



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 7019
October 20, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 7019: Planning Commission Restructure (Ordinance No. 26C-16, First Reading)	☐ Discussion Only ☒ Action Needed: ☒ Motion ☐ Ordinance ☐ Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Schedule Ordinance No. 26C-16 for second reading and adoption on November 3, 2026.	

DEPARTMENT:	City Manager
STAFF:	Jessi Bon, City Manager Jeff Thomas, Community Planning & Development
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Ordinance No. 26C-16
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to present Ordinance No. 26C-16 for first reading to restructure the Planning Commission.

- After discussing the Community Planning and Development Department's land use work plan at the City Council Planning Session on March 1, 2024, the City Manager was directed to bring a proposal to City Council on April 2, 2024, aiming to reconstitute the Planning Commission.
- On April 2, 2024 the City Manager presented various options for reconstitution of the Planning Commission to the City Council for consideration ([AB 6441](#)).
- The City Council discussed and selected various options and further directed staff to bring back an ordinance on April 16, 2024 for first reading containing these selected options to amend MICC, Chapter 3.46 to reconstitute the Planning Commission.
- With first reading on April 16, 2024 and a second reading on May 7, 2024, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 24C-06](#) amending MICC Chapter 3.46 to reconstitute the Planning Commission.
- At the October 6, 2026 Council Meeting, the City Manager presented options for the City Council regarding restructuring the Planning Commission following members of the City Council expressing interest in revisiting this discussion ([AB 7018](#)).
- The City Council provided direction to the City Manager prepare an ordinance to restructure the Planning Commission to include 5 members, a residency requirement, no compensation and

encouraging applicants who have an interest in environmental affairs, planning, architecture, land use, property development, and/or economic development as evidenced by training or experience to apply as a broad mix of occupational backgrounds is desired.

BACKGROUND

The City Council conducted a Planning Session on March 1, 2024. An overview of the Community Planning and Development Department's land use work plan was presented as part of the agenda. To increase land use planning capacity and efficiency as well as provide additional direction to work program priorities, the City Council made several motions including the following:

Direct the City Manager to bring a proposal to City Council at its regular meeting on April 2, aiming to reconstitute the Planning Commission. The new composition shall include four (4) land use professionals not affiliated with Mercer Island entities or interests, to be compensated for their dedicated time, and three (3) laypersons who are Mercer Island residents. The proposal must specify the effective date, detail the range of the number of meetings that will occur annually, outline the annual cost, and describe any necessary amendments to the Mercer Island Municipal Code (MICC).

On April 2, 2024, the City Manager presented options for the City Council to evaluate reconstitution of the Planning Commission ([AB 6441](#)). The City Council directed the City Manager to prepare an ordinance to amend Chapter 3.46 MICC regarding the Planning Commission as follows:

- **Effective Date:** January 15, 2025
- **Member Composition:** 2/2/1 Paid Practitioner – Non-Resident / Lay Person – Resident / Paid Practitioner – Resident; any vacancy may be filled by a resident lay person if unable to find a qualified paid practitioner.
- **Paid Practitioner – Non-Resident Definition:** An individual not affiliated with Mercer Island entities or interests with a minimum of five years of experience in land use planning as well as five years of such experience in the State of Washington. Examples of qualifying positions include land use / municipal attorney, hearing examiner, urban planner or architect, engineer, or builder with land use experience. Demonstrated experience in public service, working with the Growth Management Act (GMA), Shoreline Management Act (SMA), and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as well as the drafting of land use policies and codes preferred. This position will be compensated.
- **Lay Person – Resident Definition:** An individual with general interest in land use planning, environmental affairs, and/or economic development. Demonstrated experience in public service and land use planning preferred. Proof of Mercer Island residency required. This position will not be compensated.
- **Paid Practitioner – Resident Definition:** An individual with a minimum of five years of experience in land use planning as well as five years of such experience in the State of Washington. Examples of qualifying positions include land use / municipal attorney, hearing examiner, urban planner or architect, engineer, or builder with land use experience. Demonstrated experience in public service, working with the Growth Management Act (GMA), Shoreline Management Act (SMA), and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as well as the drafting of land use policies and codes preferred. Proof of Mercer Island residency required. This position will be compensated.
- **Annual Meeting Frequency Options:** 21 (11 Regular Meetings + Up To 10 Special Meetings)
- **Paid Practitioner Compensation Options:** Flat Rate Per Meeting Completed

- **Paid Practitioner Annual Compensation Maximum Amount Options:** Not to Exceed \$10,500 Per Paid Practitioner (\$500 Per Meeting)
- **Paid Practitioner Poor Performance – Termination Authority:** Only the City Council can terminate.
- **Planning Commission Seats:** Permanently reduce the Planning Commission to 5 seats on June 1, 2024.

Following first reading on April 16, 2024 ([AB 6454](#)) and second reading on May 7, 2024 ([AB 6460](#)), the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24C-06 amending [MICC Chapter 3.46](#) to reconstitute the Planning Commission.

Since the current format was implemented in January 2025, the Planning Commission has met approximately 20 times. Under the current compensation structure, Commission members receive \$500 per meeting. The City has paid approximately \$45,000 in Planning Commission compensation during this period.

In June 2026, Commissioner Akyuz resigned from the Planning Commission, creating a mid-term vacancy. [Section 8 of the City Council Rules of Procedure](#), which governs City advisory boards and commissions, provides that when a vacancy occurs mid-term, the City Council shall appoint a person to fill the unexpired term within 60 days, or as soon as reasonably practicable. The City Manager delayed opening of the recruitment until September 3 because it is challenging to recruit during the summer months. The current recruitment period closes on Friday, October 9, and, as of this writing, the City has received five applications.

Members of the City Council contacted the Mayor and City Manager to request that the current Planning Commission structure be revisited. Because any change to the Commission's structure requires consideration by the full City Council and an amendment to the City Code, the Mayor placed this item on the October 6, 2026 City Council meeting for discussion ([AB 7018](#)).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

PLANNING COMMISSION RESTRUCTURE

At its October 6, 2026 meeting, the City Council directed the City Manager to prepare an ordinance restructuring the Planning Commission as follows:

- Five members
- A residency requirement
- No compensation
- Encouragement for applicants who have an interest in environmental affairs, planning, architecture, land use, property development, and/or economic development as evidenced by training or experience

At the same meeting, the City Council suspended the City Council Rules of Procedure that require vacant Planning Commission positions to be filled within 60 days or as soon as reasonably practicable. Staff have notified current applicants that their applications will be considered once the new structure is established and appointments can be made.

ORDINANCE NO. 26C-16

Proposed Ordinance No. 26C-16 (Exhibit 1) would:

- Maintain five positions with staggered four year terms.
- Require residency within Mercer Island city limits.
- Provide that members receive no compensation.
- Remove the annual cap on regular and special meetings.
- Encourage applicants who have an interest in environmental affairs, planning, architecture, land use, property development, and/or economic development as evidenced by training, experience, or actions.
- State that the appointment process should aim to evenly represent these areas of interest and reflect the City's diverse community, and that members represent the public interest rather than specific interest groups.
- Remove all members serving before the ordinance's effective date (Section 2). The removal is for just cause, which the ordinance defines as the Council's exercise of its legislative discretion to restructure the Commission with different membership criteria and terms of service.

RESTRUCTURE TIMING

Only one Planning Commission meeting is currently scheduled, on October 28, 2026. Community Planning and Development staff have confirmed there are no other pending land use matters through the end of the year.

The City Manager recommends concluding the current Planning Commission on November 17, 2026, which is the day after the Ordinance is effective. Recruitment for the next Planning Commission would begin at the end of November with appointments anticipated in January or February 2027.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Schedule Ordinance No. 26C-16 for second reading and adoption on November 3, 2026.