



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 5738
August 4, 2020
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 5738: Anti-Racism and Cultural Awareness Training and Listening Sessions Update	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Provide feedback on listening sessions goal statement.	<input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	City Council
STAFF:	Ali Spietz, Chief of Administration
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	n/a
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

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

SUMMARY

At the June 16, 2020 Council Meeting, the City Council directed the City Manager to return to the City Council to:

1. "Mandate and appropriate funds for annual training in diversity, implicit bias, cultural awareness or related topics for the city council and all members of city Boards and Commissions; and
2. Authorize and appropriate funds for engaging a consultant or contractor to conduct a series of listening sessions for the community so that we can hear first-hand the stories of minority experiences on the Island, and gather ideas for what we can do to make the island a safe and welcoming place for people of all races and ethnicities."

This agenda bill is to provide a progress update and present scenarios for the trainings and listening sessions.

TRAINING

Staff has reached out to several trainers to schedule anti-racism/implicit bias trainings for City Councilmember and members of the City's boards and commissions. Most were fully booked for June and July. Staff will continue to contact trainers with the goal of scheduling sessions in the fall.

Staff recommends that these trainings have a mix of Councilmembers and board and commission members in each one and due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, these trainings will need to be held virtually via the Zoom platform. With the intention of creating a space where people feel comfortable sharing, the capacity for each Zoom training will be limited to allow for more participation and candor. With over 55 people to train, staff suggests scheduling 3-4 trainings with 15-20 people (including 2-3 Councilmembers in each one).

LISTENING SESSIONS

Over the past two months, many government entities have held listening sessions with their constituents regarding racial justice, systemic racism, police use of force, equity, diversion, and inclusion. With the City Council's direction in June, staff will be contracting with a consultant to moderate listening sessions with the public and the City Council.

Again, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, these listening sessions will need to be held virtually. If the session is to be an opportunity for African American and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to share their first-hand accounts of their experiences on Mercer Island, requiring pre-registration and setting a speaking time limit is suggested. Staff recommends scheduling 2-3 listening sessions with the option for more if needed or desired. If more speakers register than can be heard within the allotted time set for the listening session, the registered speaker list would be carried over to the next session.

If the City Council desires to expand the listening sessions to all residents, requiring pre-registration, setting a speaking time limit, allowing an opportunity to submit statements in advance by email and grouping speakers by topics to share could be helpful. Topics could include:

- Use of force policies/policing
- Systemic racism beyond policing/racial justice
- Mental health services/community services in lieu of policing
- Other topics related to policing, racial justice, and equity

The grouping of topics will enable City Councilmembers to respond to comments at the conclusion of each topic but would not be intended to limit or restrict speakers who wish to speak holistically or about the relationships among these inherently related issues. And speakers who wish to address multiple topics related to policing, racial justice, and equity would be asked to sign up for "other topics."

GOAL STATEMENT

Staff recommends developing a goal statement for the listening sessions. A suggested starting place is as follows:

As we determine the most effective ways to identify and address racial discrimination within our community, we have to fully comprehend the extent of its impact. A first step is to hear directly from those who have experienced it through listening sessions.

The intent of the listening sessions is to allow the Mercer Island City Council to hear first-hand accounts of the magnitude and intensity of racism in our community from residents who are African American and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

These sessions are an opportunity to gather information to guide future community actions around race, racism, diversity, and inclusion.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will secure consultants for the trainings and listening sessions moderator. Dates for the trainings will be scheduled with the City Councilmembers and boards and commissions members. The listening sessions will be scheduled in the fall to ensure the greater participation by the community. They will be publicized through all normal communication channels, in addition to reaching out to community groups (i.e. PTA Organizations, One MI – Equity for MI, Mercer Island High School Clubs for Students, etc.) to notify a broader base of residents.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide feedback on listening sessions goal statement.