

Anti-Racism and Cultural Awareness Training and Listening Sessions Update

AB 5738 | August 4, 2020



City Council Direction

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.”



Training Update

- Staff reached out to several trainers to schedule anti-racism and implicit bias trainings
- Most were fully booked for June and July
- Staff continue to contact trainers to schedule trainings in the fall



Trainings Recommendations

- Hold trainings virtually via the Zoom platform, due to COVID-19
- Limit the capacity for each training to create a space where people feel comfortable sharing
- Schedule 3-4 trainings with 15-20 people each, including a mix of Councilmembers and board and commission members in each training



Listening Sessions

- Staff will be contracting with a consultant to moderate listening sessions with the public and the City Council
- Per Council's direction: African American and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) will be invited to share their first-hand accounts of their experiences on Mercer Island
- Sessions could be expanded (or additional sessions could be scheduled) to allow all residents to speak



Listening Sessions Recommendations

- Schedule for 2-3 listening sessions or more if needed or desired
- Hold sessions virtually via the Zoom platform, due to COVID-19
- Require pre-registration to speak
- Set a speaking time limit
- Accept statements in advance by email



Listening Sessions Recommendations

- Determine and group speakers by topic:
 - 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



Goal Statement (draft)

As we determine the most effective ways to identify and address racial discrimination within our community, we must 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.



Goal Statement (draft – revised)

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

Accordingly, a primary goal of the listening sessions is to allow the Mercer Island City Council and the community to hear first-hand accounts of racism and other discrimination in our community. Another goal of the listening sessions will be to learn from members of our community on how to make Mercer Island a more welcoming and inclusive community for all people.

These sessions are an opportunity to gather information to guide City Council actions and policies around race, racism, diversity, and inclusion.



Next Steps

1. Secure consultants for the trainings and listening sessions moderator
2. Schedule trainings with City Councilmembers and members of the City's Boards & Commissions
3. Schedule and widely publicize listening sessions

