

MEMORANDUM

To: Mercer Island City Council

From: Steve Forman

Re: Retreat Follow-up and Summary

Date: March 25, 1997

I want to tell you again how much I enjoyed working with each of you at the March retreat. It is a privilege to be part of your work for the fourth year!

This memo summarizes our retreat discussions and agreements. A number of presentations were supported by written summaries, and I have included these as attachments to this report.

I. The Council looks back on challenges and accomplishments in 1996.

(Saturday morning)

Mayor Clibborn reviewed progress toward achieving 1996 retreat outcomes. She noted that several unexpected issues arose during 1996 that absorbed a great deal of time, and therefore not all outcomes were fully realized. Unexpected items included:

- Changes in Council membership and City management
- Approval of the second RTA ballot measure
- East-West-North Mercer Task Force
- Adult Family Homes Issue

Council members emphasized that the Council did not let emerging issues drop and that a significant amount was accomplished on ongoing issues:

- Completion of "Statements of Work" for boards and commissions and the dissolution of the Park and Road & Trails Boards
- Data collection on the Community Center
- Stormwater management
- Work on CBD development, including discussions with property managers

II. The Council deliberates policy directions toward development of a new Community Center. (Saturday and Sunday mornings)

Mayor Clibborn introduced discussion of the proposed Community Center development, noting that the subcommittee initially chartered to explore options for this development asked staff to assemble information identifying available services and facilities, as well as gaps in services that should be addressed.

This done, the issue is now at a stage where the proposed “ad hoc Task Force” will require input from the Council regarding its appropriate scope of work. Therefore, one important intent of the retreat discussion is to clarify the Council’s charge to the Task Force, with special attention to distinguishing between items that: (a) can be delegated to a task force for investigation/recommendations; and, (b) will require Council policy deliberation.

Staff members Conrad, Symmonds, Morgan and Feroglia presented background information about the current Community Center, site information, and service delivery issues. They also presented a list of facility considerations requiring policy direction from the Council, and a list of “baseline” recommendations. Broad items needing attention will include:

- Detailed facility and program design and development budget (includes possible use of outside consultant)
- Evaluation of services to be offered, in light of Council’s interests
- Program budget and policies (fee structure, decisions as to which groups to support)
- Implementation plan (temporary relocation, continuation of services)

Council members agreed that there were a few “non-negotiable” items regarding the Community Center, and proposed starting the discussion by identifying these. Over the course of two discussions - one on Saturday and one on Sunday - Council members progressed in their discussions towards several types of agreement.

AGREEMENT #1: Council members arrived at areas of agreement regarding the Community Center. Each area of agreement was categorized as either a) a “given”; b) a “strong inclination”; and/or, c) an area about which the Council wanted “more advice” from the Task Force. **These areas of agreement are detailed in Attachment #1.**

AGREEMENT #2 At its April study session, based on this initial thinking, the Council will begin work on Task Force selection.

- a. Mayor Clibborn and Council member Edberg will propose a starting point for Task Force selection.

III. The Council reviews its options in light of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and the need for a Transit Station. (Saturday afternoon)

Staff member White reported that the CBD subcommittee convened a one-time meeting of a “big thinkers” group comprising representatives with a wide variety of perspectives on regional transportation issues. White presented a synopsis of the group’s discussions and conclusions, “Big Thinkers = Keeper Ideas” (Attachment #2). Staff asked for Council confirmation of the directions recommended by the group.

The Mercer Island Transit Station will be a significant step toward implementation of the RTA project. Final review and approval of the RTA plan by the RTA Board is anticipated on May 22, 1997, after which Mercer Island’s position with respect to RTA will be clear.

Council member Edberg reviewed the history of the Transit Station development. The initial RTA ballot measure failed, and the second vote eliminated an electric light rail option in favor of buses. The “Big Thinkers” group recommend that, to prevent concentration of buses in downtown, the Transit Station should be sited on the I-90 roadway, rather than at street level. Several locations for the Transit Station have been considered, and a site at 77th is considered to have good potential, since the interchange design there would facilitate platform access. Moreover, development of the transit station at 77th could potentially catalyze development of the adjacent block.

Together with development of the Transit Station come questions about siting the Park and Ride facility that will serve the station for maximum capacity and accommodation. The expectation is to relocate the Park and Ride from north to south of the freeway to enhance downtown development and parking, and to take advantage of the site as a staging area during Transit Station construction.

Council member Edberg recommended that the City acquire land as a first step to developing Mercer Island’s Transit Station and park and ride, as a part of a refocused Town Center Vision. He noted that funding will be available from RTA for Transit Station construction.

AGREEMENT #3 The Council authorizes staff to proceed immediately with preliminary studies:

- a. Retain engineering services for a feasibility analysis of the Transit Station in the Town Center Vision vis-à-vis RTA 2.
- b. Begin process of discussions with RTA, DOT, property owners, and Metro regarding necessary processes, including a process for land acquisition and to obtain appraisal data.
- c. Run the above two processes concurrently.
- d. Staff will present a preliminary status report to Council in June, 1997.

IV. The Council considers the need for a new Fire Station. (Saturday afternoon)

Staff member Deveny reviewed a history of the main fire station on Mercer Island. It is a structure built in 1955 to house a volunteer fire department serving a 3,000 member community. A bond issue in 1984 funded ten feet of storage to part of the back of the station, but in other respects, the station has not been altered since it was built, and it is now clearly inadequate to current needs.

A 1991-1992 study identified structural and program problems with the current facility that call for a major remodel or replacement. Most of these problems are related to inadequate space for the services and programs. The building is also unlikely to remain structurally sound in the event of a seismic event. In 1995-1996, staff reviewed 14 sites, and the Council identified three of these that warranted further study.

A consultant identified the site at 28th and Island Crest Way, currently owned by the State of Washington, as being viable for a 14,000 square foot facility. The site would provide good access to Island Crest Way and to I-90, although some utilities would need to be moved to prepare the site. The cost to prepare the site for construction is estimated at \$244,000, with further construction costs estimated at \$1.7 million.

The 1997-1998 budget includes \$25,000 per year for planning and preliminary design work. Staff is asking the Council to consider opening the issue for public discussion, and to authorize preliminary design in order to arrive at an estimate of the total project cost. Questions remain as to whether the site at 28th and Island Crest Way is the best location, and how construction of a new fire station can best be integrated into other capital projects under consideration by the Council. City Manager Conrad noted that the firefighters have patiently waited for a new facility.

Council member Jackman asked whether the Mercerdale site had been considered. Deveny replied that it was the first site on staff's list of 14, but the Council decided not to pursue it. Deveny and Conrad both confirmed staff's belief that the site would be suitable: it is zoned Public with workable access and egress.

AGREEMENT #4 Staff is authorized to evaluate Mercerdale as a site for the fire station.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Council adjourned to Executive Session at 4:20 p.m. on Saturday, March 15, 1997. The subject matter was property acquisition. At 4:50 p.m., the Council resumed its regular session.

V. The Council discusses financial options. (Saturday afternoon)

Staff members Sylvis and Symmonds reviewed the current financing strategy for capital projects.

Restricted revenue sources include:

- Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) #1 revenues, amounting to \$400,000 per year, are currently dedicated to acquisition of open space, and are being used to acquire property at southwest 53rd. This obligation will end in 2001. In 1998, REET #1 revenues will be used for acquisition of Mercerview. REET #1 revenues may also be used for repair and maintenance of public buildings, and planning and design.
- REET #2 revenues, amounting to \$400,000 per year, are dedicated to pedestrian and bicycle facilities and street construction and maintenance. \$100,000 per year goes to parks.
- General Fund revenues are the only source available for purchase of equipment and technology.

Sylvis reviewed financing vehicles that may be used for capital projects:

- Issue of G.O. bonds, which require a 60% voter approval
- Councilmanic bonds, which do not require voter approval, but which require the use of existing revenue to service the debt
- Raising the lid on property taxes, which carries a nine-year limit
- Property taxes (6% levy)
 - Donations
- Capital reserve fund
 - Capital improvement fund
- Sale of the fire station property
 - Sale of the thrift shop property

The Council discussed options for investment and the need to balance priorities, noting that not all capital projects can be pursued at the same time. Staff asked for Council's guidance with respect to setting policy for which projects should use existing resources, and which projects should use new resources, which involves seeking voter approval.

Mayor Clibborn emphasized that the Council should move with some caution, since if even one project fails, the Council's position is weakened in the community.

AGREEMENT #5: The Council will review information on funding for capital projects, using revenue sources as follows:

- a. New revenues (G.O. Bond issue: Community Center)
- b. Existing revenues (councilmanic bonds, capital reserve fund, other sources: Fire Station)
- c. Special purpose revenues (RTA: Transit Station)

The Council asked staff to return on Sunday with a draft timeline and project management capacity plan for capital projects.

Interlude:

Using the Sylvis Slippery Surplus --
With its flexibility to serve us –
 -- Combined with beautification
 -- And Council certification
We can launch a development circus!!

Courtesy of Council member Edberg

VI. The Council considers how it works together. (Sunday morning)

The Council discussed ways to enhance its internal functioning, hearing statements of concerns, opinions, goals, and observations about how the Council works together:

Council member Orser	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constant 7-0 votes are unnecessary• Agenda time needs to reflect the depth of the subject, allowing for sufficient discussion time• All members have a responsibility for managing the agenda during the meeting• Information given to Council needs to be adequate• Presentations should be tight• Want clarification on what is the appropriate leadership role by Council members, especially with respect to taking action vs. wait-and-see, or other options (e.g. responsibility to reaffirm the importance of the CBD)
Mayor Clibborn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone has a say (if needed) on issues that are debated• All members have a responsibility for managing the agenda during the meeting• Council members have responsibility to call staff beforehand regarding agenda items that may have political repercussions• Staff who do not present, but who are responsible for information given to Council, should be present and should be recognized
Council member Edberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information given to Council needs to be adequate• Information given to Council needs to provide historical background• Staff video documentation is very helpful• Important that Council be thorough in its charges to

	subcommittees, and more critical and direct about new issues brought back by subcommittees
Council member Merkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information given to Council needs to be complete
Council member Jackman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council members should do their homework, and should take extra time before the meeting to do so • Council should hear updates on action taken on issues raised by members of the public as appearance items on Council agenda. Subsequent meeting agenda should provide for oral reports on past appearance items before new appearance items.
Council member Clancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations are good from different staff, particularly those most responsible for a given issue and most prepared for a presentation. • Staff presentations should be spread across staff during the year, allowing a longer presentation time for less-experienced staff as needed
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff presentations are overall of high quality

AGREEMENT #6: The Council will use a quarterly study session, without agenda, to discuss any issues of concern to Council members.

- a. These study sessions will not require major staff input, but will focus on the Council's internal functioning.
- b. Using these study sessions, the Council members will focus on understanding its own internal processes.
- c. The Council will evaluate this use of the study session, and will continue it or cancel it as necessary.

VII. The Council reviews staff ideas allowing for the integration of capital project timelines and beginning implementation. (Sunday morning)

City Manager Conrad presented a draft timeline for integration of RTA and project management for development and completion of the Community Center and Fire Station. It is included in this report as Attachment #3.

A master plan to integrate all elements of capital project development and construction should be complete by the end of 1997, and monitored closely to mesh changes in the RTA planning as needed. Conrad noted that in order to pursue this timeline, it will be necessary to use contracted project

management services, especially to coordinate construction in 1999, since current staff is at capacity in monitoring existing water, storm drainage and trails projects.

White and Conrad noted that the City will need to own the land used as a staging area for Transit Station construction, which will raise issues concerned with land ownership and tenant management. The park and ride facility will probably be built in 2000 on the land used for staging during Transit Station construction. Staff need to know more about design of the park and ride facility in order to have enough information to integrate all phases of the capital improvement projects.

It is unclear whether the RTA funding commitment will be available soon enough to meet the funding needs, but Sylvis will investigate the possibility of securing a short-term loan against the RTA commitment. To do so will require a binding commitment by RTA.

The schedule for development and construction of the new Fire Station is contingent on securing the site and on funding. Staff believe that it is a viable project, and will explore ways of structuring a land transaction for the present Fire Station site that will make the funding available for new development while permitting continued use of the existing facility.

Council members noted that the Fire Station may be considered in a sense a “safety valve”, and the development schedule for the facility can be slowed in the event that the scope and schedule for capital improvements is too aggressive. *The Council is on record as being committed to the new Fire Station facility.*

AGREEMENT #7: Staff will develop a master plan for capital projects.

- a. Outside consultant services will be engaged.
- b. Staff is authorized to retain an architect for additional site analysis for the new Fire Station.
- c. Staff will return with a plan to develop new capital projects according to the draft schedule, or will explain if it is not feasible.

VIII. Criteria For Success

Imagine it's three years from now. What has happened that demonstrates success in your mind?

Council member Edberg

Fred: “Hello!”

Gordy: “Hi, Fred! Look, I checked out your hairdresser in Seattle and I’ve got an appointment right after you.” *(a sigh)*

“How about meeting me at the Jim Horn Transit Station and we’ll ride the express in?”

Fred: “Great - it will only take 15 minutes and after we could hit

Clibborn's Oyster Palace for lunch and a beer."

Council member Merkle Success by 2000 means final design, completion or focused measurable progress on: (1) Community Center; (2) transit station; (3) fire station; and, (4) new southend and CBD retail/commercial/residential development, plus significant progress on long-range plans addressing transportation and water quality issues. We must progress on long-range plans addressing transportation and water quality issues. We must achieve the above through a process which respects all views but yields a result with integrity.

Council member Nelson Three years from now I would like to see that the council and community have attained a consensus on the financial resources necessary to build/remodel the community center at Mercerview.

Council member Jackman 2000 and the City is technically up-to-date with all computers interconnected. Convenience, accessibility and available parking account for the successful transit station, along with the ease of passengers to shop the vibrant CBD. Islanders enjoy their newly-completed community center.

Mayor Clibborn I hope to look back on 10 years of council decision (maybe as a private citizen) and be proud of our process and creative funding for a transit station and parking, our plan for a community center, and a decision on an appropriate fire station. If it is done as well as the town center, I will feel good about the next 100 years.

Council member Orser New retail - no more restaurants. Neighborhood traffic calmed. Park & Ride done. Grand opening of Community Center, October 1st.

Council member Clancy The Council and City Staff continue to make good decisions on all issues, particularly those directly related to the Vision Statement. Good decisions are made by continuing to focus on improving the processes used to make the decisions.

IX. Retreat Evaluation

Council members were pleased with the work accomplished during the retreat, especially the extent to which they were able to advance Council goals.

The Chair Report: Council members observed that the chairs were much softer than last year; however, two Council members noted they were too low for the height of the table.

List of Retreat Participants:

David Clancy	Council Member
Judy Clibborn	Mayor
Gordy Edberg	Council Member
Linda Jackman	Council Member
Alan Merkle	Council Member
John Nelson	Council Member
Peter Orser	Council Member

City Staff:

Rich Conrad	City Manager
Deb Symmonds	Assistant City Manager
Joanne Sylvis	Finance Director
Diane White	Development Services Director
Gary Feroglia	Parks and Recreation Department Director
Peg Morgan	Youth and Family Services Department Director
Jan Deveny	Public Safety Director
Consultant	Steve Forman
Assistant	Gretchen Reade

Attachment #1*Council's Direction Re Community Center*
Attachment #2*Big Thinkers = Keeper Ideas*
Attachment #3*Schedule of Capital Building Projects*