

## John Diaz – Appointee for Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention

## Questionnaire for Executive Department and Key Subordinate Unit Appointees

Appointee: Please prepare written answer to the below questions and return the answers to the lead staff for the Committee of the Whole no later than the close of business on **October 16, 2019**. This questionnaire will be printed in the committee packet, provided to the Councilmembers and become part of the public record of your appointment.

1. Please describe your experience and what qualifies you to lead the agency to which you have been nominated?

I believe that my 37-year career in public safety well qualifies me for this position. I started as a criminal investigator in the U.S. Army and then transitioned to the Seattle Police Department (SPD), where I was exposed to increasing responsibility at each level, advancing to chief of police. This progressive experience in criminal justice has prepared me for the honor of leading the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD).

During my time with SPD, I worked at every level of the organization, including as a detective sergeant in Internal Affairs, managing patrol squads as a lieutenant, precinct captain, gang commander, homicide commander, and deputy chief of administration. Ultimately, as chief of the department I was responsible for managing an organization of 1,900 employees and a \$250 million-dollar annual budget. In each of these assignments, I was never satisfied with the status quo, and had success building teams to systematically improve the organization. I learned how to work with an incredibly diverse workforce and focused on continual improvement and excellence. The key to my success was always setting clear expectations and understanding that the best ideas and solutions came from working collaboratively with others in the criminal justice system, community, and most importantly, with the rank and file of the organization.

2. King County has a well-established policy for examining and considering equity and social justice in its decision-making process. Please describe your thoughts on the topic and how you plan to advance these goals in your leadership of the agency?

First and foremost, equity and social justice must be a primary consideration for our agency when it looks at all aspects of their operation. Racial disproportionality is prevalent in every social structure in our country. We see it for example in health care, education, economics, and clearly in the criminal justice system. I applaud the County for their commitment to make this a welcoming community for everyone to thrive.

I believe equity and social justice demands that we pay particular attention to our work force and insure that it reflects the diversity of the community that we serve. DAJD has

worked to reduce barriers to attracting a highly diverse workforce. Currently, the department is making some headway with a workforce of over 13% Asian Pacific Islander, 22% percent Black/African American, 8% Hispanic, and 49% Caucasian. As the interim director since late April, I have directed the new recruiters, made available by the County Council, to focus increased efforts on minority communities for department employment. The department sent its recruiters this past summer to multiple ethnic community events (i.e., Sea Fair Indian Days POWWOW, Othello Park International Festival, Seattle Fiestas Patrias, and SeaFair Pista sa Nasyon) to engage with the community and promote job opportunities. I firmly believe that DAJD needs to have a workforce which reflects the community it serves, and this is paramount to its success.

We need to engage our communities in deciding on appropriate programing, assisting in ease of access to contracting and procurement.

We should look at our policies and procedures through an ESJ lens and engage stakeholders on how we can improve.

Last, but not least, training of our employees in ESJ methods must be an ongoing part of their yearly curriculum.

3. What is your vision for the agency you have been nominated to lead?

I come to this agency with a unique perspective, having spent my entire career in law enforcement. I have seen that through collaborations with stakeholders from a wide range of disciplines that new and better approaches to assist our communities and offenders are possible. My vision for DAJD is that it become known as the best run, most innovative jail system in the United States. I do not say that lightly; I have had the chance to meet many of the juvenile detention officers and adult division corrections officers, and we are fortunate to have a talented and dedicated work force. I have, for example, seen our Multi Disciplinary Team, work diligently on innovative ways to reduce the use of restrictive housing. At the Youth Service Center the requirements of ordinance 18637 has helped lead strong partnerships with King County Public Health, the University of Washington, and our Juvenile Division staff to try new trauma informed approaches to work with the youth under our care. When we have fallen short or made a mistake in our policies, I have seen our command staff, KCIT, community groups, unions, and others work together to quickly solve problems.

4. What challenges does this agency currently face?

Our largest challenge is the reliance on mandatory overtime. The use of this type of overtime increases workloads for many, while reducing the predictability of their schedules. This is an area that we must stabilize by a combination of filling staff vacancies, changes in leave usage, and a culture shift. Once we stabilize these areas we can move forward on continual improvement and innovation for the organization.

The Juvenile Division has and will be experiencing immense change in the future. Currently we are looking to hire both a Juvenile Division director and deputy director. The staff is implementing new policies and programming aimed at providing better trauma-informed care to the youth. They are also moving to a new facility, along with the courts and other programs in the coming months. Change will be the one constant in this division. I invite you all to tour the building when it is open; the difference in our ability to deliver healing and compassionate care will be significant for youth and their families.

Finally, other than the new Children and Family Justice Center, we face the challenge of aging infrastructures, many of which are not designed to deliver the type of services we aspire to provide.

5. How do you plan to address those challenges?

First, I must compliment the men and women of the organization that are doing an extremely difficult job day in and day out. I have had a chance to talk to many throughout the organization and they have and will provide many of the ideas and solutions needed. However, as you know, we have been required to increase the use of mandatory overtime to staff our facilities. The solution to this critical issue is multi-faceted. Staffing is one component; however, as important, are changes in leave management and culture. Many efforts have been made to address this issue, including raising wages, providing hiring incentives, bargaining to change work rules, eliminating barriers to qualification, and adding to recruitment efforts, among others. These efforts are starting to bear success.

This year we have hired 51 corrections officers and 18 juvenile detention officers. These numbers reflect a doubling of the number of corrections officers hired in the first nine months of 2019, compared to 25 in 2018; and a 35% increase in the number of juvenile detention officers hired in the first nine months of 2019, compared to 14 in 2018. I'd like to thank the County Council for approving the use of hiring incentives and officer referral incentives. These incentives kept us competitive in an area where most departments are also suffering from a hiring shortage.

Innovative recruitment approaches from the department human resources team and corrections staff have yielded new outreach programs. We will continue to try new ideas and expand our recruitment marketing and outreach into other counties that have not benefited as much in the current economy.

We continue to work with our labor unions on potential solutions to minimize mandatory overtime. In a recent interest arbitration decision, reasonable restrictions on the accumulation of compensatory time and some changes to leave use rules should begin to reduce the number of vacancies on shifts and the difficulty of filling those slots. The compensatory time ceiling provision alone is anticipated to bring back the equivalent work hours of about 13 full time officers each year. These efficiencies in the labor contracts would not have been obtained without the support and assistance from the Office of Labor Relations.

Working closely with our labor unions in our shared interest to reduce the impact of overtime on our workforce will be critical to solving this issue. My leadership team and I have been engaged in meetings with our labor unions to develop solutions on reducing the impact of overtime on our workforce. These ideas have included discussions about potentially adding part-time on-call officers and modifying employee work schedules and work rules. I have encouraged staff to put all potential solutions on the table as we work to reduce the impact of mandatory overtime on our employee's. I believe this is an area that bears great promise with carefully crafted memorandums of agreements (MOAs) that reflect both DAJD and labor's interest, while bringing relief to our employees.

The reduction in the use of restrictive housing is a critical issue. I applaud the efforts of the Multi Disciplinary Team in working with the individuals in custody on ways to reduce the use of restrictive housing. The MDT has recently attended a national training seminar to learn best practices and share ideas with others from across the country. This is important work that we must continue to strive for innovations.

The move into any new building is always disruptive and there will be some growing pains as we move the Juvenile Division. We are planning this big change while also making significant operational changes focused on a public health approach to working with the youth under our care and the goal of Zero Youth Detention.

Succession planning is critical for the future of the agency, as growing numbers prepare to retire. We will be strongly committed to training, leadership growth, and advancement opportunities. Additionally, we need to continue to look outside of our organization and become part of national conversations on staffing, leadership, and improving programs in our facilities.

Our aging infrastructure requires us to take a long-range view of capital planning, and continued creativity to find new ways to work within our physical facility limitations.

6. How can your agency do a better job of serving the public? How do you plan to implement those changes?

In order to serve the public, we need to reflect, where possible, the best ideas on criminal justice reform. It requires that we engage with a wide variety of different community groups and other stakeholders that can inform our views and practices. Key constituencies and groups include those working in public health, immigration rights, criminal justice reform, as well as regional and national organizations. We can only improve our services by engaging both locally and nationally in understanding and developing the most current best practices and policies.

7. How do you plan to promote ethical behavior among your staff and in your agency?

I have had the honor to work with and learn from a myriad of leaders from a variety of different disciplines throughout my career. There are a few things that have been constant across these many examples of leadership. You lead from the front and you

model the behavior that you insist from others that work with you. You give clear guidance and you hold yourself and others accountable if they do not meet expectations. You must promote a culture of innovation and improvement throughout the agency to ensure lasting change. These are some of the lessons I carry with me and apply in all my work.