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Director

Jessi Bon

Mercer Island City Manager

9611 SE 36th Street

Mercer Island, WA 98040

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Ms. Bon:

The Mercer Island Youth and Family Services Foundation is pleased to inform you that community residents, non-profit partners and local businesses have made gifts of \$617,000 exceeding our biennial 2019-20 commitment, including \$197,000 specifically directed to COVID relief and exclusive of \$63,000 directed immediately to post COVID emergency assistance. Due to this unprecedented generosity, we are able immediately to accelerate our remaining 2020 commitment to the City (\$147,000) and offer up to \$816,000 of additional funding to begin to restore YFS services. This offer draws down \$198,000 of the reserve fund presciently established by the 2016 Foundation Board. The remaining reserve balance offers a cushion, if needed, to ensure our 2021 funding commitment, once established.

Mercer Island has experienced significant spikes in mental health disruptions in youth and adults. COVID-19 has deprived youth of contact with teachers, peers, athletic coaches and arts programs, elevating depression and anxiety. Parents are juggling home schooling while working at home; some are anxious about returning to unsafe workplaces; others worry about employment or financial stability or are grieving due to COVID deaths. Quarantine is reported to have exacerbated family conflict and abuse. Upheaval after George Floyd's death unleashed anger, safety concerns and malaise. The Foundation believes rebuilding services now should be a priority to address grave community needs.

Our offer to accelerate \$147,000 of our 2020 biennial commitment and up to \$617,000 collected in excess of our biennial commitment is unconditional. Our offer of up to \$198,000 from our reserve fund is contingent on the City providing an equal amount to YFS operations in 2020, toward restoring the most urgent services recommended by the Department. The match could come from Thrift Shop revenues once reopened, or by City contingency or other available funds. The Foundation reserves – and the City match, would be available to draw upon as needed in equal measure to regain optimal service levels as directed by City management for 2020. At year end, any excess reserve/contingency balance could be returned to each of the Foundation and City or, by agreement, kept in the YFS fund to smooth the transition into 2021 to maintain service levels. Islanders have voted with their dollars to restore much needed services. The YFS model has been successful for many years with a funding partnership of the City, the Thrift Shop and the Foundation. Foundation donors have more than pulled their weight in fulfilling their side of the bargain. We ask that the City and the City Council utilize these resources to keep our families safe and healthy.

Although the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) supporting organization that does not direct or control the operations of the Department, we respectfully suggest that the City utilize some of our additional funding to prioritize restoration of the Executive Director currently on standby, on at least a part-time basis, to inform the most effective allocation of our contribution in the short term. The Department's ED for the last 18 years has a firm handle on community needs and is best suited to identify the most efficient staff level and mix based on current need, as well as support the Foundation's efforts to inspire donors to continue the extraordinary financial support that enabled the Foundation to make this offer.

The Foundation will continue aggressive fundraising efforts throughout 2020 to raise money for 2021 and work in partnership with the City and the Thrift Shop to achieve a sustainable revenue model into the next biennium and beyond. We look forward to participating in the City Council YFS working group to consider solutions for a long term, sustainable funding platform, among which could include a stand alone levy to fund school counselors, a Thrift Store revenue-enhancing renovation, and an initiative to build a parallel City YFS reserve fund responsibly over time.

We note that our protocols for donations made to the Foundation restricted to Food Pantry or Emergency Assistance remain unchanged. Those donations are, and will continue to be, immediately transferred to the YFS Department upon receipt by the Foundation. We are grateful for the City's consideration and especially for the enthusiastic financial support from the community for the MIYFS Department and the quality services it provides.

The MIYFS Foundation Board

Jody Kris, President

Mai Krishnaswamy, Vice President, Strategic Marketing Co-Chair

Chris Woerner, Secretary, Tree Lot Subcommittee Co-Chair

Laura Oberto, Treasurer

Pam Hinnen, Fundraising Committee Co-Chair; Breakfast Co-Chair

Mina Velamoor, Fundraising Committee Co-Chair, Major Donor Subcommittee Co-Chair

Steffenie Evans, Major Donor Subcommittee Co-Chair

Anjali Grover, Finance Committee Chair

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