
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

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Arts Council January 13, 2021

Introduction to Recreation, Mercer Island Community and Event Center, and Arts Reset Plan

To: Arts Council

From: Emily Moon, consultant

Date: January 13, 2021

This memo prepares the Arts Council for discussion at its regular meeting on January 13 and a more in-depth workshop to be scheduled for late January. The memo is designed to give the Arts Council a brief update on the City's progress on developing a "reset" plan for programs in recreation and arts and the Mercer Island Community and Event Center (MICEC), and to highlight next steps in the Arts Council's involvement in those plans. A staff team of individuals who were previously involved with programming and operations for recreation, the MICEC, and arts, facilitated by consultant Emily Moon, has been working since late October on the reset.

Background

The City needs tailored plans to help it emerge from a global pandemic that occurred while the municipality was already reducing programs and services. The reset plan gives the City an opportunity to apply a "zero-based" approach to its programming and budget for recreation, the MICEC, and arts. The reset will allow the City to align the organizational and programmatic design to its strategic priorities and available resources.

As the emergency continues to evolve, the reset plans need to include ample flexibility. The plans also need to be reviewed periodically and adjusted as conditions and guidance change.

The response to this emergency is not sequential. From time to time, the City - like all entities - may need to repeat or take backward steps. Iterative attempts may be required to find the right solution. In fact, the State of Washington and King County have had to do this, too, as the virus has alternated between subsiding and surging. The City will continue to move on this initial, interim path toward its future state of sustainable services, all while trying to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

Planning Progress

The team approached developing the reset plan by breaking it into two major steps:

- Shaping an Immediate Action Plan, under which some limited services and programs will be provided prior to wide distribution of a vaccine and/or King County returning to Phase 4 (business as usual) of the Safe Start plan. The Immediate Action Plan for recreation and the MICEC requires rapid implementation to successfully launch intended programs by Summer 2021. The Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council will be apprised this month that this Immediate Action Plan involves preparing to deliver summer camp programs and, possibly, facility rentals in late summer/early fall. The Arts Council will provide input during its January 2021 workshop on what the Immediate Action Plan for Arts might include.
- Constructing a longer-term action plan to design and implement future services and programs. This plan will be developed concurrent to the roll-out of the Immediate Action Plan. It will include developing a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy, a pricing strategy, and a multi-year road map to assist the City in identifying its future recreation, MICEC, and arts services and programs. The Arts Council will play an important role in reviewing and contributing to the longer-term reset plan for arts.

The City currently has only 2.75 LTE/FTE assigned to Recreation; in addition, Sarah Bluvas continues in her role as liaison to the Arts Council but in a reduced capacity while she predominantly works as the Small Business Liaison as part of the City's Emergency Operations Center function (EOC). Most of the staff are currently performing EOC functions, or some portion of their roles are unrelated to recreation or arts. Implementation of the Immediate Action Plans and the long-term reset plan will require that these staff members allocate more time on recreation/MICEC/arts services and less time on their temporary assignments. The ability for each staff member to reallocate time is highly correlated to whether his/her temporary assignment is still needed by the community.

Immediate Action Plan

The team used the following guiding principles as it assessed what facilities, programs, and services the City might be able to offer via the Immediate Action Plan. These guiding principles

were developed based on state and county guidance, a review of best practices established by other municipalities, and an understanding of the City's particular approach to the pandemic:

1. Our decisions will be guided by the health and safety of our community; we will adhere to public health advice from the State of Washington and King County, and any service sector guidance from the Governor's Office.
2. We are committed to taking whatever measures are necessary to slow down the spread of COVID-19. We must all do our part to ensure our individual and collective health and safety.
3. In utilizing City resources, we will prioritize assisting the City and its partners in providing life safety/basic needs services to residents.
4. We will ensure caretaking of City assets such that they are available and in good working order for the future.
5. We will use available data and situational knowledge to make recommendations and decisions but will be mindful that alternatives, flexibility, and small or iterative steps will be necessary.
6. We pledge to communicate with the City Council and the community as we develop plans and make decisions.
7. We will recognize and respond to this situation as an opportunity to examine doing things differently, innovate, work smarter, and reset to a new current and future reality.

Longer-term Reset Plan

Recreation/MICEC:

The team's goal is to finalize the longer-term reset plan by April 2021 and, assuming Safe Start Phase 4 and a vaccine are in place, be able to offer some initial, future recreation/MICEC services and programs by September 2021. In developing a reset plan for recreation and MICEC, the team is giving careful attention to not only community values and needs but also financial sustainability. To that end, the team is creating new frameworks and tools to guide future services. Those tools include a cost recovery and resource allocation philosophy and a pricing strategy.

Arts:

The implementation timetable for the longer-term reset for arts has not yet been established and is, in part, dependent on upcoming collaboration with the Arts Council. While financial sustainability is a driving principle for the future of recreation/MICEC, the team suggests that the long-term reset plan for arts be crafted to reflect a refined focus on the essential services of the Arts Council. This will require that the Arts Council take an exacting look at its goals, role,

available resources, and capability to sustain essential services as it provides input on the longer-term reset plan for arts.

Next Steps

Going forward with reset planning, staff requests that the Arts Council participates in the following ways:

- Understand the City's work on the Recreation/MICEC/Arts Immediate Action Plans and longer-term reset plan, and provide comments.
- Review and provide input on the reset plans for arts, which staff will develop this winter and spring.
- Provide City Council with advice regarding those plans.
- Continue to serve in an advisory role to the City Council in the development of future policies related to the implementation of the reset plan.

Anticipated meetings and public comment opportunities:

- Arts Council special meeting workshop, January 2021 (date TBC during January 13 regular meeting)

Agenda will focus on the following topics:

- Current and near-term conditions, including budgeted resources; what is needed now by the City and/or arts community
- Arts Council mission and goals; members' areas of interest
- Essential tasks/responsibilities of the Arts Council
- Future ability and thresholds that need to be met to expand beyond essential tasks; priorities and criteria for expansion
- Timetable and resource requirements for Immediate Action Plan
- Arts Council special meeting workshop, mid- to late-February 2021 (date TBC during January 13 regular meeting)
- Arts Council regular meeting, March 10, 2021
- City Council action anticipated in April 2021