

Question & Answer Matrix
December 2, 2025 - City Council Meeting

Log #	AB No.	Received From	Question	Staff Response
1	6822	Reynolds	I see reference to polygraph fees. In what ways do we utilize polygraphs?	As part of the hiring process, all police department candidates must take a pre-employment polygraph test.
2	6822	Reynolds	With the new finance system, is it practical to provide the accounts payable report in CSV or Excel format?	<p>Yes, that is an option, but staff would prefer that Councilmembers access the financial software system directly to pull customized reports. This saves the staff time of generating multiple reports when the data is already available and accessible. When the new software system was purchased, it was done so with this type of access in mind.</p> <p>As a reminder, Councilmembers with a City issued laptop and cell phone can securely access and review detailed claims information directly in the City's financial management software. Staff are available at any time for training on the system.</p> <p>The software allows multiple search and filter options, including the ability to export to Excel, to optimize claims review. If you do not have a city issued laptop and cell phone, please email helpdesk@mercerisland.gov and staff will help issue the appropriate equipment. If you'd like to talk more about this, please reach out to Matt Mornick (with a cc to Jessi) to better understand the options.</p>

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3	6824	Reynolds	How much (%-wise) did the wholesale cost of water and sewer services provided to the city increase? Alternatively, how much of the utility rate increase can be explained by increases in what the city pays to other utility entities?	<p>The wholesale utility services the City purchases include drinking water from Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and sewer treatment services from King County Metro (KC Metro). Staff estimate the cost of SPU water purchases will increase 6.9% in 2026 and KC Metro sewer treatment services will increase 7.5% in 2026.</p> <p>Alternatively, 32.4% (or \$5.11/month) of the total 2026 utility rate increase is due to SPU water purchases and KC Metro sewer services for an average single-family household customer. Refer to Table 1 below.</p> <table><tr><th colspan="4">Table 1</th></tr><tr><th>Sample Bill Allocation 2026</th><th>Local</th><th>SPU/KC</th><th>Total</th></tr><tr><td>Water*</td><td>\$ 67.76</td><td>\$ 15.35</td><td>\$ 83.11</td></tr><tr><td>Sewer (Local)</td><td>68.28</td><td>-</td><td>68.28</td></tr><tr><td>Sewer (Metro)</td><td>-</td><td>62.66</td><td>62.66</td></tr><tr><td>Stormwater</td><td>26.58</td><td>-</td><td>26.58</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>\$ 162.61</td><td>\$ 78.01</td><td>\$ 240.62</td></tr><tr><td><i>Total % of Bill</i></td><td>67.6%</td><td>32.4%</td><td>100.0%</td></tr><tr><td><i>\$ Increase from prior year</i></td><td>\$ 9.55</td><td>\$ 5.11</td><td>\$ 14.67</td></tr></table> <p>*Water bill allocation based on 2025 SPU purchases representing 19% of overall need.</p> <p>In 2026, total costs for the City’s utilities are expected to increase by \$14.67 per month, compared to 2025 for the average single-family household. An average single-family household customer assumes a ¾" meter with 7 centum cubic feet (one ccf is equal to 100 cubic feet) of monthly water usage and 6 ccf of monthly sewer usage.</p> <p>For additional information please refer to the slide deck presented to the Utility Board as part of the special meeting on October 28, 2025, located here: 10.28.25 City of Mercer Island Rate Study Presentation.</p>	Table 1				Sample Bill Allocation 2026	Local	SPU/KC	Total	Water*	\$ 67.76	\$ 15.35	\$ 83.11	Sewer (Local)	68.28	-	68.28	Sewer (Metro)	-	62.66	62.66	Stormwater	26.58	-	26.58	Total	\$ 162.61	\$ 78.01	\$ 240.62	<i>Total % of Bill</i>	67.6%	32.4%	100.0%	<i>\$ Increase from prior year</i>	\$ 9.55	\$ 5.11	\$ 14.67
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4	6824	Reynolds	Which fees are constrained to cost-recovery levels, and which fees could be increased (if we chose to) to generate revenue to help fund other operations? which fees, if any, are currently below cost recovery levels?	<p>As you note, the City’s fee schedule includes fees constrained to cost recovery versus fees with potential for revenue generation. If you are seeking an analysis of each fee, staff can perform that analysis at the direction of the majority of the City Council, but it would be sometime in 2026 before we could complete that task. For now, here is a general overview of the fees.</p> <p>In a broad sense, fees constrained to cost recovery are legally restricted by Washington state law (RCW 82.02.020) and court precedent. They cannot exceed the actual cost of providing the service or would be considered an illegal tax. Examples include park and transportation impact fees and water and sewer connection charges.</p> <p>Impact fees are strictly regulated by the Growth Management Act (RCW 82.02.050-090). They must reflect the "proportionate share" of system improvements related to new development and cannot be used for general revenue or maintenance. Connection charges must represent an "equitable share" of the cost of the system (RCW 35.92.025). While they can include a buy-in to existing infrastructure, connection charges are generally tied to the cost of adding system capacity, not general profit for each respective utility.</p> <p>Fees with potential for revenue generation (above cost recovery) either fall under the City's "proprietary" powers (acting as a business) or are specifically authorized taxes/ fines. The City Council has more discretion here to set rates based on market demand or policy goals, potentially exceeding the direct cost of service to subsidize other programs. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facility Rental Fees. When the City operates venues like the Community Center, it acts in a proprietary capacity. Washington law generally allows cities to charge market rates for the use of their property, similar to a private business. The Council can increase these fees to "market rate" to generate revenue that supports the Parks Department's general operations, exceeding direct costs of

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				<p>providing the service. Underlying direction for setting rental fees are outlined in the City’s Recreation Restart Strategy (AB 5908).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utility Taxes (distinct from "utility rates for usage") levied on the gross operating revenue of the utility provider. Table 1 outlines the utility and the City’s respective tax rate: <table><tr><th>Utility Classification</th><th>2026 Tax Rate</th></tr><tr><td>Cable TV</td><td>7.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Telephone</td><td>6.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Cellular</td><td>6.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Natural Gas & Electricity</td><td>6.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Solid Waste</td><td>7.0%</td></tr><tr><td>Water</td><td>5.3%</td></tr><tr><td>Sewer</td><td>5.3%</td></tr><tr><td>Stormwater</td><td>5.3%</td></tr></table> <p>For example, unlike the water utility rate (which pays for pipes, pumps, reservoirs, and water use, among other costs), the 5.3% water utility tax is a revenue for the General Fund. The City Council can increase these taxes up to statutory limits.</p> <p>State law limits the rate of utility tax on telephone, cellular telephone, pager services, and natural gas to 6% unless voters approve a higher rate (RCW 35.21.870). Cable TV must not be taxed at a rate substantially different than other utilities. There are no restrictions on the tax rate for water, sewer, stormwater, or solid waste. Table 2 compares the average utility tax rate among regional cities and the resulting estimated revenue relative to total budgeted revenues in their General Fund for the 2025-2026 biennium.</p>	Utility Classification	2026 Tax Rate	Cable TV	7.0%	Telephone	6.0%	Cellular	6.0%	Natural Gas & Electricity	6.0%	Solid Waste	7.0%	Water	5.3%	Sewer	5.3%	Stormwater	5.3%
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5	6826	Reynolds	The AB indicates that the well water is potable. I did not recall this. Is it true?	The emergency well is capable of supplying up to five gallons per day (GPD) per person of potable water to residents during emergency events – it is not designed or approved to supplement the City’s distribution system. The well water must be boiled or treated prior to consumption but meets DOH regulatory requirements and definition for potable water.
6	6826	Reynolds	Logistically, what does the well distribution look like? It is like a single spigot that could serve one person at a time? If we had a true emergency, what is the throughput of people that could go through every day?	<p>There are a total of 11 stations capable of distributing water located along the south and west edges of Rotary Park.</p> <p>Traffic patterns will be adjusted when the emergency well is in operation – traffic on 88th will be restricted to northbound direction only and westbound direction on 44th – this is to ensure the safety of those retrieving water and volunteers operating the well, as well as for maximum distribution to the public.</p> <p>The stations on the western side of the park, along 88th Ave SE, will serve residents in vehicles and the stations on the southern end of the park, along SE 44th St., will serve those on foot or by bike.</p> <p>To operate all 11 distribution stations, we need a minimum of 27 volunteers. Water distribution would occur during daylight hours.</p> <p>Emergency management holds an annual Emergency Water Well training in the summer. This training is not only for volunteers, it is open and advertised to the public.</p> <p>We do not have an estimate of throughput, but given our robust training program we are prepared to maximize the distribution when the well is operational.</p>

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7	6826	Reynolds	Did the utility board know about the pending \$1.8 MM rebate when they set the water rates?	<p>Yes, this fall staff informed the Utility Board of the rebate (although the final dollar amount was unknown at the time) and the upcoming contract negotiations, which will be part of the 2026 Utility Board Work Plan.</p> <p>Although the rebate returns to the Water Fund, staff anticipate there will be additional costs to the City to transfer remaining underground assets from SPU as part of the upcoming City Transmission Line Replacement Project (90.40.0032). Staff recommends funds from the rebate be used to offset costs tied to the transfer of assets and other project costs.</p> <p>Negotiations with SPU are underway and will conclude in Q3 2026.</p>
8	6826	Reynolds	Does the city have any viable alternative to purchasing SPU water? For example, could we buy into the Cascade Water Alliance? Has this been considered? Why might it be a good or bad idea?	No, the City does not have a viable alternative to purchasing SPU Water. Prior to signing the 2003 contract, the City seriously considered joining the Cascade Water Alliance (early 2000's) but decided against it. Considerable discussion and evaluation occurred with both the Utility Board and the City Council prior to executing the 2003 Agreement.
9	6826	Reynolds	In what material ways does the MI contract differ from that of other cities?	The contract does not differ from the other 16 cities and water purveyors. Other jurisdictions have different sources of water and different infrastructure which impacts overall contribution costs, but the contract language remains the same between the 16 purveyors.
10	6826	Reynolds	Section VII.A of the contract appears to suggest that we have 60 days to pay. Is this consistent with the current contract? Do we make a conscious effort to pay on or near the due date, or do we pay when we get the invoice? More generally, what is our practice for invoice payments (generally---not just water purchase) when we have a material grace period?	<p>The term is consistent with the current contract.</p> <p>SPU invoices are treated like any other accounts payable vendor invoice. Once the invoice is reviewed and approved, payment is issued with the next regular check run. Generally, the City does not hold invoices that have payment terms in excess of 30 days and instead releases payment as soon as the claim is approved.</p>

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11	6826	Reynolds	Exhibit 1 seems to suggest that our well can produce 400 gpm. Is that gallons per minute? $400 \times 60 \times 24 / 25000 = 23$ would seem to be the gallons per day per resident. Help me to reconcile that to the statement in the agenda bill that we have “an emergency well – capable of supplying up to five gallons per day (GPD) per person of potable water”	<p>Prior to the construction of the well at Rotary Park, the City was issued a permit by Department of Ecology to develop two standalone water supply sources.</p> <p>The City constructed the first well at Rotary Park and has extended the permit for construction of a South End well. Together, these two wells on a combined basis may provide a total of 400 gallons per minute and an annual quantity of 66.3-acre feet per year to meet emergency supply needs.</p> <p>The City’s operational goal for the Rotary Park site was to provide up to five gallons of water per day per person for up to 90 days in an emergency.</p> <p>The City is currently working with an engineering firm to evaluate the feasibility and limitations of the second well.</p>
12	6830	Weinberg	Are we replacing all of our police vehicles in 2025, or just some of them? How many?	<p>In 2025, 9 vehicles were replaced within the Police Department fleet – 7 patrol vehicles and two commander vehicles. Vehicles that were serviceable from the old fleet, are being repurposed as staff and backup patrol vehicles. The new vehicles are currently in the process of being outfitted with equipment before they become operational.</p> <p>Historically, the City replaces the police vehicles in two different intervals. Due to the replacement schedules and need, this round of fleet acquisition was compressed into one cycle. It is important to note that there are ongoing supply chain issues impacting fleet replacements, which resulted in the delay of many vehicle replacements.</p> <p>There are pros and cons of replacing the vehicles all at once. Staff will be evaluating the next phase of replacements and determining if it makes better sense to return to a phased replacement schedule.</p>

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13	6830	Weinberg	Regarding the DVR system, are our two choices: [1] Decommission the old DVRs when we decommission the old cars and install new DVRs in the new vehicles which are supported by their manufacturer; or [2] Keep the existing no-long-supported Motorola systems, which would involve uninstalling them from the old cars and then re-installing them into the new cars?	<p>Yes, those are essentially the two options.</p> <p>The old in-car DVR system hardware is not recommended to be re-installed into the new vehicles. The old in-car DVR system is no longer supported by Motorola, meaning they do not offer product support or replacement of failing equipment, and the equipment is at the end of its useful life.</p> <p>Since the end of the City’s agreement with Motorola, the IT Department has kept the existing in-car DVR system running through procurement of replacement hardware from third party sources until a system replacement is acquired. The current practice is unsustainable as the old equipment is becoming increasingly unreliable and replacement parts are difficult to source.</p> <p>Staff were hoping to “hold off” on replacing the in-car DVR system until we could fully explore the purchase of body worn cameras. Our vision was for all of our systems to be fully integrated. We reached a point last month, however, where the plan to “hold off” is driving inefficiency and the equipment is at real risk of failure. We will ensure that the new in-car DVR equipment purchased will integrate with future technology purchases, including body worn cameras, should that system be procured in the future.</p>
14	6830	Weinberg	Is the \$40-55K annual operating cost a <i>net increase</i> from the existing systems we’re replacing, or will that be offset to some degree by the annual operating cost of old systems we’re considering decommissioning?	<p>The annual cost of the existing ALPR system (both parking and patrol) is approximately \$12,750. There was no annual cost for the in-car DVR system.</p> <p>The \$45-55k cost included in the agenda bill is the total estimated annual cost of the new in-car DVR and digital evidence management systems, not the net cost.</p>

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15	6830	Weinberg	It seems that a limited-term service contract of, say, 7 years, can force a city's hand into replacing a system which might actually be well short of its mechanical end-of-life. Do any suppliers of these systems offer <i>renewable</i> service contracts	Yes. The City purchased the existing in-car DVR system for \$53,972.56 in December of 2013, with the system going live early 2014. In 2019, at the end of the 5th year of the service agreement, the in-car DVR main units and cameras were replaced for \$39,341.53 with a new 5-year contract which expired in 2024.
16	6830	Weinberg	Has the existing DVR system truly failed, in that it has stopped working entirely, or has Motorola just stopped supporting it?	<p>The equipment has not failed, but it is truly at the end of its useful life. We are keeping it operational through sheer will and creatively sourcing replacement parts.</p> <p>As mentioned previously, Motorola no longer offers support for the City's existing in-car DVR system. The City's five-year support agreement expired in September 2025. When equipment needs to be repaired staff have to source the replacements through third party vendors. Literally, staff are looking on eBay for replacement parts.</p> <p>As noted in the previous response, we made the call last month that this equipment needed to be replaced now and we cannot wait until 2026. We will ensure that the equipment procurement will integrate with future technology purchases.</p>
17	6830	Weinberg	Will the ALPR parking enforcement systems which staff intend to propose in 2026 result in a net savings of parking enforcement staff time per day? If so, would it be possible to include an estimate of that anticipated savings and how much it is expected to offset the cost of the ALPR readers?	<p>While staff appreciate the question, the parking enforcement system is not part of this agenda bill and we don't have capacity to prepare a response at this time. Staff will request quotes from vendors for a new automated parking enforcement system after the procurement of the in-car DVR and digital evidence management systems is complete.</p> <p>Due to the failing parking ALPR equipment (separate from the in-car DVR systems), the Police Support Officer is currently chalking tires and performing the duties of the job 100% manually. Purchasing a functioning parking enforcement system with ALPR technology will significantly improve efficiency.</p>

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Log #	AB No.	Received From	Question	Staff Response
18	6830	Weinberg	Is the year correct on Objective 3.2 in the agenda? It says the body-worn-video recommendation would be presented in Q3'25. Did it mean to say Q3'26?	Yes, that was an error. The body worn cameras, cost, and scope will be coming to the City Council for discussion later in 2026 for consideration as part of the 2027-2028 budget. Note that body-worn cameras will require additional public records staff to manage the public records requests associated with this technology. The total cost of the technology and additional staff is the primary reason body-worn cameras have not yet been pursued and the reason these will be discussed independent of the other technology replacement items.
19	6830	Reynolds	Approximately how much did we pay in total (purchase, license, service, etc) for the extant ALPR system?	We purchased the current ALPR system, which includes patrol and parking enforcement technology (please see question #21 for the explanation of the two systems) in 2020 for \$80,717. We paid annual operating costs of \$12,750 in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 for a total of \$131,717.
20	6830	Reynolds	What is our approximate annual parking ticket revenue?	Parking citation fees increased from \$20 to \$54 on January 1, 2025. From January 1 to November 30, 2025, the City issued 292 parking citations, with revenue estimated at \$16k.
21	6830	Reynolds	What successes can be attributed to the ALPR system? For example, how many stolen cars were identified? Did it result in any criminal apprehensions?	<p>The PD currently operates two ALPR systems: patrol-based and parking-based.</p> <p>The patrol-based ALPR system compares the captured plate to a 'hotlist' of known stolen or wanted vehicles. The operator receives the 'hit' notification and then confirms the data prior to taking any enforcement action. As we only archive seven days of data within the ALPR system the data on hits reported to officers does not exist within the system. It is too time consuming to review every case report to get the actual data of successes. We have seen apprehensions that we can directly attribute to the ALPR systems in the years that it has been in service.</p> <p>The parking-based ALPR system has two functions. It compares the license plates of vehicles that have paid the parking fees at either the boat ramp or in the Town Center Parking Area. It also has the ability to give a GPS lock of vehicles that are in the timed parking enforcement areas. Once it receives the data it notifies the operator that the vehicle is in violation, and a parking ticket can be issued.</p>

Question & Answer Matrix
December 2, 2025 - City Council Meeting

Log #	AB No.	Received From	Question	Staff Response
22	6830	Reynolds	Help me to understand the field of vision of the proposed car cameras. I think I understand that they film the back seat. Do the forward-facing cameras record the front seat, or are they designed to look outside the car? If so, is the front view the only outside view?	The forward-facing cameras do not capture the front seat area inside the vehicle. They are designed to capture the outside of the vehicle, specifically the field of view in front of the vehicle.
23	6830	Reynolds	How many public records requests does the city get per year related to the car video systems?	The City received 59 public records requests in 2024 and 81 public records requests in 2025 YTD related to the in-car DVR system.
24	6830	Reynolds	Should I be surprised that the ALPR system failed after about five years? Is it impractical to repair?	<p>The standard for computer replacements is five years. Computer equipment in Police vehicles is subject to harsher conditions than computer equipment used by other departments. The hardware is heavily used and subject to constant vibration and wide temperature ranges. The cameras are exposed to the elements and severe weather events.</p> <p>The City does not have the means to repair the cameras in-house and the system is no longer supported by the vendor.</p>