

## Responses – Kathleen O’Toole

### 1. Describe your realistic 5-year vision for the City of Seattle Police Department? What specifically will success look like after year one? Three? Five?

First, I would like to preface my answer to this question by respectfully suggesting that a police chief should not single-handedly develop the vision for the organization. The vision should be developed during a collaborative process involving sworn and non-sworn personnel of all ranks, city leaders, other government agencies, academia, the private sector, non-profits and a broad range of community representatives. The vision should unite and inspire all partners and provide a solid foundation for the Seattle Police Department strategy. It should be stated in simple and clear terms. The following is an example of a simple, but inspiring, vision statement:

***Working with our community, in mutual trust, to provide a safe, vibrant and nurturing environment for all in our city.***

At the end of year one, I envision:

- More productive partnerships and collaborative initiatives;
- Exciting and effective policing strategies for each neighborhood;
- Significant progress on implementation of the consent decree;
- A professional development plan for the organization;
- An enhanced accountability framework;
- More efficient operations and enhanced technology;
- Significant improvement in community confidence; and
- Improved morale.

At year three, I envision:

- Community confidence and trust restored;
- Public/private/community partnerships thriving;
- Safer, more vibrant neighborhoods throughout the city;
- Consent decree requirements met;
- Solid business practices and cutting edge technology;
- A healthier organizational culture; and
- An emerging cadre of capable leaders.

At year five, I envision:

- Consent decree reforms imbedded;
- High performance, high morale organization;
- Effective and efficient management and technology;
- Community pride, trust and confidence in police; and
- Seattle Police Department recognized as a model of excellence for professional policing and community collaboration.

2. **As specifically as you can – describe three operational/tactical actions you will take to achieve success in year One? Five?**

In policing, the words “operational” and “tactical” have multiple definitions. In my response, I assume the Committee is using these words in the context of leadership and management, and not as they relate to field operations.

My operational/tactical priorities would be built on the foundation of a strategy that emerges from broad consultation. I expect the following would be at the top of my list.

**Year One**

- I would declare that restoring community trust is my top priority. I would meet immediately with the Consent Decree Monitor and representatives of the US Department of Justice to determine how we can work constructively and collaboratively to address all of the requirements in the agreement. I would constantly emphasize the Department’s commitment to substantive reforms and develop a greater sense of urgency in the implementation process.
- I would work tirelessly to develop strong relationships and trust, internally and externally. I would do so by being visible and accessible, in formal meetings and informal encounters. I would listen carefully, and incorporate valuable input and feedback into SPD strategies and plans. I would also work hard to leverage public and private resources to support the implementation of the Consent Decree and other important initiatives.
- During the first 90 days, my team would conduct a comprehensive assessment of the organization, which would culminate in a plan of action with concise and measurable goals and objectives. This process would be informed by the ongoing consultation described above.

Note: I’m a bit confused as the question jumps from year one to year five. My hope is that the organization would be much healthier after five years and operational/tactical priorities would be very different.

**Year Five**

- Metrics would be developed to ensure ongoing compliance with the goals and spirit of the Consent Decree after the Department of Justice and the Monitor have completed their work. The system would include internal and independent review.
- The “action plan” would be a living document that would be assessed and updated each year.
- Continued focus will be placed on public/private partnerships that will enhance trust and produce tangible results and benefits for the community.

**3. What is the ideal relationship between the Police Chief and the Mayor, including in terms of engagement and autonomy?**

The ideal relationship between the Police Chief and the Mayor is one of trust, respect and shared purpose.

Over the years, I reported directly to three elected officials: a mayor and two governors. Each had a unique personality and management style. One delegated liberally, another had the reputation of micro-manger, and the third struck a sensible balance between the two. I developed and maintained wonderful friendships with all of them and was ALWAYS loyal. They were very different people, but they all demonstrated a selfless commitment to public service, and I respected that.

I am a team player and have adjusted to different working environments. Once I've earned the trust of my boss, I prefer an environment where I am delegated the authority required to get the job done. At the same time, I recognize the importance of constant, effective communication and seeking direction when needed.

When working for elected officials, I've always said to them, "When it's a good news story, you should be at the podium. When it's a bad news story, I should be there." At the same time, I've been blessed with bosses who have always backed me up during difficult challenges. For instance, on the day I addressed the tragic killing of an innocent college student by the Boston Police, I did not expect my Mayor to attend the press conference. As I approached the podium at police headquarters, I was surprised to see him enter the room. He did not speak that day. I made the statement and fielded all the questions. But he stood behind me and it was reassuring. It also sent out a powerful message that he believed in me. I'll always remember and appreciate that.

From time to time, I engaged in spirited (but respectful) discussions with that same Mayor about staffing and operations, but it was always in private. I never disrespected or embarrassed him publicly. To this day, we remain personal friends.

I also recall working for the Governor who said, "You're the police expert. Take the ball and run with it. If you need me, call me." He delegated considerable authority and provided the resources required to do my job effectively. I always kept him informed and he also stood behind me when there were crises. It was an exciting and professionally rewarding experience.

In conclusion, the Mayor and the Police Chief should have a close relationship. I would hope to be a key member of the Mayor's management team, weighing in on a variety of issues. I have considerable experience beyond policing and very good political instincts (although no political aspirations). I hope the Mayor would consider me a valuable resource and trusted confidant.

**4. Describe how in your first three months and first year you will prioritize establishing internal and external relationships and who/what groups fit in each category?**

Developing and maintaining trusted relationships would be my top priority, not only during the first three months and first year, but also throughout my tenure as Chief. I believe it is important to balance internal and external relationships, making an equal commitment to both. During the first three months, I would establish relationships with the internal and external parties/groups below and I would create a structure to maintain these relationships. Also, I feel it is very important to institutionalize these relationships by involving personnel at all levels of police department. This will ensure continuity when individual players change in the years to come.

**Internal**

- Command staff – It will be important to develop relationships of mutual trust and respect. Also, constant interaction will provide an opportunity to assess existing command staff personnel.
- Unions – It is essential to establish an open door policy and maintain strong lines of communication with union leaders.
- Front-line officers - I would attend meetings at all stations during the first ninety days and develop a schedule for ongoing visits. I would also spend considerable time in the field, interacting informally with officers.
- Non-sworn personnel – I would make an equal commitment to non-sworn personnel.
- Chief's Advisory Committee – I would establish a representative group of highly respected police and civilian personnel of all ranks and would rotate personnel through this group.

**External**

- Mayor and his team - It is absolutely essential to develop and maintain a relationship of trust, respect and common purpose with the Mayor and his team.
- City Council and other elected officials – Elected officials, particularly city council members serve as an important conduit to the community.
- Monitor and Department of Justice personnel – A healthy, collaborative relationship must be developed in order to accomplish the goals and requirements in the Consent Decree.
- Business community – The business community can be a great resource to a police service. Too often police chiefs undervalue the private sector.
- Academic community – Trusted, capable academics should be imbedded in the police department, building an important bridge between theory and practice.
- Federal, state and local law enforcement – It is important to harness resources and work collaboratively with these partners. Also, grant opportunities can often emerge when working in partnership, particularly with federal agencies.
- Other city, state agencies - Education, health, mental health, probation, parole, sheriff, corrections)
- Wide array of community groups – Everyone would have access and a voice, including the faith-based community, LGBT community and civil liberties groups.