



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 5956
November 16, 2021
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 5956: 2022 Community Event Series on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Direct City staff to prepare a \$60,000 appropriation request to include in the mid-biennial budget amendment on December 7 in support of a 2022 community event series on diversity, equity, and inclusion in partnership with ONE MI and Do the Work MI.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution

DEPARTMENT:	City Manager
STAFF:	Benson Wong, Mayor Jessi Bon, City Manager Merrill Thomas-Schadt, Senior Management Analyst
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Benson Wong Choose an item. Choose an item.
EXHIBITS:	1. ONE MI – DTW MI Initial Proposal
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ TBD
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ TBD
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ TBD

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to discuss a possible partnership involving the City of Mercer Island and two Mercer Island community-based groups, ONE MI and Do the Work MI. The purpose of such a partnership is to work collaboratively to promote conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion on Mercer Island through a 2022 community event series. ONE MI and Do the Work MI will volunteer their time to facilitate the community event series and the City will provide financial and contract administration for the event series.

BACKGROUND

The death of George Floyd in the spring of 2020 prompted a national shift in the public discourse on racism and social justice. As in many communities across the United States, Mercer Islanders demonstrated their commitment to combating discrimination by taking part in peaceful assembly, speaking out in public forums, and engaging their City Council.

The City Council has shown support for matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion by participating in cultural competency training, supporting a range of community events such as Juneteenth and Sukkot, and issuing public proclamations including the following most recent proclamations:

- [Renewed Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) (June 10, 2020)
- [Black History Month](#) (February 2, 2021)
- [Women's History Month](#) (March 16, 2021)

At the June 16, 2020 City Council meeting, the Council directed the City Manager to begin exploring options for cultural competency training for the City Council and community listening sessions for the public.

At the August 4, 2020 City Council meeting ([see AB5738](#)), the Council adopted a goals statement with regard to the proposed community listening sessions, which included the intention for those sessions to guide future community actions around race, racism, diversity, and inclusion.

At the October 20, 2020 City Council meeting ([see AB5764](#)), the Council appropriated \$20,000 for the cultural competency training for Councilmembers and the community listening sessions. Based on this direction, City staff began to reach out to community members, trusted partners, and professional consultants to prepare training and programming options.

The City Council and a majority of the City's board and commission members completed a cultural competency training session in November and December 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted staff progress on planning the community listening sessions and this work did not commence until the summer of 2021.

In August of 2021, the Mayor and City Manager connected with ONE MI and Do the Work MI to discuss their interest in collaborating with the City on an event series to engage the community on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion on Mercer Island. Members of ONE MI and Do the Work MI expressed an interest in partnering and supporting this work.

PARTNERS

ONE MI and Do the Work MI are Mercer Island-based community groups who have been active for several years engaging Islanders on matters of race, equity, and social justice in various ways: coordinating public art displays and events, sharing resources on social media, organizing book group discussions, and through other means.

ONE MI focuses on "fostering positive identity for children of color, supporting families of color, and advancing equity in the Mercer Island community." Do the Work MI (DTW MI) is "a group of white women committed to eliminating anti-Black racism by examining our whiteness, our role in perpetuating racist structures, and using our knowledge to promote racial equity and condemn and counteract anti-Black racism."

If the appropriation request is approved by the City Council, members of ONE MI and Do the Work MI intend to partner with the City by volunteering their time to coordinate and host the community event series on diversity, equity, and inclusion. They will make recommendations on potential speakers and topics and help with the logistics for each of the events. Contracts with speakers, consultants, and any other services related to the community event series will be with the City and administered by City staff.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The project proposal includes goals and expected outcomes and an outline of topics to be covered (see Exhibit 1). Goals for the community conversations series include:

- To offer space for conversations that expand understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion to the Mercer Island community.
- To provide support for underrepresented families through conversation and opportunities for community connection.
- To offer a variety of events that meet the needs of different age groups and demographics.

The series will include up to six sessions throughout 2022, with the intention of increasing awareness of issues of racism and inequity, sharing real-life experiences, providing tools & resources, and promoting the value of a diverse Mercer Island community. Potential themes to explore during sessions include:

- Connection for multiracial families
- Navigating microaggressions and creating space to connect and reflect
- An oral history workshop to better understand the connection of descent and identity
- Community inclusion strategies, and how diversity strengthens community

The format of each session may include group discussion, engagement activities, and hard-copy materials provided to participants.

Sessions will be provided through the Zoom virtual platform and potentially at in-person events as COVID-19 protocols and guidance allow.

Preliminary budget considerations include speaker costs (fees and travel), accommodations for hearing or visually impaired participants, Zoom support, and supplies (if needed). Speaker fees have yet to be explored, but will likely range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per speaker.

The City intends to contract for Zoom support services for the community event series, consistent with current practices for public meetings and large engagements. The City estimates \$2,000 to \$5,000 for professional Zoom support services per event depending on the complexity of the engagement, the number of technicians needed, and the amount of advance prep work required for the event. Staff and volunteers may be able to assist with Zoom support to offset these costs.

The appropriation request is not to exceed \$60,000 for the proposed 2022 event series.

COMMUNICATION

Promotion of the series will be shared between ONE MI and DTW MI and City communications platforms (social media, the City's calendar webpage, the MI Weekly newsletter).

Members of ONE MI and DTW MI will present an outline of the session schedule, topics to be covered, and featured speakers to the City prior to commencement of the community event series.

Measurables from the series will include the number of attendees, level of engagement during sessions (in question & answer periods or breakout groups), demographic diversity of participants (by anonymous poll or check-in information), and a summary of outcomes and suggestions to guide future community actions around race, racism, diversity, and inclusion. Post-event surveys and evaluations will be conducted as part of

each session. This information will be compiled and presented to the City Council at two check-ins, one at the mid-point of the event series and the other at the conclusion of the series.

NEXT STEPS

With City Council's support of the series' proposal, staff will include the appropriation request as part of the mid-biennial budget adjustment process in an amount not to exceed \$60,000.

Cultural Competency Training

The City Council appropriated \$20k in 2021 and 2022 to continue providing annual Cultural Competency training for City Council members and board and commission members. Feedback from the initial round of cultural competency trainings in 2020 was mixed and staff would like to discuss the preferred approach with the City Council before resuming work on scheduling these trainings. The staff recommends discussing the vision and goals for the Cultural Competency Training at a Study Session in 2022 or at the February 2022 Planning Session.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Direct City staff to prepare a \$60,000 appropriation request to include in the mid-biennial budget amendment on December 7 in support of a 2022 community event series on diversity, equity, and inclusion in partnership with ONE MI and Do the Work MI.