**2015 Seattle City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer this questionnaire, which was developed by members of the Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy (CASE). Please note, answers will be shared with CASE members but will not be publicly distributed.

Your responses to the following questions will be used as part of a screening process to determine which candidates the CASE candidate evaluation committee will interview.

**Responses are due by Friday, April 10.**

To submit your completed questionnaire, or if you have any questions, please contact Markham McIntyre, Executive Director of CASE, at 206-389-7313 or markhamm@seattlechamber.com.

**About the Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy**

The Civic Alliance for a Sound Economy (CASE) is a political action committee sponsored by the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. CASE is the strongest political voice for businesses, large and small, in the Seattle metropolitan region. We represent employers and organizations from every industry sector in the region.

CASE supports local candidates and issues that help create a healthy economy, competitive business climate, high quality of life, and progressive future for the Seattle metropolitan area.

**Basic Information**

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| --- | --- |
| Candidate Name: | Rob Johnson |
| City Council Position: | Position/District 4 |
| Party Affiliation: | Democrat |
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**Administrative Questions**

*\*This is for background information and internal use only. It is confidential and will not be published.*

1. Please list your political consultant(s), campaign manager, and fundraiser.

Christian Sinderman (General)

Rachel Padgett (Fundraising)

Emilio Garza (Campaign Manager)

1. Please list all endorsements you have received.

I’ve received Cascade Bicycle Club’s early endorsement (1 of only 5 to receive their early endorsement). I’ve been endorsed by the following elected officials: Executive Dow Constantine, Rep. Jessyn Farrell, KCCMs Joe McDermott and Larry Phillips, Senator Marko Liias, and Tacoma City Councilmember Ryan Mello. Several community leaders have endorsed me including Amy Grotefendt, Randy Hodgins, Anne Fennessy, Brian Painley, John Perlic, Sara Patton, Laurie Valeriano, Joanna Grist, Hilary Franz, Amy Solomon, Neelima Shah, Lisa Quinn, Todd Vogel, and Denis Hayes. For a complete list of endorsements please take a look at our [website endorsement page](http://www.rob4seattle.com/endorsements).

1. Please list how much money you have raised to date, and your fundraising targets for the primary and general elections.

We’ve raised just shy of $40,000 ($39,543 to be exact) with another $10,000 in monthly contributions and pledges. That’s 50% of the way toward our goal of $100,000 for the primary election. We would attempt to raise another $100,000 between the primary and general election.
2. Please describe how you would use the CASE endorsement.

I think an endorsement from CASE would demonstrate my ability to work effectively and collaboratively across various constituency groups, as I’ve been able to do at Transportation Choices. I’d use the CASE endorsement in our direct mail pieces, in endorsement interviews, and to assist in our fundraising and outreach with big and small neighborhood businesses.

**General Questions**

1. What are the top three issues in your district you think the City Council should address? Please describe how you would address these issues.

When I’m out on the doors I spend a significant amount of time talking about public transportation, public schools, and affordability. Those issues have really been resonating in NE Seattle.

To support increased public transportation, I believe we’re at a unique point in our city’s history. We’ve recently passed the largest increase in bus hours in our city’s history, we’re a year away from opening a huge light rail investment to Capitol Hill and Husky Stadium, and 5 years from opening the three additional stations at Brooklyn, Roosevelt, and Northgate. This will result in a huge opportunity to reshape the bus system as we know it in Seattle to make it much more efficient and to dramatically improve the coverage. I have experience working directly with King County Metro, Sound Transit, UW, and the City of Seattle and will be able to effectively navigate a way through those agencies to make sure that we’ve developed a simple and effective plan that will make the commutes, travel times, and bus service coverage in our city much better.

Currently there is not a member of our city council with kids in public schools. I’d like to see us do a lot more to coordinate with the school districts on a whole host of specific issues. We should be working closely to ensure that there is enough space in our public schools to accommodate our rapidly growing population and should be coordinating our growth strategies. For example, I’ve been advocating for increased heights and density in the University District, but there currently isn’t any plan to increase the size of local public schools to accommodate that potential enrollment growth. I believe we should be working more closely between our libraries and our public schools to ensure that all students, but particularly low income students and students of color, have access to good year round tutoring and educational opportunities, a collaboration that happens occasionally and somewhat haphazardly. I believe we will see dramatic and positive results from the recent investment in our pre-K program and would like to see it significantly expanded.

On affordability; I’d like to see us significantly increase the funds in 2016’s housing levy. I’d like to see us explore more housing on public lands. I’d like to see us work more closely with Sound Transit on surplus properties to build more transit oriented development that could be targeted for affordable housing. I’d like to see us increase our height limits around Sound Transit light rail stations, particularly in the University District, Roosevelt, and Northgate. I’d like to see us go to Olympia and get the authority (if we don’t believe we have it already) to implement a form of land value taxation to (ideally) flatten out some of our construction booms and busts. I’m a supporter of increased tent city encampments provided that they are placed near frequent transit service and that we have the social service workers available to get tent city residents access to the services they need. And most importantly, I don’t want us to build a multi-billion dollar light rail system that is extremely frequent, reliable, and affordable (especially now thanks to ORCA LIFT) that subsequently prices the working families who need that frequency, reliability, and affordability out of the city.

1. What is the top challenge for the City as a whole? How would you, as a City councilmember, help solve this challenge?

I think growth and affordability are the biggest challenge for Seattle right now. We’re a very attractive place to be - one of the few in America that boasts a combination of a growing economy and progressive set of values, in addition to our vibrant cultural assets and extremely beautiful natural surroundings. To help solve this problem, I think we need to be planning for growth around light rail stations to ensure that we are offering new residents the opportunity to live here without needing a car. I’d do that through pushing for height increases near the University District and Roosevelt stations (amongst others), by loosening regulations on DADUs/backyard cottages within a mile of light rail stations and a half mile of our bus rapid transit lines, and by implementing the ideas outlined earlier about building public housing on public land, supporting TOD, implementing land value taxation, and increasing the size of the housing levy.

1. Seattle is the fastest growing City in America. Is this a good thing? What steps can the council take to help effectively plan for continued growth?

In the 90’s and 00’s our city grew by 8-9% each decade. We’ve already grown that much in the first 5 years of the 10’s. It’s imperative that we’re creating enough density to meet the demand - and the best place for us to maximize the environmental benefit of those investments is to make sure that we increase building heights in areas that are going to have frequent and reliable transit service. Without increased heights we will continue to price people out of Seattle which is bad for our economy, environment, and quality of life. I strongly believe that it is our duty to ensure that the multi-billion dollar investment we’re making in our light rail system benefits people from all hues on the economic spectrum. That’s not going to be possible without an increased focus on density near stations and a coordinated strategy to dramatically increase affordable housing near those stations as well.

1. What is the City’s role to support business growth and economic development?

I’d like to see the City do more to improve connections between our transportation system and economic development. For example, several studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between economic development, transit service, and walkability. Put more simply, encouraging people to get out of their cars increases revenues both for the public and the private sector. I think the City has a huge role to play in coordinating with the private sector to make sure these opportunities are abundant in neighborhoods throughout the city. If we as a city are designing a Seattle that is a fabulous place for people, it will have great economic benefits. Designing and building an incredible internationally renowned waterfront is a perfect example of where we could make great headway over the next few years.

In addition to urban planning strategies I’d like to see the city work more strategically with the private sector on creating a culture of innovation in Seattle. Boston has developed an innovation district that is a public-private partnership to encourage innovators and entrepreneurs to share ideas, gather, and collaborate. Developing a similar model with groups like TechStars would be a great way for the city to continue to support economic growth. I’d also like to see Seattle focus more on economic gardening strategies. Historically (and even recently) we’ve been very good at economic game hunting (getting big businesses to locate in Seattle), but economic gardening is intended to focus on those small/mid size businesses to help them really achieve maturity. Using a variety of public and private resources, communities around the US have been embracing this strategy effectively and I’d like to see us devote more resources to this type of strategic thinking.

I also believe that a key to economic success is to have a vibrant cultural space. The passage of the Cultural Access Washington plan in Olympia and the subsequent implementation of that plan by the King County Council would provide critical operating support to arts and cultural institutions throughout King County. The idea, as first conceived on a Chamber sponsored trip to Denver, would have an immediate impact on the 10,000+ people employed in the arts and cultural community in Seattle and would dramatically expand our ability to take those cultural assets into our schools, workplaces, and community. To stay economically competitive we must continue to have a high functioning arts and cultural community, in addition to a great transportation network and preservation of our natural environmental assets.

1. What would you hope to accomplish in your first year in office? Do you have specific legislation that you plan to introduce? If so, please describe your strategy to get your idea implemented.

My first year priority would be working to pass the Sound Transit 3 ballot measure in 2016 and to make sure that measure will benefit the greatest majority of Seattleites possible. I’d anticipate that would take the form of community outreach, collaboration with stakeholders in the community and at other local governments, and behind the scenes collaboration with the campaign to ensure we have the greatest chance of success.

In addition to the successful passage of ST3, I’d like to work to promote increased heights in the University District (a decision that appears set to take action sometime in the first or second quarter of 2016), ensure that the implementation of new bus service routing in conjunction with light rail opening at Husky Stadium and Capitol Hill in the first quarter of 2016 works effectively and efficiently for NE neighborhoods, and that as a city we’re promoting more innovative placemaking opportunities like the City’s parklets, play streets, and festival streets programs.

1. What experiences have you had that you think best prepare you to be a city councilmember?

I’ve spent more than 10 years working on major transportation issues at the local, regional, and state level. I’ve served on several committees including on Mayor McGinn’s Green Ribbon Commission, the 520 mediation team, two Viaduct related committees, the PSRC Transportation Policy Board, and several more. I’m currently serving on the steering committee of the Blue Green Alliance, the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, and for the last several years have served as the Environmental Community co-chair advocating for a state transportation revenue package (alongside Jeff Johnson from the State Labor Council and Steve Mullin from the Washington Roundtable). I’ve also got a strong commitment to this city. I’m a 5th generation Seattle resident and am an urban planner by training, so I think a lot about placemaking, land use, and transportation decision making. I’ve been active in helping to draft and pass both legislation and ballot measures that have had an indelible impact on Seattle including the 2006 Transit Now measure, 2008 Sound Transit 2 measure, and 2014 Seattle Transit measure. All told those three measures have contributed more than $20 billion worth of economic impact and improved mobility to Seattle and the region. I’ve also got three daughters that will be in public schools in Seattle, am active in the arts and culture community (including working to help pass the Cultural Access Washington legislation in Olympia), and have an inherently collaborative nature.

1. Describe how you would assess the impact proposed legislation would have on businesses.

When thinking about the impact of any piece of legislation, I can confidently say that I would start with an evaluation of its environmental impacts. As a city with a goal to be carbon neutral by 2050, we have a lot of work to do particularly in the transportation and land use areas if we’re going to meet that goal. I firmly believe that these positions are consistent with business community goals. If we are to attract and retain a vibrant workforce, we have to protect our natural environment. Increasing transportation options is critical to the movement of our workforce and goods throughout the region.

I think the next assessment for me would be the impact legislation would have on low-income people and working families in our community. Considering the growth in income inequality in our city and region, and the disproportionate impacts on low income people and working families of our regressive tax system, I would attempt to gauge the impact any legislation would have to reverse that course and make our city more affordable to people at all rungs of the economic ladder. I believe this is also consistent with the values of the business community. Increased economic opportunity for working families provides greater financial flexibility (and more disposable income), both of which are good for businesses in our community.

1. If you have any other relevant information that you think would be useful in our evaluation, please add it below.

I was raised by a mom who is an HR professional and started her own health care company and a dad who has spent his whole life in the restaurant business, so I have a good understanding of the pressures faced by small business owners, particularly in the health care and restaurant industries. As an employer of a small non-profit myself, I’m very familiar with what it takes to make a payroll every month, to deal with the complexities of local, state, and federal regulations, and to manage the pressures of maintaining the staff you have while strategically attempting to grow and do it sustainably.

**Issue QUESTIONS**

1. **TRANSPORTATION**

Recently, the Mayor proposed the Move Seattle levy, a $900 million property tax levy for transportation. This proposal is the beginning of an important conversation about how the City of Seattle funds its transportation infrastructure over the next number of years. Ensuring an efficient, integrated, multi-modal transportation system is a core government function that makes a huge difference in the lives of our employers, employees, residents and visitors.

Levies should help the city expand its ability to make investments. When the original transportation levy, Bridging the Gap, was introduced in 2006, there was concern that levy money would replace money that was already going to transportation.

Unfortunately, that’s exactly what happened: 5.25 percent of general fund money used to go to transportation, and now it’s 4.25 percent.

**Q: Do you support the Move Seattle levy? Why or why not?**

I’m a huge proponent of increases in our transportation infrastructure. In the 10+ years I’ve been at Transportation Choices we’ve helped pass more than $30 billion in new transportation infrastructure all throughout the state from Vancouver to Bellingham to Spokane to Winthrop, and of course in King County and Seattle. The thing that’s unique about the Move Seattle plan is that it proposes about $3 billion worth of projects which will have positive impacts on every line item of our city’s infrastructure. The first step in that plan will be the passage of this November’s levy which will fund $900 million worth of those $3 billion worth of investments, including the revamp of major corridors outlined in that plan to make them much more multi-modal. To effectively fund the remaining $2+ billion we need to continue to advocate for a fair share of funding for Seattle as part of ST3 in 2016, both for the bus/bike/pedestrian connections to the planned stations coming on line in the 2020’s and for the new projects/stations that will be included in the ST3 plan. In addition, we should be increasing the city’s public spaces advertising and using the revenues to increase street furniture, real time transit information at stations, and traffic calming in our neighborhoods. Finally, we should be pursuing additional funds at the state, regional, and federal level to leverage the local investments we’re making.

1. **HOUSING**

Seattle’s economy continues to rebound after the most recent economic recession. As we welcome new workers and residents to our city, healthy wages and robust employment are driving an increase in demand for housing. It is essential that Seattle continue to produce a supply of housing to meet a growing demand for housing at all income levels.

Multiple studies, including one commissioned by the City of Seattle and one commissioned by the Downtown Seattle Association, have found that current actions and policies are not sufficiently addressing the issue.

**Q: What actions and policies can Seattle implement to increase the supply of affordable housing in the City?**

I think that there are a lot of objections to density starting with parking/transportation impacts and continuing to architectural aesthetics, class/race issues, that growth results in ‘give-a-ways’ to developers, the mitigation required for ‘taking’ that growth, etc. There is a generational divide on this issue and I think one of the goals for us as a City should be to engage the under 40 crowd in Seattle that is a fast growing portion of our population. I also spend a lot of time on the campaign trail connecting density to our other universally supported, Seattle goals of livability, sustainability, and environmentalism. But I think the best answer is it takes political courage to increase density in Seattle, and I will be a strong advocate for more density.

As mentioned before, in order to actually increase the supply of affordable housing I’d like to see us significantly increase the funds in 2016’s housing levy. I’d like to see us explore more housing on public lands. I’d like to see us work more closely with Sound Transit on surplus properties to build more transit oriented development that could be targeted for affordable housing. I’d like to see us increase our height limits around Sound Transit light rail stations, particularly in the University District, Roosevelt, and Northgate. I’d like to see us go to Olympia and get the authority to implement a form of land value taxation to flatten out some of our construction booms and busts. And again, I don’t want us to build a multi-billion dollar light rail system that is extremely frequent, reliable, and affordable (especially now thanks to ORCA LIFT) that subsequently prices the working families who need that frequency, reliability, and affordability out of the city.

1. **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Public safety is of the utmost importance to the business community and neighborhoods throughout Seattle. We believe that residents should be able to live and work in safety and public spaces should be clean, safe, and inviting.

**Q: What is the most important public safety issue in the city and how would you address it?**

There are an incredible number of issues that I would place on this list including the increase in homelessness in Seattle and our region, the deterioration of our state and federal support for those in need of mental health counseling and support services, the institutional changes that are going to be required for SPD to regain community trust in many neighborhoods throughout the city, the need for more community policing, and an increase in the number of officers to reduce response times. However, I think the issue I’d like to focus most on would be the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. I believe that LEAD is a critical step to reducing recidivism and encouraging low level offenders to seek treatment rather than going directly to incarceration. In the LEAD program evaluation for the first two years of implementation several strategies are identified for the continuation of the program. Providing training for legal and social service providers as well as on-going collaboration and training with SPD sergeants and line officers seems critical to the success of an expansion of LEAD. The program’s success has hinged to date on the effective communications amongst all parties involved, which becomes increasingly difficult as the program grows. Finding ways to resource effective communications and continuing to foster trust amongst the clients, social service providers, and enforcement officers would be a key strategy I’d want to pursue.

1. **GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

In 2014, residents and business owners in Seattle had eight special property tax levies to fund: transportation, families and education, parks and green space, libraries, low income housing, voter approved bonds, the Pike Place Market, and universal preschool.

This “a la carte” funding of City services is increasing the tax burden on our households and businesses, while masking opportunities for efficient and effective integrated delivery of City services. Furthermore, piecemeal service funding makes it harder to understand and analyze the City’s policymaking and budgeting processes.

**Q: How would you improve transparency and accountability in Seattle’s budget to help citizens better understand how their money is being spent and whether they are getting the desired outcomes?**

The City Council’s foray this year into Participatory Budgeting was an interesting step toward increasing transparency and accountability in government and depending on the model and its implementation I think it could be an interesting direction to pursue. In many ways it was a similar exercise to what Ron Sims did as King County Executive when he held budget focused town halls and gave each person a hypothetical $100 to spend across the budget. But I believe that the new district model will only enhance the communications between council and citizen about the ways the city is raising and spending money. The new model forces greater levels of transparency and accountability that will encourage all of us to get smarter about the services we currently get, and want increased in our neighborhoods. I would capitalize on this by spending more time out in the community talking about the budget, both through community based budgeting conversations (not at City Hall) and by opening a District Office to encourage more open lines of communications between citizens and council all year long.

Using transportation as an example, we’ve seen time and again the public be unwilling to increase funding for basic maintenance and services, while being more motivated to increase funding for new capital projects. However, the traditional sources of maintenance for our transportation infrastructure (the state and federal governments) have been reducing their commitments and funding. So as a result, local governments including Seattle are having to provide a bigger piece of the pie for what we used to be able to rely on from other sources. And of course this isn’t just the case for transportation, but we’re seeing it in education funding, health and human services, etc. In order for us to accomplish our policy goals as a city we’ve got to find a way to build better partnerships with those other levels of government to get more assistance to meet the basic needs of our citizens and our shared community infrastructure.

1. **EMPLOYMENT**

The underrepresentation of women in business and leadership roles, and the persistent gender wage gap, is an issue that has gained forceful momentum in popular media, in tech companies, in policy initiatives, and more.

The gender wage gap—the difference between the overall earnings of a man versus a woman for equal work—has deep implications for women, employers, policy makers, and our entire economy. Women in the Seattle metropolitan region are paid 73 cents for every dollar paid to men in the area, making it one of the worst wage gaps in the country.

**Q: What is the best way to improve gender pay equity in Seattle? How would your solution work?**

As an employer at a small non-profit organization, the first thing that I did when I got the job as Executive Director was a gender wage analysis and I immediately raised the wages of several of our employees that were being paid less than their male counterparts. Transportation Choices has, for most of my time been a majority women of color, so I take diversity and gender pay equity very seriously. As a dad of three girls I’m very disturbed at the prospect that their male counterparts may make more than they will for the same work. I would work to solve this disparity by fighting for increases in women at leadership positions in the city including as department heads and deputies (a strategy I strongly advocated for during the SDOT director hiring process). As a city we’ve already taken good steps to help reduce the gap by adopting a higher minimum wage and paid sick leave, both of which have been proven to help reduce the gap. I would like to see us advocate for stronger governmental transparency on earnings and in particular to see the city support the Paycheck Fairness Act. I also believe that stronger scheduling requirements would reduce the pay gap. As someone that spent a year working at a restaurant I watched many of my colleagues struggle with the week to week aspect of scheduling. Those that were the most disproportionately impacted by the lack of consistency to their schedule were the working moms who constantly had to juggle shifts and child care in order to make it to work.

1. **EDUCATION**

Education and workforce development are key priorities for the business community because our region’s economy depends on people having the knowledge and skills they need to work in its current and future job markets.

**Q: What would you do as a City Councilmember to improve education outcomes for all students?**

Again, we don’t currently have anyone on city council with kids in public schools, so this is an issue I’m particularly passionate about. We should be working closely to ensure that there is enough space in our public schools to accommodate our rapidly growing population and should be coordinating our growth strategies to ensure that we’re not overcrowding our schools more than we already are. I believe we should be working more closely between our libraries and our public schools to ensure that all students, but particularly low income students and students of color, have access to good year round tutoring and educational opportunities, a collaboration that happens occasionally and somewhat haphazardly. I believe we will see dramatic and positive results from the recent investment in our pre-K program and would like to see it significantly expanded. I’m a big supporter of the data coming out of Seattle Colleges ‘13th Year’ program which provides Cleveland students a free year of tuition at Seattle Central College. I think that the Dream Project at UW and the College Bound project are both showing incredible results that are strongly based in data. And of course, I’m a big believer in what King County is doing through their Best Starts for Kids project. If the first 1000 days are the biggest predictor of 3rd grade reading levels, and 3rd grade reading levels are the biggest predictor of college graduation rates, then we need to be very focused on those first 1000 days to ensure we are giving our kids the best start we can.