the environment. While protecting the environment is an important part of sustainability, so is promoting social justice and lasting economic vitality. To me, "sustainability" means vibrant, prosperous, and equitable communities that thrive by respecting nature's limits.

One emerging trend in sustainability is a move toward neighborhood-scale, place-based planning and community building strategies. As one example, the federal government's Sustainable Communities Initiative and associated funding priorities are evidence that sustainability will be moving more toward place-based approaches in the coming years. In addition, there is an increasing move toward financing and building sustainable infrastructure—such as, district energy systems, green stormwater infrastructure and the like—at the neighborhood scale.

Fortunately, there are a number of near-term opportunities for the City to build a place-based approach into our sustainability work. First, through the Comprehensive Plan update we have an opportunity to provide a clear, compelling, place-based vision for Seattle as a sustainable community. Second, with the Climate Action Plan update, we have an opportunity to look at place-based approaches to create climate-friendly communities. To meet the City's ambitious climate change goals, Seattle needs to become a place where people can live, work, play, and prosper without relying on carbon-intensive lifestyles. An integrated look at how to create vibrant, low-carbon communities will provide a compelling roadmap for action planning. Lastly, the City has an opportunity to promote sustainability and make efficient use of city resources by doing neighborhood-scale coordination of sustainable infrastructure planning, which allowing the City to achieve multiple sustainability goals with a single investment.

11. How is your office addressing issues of the evolving workforce of the future, such as welcoming more people of color and workers of all ages to OSE's workforce?

OSE is a small office with low turnover, but 2010 has been a boom year for the office as we have had to staff up to implement the Community Power Works program. To fill all positions, the Office follows inclusive hiring practices and broad recruitment strategies guided by the Race and Social Justice Initiative's principles.

In addition, OSE has used a variety of other tools to bring diversity to its team, such as out-of-class opportunities, internships, and temporary employment whenever possible. Interns have included Mayor's Fellows and international students from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Volunteers have also been active in our community engagement programs such as the Carbon Coaches and Climate Action Now.