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From: Lisa Pedee <lisamp@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 31, 2026 2:51 PM
To: Council
Subject: Public Comment RE CPA25-002, RZN25-002 – JCC Rezone (Member & Resident Perspective)

Mercer Island City Council:

I am a resident of Mercer Island and I am writing to oppose the rezoning of the JCC property to Commercial Office without a transparent, binding plan for how that designation would be used.

I am also a member of the JCC and want to see their facilities improved. But I don't want that improvement to come at the expense of Mercer Island residents, and I don't think it's appropriate to position the JCC as a regional center for the entire metropolitan area while asking local residential streets to absorb the impact. If a commercial designation is granted, it should be tied specifically to community-facility use, through a mechanism like a Development Agreement that binds any future owner, not an unconditional rezone that would survive a sale and allow far more than the JCC says it currently needs.

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We Support The Stroum Jewish Community Center

Like the other recreational clubs on the Island, the JCC has been an important provider of community services for residents of Mercer Island. Over the years the JCC has expanded its services to include fitness classes, childcare, summer child programs and more. And it's even a place for people to go to play Mahjong. This is all fantastic and nobody takes issue with what has been created.

What We Oppose

At some point in the fifty-plus years the JCC has been on Mercer Island, their goals have changed. No longer are they satisfied with their original goal of serving Mercer Island residents. For several years, they have been expanding the mission to include the entire Puget Sound. This is all good to the extent that it doesn't destroy the serenity of an otherwise peaceful residential neighborhood. If this was all taking place in Town Center, it would be great. The commercial zoning would support it and there is infrastructure in place to handle commercial traffic. What they seek to do instead is take a significant parcel of residential property, in a primarily residential neighborhood, and convert it to commercial zoning. Once changed, this can never be returned to residential. The zoning change is not exclusively for the JCC, like a conditional use permit is, but a rezone stays with the property. And their own plan shows that they intend to use residential streets to "mitigate" the traffic issues that currently exist at the East Mercer Way I-90 access point.

If the JCC decides to sell the property at some point in the future, the commercial zoning stays. This opens the door for a developer to build a Trader Joe's, or even a shopping mall. We are not saying that's the plan, but nothing is guaranteed, except the zoning.

This is not just an issue for residents who live close to the JCC. If the comprehensive plan is changed for this one organization, it opens the door for all recreational clubs, private schools and churches on the island to make similar requests.

Arguments For Allowing The Zoning Change

The JCC needs to upgrade their facilities. We support their need to upgrade facilities to the extent that those upgrades serve the Mercer Island community at large. Upgrades that allow for the uncontrolled increase in membership do not provide any benefit to the City of Mercer Island and will result in a significant disruption to the adjacent residential community. There are other ways to accomplish the facility upgrades, short of a drastic rezone.

The JCC is good for Mercer Island. Yes, the JCC is good for the residents of Mercer Island who use the community center as well as the significant number of off-island members. But, as a not-for-profit entity that enjoys tax-free status, the JCC does not contribute to the funds needed to operate our city. While we want them to be successful, they need to

consider it's all the residents and businesses on Mercer Island who pay for the infrastructure and emergency services upon which they depend.

A Logical Solution

Do not change the zoning. A change in zoning outlives the JCC and any future owner would be able to do far more than what the JCC is on the record saying they need. Instead, create a plan that allows the JCC to do the upgrades necessary to serve their membership. If, as they say, their reason for the zoning change is to upgrade their facilities, this should be acceptable.

Place membership limits. Every other recreational club on the island has membership limits. This is in place to limit disruption to the residential neighborhoods where those clubs are located. The JCC must be held to the same standard.

Require effective traffic mitigation. The JCC plan must include dealing with the significant parking needs and traffic backups within the confines of their own property, not use local residential streets to do this.

The JCC's leadership often says they always have the best interests of Mercer Island in mind. If this was true, why haven't they asked to meet with the residents in their neighborhood or asked the city to broker a discussion? The lack of collaboration and transparency is concerning. If their publicly stated goals are true, there should be no problem developing a plan that works for both the JCC and the residents.

Regards,
Lisa Pedee
Mercer Island resident