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Spring 2022 Update from Mayor Salim Nice

Spring is upon us, and like many of you, my family and I are beginning to turn our attention to the warmer months ahead. We find ourselves filled with anticipation about spring vegetable garden planting, summer bike rides, the numerous lake activities we all love, and the return of Seafair and the tradition of Mercer Island's own Summer Celebration!

While we shift our focus to the future, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of the City Council and the work the City of Mercer Island has done on behalf of Islanders this past four months.

Honoring a Local Hero, Kirk Robinson

This summer, the skate park at Mercerdale will officially be re-named the "Kirk Robinson Skate Park." Former Mercer Island Resident, volunteer firefighter, and Marine Patrol crew member Kirk Robinson passed away from job-related cancer Friday, October 4, 2019.

After serving as a volunteer firefighter for Mercer Island, he joined the Bothell Fire Department at age 23. Kirk served the Bothell Fire Department for more than 18 years, rising to Lieutenant. Kirk's infectious personality and tireless work ethic quickly made him a favorite among his peers. He was a member of the technical rescue team, water rescue team, honor guard, and served as a Competency Based Training (CBT) instructor. He assisted with the 9/11 response effort and, in 2005, deployed to Hurricane Katrina. Kirk participated in the Firefighter Stair Climb each year to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. He was always the first to volunteer to help with any need of family, friends, the community, or the Bothell Fire Department.

In honor of Kirk Robinson's service to the Mercer Island and Bothell communities, [Resolution No. 1622](#), to name the skate park "Kirk Robinson Skate Park", was [presented](#) to City Council for consideration and approval. The Resolution passed unanimously on April 2nd.

This will serve as a lasting tribute to Kirk Robinson and his family, friends, and colleagues and honors the indelible impact he had on so many lives.

Preserving Neighborhoods & Mobility

The beginning of the year brought a sixty-day Washington State legislative session. Several problematic bills were introduced and advanced that proposed to preempt local control and force a statewide "upzone" across Washington single-family residential (SFR) neighborhoods. The proposed legislation

would have turned many Washington SFR neighborhoods into multi-family zones with residential streets mirroring those in larger cities, many of which no longer allow two-way traffic because of parked cars.

Working with the City Manager and City Council, and in consultation with the Washington Association of Cities (WAC), I wrote [a letter](#) to our legislative representatives asking them to oppose this legislation. I met with Mayors from across the state in Olympia to share our message and encourage them to write to their legislative representatives. Islanders also wrote in by the hundreds, as did countless constituents from around the state. Thanks to the combined effort and voices from across the state, the legislature ultimately backed away from the legislation.

Recently, the City Council unanimously approved [Agenda Bill 6061](#), authorizing the City Manager to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to retain a contract lobbyist(s). Over the coming months, Council will work with the City Manager and the contract lobbyists to prepare for the 2023 legislative session. Council will also work with the federal lobbyist to restore the Island Crest Way to westbound I-90 single-occupancy vehicle access.

The preservation of local, appropriate zoning control and mobility improvements for Islanders are two of my highest priorities. I value the support of the City Manager and Council on these two critical issues.

City Property Acquisition at 40th and Island Crest Way

Mercer Island City Council passed a resolution on July 6, 2021, authorizing City officials to purchase a residential property at SE 40th Street and Island Crest Way. The acquisition provides the City with needed land at this busy intersection to make necessary traffic safety improvements, enhance sightlines for motorists, and upgrade the sidewalk for pedestrians, including the creation of a modest grassy plaza.

Acquiring this vacant property was an ideal solution. It will allow for future necessary roadway improvements while enhancing safety in the short term.

In the interest of sustainability, the City hired a contractor to deconstruct the existing vacant residence to ensure all usable material is salvaged and recycled. This deconstruction was completed just in time for spring hydroseeding with grass.

Climate Action Plan (CAP)

April 22 was [proclaimed](#) Earth Day on Mercer Island, and what better way to segue into the topic of drafting the Island's first-ever [Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#). City Council will begin identifying and crafting policies to help Mercer Island meet its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction goals of 50% by 2030, compared to 2007 emissions. Because aspects of the CAP are likely to impact many in our community, we hope to get broad community engagement.

A [Let's Talk page](#) has been established to outline the key milestones and dates through adoption in December 2022. After creating an account, Islanders wishing to read and post comments can do so [here](#). I encourage Islanders to review this information and comment, especially if you feel strongly about any of the following GHG reduction strategies proposed by community members:

1. A proposed ban on commercial and homeowner use of small-gas-engine leaf blowers and other standard yard-maintenance equipment.
2. Building permits conditioned on fitting solar panels, electric car chargers, electric heat pumps for residential heating and cooling, and electric hot water heating for all new residential development and substantial remodels.
3. A ban on commercial natural gas use for heating and hot water and no new residential gas connections (i.e., get ready for the fully electric home).

I mention these suggestions hoping that many Islanders will engage with the City and Council over the summer and fall. Please stay tuned for the full public engagement schedule beginning late spring to early summer.

2023-2024 City Council Priorities

On Saturday, March 26, 2022, the City Council held its annual Planning Session and discussed and drafted the 2023-2024 biennium priorities. After the Planning Session, the City Council voted to adopt the following 2023-2024 City Council Priorities, along with a brief preamble:

The City of Mercer Island provides outstanding municipal services that enhance and protect the environment, the quality of life, and our community's health, safety, and welfare. We engage with the community on issues of importance to listen, instill trust, and promote sound decision-making. We strive to create and maintain an environmentally sustainable and inclusive community that is safe and supportive for current and future generations.

In the 2023-2024 biennium, we will continue to restore city services with fiscal sustainability while focusing on the government's effectiveness and efficiency, and the following priorities:

1. Develop data-driven economic development and retail plans and strategies to activate Town Center and other business areas.
2. Sustain and enhance our natural environment, especially parks and open spaces, to benefit this generation and others that follow.
3. Make once-in-a-generation investments to update and modernize aging infrastructure, capital facilities, and parks.
4. Focus efforts and actions to be an environmentally and fiscally sustainable, connected, and diverse community.

As a Council working for and toward our communities shared priorities, it has been rewarding to see our progress as we recover, rebuild, and rethink the path forward. I look optimistically both for our summer weather and the great work ahead and I hope to see many of you at these upcoming Island events:

Music in the Park – July 14: West Coast Feed

Music in the Park – July 21: Great American Trainwreck

Music in the Park – July 28: Outside The Lines

Music in the Park – August 4: Portage Bay Big Band

Music in the Park – August 11: The Rumba Kings

[Note: Will include other summer special events in final letter.]

[Signature]