



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 7018
October 6, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 7018: Discuss Potential Restructure of the Planning Commission	☐ Discussion Only ☒ Action Needed: ☒ Motion ☐ Ordinance ☐ Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Discuss the current structure of the Planning Commission and provide direction to the City Manager regarding potential changes and next steps.	

DEPARTMENT:	City Manager
STAFF:	Mayor David Rosenbaum Jessi Bon, City Manager
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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is for the City Council to discuss potential changes to the structure of 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.
- After two years of the Planning Commission meeting in its current structure, members of the City Council have expressed interest in reviewing the Commission's structure and considering potential alternatives, including restoring the previous structure. Because any change requires consideration by the full City Council and an amendment to the City Code, the Mayor has placed this item on the agenda for discussion.

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 have 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 has placed this item on the agenda for discussion.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

If the City Council wishes to change the structure of the Planning Commission, direction should be provided to the City Manager to prepare an ordinance amending the applicable provisions of the City Code. Because the composition and structure of the Planning Commission are established in the City Code, any change requires formal City Council action by ordinance. The City Manager will need direction regarding the following items to prepare the ordinance:

- Number of seats
- Compensation
- Resident versus non-resident requirements
- Specialty positions versus lay positions

The City Council will also need to determine how to proceed with the current recruitment for the vacant Planning Commission position. If the Council intends to change the Commission's structure, staff recommends suspending the current recruitment and retaining the applications received for consideration once the new structure has been established and appointments can be made under the revised format.

Postponing an appointment to fill the current vacancy would require the City Council to suspend the applicable provision of its Rules of Procedure, which provides that a mid-term vacancy should be filled within 60 days, or as soon as reasonably practicable. City Council direction should therefore address both whether to prepare an ordinance changing the Planning Commission structure and whether to suspend the current recruitment and appointment process while those changes are considered.

NEXT STEPS

If the City Council directs the City Manager to prepare an ordinance to change the structure of the Planning Commission, the ordinance will be brought forward for City Council consideration on either October 20 or November 3. If the Council also directs that the current Planning Commission recruitment be suspended, applicants will be notified and their applications will be retained for future consideration.

If the City Council elects to retain the Planning Commission in its current structure, the current recruitment will close on Friday, October 9, and the City Council will consider an appointment to fill the vacancy on October 20, 2026.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Suspend the City Council Rules of Procedure requiring filling vacant Planning Commission positions within 60 days or as soon as reasonably practicable to allow time for the City Council to consider options to restructure the Planning Commission. (Approval by 2/3 of the City Council needed to pass.)
2. Direct the City Manager to prepare and return to the City Council, at the earliest practicable meeting, an ordinance to restructure the Planning Commission to include the following [insert items discussed during meeting].