

Faith Action Written Questionnaire
Mayoral Accountability Assembly – July 11, 2020
Written Response Questionnaire
Keith Amemiya

Homelessness

1. What should the City do about homelessness which is different from what the City is doing now? For example, what is your stance on the effectiveness of sweeps? Would you continue this practice, or use a different method? Do you have an idea for a new program? Should any existing program be expanded or modified? Should any existing program be reduced or cut? How much in additional funding would it take to implement your ideas?

I will continue funding for Housing First and take the lessons learned in developing housing specifically for homeless persons to truly build at a much larger and much needed scale.

My experience with Kahauiki Village -- a public-private partnership with the City to create housing for over 600 people who were previously houseless including over 300 children -- has made it clear to me that City leaders can and must do more for our families.

While I support the sidewalk nuisance and stored property ordinances, I believe people who are homeless must have a reasonable option for shelter when these laws are enforced in an area. People can decline the option, but it must be available.

The larger issue is: How do we address the needs of people who feel that the sidewalk is their only option?

As Mayor, I will partner with the State to tackle mental health and substance abuse. While the State has primary responsibility in these areas, I will address this long-standing issue in our community immediately with partners and stakeholders ready to work on solutions.

Health

2. Reopening our economy to tourism may bring a second wave of COVID-19 infection that could be worse than the first, and that may necessitate imposing restrictions on business, travel, and activities. What is your assessment of the measures taken so far to keep Hawai'i safe from COVID-19, and what changes, if any, would make in approach if a second wave of COVID-19 warrants new restrictions?

We are already seeing increases in COVID-19 cases with the opening of just our local economy. As we open up trans-pacific travel, there is the possibility of a second wave. I support the measure by the Governor to open up the island to travellers that test negative for COVID-19 prior to arrival to the islands or subject themselves to a 14-day quarantine. We need to make sure we are constantly monitoring the cases and hospital capacity and using the advice of public health professionals to help inform our decision making.

As we reopen we need to ensure the health and safety of our residents first and foremost. My policies and actions will prioritize the long-term health and well being of our residents. All of our recovery efforts must ensure that the health, safety, and fair treatment of all O'ahu residents always come first. This includes the following in the case of a second wave:

- Clearer, more consistent communication to the public, with coordination from all levels of government and business and community leaders.
- Coordination of evidence-based and research-driven practices for community-wide screening and testing.
- Access and information to ensure that people's basic needs are met, such as food and housing.

As Mayor I would prioritize funding for the following:

- **Testing. Contact Tracing. Treatment.** We have a responsibility to protect our frontline workers in hospitality, tourism, and healthcare. To ensure the long-term safety of our community as a whole, until we have a vaccine, anyone who wants a COVID-19 test will get a test under my administration.
- **CARES Act Spending for O'ahu Residents and Businesses.** I will prioritize future federal relief money for strengthening the safety net for all residents, small business loans and grants, programs that put people back to work, and increasing access to health emergency testing.

Public Safety

3. If elected, what is your plan to reform and strengthen accountability within the HPD, and with the larger community? Do you support the concept of community-based policing? If so, what steps would you take to implement it?

I served as a Commissioner on the Honolulu Police Commission and have always advocated for an honest and corruption free police force. I believe we need to ensure our police are properly trained, equipped, and supported in order to keep our community safe, but we also need to demand accountability and transparency.

In light of the concerns raised by Justice Steven Levinson and Loretta Sheehan about the Police Commission, I am open to discussing ways that the City Charter can be amended to allow the Police Commission greater oversight over the department. Such an amendment would need to go through the City Council or a Charter Commission and be approved by the public. As Mayor, I will ensure that people appointed to the Police and Ethics Commissions are willing to publicly voice concerns and offer true oversight.

I do support the concept of community-based policing. I believe we need more partner programs with the police and other organizations, like community groups, non-profit organizations, and private partnerships to help provide police the support they need to deal with social services issues in the community like mental health, drug abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence.

Other steps I would take include continuing the ban on chokeholds altogether, making implicit bias training required for all police and all City employees, and supporting a duty to intervene law that obligates officers to intervene in situations where they witness an improper use of force or ethical violation.

Rail

4. In light of the shortfalls in funding rail, are you in favor of reducing the length of the rail line or are you in favor of ending at Ala Moana Center, as planned? If so, how would you get the funding needed to address the shortage?

I am in favor of completing rail to Ala Moana Center as initially planned.

Rail will be a key component in addressing community development going forward. The future of Honolulu requires a public transportation network for our island that is: (1) multimodal, (2) accessible, and (3) affordable. We know that strong economies have strong public transit systems around which they build affordable housing and economic centers. Transit oriented development will allow us to provide greater affordable housing opportunities, design better neighborhoods, and support clean energy transportation solutions. What we need to do is provide better project oversight and transparency to our residents.

As far as long term financing of rail operations and maintenance, rail will be funded by three main sources: 1) fare collection; 2) the recent increase in real property taxes for higher end properties; and 3) the cost savings for reduced bus routes due to rail. Public transportation has always been and continues to be an important method for equitable access to housing, jobs, and education, for which the government reasonably provides subsidy.

Rail will be an economic engine of transport and recovery for our city, but we must do it right. It has been mismanaged to date and many career politicians have helped rail get to where it is today. In my experiences as a nonprofit leader and local business executive, I have always ensured integrity and financial accountability and will make sure that rail is done right.

Accountability

5. The focus of today's event is Accountability. Will you commit to provide regular updates for Faith Action and the rest of the community, and meet with Faith Action as appropriate on your progress regarding your commitments made here today?

Yes