

October 13, 2017, Candidate Forum - Seattle City Council

Pos. 9

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Lisa K. Hutchinson

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>>KAREN: So, thank you very much. We're going to go ahead and get started. And we start giving you each an opportunity for a one-minute, sort of, opening statement or introduction. So, Pat, would you like to start?

>>PAT: My name is Pat Murakami. I'm running for Seattle City Council Position 9. I have lived in Seattle since 1975. I came here to attend the University of Washington, fell in love with the city, and stayed. I own a small IT company that I have been running for over 30 years. I have offices in Georgetown and So-Do. I help a variety of businesses across the city, so I would be the only person on the City Council with a business background. I have been volunteering in my community -- well, I have been volunteering since I was 9. I have been volunteering

in my community since I moved into the South End in 1990. And one of the reasons I'm running for City Council is, I want to continue the work I have been doing in South Seattle, serving the underserved populations of our city.

>>M. LORENA: I'm sorry, it was one minute?

>>KAREN: Yes.

>>M. LORENA: Good evening, everyone. My name is M. Lorena González. I am the incumbent in this position, and I have had the peripheral of serving the people of the City of Seattle since 2015, when I was first elected. I have had the privilege of serving in this position as, again, the Citywide Representative, one of two. I originally grew up in Washington State as a migrant farm worker, and my parents came to this country from Mexico in the early, early '60s, before they settled in Central Washington.

I'm really excited about being here, and talking a little bit more about your issues and hearing some of your questions about how the city can do better on delivering services, and championing disabilities issues, and I hope to be able to share some of the work we're going to be currently doing this year on the budget cycle, and moving forward in the next year that, hopefully, will make Seattle more inclusive.

>>KAREN: Great. Thank you very much, ladies.

First question: As an influential leader, and possible City Council Member, please describe your experience, or knowledge, with the disability community. Would you like to start?

>>M. LORENA: Sure. You know, I worked as a Civil Rights Attorney before coming onto City Council, and I had the pleasure of actually representing a young woman who had cerebral palsy, who had been denied a job employment opportunity with no other than the Housing Authority in Washington State. A little ironic of a situation.

And, you know, I really developed a strong kinship with her, and was able to get her the relief that she needed. Not only did she get ultimately at the end of that case -- a job offer -- that came with accommodations. She also was able to receive backpay, had she been hired at the time that she interviewed for the position, and would have been offered the position. So, I come to this work on City Council having had that experience as a legal advocate, working for, and on behalf, and championing what was clearly a huge wrong that was committed against this young woman.

I still stay in touch with her. She still calls me and e-mails me, and gives me updates about how she's doing out in Wenatchee, which is where she lives, and I think that that is just one example of how I root my work

on City Council -- is with that deep understanding of how important it is to make sure that we're fighting for equal rights, and for antidiscrimination laws that really are inclusive of everybody in our community. Especially the disabled community --

>>KAREN: Pat.

>>PAT: Well, I'm the current president of the South Seattle Crime Prevention Council. I'm in my eighth year, and we don't just look at Public Safety issues as they relate to the police. Our bylaws are written so that we can work on any liveability issue. We are an all-volunteer organization, and we have advocated for improvements in sidewalks, because people in wheelchairs, or people that are blind, are having a hard time accessing the services, and going where they wish to go in our community -- because some of our streets are not -- do not have sidewalks. We have also advocated for clean-up. We have brought in DOC Crews to clean up hazardous areas. I don't live very far from Lighthouse for the Blind, and so this is a real and obvious need in our community that I face every day. And we've advocated for curb-cuts in areas where people with wheelchairs are having to access stores and other areas.

>>KAREN: Thank you. Of the homeless individuals in the 2017 One Night Count, 49% self-identified as having

one or more disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires the city to provide accommodations to people with disabilities when they are needed. As a Council Member, what would you do to ensure that accommodations are made available to people with disabilities living in encampments relating to their rights? Would you like to start.

>>PAT: Oh, sure, I'll start. Well, the -- we have -- the more money we've put into addressing homelessness issues, the worse the problem has gotten in Seattle.

So, I think it's really important that we make sure we're actually taking effective action with the money that we put toward the issue.

So, I have actually two ideas. One, a campus for the homeless, with all the necessary wrap-around services on site: Including mental health, drug addiction; and job counseling; and showers, kitchen, laundry; all the facilities that they need. And, another idea, there's actually a cruise ship that's for sale for a very reasonable amount. We could dock it on our waterfront, and that would provide hundreds and hundreds of rooms for people to live in immediately, where we have electricity and running water.

That's one of the things I don't like about what

are called "tiny houses." I refer to them as sheds. I don't think that's an acceptable way to live. I like people to live in a more dignified way, until we can build enough affordable housing.

>>M. LORENA: I appreciate you -- I'm not sure if this was a question from the panel, or from the audience -- but it's a wonderful question. So, I think, that when we look at how we do outreach to encampments, it's incredibly important for us to make sure that we understand that people who are living unhoused, currently, come to the city, and are experiencing -- you know -- different needs, in terms of access to services, and what their particular needs might be: Whether it's a mental health issue, or a physical disability, or a hidden disability, like chronic pain, for example. So, I think, that it's important for us to do a couple of things. One is around access to services. We need to make sure that access to the outreach services that we're funding is taking into account -- the fact that when you go into the field, and make a contact with folks living in encampments -- that you need to be equipped to make sure that you have hearing devices, or that you have a pad, for example, that you can write on if somebody is hard of hearing, or that you have translators available for you, either in sign language or a language other than English,

to make sure the access to those outreach services are actually meaningful, and being accessible.

I think that is true for both our City Workers that we send out on the Navigation Teams, and also for service providers that we are funding with city dollars to make sure that we are rooting in our contracts that requirement to have -- to take this issue into consideration -- and make sure that they are creating as accessible outreach services as possible, so that we are reaching as many people, and that they feel that they are really, meaningfully being engaged, to come into contact with social services that are needed.

>>KAREN: Thank you. Seattle is a sanctuary city. And yet many people with disabilities, who are undocumented are still afraid to access the services that could be available to them, including: Health care, food, transportation, and more. What ideas do you have to change that?

>>M. LORENA: I was really proud, after the election of Donald Trump, to come out immediately with sponsoring a resolution that committed -- recommitted -- the city, and had the city double-down on its Sanctuary City Policies. So, we reminded the Police Department, for example, that Public Safety Services are to be provided to members of our

community, regardless of whether or not they are documented or not.

And I think that the question about how people are accessing the health services is an incredibly important one, particularly if you are undocumented, and have other intersectionality, in terms of disability, or other issues that are already barriers to wanting to access health care and other services. And so, I think there's a couple of things that we need to do at the city:

One is that we need to do much more outreach in terms of Public Education and Awareness Campaigns about what the city's policies are, and what the policies are not, as it relates to accessing our services if you are undocumented. The other concept that I have been talking to undocumented communities about, is sponsoring some legislation that would declare certain areas within the city as sensitive locations. That would include hospitals, Public Health clinics, schools, day cares -- and has already begun doing this on their own initiative.

We would like to be a good partner at the city to make sure these critical, basic Public Health Services are still going to be accessed by undocumented folks, regardless of their immigration status.

So, those are a couple of things that I can think of now. And the last thing I'll add is that, just today,



we went live on our Legal Defense Network Fund, so if folks are undocumented and need assistance in finding Immigration -- Free Civil Legal Immigration Services -- that is available now, through the Immigrants Rights Project.

>>KAREN: Great Pat.

>>PAT: I would like to see the city do more for our undocumented residents. We need to do more than just the Legal Defense Fund. We need a fund that helps people be successful, and tax-paying members, of our community. And, while there are laws regarding employment, there is -- its pretty easy -- to start your own business, and not be asked about your residency status.

So, we really should have a fund with micro-loans to help people start their own businesses. I have long been communicating to the Southeast community, where we have a lot of undocumented residents. Many of them are successful homeowners, but the problem is they are reluctant to report crimes. They are often victimized. So I'm always harping in my newsletters to folks that the police will never ask your residency status, or ask whether or not you are a citizen. That it's important to report a crime. Victims will be protected. We need to do more for our homeless population. For example, on Night Out we could really communicate one-on-one with people, and are

make them aware of the services, and that they will not be asked questions and that it is safe to come and get the services that they need.

>>KAREN: Thank you. Next question: Special Education Students are only 12% of the student population, but represent a quarter of students arrested and referred to Law Enforcement, according to the Department of Education. Seattle Office for Civil Rights was recently directed to study alternatives to youth incarceration. What kinds of policies do you propose to prevent disabled youth from becoming incarcerated? Do you believe another youth jail would exacerbate this issue?

>>PAT: Well, I don't know that the youth jail itself would exasperate the -- exacerbate the situation -- but we can do so much to keep kids out of jail. We can have Restorative Justice available to them. We can have a Community Court, where they do community work in lieu of jail time, and then it just drops off their record, and they are free and clear. I think that one of the problems in our schools is that we teach children in a very traditional way, and while I'm not running for school board -- in my ideal world -- we would actually assess everyone for their learning style and put them in a classroom on that basis.

So, if a child is really active and likes to run

around, they would be in a classroom with no desks and all the lessons would be done in a very physically active way. There are other students that need to be tactile, or they prefer to get direct instruction, or to read.

And I think as a whole, in society, we are failing our kids, because we don't meet their needs, and I think a lot of the behaviors that get kids into trouble are really based on the fact that we're not connecting with the kids, in terms of what they need to connect to, what we're trying to teach them. So, that's what I would change.

>>KAREN: Thank you.

>>M. LORENA: So, I think that the School-to-Prison Pipeline is one of the greatest challenges for our society. There's no question that folks who are -- you know -- who don't have barriers to accessing education are not the ones being caught up in that prison -- that School-to-Prison Pipeline.

So, there's a few things that I think I am very supportive of in the Education System, to prevent funneling youth in school with Special Education Needs into that pipeline. One is that I am not supportive of discipline that involves expulsion. People -- kids -- can't learn unless they are in school. So, we need to make sure kids are staying in school at all cost, and it's incumbent upon our School System to make sure that there is a curriculum

that is appropriate for those Special Ed. Students.

I grew up in a school, where they are currently being sued for not delivering basic education to Special Education Needs students, and I think that that -- you know -- those are the types of cases that need to be brought into compliance. We need to organize folks in the community to be able to do that. On the flip side of what do we do with our Criminal Justice System to avoid further exacerbating what we know to be the School-to-Prison Pipeline, is there's a couple of things that I have been supportive of, that I'm working with Council Member O'Brien on:

One is Pretrial Diversion, which funnels kids and other young adults out of the Criminal Justice System, and gives them an opportunity to engage in Restorative Justice instead of going to jail. The other is Pre-Filing Diversion, which avoids putting kids into jails altogether, and during this budget cycle, he and I will be advancing a proposal that really doubles-down on this Pre-Filing Diversion concept.

>>KAREN: Just for my edification, can you explain what Restorative Justice is? Both of you have used that term.

>>PAT: Sure. So, you bring the victim and the perpetrator together with facilitators, and discuss what

happened, and find a solution that makes -- that works really for both parties. And, the suspect or the perpetrator would, maybe, make restitution by helping the other person. It's also you are communicating, so that both people understand the perspective of the other person. I mean, sometimes young kids commit crimes, not because they are bad, or that they want to do it.

I mean, sometimes they are acting out because of issues that are going on in their homes. So, it -- that open communication helps eased problem -- both the victim and the suspect feel better, and where we end up being a healthier, more close-knit society as a result.

>>KAREN: Thank you. While aging into disability is not inevitable, about 40% of older Seattle residents self-report as having a disability. What is your knowledge of what the City of Seattle does now, to serve people with hearing loss, low vision, and other chronic conditions that frequently impact older adults, and what should the city do to increase those services in the future?

>>PAT: Well, I mean, I only know what the city is does -- this is something I haven't studied, so I only know what the city does based on my observation of City Hearings or City Meetings, and it's not enough. I don't think we're really doing anything specific for people with hearing disabilities. We could provide sign language translators.

We could provide headphones for people that need language translations, for example.

I think part of the problem is even access to the meetings -- they happen when many people are working. Sometimes difficult to go downtown. Expensive to park. I would like to see more Community-Based Meetings so meetings are open to more people. And we could also, on the Seattle Channel, instead of just doing the audio -- we could have subtitles on the meetings and hearings.

>>KAREN: Lorena.

>>M. LORENA: Thank you. So, in Council Chambers, under the leadership of, I believe, if I recall correctly -- it was Council Member Nick Licata at the time -- that advocated for installation of a Loop Hearing System, to be able to make the acoustics in chambers actually audible to folks who had hearing impairments. We also have devices available in Council Chambers that can be, even, an additional boost in assistance to being able to hear what's actually happening during Council Meetings.

The one thing we are deficient on is, exactly what you are seeing happening above us, during Council Meetings: We do not have any closed-captioning during any of our Public Hearings, or Council Committee Hearings. Last year, Council Member Herbold, along with the Office of Civil Rights, brought forward a proposal to change that, and it's

currently being worked on. And that's work in large part, because the Disabilities Commission has been advocating for that modification to happen, in terms of our accessibility.

We also have Braille on a lot of our signs throughout City Hall and our city buildings. Again, we have a ways to go in this area with regard to access for a lot of folks, including people who don't speak English. All of the signs in every, single building that we have, are primarily in English. Our Braille language is spotty, at best, and we need to challenge ourselves to making sure we understand that not everybody comes with the same set of circumstances to us, when we go to City Hall.

>>KAREN: Our next question kind of overlaps a little bit. That's why I'm stumbling here a little bit.

The next question is: Would you change Building Codes to require all new buildings and remodels to include Loops or Hearing Access from the design stage? And what about elevators in buildings more than two stories?

>>PAT: I would, yes. We have an aging population. We're all going to need it pretty soon.  
(Laughter.)

>>M. LORENA: Yeah. Absolutely. I think it gets a little tricky when we are talking about historic buildings. There's a lot more rules related to those, not that I agree with them, but they exist. So, it becomes a

little trickier in terms of trying to navigate how to make historic buildings more accessible, but I absolutely think we need to take a look at how we can be as inclusive as we possibly can, even in our Land Use Codes, to make sure that we are taking into account the fact that we're all headed towards aging. For example, and there are folks who are going to have the intersectionality of disabilities, on top of aging, that need to be taken into account.

I will add one thing, that I hope the Disabilities Commission is aware of, which is: In the 2017 Budget Cycle, there's a \$1.2 million add to support ADA Compliance Improvements to our Department of Parks and Recreation Facilities. So, that would include Community Centers, pools, and parks. Just wanted to alert folks to the fact that, that is currently part of the proposed Mayor's budget, and I hope we can get the support from the Commission to make sure we get that particular, significant investment right.

>>KAREN: That sounds like a great idea.

>>CINDI: Still less than Pronto.

>>KAREN: We can always use more.

>>M. LORENA: We can always use more.

>>KAREN: What are your thoughts on creating a Disability Equity Toolkit to evaluate better the burdens and benefits associated with city programs, policies,



budget decisions, and city services, much like the Racial Equity Toolkit has done?

>>M. LORENA: I'm happy to go first on that one. I think that's a fantastic idea. I mean, I think -- just in the questions that have been asked in this panel -- I think it's pretty obvious that the city can do better on how it is intentional about thinking about disabilities, in terms of its policy making, and in how we invest our dollars. And, I will tell you what, that when we are looking particularly at Infrastructure Capital Improvement dollars, that Disability Equity Toolkit becomes even -- much more -- important.

You know, we recently had to engage in a settlement, because we had not been complying with ADA requirements, as it relates to accessibility on sidewalks, and making sure that we had shortest distances that were actually walkable for folks with disabilities -- all sorts of disabilities -- and so, I think if we had had that Disability Equity Toolkit, we sure would have saved ourselves a lot of money as a city, in terms of having to go back, and do regrades of sidewalks. So I would be a big proponent, and supporter, of that tool.

>>PAT: I do support having a toolkit, but with regard to the Racial Equity Toolkit, it feels many times like it's never been opened up and used. So, I want

Citizen Commissions to have some real teeth, and they should be yelling at us when city leaders aren't doing the right thing by different contingencies, serving the needs of all community members.

>>KAREN: Great. While the city is permitting numerous new residential buildings, many of these buildings do not have any parking. Would you support a change that requires some accessible parking spaces, even if no other parking were provided?

>>PAT: I would, yes. I think that parking should be required, regardless. We're really, um -- I don't even have a word for it -- decimating some neighborhoods with these micro-housing units. Forty-seven or forty-two in an already crowded neighborhood. No parking available at all. And then, they're going to add all those units with no parking. And you can't tell me that all forty-seven or forty-two of those people -- not one of them is going to have a car.

So, parking is required in other municipalities, such as Bellevue, yet their rental rates are lower than ours. I think we absolutely need to have parking, especially for people with disabilities.

>>M. LORENA: I'll give you a short answer, which is that I would absolutely be willing to revisit the city's current policy around those parking requirements to make

sure that, as you have suggested, we are looking at it through a Disability Equity lens, and taking into account that we do need to acknowledge that there are folks who have disabilities -- who require mobility through vehicles, either personally owned ones, or taxis, for example -- that need to be able to get into loading docks, or loading dock kind of areas, or areas that are easily accessible to elevators, that will get folks to where they need to get to. And that is something we should be prioritizing as a City Council, as we're looking at updating our Land Use and Development Codes.

>>KAREN: Thank you. What is your stance on improving and Preventing Exclusion and Restraint Policies of students with disabilities -- to prevent situations like what happened at Bellingham's Sehome High School, where a student with developmental disabilities was confined, 617 times, in 2016?

>>M. LORENA: We're probably going to have a really similar answer around this one.

>>PAT: Um, well -- as a mother, and somebody who has worked with a lot of kids, and somehow I'm able to relate to kids that other people can't -- I just think that there's no excuse for that. That we, as adults, need to find a way to reach that child. And it probably -- that problem probably started at a very young age -- and

everybody just, kind of, shoved him off to the side because he was problematic, and instead of one adult really mentoring him through the School System. Sometimes all you have to do is just touch a child's cheeks and make good eye-contact with them, and get them to calm down. There are so many things that we could be doing differently than just restraining a child or -- and I'm absolutely a hundred percent opposed -- to isolation.

>>M. LORENA: So, I'm really proud to have the endorsement of the Seattle Education Association, which is the union that represents public school teachers. And I think that, first and foremost, we have to do a better job of training our educators, and our teachers, and people who are in the classroom who we are asking to be guardians of our children, to be as best equipped as they can be to deal with whatever situation comes their way. Restraining and isolating a child, regardless of whether or not they have a disability, is absolutely, fundamentally wrong, and is a complete violation of that child's Human Rights -- setting aside the issues of how just inhumane it is to isolate a child because they are having behavioral issues, or because you don't know how to manage those behavioral issues. And so, we need to make sure that we are training educators to address those types of situations appropriately, and we also need to make sure that when those rules are broken,

that we are holding folks accountable in the system to make sure that it does not occur again, and that we make the child, and their family whole, as a result of that very traumatic experience.

And it's hard to figure out how to make a child whole after they've been, you know, essentially tortured in such a fashion that is so cruel. And, you know -- it's really disappointing that no one reported it -- no one thought to report it. Or, if it was reported, that it just slipped through the cracks and the leadership within the educational -- within the School System -- didn't intervene sooner, and that is just absolutely negligent and inexcusable.

>>KAREN: Thank you. Seattle recently became the first city in the country to ban paying subminimal wages to workers with disabilities -- thanks to the work of the Disability Commission. Disabled people face high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Up to 80% unemployment, in the case of autistic people, and people with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, Federal Aid to Vocational Rehabilitation has been cut. The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, which pays for job training for disabled people, moves to a quote-unquote "Order of Selection" November 1st, which means clients will have an indefinite wait of several years to receive training and

placement.

What can the City of Seattle do to pick up the slack, and ensure the disabled workers have the same opportunity as others to get a job?

>>PAT: Well, we can increase training programs. We can put a request for a proposal out, and find an agency that has a good success history, and have them bring a program in. I think we should reward employers that will make accommodations, and figure out a way to change a specific job, so that a person with a disability can be hired and do that work. Same thing with people that are autistic. There might be a different environment than a standard office, where that person would be more successful.

Maybe they need to be by a window, and have trees outside, or be in a soothing environment, or be in an office by themselves versus being in a cubicle. That's what we should do, is really encourage employers to help people, so everybody can be gainfully employed.

>>KAREN: Thank you.

>>M. LORENA: Kudos to the Disabilities Commission for the huge victory around the subminimum wage. It is a big, big deal.

>> (Applause.)

>>M. LORENA: You guys should be applauded. Sean,

you were amazing. That was just wonderful work by the Commission. Serious, this is the reason why we have these, you know, Resident Member Volunteer Commission and Organizations, is to really help keep us as a city -- and city leaders accountable -- around what your needs, and how we can modify our policies accordingly. So, really proud of the work that you all did in that area, and I'm so thrilled with the results.

In terms of connecting folks with disabilities with work opportunities, there's a couple things: One is, on the front end, it's important for us to make sure that as we are looking at investing in Workforce Development, that we are taking into consideration the funding Community-Based Organizations and other Workforce Development Organizations that will make a commitment to, or already do, have a proven track record in providing hard trainings -- hard work skills -- to the disabled community.

Secondly, the city has a lot of internship opportunities, and I think it's really important to build that résumé for a lot of folks within the disabled community. And so, I think that we need to look at the city inside the city, to see what kind of internship opportunities we have available in the city that we could dedicate to providing internship -- real, in-time training -- job training opportunities -- to folks who have

disabilities, and are struggling to connect with realtime job opportunities.

The other thing that we can do is create a Public-Private Partnership, so we are not just hiring folks inside city government for these internship opportunities, but we're able to connect folks with private corporations, and entities, within our city who are interested in participating in this kind of a program.

>>KAREN: Thank you very much. It's been a very interesting discussion, and we're going to give you one minute each to provide a closing statement. Pat, would you like to go first?

>>PAT: I don't need the job of being your Seattle City Council Member. I make plenty of money in my current position, as the owner of a small IT company, and I would have a lot more free time. I want this job because I want to serve the city, and I feel that the city does not serve the community, the real people of Seattle, very well. I think that the wealthy, outside developers are extremely well-served by our City Council. We need somebody with a different perspective on the City Council. You need me to represent you. You need me to restore the voice of small businesses. You need me to restore the voice of neighborhoods. And you need me to be your voice.

>>CINDI: My turn!



>>KAREN: Don't get too excited, Cindi.

>>M. LORENA: I -- again -- my name is M. Lorena González. Running for Seattle City Council Position 9. I have really, truly, fundamentally enjoyed serving the people of Seattle over the last -- almost two years. I bring my lived experiences every day to City Hall, to champion a lot of the issues that I know that the Disabilities Commission really, deeply, profoundly cares about. That's the issue of inclusion. Whether we're talking about race, or gender, or disabilities: We understand that there are people who are systematically left out of our policy decisions, and out of actual policy, and I work really hard, every day, to try to bring a lived experiences to correct those institutional wrongs. Do we always get it right at City Hall? Of course not. That's why I really appreciate having commissions, like the Disabilities Commission, to help us correct course and get it right. And, the subminimum wage correction was one, clear example of how that can work, and how I want to be able to work with you all, and with others in the future, towards similar endeavors.

Thank you.

>>KAREN: Thank you very much, ladies. We'll say thank you, using deaf hands today.

(Applause.)

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Lisa K. Hutchinson

Certified Realtime Captioner