



# BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 5795  
January 5, 2021  
Regular Business

## AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 5795: Acceptance of Washington Department of Commerce Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Fund Grant.	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Accept funds from Washington State Department of Commerce to restore school counseling and emergency assistance staffing to full time for the Youth and Family Services Department for the 2021-2022 biennium.	

<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Youth and Family Services
<b>STAFF:</b>	Tambi Cork, YFS Administrator
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	n/a
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	n/a
<b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:</b>	4. Provide emergency response services related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$ 243,129
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$ 0
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$ 243,129

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to accept funds from the Washington State Department of Commerce Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Fund grant in the amount of \$243,129 to restore seven school-based counselors and one Emergency Assistance Coordinator to full-time for the 2021-2022 biennium.

## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic response caused unprecedented shortfalls in the City of Mercer Island's budget, resulting in staff layoffs and furloughs in the Youth and Family Services Department (YFS). These reductions included a 20% furlough for all seven school-based counselors and the Emergency Family Assistance Coordinator. The City applied for and was awarded a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Fund to cover 20% of salaries and benefits to restore these eight positions back to full time for the 2021-2022 biennium.

## PANDEMIC IMPACTS

Accepting the grant award and restoring the seven school-based counselors and one Emergency Assistance Coordinator to full time will help mitigate some of the most challenging aspects of the pandemic facing the Mercer Island community as follows:

- **Remote Student Learning.** School-based counselors support students challenged by remote learning by providing 1:1 support, parent consultation/coaching, and resources and referrals. The social and emotional learning curricula provided in the schools supports students building the resiliency needed to maintain connection to remote learning without the typical motivation, consistency, and structure that comes from in-person learning environments.
- **Parenting Support.** School-based counselors consult with parents, provide coaching and trainings, problem solve difficult situations, and refer for specialized services in cases of domestic or family violence.
- **Provide Social Connections.** The pandemic has isolated most students and families. School-based counselors provide lunch groups, support high school clubs, and offer friendships groups remotely to mitigate the isolation of students who developmentally need healthy peer connections. Facilitating connections help youth and families navigate isolation.
- **Maintaining Employment.** Emergency Assistance services include employment support for community members unemployed due to the pandemic. In addition, many residents work locally in businesses struggling due to the pandemic.
- **Keeping a Roof Overhead.** The housing and rental costs on Mercer Island are some of the highest in the State. Emergency Assistance services help residents unfamiliar with social support services coordinate available local, state, and federal support services to avoid eviction and maintain independence.

When the pandemic threat levels stabilize, students and communities will need additional support to transition back to school and in-person relationships and jobs. The Mercer Island School District recently announced that Kindergarteners and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade students are expected to return to the classroom in January. The remaining elementary grades are likely to return in phases. Full time school-based counselors will be critical for overcoming the trauma, loss, and ongoing health concerns that can serve as barriers to school re-entry. Similarly, the financial impact of the pandemic will multiply the longer the high threat levels exist, and a full time Emergency Assistance Coordinator will be crucial for families struggling to regain economic stability.

By strengthening resiliency among those members significantly impacted by the pandemic, the Mercer Island community will increase its protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with the pandemic accordingly:

- **Increase protective factors:**
  - Student engagement in remote learning
  - Youth learn appropriate Social/Emotional skills
  - Increased family management skills and parent support
  - Residential and food security
  - Employment stability
  - Increased sense of hope and resiliency
- **Decrease risk factors:**
  - Mental health symptoms/suicidality
  - Substance use and abuse

- Family conflict
- Interpersonal abuse/violence/aggression

**GRANT AWARD**

This opportunity was made possible via the CARES Act, which provided funding for the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding (CESF) grant program. The provisions of the CESF grant program allowed for a wide range of applications provided they were focused on preventing, preparing for, or responding to the pandemic. CESF funds were allocated to each State by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Justice Programs using Justice Assistance Grant Allocation procedures. City staff submitted a grant application in November and the Washington State Department of Commerce notified the City on December 17, 2020 that the City’s application was selected for a CESF grant award.

The grant award covers 20% of salaries and benefits for all seven school-based counselors and one Emergency Family Assistance Coordinator, thereby restoring the positions to full time for the biennium. The award was based on cost estimates for the award period January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022. Given the timing of the City Council meeting, the implementation date for the grant will be January 11, 2021. The grant breakdown is outlined below:

	<b>Year 1 - 2021</b>	<b>Year 2 - 2022</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Salaries</b>	\$104,671	\$106,745	\$211,426
<b>Benefits*</b>	\$15,701	\$16,012	\$37,713
<b>Total</b>	\$120,372	\$122,757	<b>\$243,129</b>

*\*Benefit impacts due to furlough reductions reflect only those benefit costs that are variable based on gross earnings (payroll taxes & retirement).*

The grant allows for a shift of up to 10% of the total award between the expense categories and between the fiscal years within the grant term. In addition, the City will save on unemployment costs for these positions as they will no longer be furloughed.

Upon City Council acceptance of the CESF grant award, all seven school-based counselors and the Emergency Family Assistance Coordinator will be restored to full time. This authorization is effective from January 11, 2021 through December 31, 2022.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the Washington State Department of Commerce Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Fund grant in the amount of \$243,129 to restore school-based and emergency assistance staffing to full time for the 2021-2022 biennium.