

People Power Washington

2023 Policing and Public Safety Candidate Questionnaire – Seattle City Council



[People Power Washington](#) strives to bring just and equitable public safety to our local communities through relationship building, education and policy reform. *We at People Power Washington believe that no matter your race, your gender, or your income, you deserve safety.* We champion policies that divest from police and reinvest in community-based solutions and alternate crisis response, decriminalize non-serious offenses, and implement accountability and enforceable standards for police officers and agencies. Our vision is for public safety in Washington to be community-driven and to meet the needs of all people equitably.

Our group's work advocating for police accountability in our local communities has made us well aware of the important role our local government and elected officials play in driving policy around this issue. Appreciating the impact that legislation and budget decisions by the City Council have on our day-to-day lives, our hope is to empower voters with a non-partisan resource to understand how to vote their values through a lens of police reform and re-imagining of public safety.

Candidate Information

Candidate Name	Andrew Lewis
Position Sought	Seattle City Council, District 7
Campaign Contact Information	Website: www.lewisforseattle.com Email: lewisforseattle@gmail.com

Part I – Yes/No Questions

1. Do you support allocation in the City budget for a civilian-led mental health crisis response?

Yes	YES!!!!!!!!!!
No	
Additional Comments	I have been the biggest champion for this very necessary service on the City Council. We have a pilot launching this fall and I am hoping that is just the start for this critical service.

- [Nationwide, in 25% of all officer shootings the individual was suffering from an acute mental health crisis. The mere presence of an officer uniform, badge, and gun is traumatic and can escalate situations.](#)
- Crisis Intervention Teams International (CIT), who provide de-escalation and behavioral health training for law enforcement, has published a position paper that speaks to how national best practices are evolving away from embedded co-responders (police officer & mental health specialist riding together in the same car.) ["Why doesn't CIT International promote the embedded co-responder model?"](#)

2. Do you support allocation in the City budget to increase the pay of human service workers?

Yes	YES!!!!!!!!!!
No	
Additional Comments	Increased pay for human services workers was my top budget priority in the last biennium and we were successful in getting a higher increase than what was originally proposed by the Mayor. I will continue to push for this critical resource.

- Human Service workers

provide homeless and housing services, preschool programs, senior care, youth care, food banks, veteran services and aid for survivors of gender-based violence. Right now we are asking them to do this essential work while paying wages so low many of them are facing their own housing instability. As a result, many human service departments face a 50% or greater attrition rate. If we are serious about solving homelessness, we must pay our service providers more.

3. Do you support preserving the JumpStart Tax for housing, Green New Deal, and equitable development?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	I co-sponsored JumpStart.

- In 2020 the City Council passed JumpStart - a payroll tax to fund housing, Green New Deal, and equitable development. The balanced budget passed by the council in 2023 used JumpStart funds to shore up budget deficits in the short term to avoid austerity budgeting, with the intent of returning JumpStart funds for their legislated purpose after 2024.
- As the City of Seattle continues to grow, we are facing a critical housing shortage. It is fundamentally unsafe to live outside and our unhoused neighbors are facing increased hate crimes and a record number of deaths. We are also continuing to see safety concerns due to the effects of climate change and an annual heat and smoke season.
- Retaining funding to ameliorate these issues that affect our community’s public safety is paramount to the future of the City.

4. Do you support removing funds in the City budget for forced encampment removals and instead allocating funds toward a housing first approach?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	If there were a “maybe” option, that would better reflect my position. Our goal should be based on the JustCare model I have championed that resolves encampment locations by created a bespoke housing or shelter plan for every encampment resident as part of the resolution. Constant improvement in how we do outreach and

	encampment remediation has been a big focus of mine, and will continue to be so.
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- While sweeps increase the trauma and violence experienced by our unhoused neighbors and make it more difficult for human service workers to find them, housing is a proven intervention to reduce the disproportionate levels of violence our homeless community members face.
- And while wrap-around services and substance use disorder treatment are also necessary, a housing first approach has been shown to reduce rates of substance use in and of itself.

5. Do you support abrogating the funds from unfilled SPD positions toward meaningful public safety measures?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	<p>I do not support abrogating the positions. But, on a budget by budget basis, I do support taking the funding from positions that are certain to be unfilled and putting them to a different public safety purpose for that particular biennium. This is essentially the strategy the Harrell administration proposed and the Council majority rejected. I think abrogating the positions entirely is unnecessarily distracting and polarizing.</p>

- City departments often have positions that are unfilled. When departments are unable to

fill those positions it is standard practice to abrogate those positions and use that salary savings elsewhere in the budget.

- SPD has been exempt from this process in past years, allowing the department to retain funds for positions it cannot fill under the most optimistic hiring plans for the department.
- There are approximately 130 of these "ghost positions" left in the 2023 City budget. [It would take approximately 10 years to fill 130 of these unfilled positions](#) and the retaining of these unused funds for SPD means that money is not available for meaningful public safety measures like affordable housing and gun violence prevention.

6. Do you support allocating money in the City budget for supervised consumption sites?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	Yes, and I have consistently been an outspoken advocate for harm reduction strategies, including supervised consumption.

- Supervised consumption sites [save lives, build trust, and provide pathways to recovery](#).
- In 2016, the King County Heroin and Prescription Opiate Addiction Task Force [recommended](#) the establishment of a three-year pilot project involving at least two Community Health Engagement Locations to include supervised consumption services, one in Seattle and one outside Seattle.
- In 2018, the Washington State Supreme Court [struck down a ballot measure](#) proposing to ban supervised consumption sites in King County. The City of Seattle had set aside \$1.4 million in 2016 and 2017 to establish one of the two sites.

7. Do you support increasing funding in the City budget for violence intervention programs?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	Yes, and I am proud to be endorsed by Dominique Davis at Community Passageways. One of the best advocates in our region for violence intervention.

- Similar to other areas across the country, gun violence is a serious issue within our community that needs to be addressed.
- We know that [violence intervention programs work](#). Bolstering investments in community-led safety initiatives is proven effective, saves lives, and reduces involvement in the criminal legal system.

8. Do you support funding in the City budget for the Social Housing Initiative?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	

- In February 2023 Seattle residents voted to pass the Social Housing Initiative.
- Social Housing will create mixed income units that are publicly owned and permanently affordable.
- Though Social Housing is self-sustaining because higher income earners subsidize the rents of lower income earners, capital is needed to initiate the program. The state approved some money for startup costs and the remainder will need to come from the city.
- Increasing affordable housing options is a crucial public safety measure.

9. Do you support a basic income pilot in the City budget?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	I am open to it, but do not as of this moment have a specific proposal to implement it or pay for it.

- Guaranteed income pilot programs traditionally provide unconditional, individual, regular cash payments intended to support the basic needs of the recipients. Meeting the basic needs of residents increases the overall public safety of a community.

10. Do you oppose adding new crimes to the City code?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	I do not categorically oppose the addition of new crimes to the Seattle Municipal Code. During my time on Council I repealed two outdated and problematic loitering laws, drug traffic loitering and prostitution loitering. Those repeals represent the only time in the last 30 years that I am aware of that we have repealed a criminal statute. I have also sponsored legislation expanding our obstruction ordinance to include firefighters. For me, it depends on the construction and use of the statute. So, I will not categorically commit to opposing future statutes.

- Cities have jurisdiction over misdemeanor crimes that carry a maximum penalty of 364 days in jail and \$5,000 in fines.

- New misdemeanor crimes tend to criminalize poverty and exacerbate racial disparities in the criminal legal system through unequal enforcement. They increase the public's contact with police.
- Our jail and court systems are beyond capacity and often do not provide the support necessary to address the root causes of criminalized behavior. Seattle's King County Jail has had a record number of deaths in recent months as a result of unsafe conditions. Adding to Seattle's criminal code will increase the population of the jail, the vast majority of whom have not been convicted of any crime and are there only because they are too poor to afford bail or because they are experiencing mental health crises.

11. Would you oppose a SPOG contract that doesn't give both the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) subpoena power?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	Again, if there were a "maybe" that would better reflect my position. Contract negotiations are a bargain. There are lots of things I want to see in a new SPOG contract. I am not going to make a categorical statement and box myself in.

- The previous Seattle Police

Officer's Guild (SPOG) contract disallows subpoena power, which would allow the OPA and OIG to better investigate police misconduct.

- The city is currently negotiating the next SPOG contract and has the opportunity to negotiate for subpoena power.
- After the SPOG contract is negotiated the full city council will vote on whether or not to accept the contract.

12. Would you oppose a SPOG contract that doesn't remove limitations as to how many of OPA's investigators must be sworn versus civilian?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	I am not going to make categorical statements on individual components of a contract vote. I am happy to state the overall package I would like to see as an individual, including civilian investigators, but I cannot approve these one-by-one on an a la carte basis.

- The current SPOG contract allows only 2 of the

12 investigators to be civilian, while the remaining 10 are sworn officers. Officers investigating officers is an inherent conflict of interest. If we are to have true accountability we must progress toward a civilian investigative unit.

13. Would you oppose a SPOG contract that impedes the ability of the City to move police funding to public safety alternatives?

Yes	
No	NO
Additional Comments	See the above answer.

- Cities across the country have been creating alternative community-led first response programs, such as [CAHOOTS in Eugene](#) and [STAR in Denver](#). Alternative response teams reduce overreliance on law enforcement by dispatching professionals equipped with the tools necessary to resolve a crisis without creating unnecessary criminal legal system involvement. This creates more equitable outcomes for communities of color and others disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system.
- The SPOG contract has been repeatedly cited as one of the major obstacles to implementing a similar alternative response program in Seattle.

14. Do you support eliminating in-uniform off duty work for officers?

Yes	YES
No	
Additional Comments	We lose thousands of service hours a year to moonlighting. We need to get rid of it.

- Allowing in-uniform off-duty work creates confusion among the public and fails to establish clear boundaries of professional work. The added hours over and above the officer’s work as a police officer lead to fatigue, which increases the effect of racial bias on decision-making and has detrimental consequences to our community, especially Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color.

Part II – Free Response Questions

What is your idea of public safety? What are tangible ways to measure progress toward this goal?

Public safety means building a community where everyone can seek self-actualization and wellness without fear. Fundamentally, Seattle's public safety problem is a disorder problem. Inequality in Seattle has created a significant and visible population of people in extreme poverty engaged in a large volume of low-level criminal activity. Overwhelmingly, our system to manage that visible poverty is geared toward a punitive and surveillance-based model. That model is not capable of solving, or really significantly mitigating, this problem.

We need a robust public health response to complement enforcement. On-demand access to treatment and enhanced shelter in the short-term, with a long-term scaling up of permanent supportive housing and social housing to provide more permanent stability. We have programs that show the proof of concept. LEAD, REACH, and We Deliver Care have done amazing work with limited resources to show there is another way. I will continue to build on that work!

Where do you see gaps and shortfalls in our current public safety system, and what do you propose to address these?

We need a contract that emphasizes short-falls in our accountability system. If officers are not held sufficiently accountable for misconduct the entire legitimacy of the system is undermined.

We also need to create alternative services based in public health to take on roles the police do not need to do. This may, in some respects, be the most fundamental problem we face. While accountability is a huge problem a large volume of the situations leading to police abuse come from calls they shouldn't have been on in the first place.

It stands to reason that the strain on the accountability system, and the reputational challenges faced by police, would be well addressed by a clarifying of roles and a standing up of these alternative services, like Denver STAR.

The 2012 Consent Decree may be ending soon. While overall rates of use of force have decreased since 2012, racial bias has not. Black people remain seven times more likely than white people to be the subject of police force. There were over 19,000 complaints filed against police action at demonstrations in 2020. In total, 40% of Seattle Police Department employees had at least one complaint filed against them. What further changes need to be made to address these issues?

As I alluded to in my above answer a big part of this could potentially be solved by removing officers from a significant percentage of calls entirely. I have not done a data analysis of one of our largest categories of complaints, "professionalism", but I would be really interested to know the types of calls where residents are leveling that complaint. The reality is, the police respond to lots of calls they really can't do much to resolve. My suspicion is this leads to an impression, either real or perceived, that the officer doesn't care, is shirking, or is otherwise being flippant. While that may be the case in many cases, on the whole my suspicion is there really isn't much the officer could do anyway.

There is significant utility to training officers in de-escalation, professionalism, and cultural sensitivity. But, we need to face the practical reality that removing officers entirely from certain categories of calls, overwhelmingly non-criminal in nature, is probably one of the best strategies to address concerns around disproportionality.

To realize your vision of public safety in Seattle, what kinds of alternative responses and prevention measures are you interested in pursuing?

My personal favorite of the national alternative models is Denver STAR. This is a model where the city contracts with a provider to send out mental health clinicians to respond to non-criminal public health-based calls for service. It has been overwhelmingly successful and the model is nimble and has developed a unique culture that has been embraced by community.

That said, the Harrell Administration supports the similar, but different, model used in Albuquerque. Under this model, all the people working for the response service are within the city and are official city employees. It is a good model and I am happy to support it, and I appreciate the Harrell Administration embracing it. But, I have long-term concerns about the culture of a government entity versus a provider-based entity. The culture of these response services is really important for their credibility with the populations they serve. So, we need to be vigilant to make

sure our model reflects that, regardless of how we organize it.

Regardless of how the service is organized, all of them have the same fundamental mix of equipment and personnel. Typically, a mental health clinician teamed up with an EMT or a nurse, in a van, and not in an official uniform. I expect our model to reflect that.

What are your budget priorities?

Scale and expand services based in public health, housing, and wellness to meet the demand of the disorder crisis we face in Seattle.

I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete, and correct to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.

Signature	Andrew J. Lewis	Date: 7/19/2023
Printed Name	Andrew J. Lewis	