



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6115  
July 19, 2022  
Consent Agenda**

**AGENDA BILL INFORMATION**

|                            |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>TITLE:</b>              | AB 6115: Update on Community Conversations Series | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only<br><input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed:<br><input type="checkbox"/> Motion<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance<br><input type="checkbox"/> Resolution |
| <b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b> | Receive report.                                   |  |

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>DEPARTMENT:</b>            | City Manager   |
| <b>STAFF:</b>                 | Jessi Bon, City Manager<br>Merrill Thomas-Schadt, Sr. Management Analyst |
| <b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>       | n/a  |
| <b>EXHIBITS:</b>              | 1. Community Conversations Survey Results                                |
| <b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:</b> | n/a  |

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| <b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>  | \$ n/a |
| <b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>        | \$ n/a |
| <b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b> | \$ n/a |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide City Council with an update on the Community Conversations series.

- In late 2021, the City Council appropriated \$60,000 in support of a 2022 community event series on diversity, equity and inclusion in partnership with Mercer Island groups ONE MI and Do the Work MI (see [AB5956](#)).
- The City has hosted three events so far in 2022: an online program about the history of racial housing covenants in our region, a hybrid virtual-and-online intergenerational conversation with Asian American Mercer Islanders, and an in-person oral history family interview workshop.
- A Let’s Talk page, dedicated to the Community Conversations series, provides program information and related resources (see [Community Conversations | Let's Talk Mercer Island \(mercergov.org\)](#))
- City Council requested two “check-ins” on the series throughout 2022. This is the first of such reports.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2020, the City Council directed the City Manager to begin exploring options for cultural competency training for the City Council and community listening sessions for the public and adopted a goals statement with the intention of those listening sessions to guide future community actions around race, racism,

diversity, and inclusion (see [AB5764](#)). Based on this direction, City staff began to reach out to community members, trusted partners, and professional consultants to prepare training and programming options.

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.

In November of 2021, City Council approved the partnership proposal and plan to host the Community Conversations series (see [AB5956](#)). Members of ONE MI and Do the Work MI have volunteered their time to coordinate the programming of the series, 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 are held by the City and administered by City staff.

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

### Community Conversations Sessions

There have been three events in the Community Conversations series held so far in 2022. A brief summary of each is provided here:

#### Towards Inclusive Community (February 2, 2022)

This event was organized and presented in partnership with the Mercer Island High School Black Student Union and the University of Washington's Civil Rights and Labor History Project. The presentation included a history of segregation and racially restrictive property covenants in the Puget Sound area and on Mercer Island specifically, and resources for homeowners to identify and address such covenants connected to their own property. Over 275 people participated virtually.

#### Intergenerational Conversations: A Roundtable with Asian American Islanders (May 25, 2022)

This event was held in partnership with ONE MI, Do the Work MI, and the Mercer Island High School's Education Coalition for Asian American Representation and moderated by Mercer Island School Board member Maggie Tai Tucker. Roundtable participants came from the diverse Asian American community of Mercer Island and explored differing perceptions around academic achievement, body image, and social norms. 22 people attended this event in-person at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center and approximately 30 participated online.

#### Oral History Family Interview Workshop (June 5, 2022)

This interactive program was presented in partnership by ONE MI, Do the Work MI, the Stroum Jewish Community Center, the Mercer Island Historical Society, and the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. The workshop, facilitated by Islander Robin Li, showed how oral history interviewing is different from other types of conversations. Participants practiced strategies for conducting effective interviews and learned best practices on recording and archiving oral histories. 27 Mercer Islanders attended this in-person event.

### Feedback and Survey Results

Each event concluded with a brief survey of participants to learn more about those who attended and to gauge their satisfaction and feedback (see Exhibit 1).

Most survey respondents identified primarily as “students” or “parents.” A majority of respondents identified as “white/Caucasian,” followed by “Asian/Asian-American,” “mixed-race,” and then “Black/African American.”

Each session yielded overall positive feedback and support for the series. For the three events combined, more than half of survey respondents indicated that the information provided was new to them, and more than 60% of respondents said that they were likely to take action or make personal changes based on the session’s content. Over 75% of respondents rated the overall programming “good” or “excellent” and more than 70% expressed interest in attending future events in the series.

A small number of comments (fewer than 10) received by City staff indicated dissatisfaction with the content or overall theme of the series’ programming. All feedback will be taken into consideration during the development of the remaining events in the series.

### **Program Budget**

Events in the series so far have had limited impact to the approved budget of \$60,000. A total of \$2,462 has been spent on presenter fees, technology support, and workshop supplies. Planning, facilitation, facility use, and day-of event support have been handled mostly by existing staff and volunteer partners.

Staff anticipates that the remaining events in the series will have a somewhat higher cost, mostly due to contracted speaker fees. Staff do not anticipate the full budget authorization of \$60,000 will be needed to complete the series.

## **NEXT STEPS**

There are three more events planned in the series throughout the remainder of 2022. Staff will continue to develop the programming of the remaining sessions, to include:

- September: *How to be an Ally*
- October: *The Gifts of Diverse Environments*, and
- November: *Building a Toolkit to Respond to Racial Bias*

Once event dates and details are confirmed, promotions will be released through the MI Weekly, social media channels, the Let’s Talk Page, and distributed via the past participant email lists.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Receive Report. No action necessary.