

Question & Answer Matrix  
January 7, 2025 - City Council Meeting

Log #	AB No.	Received From	Question	Staff Response
1	Cert of Claims	Reynolds	What is the \$100,000 charge for “Light Rail Emergency Responder”. Is this training? Expected to be recurring? Why is it apparently not covered by flat fee to EF&R?	<p>This charge is a transfer of funds held by the City of Mercer Island to Eastside Fire &amp; Rescue for light rail emergency responder training and supplies.</p> <p>In February 2023, a funding agreement was executed between Sound Transit and the Cities of Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond for emergency responder training and supplies to prepare for light rail in the respective communities (see attached agreement). The funds were received by Mercer Island in July 2023 and have been held in reserve for future training use.</p> <p>These funds should have been identified as a transfer payment to EF&amp;R in the agreement between the City and EF&amp;R, but they were inadvertently omitted. This payment completes the transfer commitment. The funds will be used to support EF&amp;R training needs related to the opening of the light rail station.</p>
2	6556	Weinberg	What is the Planning Commission’s role, if any, in the policy work due 7/1/25 relating to HB 1110, 1337, and SB 5258?	<p>The City plans to achieve compliance before the June 30, 2025 deadline via the adoption of interim development regulations by the City Council. This process will not involve the Planning Commission.</p> <p>The Planning Commission will be part of the process to develop the permanent regulations.</p>
3	6556	Weinberg	What is the substantive difference between the definitions of Cottage Housing and Courtyard Apartments? It seems that they only differ in whether the units touch each other and whether the open space they surround can be owned by a non-occupant.	<p>The primary difference is that cottage housing is defined as <i>detached</i> units arranged around a shared open space and courtyard apartments are <i>attached</i> units arranged around an open space.</p> <p>The ownership of the open space would be determined depending on whether the units are held in fee simple ownership, condominium ownership, or are rental units. Both cottage housing and courtyard apartments could be configured with any of these ownership/tenancy arrangements.</p>

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4	6556	Weinberg	Section 36.70A.636(3)(d) conspicuously does not have a requirement indicating that the “substantially similar” requirements predate some date in the past, unlike sections (a), (b), and (c). Does that alter staff’s assessment regarding the viability of option 3?	Subsection 3d requires that the city “clearly demonstrate that adopted regulations will allow for a greater increase in middle housing production within single family zones than would be allowed through implementation of RCW 36.70A.635.” While it’s correct that this option is not bound by a date requirement, staff do not recommend adopting provisions that go above and beyond the requirements in HB 1110 as part of the proposed interim development regulations.
5	6556	Reynolds	To what extent are current lot coverage and GFA limits still enforceable for middle housing? Are most new homes on MI currently built at or near lot coverage maximums?	The City may apply the existing lot coverage and GFA limits to middle housing. This approach is recommended by staff for the interim development regulations. Currently, most homes being built on MI do seek to build to the maximum allowed GFA and lot coverage.

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6	6595	Reynolds	Are YFS services available to all community members, irrespective of immigration / documentation status? In the event of increased federal deportation efforts, what will the impact be on required services for community members? Are we prepared?	<p>Yes. YFS services are available to all residents of Mercer Island regardless of immigration or documentation status. In addition, any student enrolled in MISD is eligible for YFS services from school counselors (there are some students enrolled who live off Island due to the district’s open enrollment policy).</p> <p>Anticipating the impact of federal deportation efforts is difficult to determine. YFS would predict an increased need for general mental health support for individuals related to stress, trauma, and exacerbated mood disorders (anxiety, depression). There could also be increased demand for parent/family support services if families are separated.</p> <p>YFS’s largest asset by FTE count is our mental health capacity (outpatient and school-based) and should be prepared to handle a small to moderate increase in demand in the short or mid-term. A larger challenge would be for our Emergency Family Assistance (EA) case management and support services that include rent assistance, food security, employment assistance, and general assistance for basic needs.</p> <p>Of note is that YFS’s EA program currently offers \$2,000/year maximum for income qualified families which could become inadequate.</p>
7	6595	Reynolds	Do we have estimates on the number of undocumented MI residents?	<p>No. YFS serves undocumented MI residents but does not survey for this information nor do we have knowledge of numbers.</p>

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8	6595	Reynolds	It seems we have gone back and forth on food cards vs food pantry. What is the current and long-term plan and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each option?	<p>The current and long-term plan is to maintain the Mobile Market and supplement with food gift cards as needed.</p> <p>YFS food security was based pre-pandemic on providing shelf stable food items out of the YFS Food Pantry in the Luther Burbank building, then shifted to cash cards for food during the pandemic and now is providing fresh and shelf-stable food items via the HopeLink Mobile Market.</p> <p>The advantage of distributing “real” food items using YFS staff and volunteers is that 100% of the resources go towards food (vs. cash cards for food that can be used for other items or lost/underused). The advantage of cash cards is that it allows additional flexibility for individuals and families for whom food security is typically not the only financial stressor (for example diapers could be purchased) and for whom dietary or religious needs require more variability in food options than is typically available at a food distribution program.</p> <p>The current plan is to maintain the Mobile Market and backstop this effort with food cards only as indicated/needed.</p>
9	6595	Reynolds	With respect to marginalized communities, please explain why <i>“It was mutually agreed that the most respectful way to include their voices was to engage specific groups after the community needs Assessment”</i>	<p>The YFS Administrator reached out to a representative (pre-)focus group of leaders from several marginalized Island communities as well as Islanders with professional experience in facilitating conversations among these groups. The feedback received was that a proactive focus group asking about needs from these groups could be perceived as, itself, being a marginalizing act. This group gave the feedback that a more culturally appropriate approach would be for YFS to engage with these groups after the Community Needs Assessment was completed, present findings, and begin a conversation. In addition, YFS received feedback that should focus groups be considered, that lumping together several marginalized groups robs each of the opportunity to provide more targeted feedback. The “mutually agreed upon” phrase refers to this feedback and that YFS agreed to follow this recommendation.</p>

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10	6595	Reynolds	Why are senior citizens not included here: <i>“Involving and inviting community members, especially youth, marginalized populations, and BIPOC leaders, in program planning and implementation...”</i>	The omission of seniors in that statement is not reflective of YFS’s intent to focus on senior needs moving forward. The slide deck will highlight specific senior needs and YFS efforts and ideas about how to be responsive.
11	6595	Reynolds	Combined NHOPI and AIAN share of the MI population is reported to have dropped from 0.6% to 0% from 2010 to 2022. If my math is right, that translates to be going from around 150 people to 0. It is hard to believe that 150 (perhaps a bit less allowing for rounding) NHOPI or AIAN families have moved away. Do we believe this is real or a data anomaly of some sort?	We are unsure about the roots of this change in the data. Response rates to surveys about ethnicity can be influenced by many factors. One consideration is the increase in people identifying as two or more races/ ethnicities might be capturing a percent of this decrease.
12	6595	Reynolds	Reference is made to the “YFS patient waitlist”. How long is the waitlist? What is the process for triaging and prioritizing? Is the wait list at a particular school? How many additional staff would be required to keep the wait list close to zero?	<p>The wait for services for outpatient counseling services varies from 2 weeks to 3 months.</p> <p>Callers who screen-in for YFS services are seen on a first-come, first-served basis unless they are prioritized with non-lethal, but still urgent, mental health needs. Clients must be Mercer Island residents and/or be enrolled in the Mercer Island School District to be eligible for YFS services. All service requests are centralized through a single phone “intake and referral line” staffed by a licensed therapist on staff who provides triage.</p> <p>School staff keep no formal wait list, instead they prioritize student support based on need and availability.</p> <p>An additional 1.0 to 1.5 FTE outpatient therapist position(s) would likely keep the waitlist near zero given current demand.</p>

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13	6596	Reynolds	Doesn't the planning session agenda typically include a work plan status update and an opportunity to add things to the work plan? If so, why are these things not on the agenda this time?	<p>The focus of the 2025 Planning Session is on the Public Safety and Maintenance Building design workshop. The 2025-2026 work plan was just adopted as part of the biennial budget. Since we will only be one month into the plan, and we will be in the middle of the legislative session, the work plan update was not added to the Planning Session agenda. Instead, an update to the work plan will be on the Consent Agenda for the Regular Meeting on February 4.</p> <p>Staff will return for a discussion on the work plan in May or June once the legislative session concludes.</p>