



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES ANNUAL PLANNING SESSION JANUARY 22-24, 2010

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Jim Pearman called the meeting to order as follows in the Luther Burbank Room at the Community Center at Mercer View (8236 SE 24th Street, Mercer Island, Washington):

- January 22, 2010, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm, 7:45 pm - 9:00 pm
- January 23, 2010, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
- January 24, 2010, 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

ROLL CALL:

Councilmembers Bruce Bassett, Mike Cero, Mike Grady, Dan Grausz, Steve Litzow, Deputy Mayor El Jahncke and Mayor Jim Pearman were present.

The attached memo, dated February 8, 2010, to the Mercer Island City Council from Ginny Ratliff with Agreement Dynamics, Inc is hereby incorporated by reference as the minutes of the 2010 Mercer Island City Council Annual Planning Session.

ADJOURNMENT: 12:00 pm, January 24, 2010.

Jim Pearman, Mayor

Attest:

Allison Spietz, City Clerk



TO: Members of the Mercer Island City Council
FROM: Ginny Ratliff
RE: 2010 City Council Planning Session
DATE: February 8, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to provide note-taking services for your January 23-24, 2010 City Council Planning Session. As always, it's a pleasure working with the City of Mercer Island.

Friday, January 23, 2009

MAYOR'S OPENING REMARKS

Mayor Pearman welcomed the Council and staff to the 2010 Planning Session. He gave a quick review of the weekend's agenda noting that he thought there would be adequate time to discuss all of the Council's topics.

City Manager Rich Conrad then provided a brief review of the Council's 2009 Work Plan and the status of work plan items. He reported that all work plan items had been accomplished except those that were on January/February, 2010 calendars per Council or Planning Commission direction (Tent City Ordinance, Bike & Pedestrian Plan). He noted that the total agenda item "units" accomplished in 2009 turned out to be identical to those planned for at the 2009 Planning Session – 98 agenda items. In response to Council Litzow's question, he also noted that this level of workload for the staff was realistic.

COUNCIL OPERATIONS

Mayor Pearman opened the discussion by pointing out that every year the Council checks in about its own behavior and processes. City Manager Conrad highlighted an issue concerning Board and Commission council liaison roles that had come to light. The issue concerned council liaison engagement and influence on the work of the boards and commissions, particularly the Planning and Design Commissions. Consistent with Council-adopted protocols, Councilmembers agreed to maintain independence from any quasi-judicial work of the commissions as well as refraining from influencing any substantive policy recommendations arising from the commissions.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

The Council ended the evening's session with a discussion of the Citizen of the Year Award.

Saturday, January 23, 2010

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mayor Jim Pearman convened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. by welcoming Councilmembers, City staff, and community members to the 2010 Council Planning Session.

City Manager Conrad opened the discussion by explaining that the Council needed to discuss options to rebalance the 2010 budget and consider funding alternatives for some previous Council decisions affecting the General Fund.

Finance Director Chip Corder stated that the General Fund revenue shortfall for 2009 had increased to \$1.35 million (\$100,000 over his November 2009 projections) due to decreases in property, utility and sales taxes and fewer development fees. He also noted that the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget is also lower due to the decrease in real estate excise taxes (REET) resulting from fewer home sales and lower sales prices.

The Council and staff discussed Island housing prices, the likelihood and timing of an economic recovery, and that tapping the "rainy day fund" would not affect the City's bond rating,

Finance Director Corder and City Manager Conrad recommended rebalancing the 2010 General Fund budget in ways that wouldn't require staff layoffs or service reductions through a combination of expenditure savings and using the City's "Rainy Day Fund". The savings he cited were on staff COLAs, non-staff departmental expenditure cuts, positions temporarily remaining unfilled, and a reduction in DSG contract staff. City Manager Conrad related discussions he has had with the unions (and non-union employees) to accept zero cost-of-living (COLA) raises for employees in 2010, resulting in savings of approximately \$156,000. After some discussion, the Mayor queried the Council if they supported the union COLA concessions and all Councilmembers concurred.

Next, the group discussed how to fund the zero percent property tax increase in 2010 when one percent had been budgeted. Staff suggested tapping the contingency fund to cover the \$104,000 shortage, but Councilmember Grausz endorsed taking less from the contingency fund and increasing revenues instead. Only one other Councilmember agreed with this approach.

Finance Director Corder then recommended that the Council revert to the staff's previous method of calculating CIP administrative overhead which would preserve the budgeted transfer from the CIP to the General Fund of \$173,289. Deputy Mayor Jahncke suggested that change only for 2010 and the Council agreed.

Next the Council considered staff recommendations to use the Youth and Family Services (YFS) fund balance for counselor funding (\$57,000) in 2010 and resolve the 2011-2012 funding issue during the budget process. Youth and Family Services Director Cindy Goodwin responded to Council questions about increased demand for services. YFS Director Goodwin explained that the need for emergency services has risen dramatically in the past year and has been met through additional grants and sales from the Thrift Shop. Councilmember Cero asked if additional service from the counselors beyond their 10 month contract was feasible. Councilmember Grausz advised looking at all areas of YFS funding, including the cost of counseling, during the budget process. Mayor Pearman suggested the Council adopt staff recommendations to fund YFS counselors for 2010 and address issues raised during their budget cycle discussion. All Councilmembers agreed except for one.

To close out the Budget Discussion, City Manager Conrad summarized the Council's decisions on the budget:

- Support management's recommendations on COLA freezes for 2010;
- Support the use of \$479,000 in the "Rainy Day Fund" to cover 1% property tax budgeted in 2010 (\$104,000) and to fund half of the remaining \$750,000 total revenue shortfall;
- Support using one-time dollars to extend Youth and Family Services counselors through the end of 2010;
- Not supportive of a new revenue source for replacement of property tax reduction;
- Support staff's recommendation to revert to previous CIP overhead for 2010 but to revisit the issue in the 2011-12 budget process.

ISLAND CREST WAY

City Manager Conrad stated that in order to meet the Council's request to complete Island Crest Way Alternative 3 in 2010, he would need to use \$150,000 slated for future projects. He explained two possible advantages: REET funds may recover in the future and the cost of construction is lower now than in the past. The Council concurred with this recommendation.

City Manager Conrad also requested that the Council's final discussion on project scope, schedule, and budget be moved to the March meeting to accommodate Councilmember Bassett (who will be absent in February). The Council agreed.

SOUTH FIRE STATION FINANCING

In recognition of the economic climate, REET funding shortages and the need for a new fire station, Council and staff brainstormed what options they could pursue in 2010. After discussion of design phases, bond or other funding sources, public safety, and possible postponement, the Council agreed to start the "building program" phase in 2010. This phase establishes the purpose and mission of the future facility vis-à-vis the operations that are intended for the building. It is a pre-cursor to determining project scale and cost. City Manager Conrad will propose to the Council how to pay for the estimated \$20,000 in architectural services.

In response to an inquiry from Council, Fire Chief Chris Tubbs said he expected to hear whether Mercer Island would be awarded a Homeland Security Grant in September 2010.

2011-2012 BUDGET PROCESS DISCUSSION

Council and staff discussed the biennial citizen survey. Councilmember Cero recommended skipping the 2010 survey because of the budget shortfall. Two Councilmembers supported this idea. City Manager Conrad suggested the possibility of fewer calls to save costs. Councilmember Litzow advocated continued support of the survey and requested staff check with the pollsters on how to reduce costs. Councilmember Grady endorsed transitioning to paperless or electronic surveys to save money. Four Councilmembers supported continuing the survey as well as looking at ways to transition to electronic surveys.

Next, Council and staff discussed the budget calendar, ways to improve budget discussions and methods to achieve Council's goals for those discussions. Finance Director Corder recommended that prior to launching into budget detail he would provide a budget overview prior to the October 4 meeting. He suggested splitting the operating budget review into 3 meetings (the first two to review department budgets and a follow-up meeting for issues raised, revenue projections, etc.). Councilmember Litzow advised starting budget meetings earlier, like 6:00 p.m., to avoid late-night deliberations. The Council discussed the possibility of seeing revenue projections prior to developing the budget, but decided to continue reviewing staff's budget first.

Mayor Pearman reiterated the Council's goal of shorter staff presentations and reminded the Council of the importance of preparing for these discussions. He also preferred giving staff the leeway to provide more detailed presentations when deemed necessary.

City Manager Conrad followed up by saying that a discussion on Council budget presentations will be a top priority at the upcoming management retreat.

Councilmember Litzow pointed out that the July 5 meeting scheduled conflicts with Independence Day holiday.

SUSTAINABILITY

Deputy City Manager James Mason explained that the Council's investments in staff and consultant time had leveraged \$35,000 into three sustainability grants totaling nearly \$420,000. He noted that the City is maintaining the ICLEI database and monitoring savings from the City's sustainability initiatives. He said that the fuel savings in the City's new electric and hybrid vehicles will offset the price differential of these vehicles.

The Council raised questions about the new electric bikes for police officers. Police Chief Ed Holmes said that in the past, non-motorized bicycles limited how far the officers could travel from their vehicles. He went on to explain that electric bikes, which travel at speeds of 35 miles per hour, will allow officers to travel greater distances on bicycle trails and then speed back to their cruisers if they are called by dispatch. In response to a query, he said that the City will maintain three officers on duty at all times.

Councilmember Bassett described the growth and citizen advocacy of the Green Ribbon Commission. He said there are more than 25 citizens involved and the transportation and home energy efficiency committees have developed social marketing campaigns. He announced that the transportation committee is sponsoring three "YouPowered" events focused on getting around the Island without using a car.

Deputy Mayor Jahncke noted that the City is a stakeholder of the Commission. He asked what the difference was between a stakeholder and a member. Councilmember Bassett explained that "stakeholders" refer to groups (e.g., Rotary, Island Vision, Boys and Girls Club), while members are individuals who participate in the Commission. He also communicated that the City is just one of many players active in the Commission's effort.

Councilmember Grady described future opportunities to leverage more funding for sustainability projects:

- Mercer Island will be getting 4-5 hybrids and one additional electric car. Nissan will be testing a fleet of nearly 5000 electric vehicles (EV) in the Seattle area. If appropriate, City Manager Conrad will be trying to secure electric charging stations on the Island to support users and to help catalyze the EV business.
- HUD and DOE have developed a sustainable initiative to help regions combine planning for land-use, housing, and energy to achieve sustainability. Transit-oriented development, like on Mercer Island, could be highly regarded for this grant cycle.
- A national conference on sustainability will be held February 4 in Seattle. Two groups will tour the Puget Sound region and will be visiting Mercer Island's Town Center.
- Department of Labor funding is flowing to Bellevue and Seattle Community Colleges to train technicians in conducting energy conservation audits.

Next the Council and staff discussed the City's fleet of vehicles. City Manager Conrad explained the City's approach to evaluating vehicle replacement with electric/hybrid, right-sizing, and avoidance of vehicle "creep."

Councilmember Cero indicated he has hardly seen the City's electric car and recommended that the staff prioritize its use, thereby increasing awareness of and support for EV in the community.

Councilmember Grady shared that a Rotary group is working with the City on siting electric car charging stations. He shared that there is an Island auto manufacturer who has developed a broad line of electric cars--from passenger sedans to sport utility vehicles.

In response to an inquiry from Councilmember Grausz, Councilmember Grady shared areas where sustainability grants could be used by the City, including: Comprehensive Plan updates to include long-range, multi-modal planning; alternative transportation like bike and pedestrian plans; Puget Sound Energy and Green Ribbon Commission's home energy reports; and a smart grid and reliable energy distribution network on Mercer Island.

Councilmember Grausz recommended that the Council be more involved and give direction and prioritization on the City's requests for sustainability grants. City Manager Conrad suggested a brief strategic plan for the Council to review. He also noted this could be a tool to impress upon the community the importance of the City's efforts toward sustainability.

The group brainstormed ways to inform the community about these efforts and discussed school curriculum, Mercer Island Quarterly, Mercer Island Reporter advertising, school district email, utility billing, and email.

Councilmember Bassett stated that the Home Group wants to challenge the Council to measure, publish and evaluate each member's carbon footprint.

TOWN CENTER

Following a lunch break, the Council and staff focused on the Town Center. Steve Lancaster (former Development Services Director) was introduced as the new City Administrator of Tukwila.

Deputy City Manager James Mason shared that there has been considerable interest expressed in the Town Center because of its unique location relative to transit, the thousands of people passing by each day as well as the well established community base of citizens on Mercer Island. City Manager Conrad summarized some of the discussions he had with interested developers that could impact the Walgreen's Site, and other possible projects in Town Center.

Steve Lancaster told the Council and staff that they should be proud of Town Center and said that many other communities are impressed with what has been accomplished there. He applauded the City, the Design Commission, and the Council's leadership, vision, and their commitment to the plan. He cited the many amenities of Mercer Island and the important role that public investment has played in enhancing those amenities.

He noted the desire for more specialty retail and restaurants to fill Town Center. He stated that most local residents work off island and provide an evening customer base for Town Center. However, retailers need more daytime activity (i.e., office employees) to sustain themselves. He discussed business recruitment to attract office employers and possible code incentives to draw these businesses to Town Center.

Mr. Lancaster also described parking as an ongoing issue for Town Center. He believed that finding new parking options for Mercer Island transit riders and limiting the length of stay for on-street parking would help alleviate the problem. He recommended increasing the on-street retail parking supply, code changes to incent more public parking, and promoting alternatives to the automobile. He also said continuing to pursue public/private partnerships and, wherever possible, shared parking opportunities

Councilmember Grausz cited a Town Center retail business he recently visited. He said that while it is tailored to Mercer Island tastes, it wasn't being supported by the community. He asked if there was a role for the City to attract more business to the retail center. City Manager Conrad said that the City has not had an economic development function but that other cities promote such a business model. He asked Deputy Mayor Jahncke for his opinion on this issue.

Deputy Mayor Jahncke, a commercial real estate investor, said that like everywhere else in the country, the retail occupancy and rental rates are down. He said that while many commercial property developers are "underwater", they are also reticent to cut rents because it devalues their property. He indicated that everyone is waiting it out with the belief that it will begin to turn around in 2011.

The Council, Steve Lancaster and staff discussed suburban and urban design models vis-à-vis Town Center. They also strategized ways to achieve Mercer Island-only parking for resident commuters and discussed what financial tools could be available for that purpose. Councilmember Litzow suggested a study session on ways to improve parking in Town Center.

Councilmember Grausz requested a forum for property owners, retail businesses and the City to discuss issues and opportunities for Town Center. City Manager Conrad recommended asking the Chamber of Commerce to do that in exchange for their rent. The Council concurred unanimously.

Councilmember Bassett offered the idea of finding a source of dedicated parking on the south-end of the island with a jitney to connect to Town Center and the park and ride. He said that it could be incorporated into their sustainability efforts. All but one Councilmember concurred with that recommendation.

RECYCLING CENTER

After a brief break, the planning session reconvened to discuss the soon-to-be closed recycling center. City Manager Conrad said that the City owns the property and that it is adjacent to two parks and a dedicated green space. He said the reason that this has come to the Council for discussion is because the Mercer Island School District has given notice that they will no longer be running the recycling center that's been on the property since the 1970s.

He then introduced students from the Bainbridge Graduate Institute (BGI): Susan Borg, Laura Steffen, Nathaniel Ludwig, and Tylor Jeffrey. He explained that this bright and dedicated group of business graduate students will help shape a public process for the community to decide upon the future of this site. The students are engaged to work on this project through a grant written by and awarded to the City of Mercer Island.

Laura Steffen described BGI's mission to prepare students to build enterprises that are financially successful, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable. She noted that this collaboration was a good fit because Mercer Island strives to be a sustainable city. She commented that the stakeholder process would also be a sustainable model: it could be a framework for other public involvement processes and that City staff, who will work in collaboration with BGI, will gain experience and be able to replicate similar efforts in the future.

Susan Borg presented a slide show on the proposed process. She showed the varying levels of stakeholder engagement and the importance of setting discussion boundaries at the outset of the process. She also recommended clear communication about these boundaries to keep stakeholders engaged and their expectations met.

She provided a timeline of what they could accomplish prior to July. She indicated they could identify stakeholders, design and conduct the process, summarize the community's preferred solutions for the site and debrief the Council and staff on the outcomes and the process. She concluded by saying that they will be using the best practices for stakeholder processes drawn from throughout the world.

Councilmember Litzow expressed support for this effort noting that it will create a repeatable process for the City to get public input and help the City determine what the community wants for the recycling center site. After discussion, the Council was unanimous in its support to work with the BGI Team.

Next City Manager Conrad facilitated a Council brainstorming session on boundaries for the process discussion. After eliminating a few options, the Council provided the following guidance for the recycling site:

What it could be

- Recycling center
- Dedicated parking with plug-ins
- Community bike shop
- More park and open space
- Combo admin offices for city/school
- Environmental education center
- Miscellaneous parks/recreation utility building
- Farmers market
- Affordable housing
- Music/art center
- Thrift shop site
- Residential site that demonstrates green building and sustainability techniques

What it can't be

- Toxic waste site
- School bus parking
- Residential – garden variety
- Commercial building use (private/office retail)
- Land swap

Laura advised that the Council and staff look more broadly at the values desired for the site or what the community's needs are. For example, she noted that the City has identified that whatever happens at the site it needs to be budget neutral and be consistent with the City's sustainability goals. She also suggested setting clear boundaries for the community by deleting the "What it could be" column, and leaving in place "What it can't be."

In closing, Nathaniel Ludwig of the BGI team expressed enthusiasm and appreciation to be working with the City on such an important and timely project.

TRANSPORTATION VISION

Councilmember Bassett began this discussion by noting that the Transportation Element in the Comprehensive Plan is based on 15-year-old assumptions. He recommended using the BGI process to allow the community to envision its transportation plan 20 years in the future. He explained that Council decisions that affect transportation can then be informed by the community's vision.

City Manager Conrad advised that the State may postpone Comprehensive Plan updates until 2014 but that the \$80,000 the Council had budgeted for this purpose could be used to bridge other budget shortfalls. The Council recommended that the Sustainability Committee develop and present a plan and a proposal for the jitney service discussed previously in the day.

PARKS AND RECREATION COST RECOVERY:

Deputy Mayor Jahncke expressed interest in increasing parks and recreation cost recovery to more than 46% from programs that can afford to pay higher rents for Community Center use (e.g., Jazzercise). He said this would help the City's overall budget. He also reiterated concern about City-sponsored programs that compete with the private sector, citing a flyer he received from a financial planner who provides his services at the Community Center. He opined that the City was subsidizing some businesses through their sponsorship and/or lower rents and setting up unfair competition for other Island businesses and property owners like Pilates and Yoga programs elsewhere on the Island. Councilmember Litzow stated that the City's rental rates should be competitive, rather than subsidizing.

After examining the flyer City Manager Conrad said it appears to be a case of marketing under the City's umbrella. The financial planner provides the training pro-bono to seniors. The Council agreed that the sponsorship for this program should change.

Interim Parks and Recreation Director Manny Ocampo stated that the City averages a rate of 41% cost recovery and that pre-school, youth, seniors and teens have the lowest cost-recovery of all. Overall, he said, adult classes are actually revenue generators for the City.

After additional discussion, a majority of the Council agreed to maintain the overall cost-recovery goal for Parks and Recreation at 46%.

At 5:30 p.m. the Council planning session adjourned.

Sunday, January 24, 2010

Mayor Pearman called the planning session to order at 8:45 a.m.

UNDERAGE DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

Youth and Family Services Director Cindy Goodwin told the Council that her purpose today was to listen to the Council's concerns and answer any questions they may have. She informed them that she'll be bringing a calendar of events and list of achievements to the first February Council meeting.

Councilmember Grausz stressed the importance of the community and Council's focus on this issue. He also stressed the need to have a specific plan on how to message the issue and share it with adult and youth groups in schools, churches, synagogues, the Jewish Community Center and other organizations on the Island. He recommended a campaign whereby at the end of 2010 children and adults have heard the "message" and understand the importance of avoiding drug and alcohol use. He concluded his remarks by stating that City involvement is key to the success of this campaign.

YFS Director Goodwin advised that Communities That Care (CTC) is the umbrella organization working on this issue and that most Island clergy are involved. She noted that their message needs to be repeated--sometimes three or four times--before an organization will internalize it. She listed other organizations where they are sharing concerns about underage drug and alcohol use, including country clubs.

City Manager Conrad commented that Nancy Lee's social marketing campaigns have been very successful at changing people's fundamental thought processes and behaviors, citing her "Click-it or Ticket" seatbelt campaign. He recommended having Nancy give feedback on messages for underage drug and alcohol use.

In response to Councilmember Grady's inquiry about getting coaches involved in the campaign, YFS Director Goodwin explained that their involvement is critical because many parents drink prior to and during youth athletic events. Councilmembers Grausz said the City has the legal jurisdiction to prohibit drinking on athletic fields. YFS Director Goodwin responded that notices have been posted to that affect.

Councilmember Cero expressed appreciation to YFS Director Goodwin for including drug use in the messaging campaign since DARE and the Bellevue Drug Program have been eliminated.

Mayor Pearman asked what YFS Director Goodwin's performance measures were and she replied that every other year YFS measures via a Healthy Youth Survey.

Councilmember Grausz prescribed funding these important programs through a surcharge on admission to community events.

Mayor Pearman recommended, and the Council agreed, to get an update from YFS Director Goodwin at their mid-year planning session.

TEMPORARY ENCAMPMENTS ORDINANCE

City Manager Conrad informed the Council that they will be voting at their next Council meeting on the Planning Commission's recommended temporary encampments ordinance which had been presented to the City Council for First Reading on January 19th.

City Attorney Katie Knight provided a handout of draft language based on guidance she had received from the Council at the Council's previous First Reading as well as a review of other jurisdictions' ordinances. She led the group through discussion and decisions on each area of proposed changes with an eye towards revisions to the draft ordinance that would be considered at the next Council meeting under Second Reading.

Councilmember Cero recommended, but the Council didn't agree, to consider the first page of "Whereas" language together. The Council had considerable discussion about legal challenges to similar ordinances, discrimination and the language on mental illness and sex offenders. They decided to keep the first two "Whereas" statements that provide the statistics on homelessness in King County and acknowledges that tent cities are an emergency response as well as a safer alternative to life on the streets.

Principal Planner George Steirer described the purpose of temporary use permits and tying encampments to places of worship (Section 1 Definition and Section 2A). Councilmember Cero expressed concern about neighborhood safety, property values, and First Hill being stereotyped as a homeless encampment neighborhood. He also stated that giving flexibility to extend beyond a 90-day stay sends the wrong message to Mercer Islanders. According to City Attorney Knight, the Tent City residents prefer to move on the weekend and the Council agreed that the code official may allow up to five additional days to accommodate moving on a weekend.

Next, Principal Planner Steirer explained that new language proposed for Section 2: 19.06.090(A)(11)(b) would provide more guidance on the types of acceptable fencing or screening. After discussion of aesthetic standards and cost, the Council removed the proposed language and left discretion to the code official on what are acceptable materials for privacy and visual buffering. He noted the community's dislike of tarps as a screening method.

The Council agreed unanimously to require the managing organization of the temporary encampment to sign a hold harmless agreement.

Regarding Section 2: 19.06.090(A)(17)(a), the Council debated and approved replacing a "government issued" ID with a "verifiable" ID for the purpose of knowing who the encampment residents are. In addition, the Council unanimously approved language prohibiting sex offenders from residing in the temporary encampments.

Regarding proposed language changes for Section 2: 19.06.090(A)(19), the Council and Police Chief Holmes discussed random searches and options for warrant and sex offender checks. Councilmember Grausz recommended, and the Council concurred, that the language should require the hosting organization to run sex offender and warrant checks prior to an encampment moving to Mercer Island. Councilmember Grady opposed this and expressed concern about discrimination and the assumption of guilt that this places on the homeless.

The Council agreed to require designated smoking areas at the temporary encampments and approved new language requiring informal public meetings prior to submitting a temporary use permit for an encampment.

Councilmember Grady and Deputy Mayor Jahncke recommended removing the required Code of Conduct from Section 2: 19.06.090(C)(1) but that failed to receive Council support.

Councilmember Cero requested that staff retrieve current information from the Sheriff's office on the number of county sex offenders and the number of them that are homeless. Chief Holmes agreed to supply the information.

City Manager Conrad indicated when the draft of the ordinance comes before the Council for a vote, staff will recommend an interim fee for temporary encampments until the fee schedule is finalized later this year.

WORKPLAN FINALIZATION

As a result of discussions during the planning session, City Manager Conrad added new tasks to the work plan for 2010. Generally, he said, it appears to be a full schedule, especially given budget deliberations that will come later

in the year. The year's work areas include: budget deliberations, I-90 issues, Sewer Lake Line Project implementation, Communities That Care, City code amendments, South-end Fire Station Program Plan, Shoreline Master Plan, sustainability efforts and grant review by the Council, buildings codes for home electric vehicle plug-ins, long-range transportation plan and jitney bus, collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce on Town Center partnerships, recycling center community process, and review of performance measures.

MISCELLANEOUS COUNCIL TOPICS

Next, the Council turned to additional topics for discussion.

Deputy Mayor Jahncke raised a point concerning consultant bias. He said he observed a consultant promoting a particular solution during the examination of Island Crest Way.

In an effort to improve governmental transparency, Councilmember Cero requested adding a Council discussion about the pros and cons of taping Executive Sessions. The Council did not concur.

Councilmember Cero raised the question of setting residential and arterial street life cycle standards. City Manager Conrad suggested the Council take that up when they consider the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He also informed the Council that a report will be presented on this topic from research done last year.

Councilmember Cero explained that the State Auditor's Office (SAO) offers a performance auditing service. He recommended the City conduct such a review to learn ways to do things better in the City and to save money. City Manager Conrad noted that continual improvement is built into the City's culture and that the SAO may offer audits to find efficiencies. The Council didn't support Councilmember Cero's idea.

Councilmember Cero recommended an agenda item to keep the Council updated on the proposed regional airport near South Lake Washington. Mayor Pearman reminded the Council that Bryan Cairns (former Mayor and Councilmember) represents the City on the joint city airport committee. He went on to say that he'll check in with Bryan Cairns and have him brief the Council prior to any developments.

Councilmember Cero suggested broadcasting the Planning and Design Commission meetings on Mercer Island TV. A majority of Councilmembers concurred, and City Manager Conrad said he will bring a proposal and cost breakdown for the Council to consider.

Councilmember Bassett endorsed--and the Council concurred--to have an agenda bill to review the policies of the Open Space Conservancy Trust and include new properties like Pioneer Park and Engstrom's. City staff will bring information to the Council to consider.

Councilmember Bassett raised the idea of an Arts Council liaison being on the Design Commission. The group talked about the nexus of public-private art installations and City Manager Conrad recommended that the two Council liaisons meet with the two board chairs and bring issues back to the Council, if there are any.

Deputy Mayor Jahncke raised his interest in discussing 1% for art on utilities projects, citing the Lake Line project as an example. The Council agreed to discuss it.

Mayor Pearman reminded Council and staff that 2010 is the 50th anniversary of the City of Mercer Island and that the City should gear up for celebrations.

Councilmember Cero raised concern that the City is not fully funding LEOFF 1 long term care liability. He requested that the staff provide information on the unfunded liabilities and its implications going forward during budget deliberations.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.