



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

MID-YEAR PLANNING SESSION

JUNE 21, 2019

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Mayor Debbie Bertlin called the Mid-Year Planning Session to order at 1:02 pm in the Clarke Room at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center, 8236 SE 24th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

Mayor Debbie Bertlin, Deputy Mayor Salim Nice, and Councilmembers Lisa Anderl, Bruce Bassett (arrived 1:03 pm), Wendy Weiker (arrived 1:58 pm), David Wisenteiner, and Benson Wong were present.

Introductions, Review Agenda and Expectations

Interim City Manager Jessi Bon welcomed the Council and staff. She introduced the session facilitator, Dave Uhler, a Mercer Island resident and emergency management volunteer, who facilitates sessions professionally as Managing Director of Research & Development at a consulting firm based in Seattle.

Mr. Uhler reviewed the agenda and process for the day.

SPECIAL BUSINESS

Fiscal Sustainability Plan - Proposed Budget Strategies

Mr. Uhler reviewed the questions that would be asked for each budget strategy as follows:

1. Do you understand the current issue/service/program?
2. Do you understand the proposed strategy?
3. Are there additional considerations or factors that need to be considered?
4. What additional questions need to be answered?
5. Should this strategy be (choose one):
 - A. Eliminated from further consideration?
 - B. Analyzed further and scheduled for City Council follow-up?
 - C. Retained in the proposed budget scenarios?

The City Council reviewed and asked questions about the following proposed budget strategies:

4. Contract operation of the Mercer Island Community and Event Center

- Clarification of support for the MICEC from the General Fund
- What is the current fee model?
- What is the rental fee impact of eliminating the non-profit discount?
- Could volunteers fill staff positions?
- Who would be responsible for the capital infrastructure?
- Could parameters be placed on the operator regarding fees?

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax3, Bx3)

2. Renegotiate maintenance agreements with MISD for ball fields and pool maintenance

- This work is in process now and still will bring back to Council in 2020
- A change in the level of service will need to be negotiated with the union
- For use of fields by for-profit organizations during unscheduled time:
 - Are we collecting the fees?
 - Are we enforcing the rules for unscheduled time?
 - Is there a way to make the field schedules available online?
- These will be part of the Parks, Recreation and & Open Space (PROS) Plan to be adopted in 2020

- New ILAs with MISD will be put into effect in early 2020

Council Consensus: B – Analyze further and follow-up with City Council (Ax2, Bx4)

20. Reduce parks landscape maintenance and irrigation

- This will require a discussion regarding level of service which will be part of the Parks, Recreation and & Open Space (PROS) Plan to be adopted in 2020
- A change in the level of service will need to be negotiated with the union
- What part of this work is covered by parks levy?
- Would the reduction be for parks maintenance only or open space as well?
- Does this impact the vegetation management program?
- Can more casual labor be used?
- Will be important to state for the public what the impact of reductions will be
- Can more volunteers be used?
- Should the conversation with the union start now?

Council Consensus: C – Retain in the proposed budget scenarios (Bx3, Cx4)

7. Create a metropolitan park district as a funding tool for parks and recreation operations and maintenance

- Could a City-run library be part of metropolitan park district (MPD)?
- Which is better: MPD (permanent) or Parks Levy (renew)?
- Include option for maintenance of pool and athletic fields by MISD?
- Is community better served?
- How long would it take to create and get into place?
- Is this just shifting taxes & creating more overhead?
- Gives voters say in parks

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

1. Reduce vacation benefits

- “Use it or lose it” policy:
 - When should it go into effect?
 - Would this force staff to take vacation?
 - Could it be a 2-year or 15-month program?
 - Concern about staffing levels in December if staff are forced to take leave to not lose it
 - How does it compare to other cities?
- Concerned about staff earning vacation time at low rate and cashing out at high rate
- How does Mercer Island’s policies compare to other states?

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax5, Bx2)

19. Eliminate/brown-out one fire station

- What are non-medic calls?
- When does the current Fire Station Levy expire?

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

5. Change one fire engine to EMS apparatus and staff EMS drivers with non-sworn employees

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

6. Develop shared services model for fire services

- This model may allow for more advancement opportunities for staff
- It may increase services for the Island, but will cost more
- A staffing and level of service study should be completed before moving forward
- What would the cost recovery/revenue be in the next biennium?
- The current EMS rate covers 4 firefighters, when would the 5th be needed?

Council Consensus: B – Analyze further and follow-up with City Council (Ax1, Bx6)

8. Establish new fire protection district for fire services and transfer fire services to the new district

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

22. Reduce law enforcement specialized services

- Working towards MISD paying 50% of 9 months for the School resource Officer position
- Emergency Manager is a Police Officer and the Crime Prevention Officer.
- Any changes will need to be bargained with the union
- Police and Fire staff are working on a public safety plan with Sound Transit Police for the new light rail station

Council Consensus: Continue to work with MISD on SRO salary split.

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

3. Contract for police services with King County Sheriff’s Office

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

21. Eliminate or reduce marine patrol services

- Could MI charge a user fee?
- Could the boat launch fee be increased?
- Could Marine Patrol “Brown-Out” in the winter?
- Could a special district be created for Marine Patrol?

Council Consensus: Continue to optimize Marine Patrol Services.

Council Consensus: A – Eliminate from further consideration (Ax7)

School-Based Mental Health Services Pilot Program

Interim City Manager Bon spoke about the pilot program to implement billing for school-based mental health services in 2020 with the goal of collecting \$109,000 to address the revenue shortfall in the YFS Fund. She noted that collecting fees in the school setting poses several clinical and administrative challenges and the recommendation is to forego the pilot project for the following reasons:

- Establishing a school-based billing program will require a significant administrative investment.
- The pilot project significantly changes the mental-health services model in the schools.
- There are potential equity management issues in determining when or when not to bill.

Council Consensus: Discontinue the pilot program for billing for school-based mental health services and bring back to the Council a budget adjustment to use 2019 Thrift Shop net income and MIYFS Foundation donations to bridge the \$109,000 gap for 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

The Mid-Year Planning Session adjourned at 5:36 pm.

Debbie Bertlin, Mayor

Attest:

Deborah Estrada, City Clerk