

## Molly McGuire

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**From:** Merkys Gomez <merkysg@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 31, 2026 1:42 AM  
**To:** City Clerk; Molly McGuire  
**Subject:** Comments re Permit Nos. CPA25-002 and associated permits RZN25-002, SEP25-021  
**Attachments:** 2026.07.30 -- Comments re JCC Re-zone-emailed.pdf

Dear City of Mercer Island Clerk & Ms. McGuire: I am unable to make it to the hearing scheduled for August 5, 2026, and respectfully submit my comments (below & attached).

Sincerely,  
Merkys

**July 31, 2026: Comments from Merkys I. Gómez Regarding the JCC Rezone  
Permit Nos. CPA25-002 and associated permits RZN25-002, SEP25-021**

As a resident of Mercer Island living in the neighborhood off of I-90's Exit 8, I am very concerned about the JCC's request to rezone their property from residential to commercial.

I write to express 2 initial concerns:

**1. Traffic**

First, to grant the JCC's request to rezone to commercial would be poor planning. The City of Mercer Island (the City) has already granted Herzl's request for a new building on its property to house a school. The Herzl property is effectively across the street from the JCC property. The Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) that was completed alongside Herzl's proposal indicated that East Mercer Way (EMW) needed to be altered in order to accommodate the changes (and increases) in traffic flow. Herzl will not be making any modifications to EMW – the street is city property. However, the City does not have any plans to modify EMW. Even if it did, the modifications to EMW would not occur prior to the Herzl's new building opening. The traffic snarls are likely to impact not just island residents in general, but also island children as the buses that come down Gallagher Hill and turn onto EMW to pick up Mercer Island School District children will have to face the additional traffic of vehicles exiting I-90 and lining up along EMW's one lane road to turn into the Herzl property. Even if this were not to occur, thoughtful planning would involve sufficient time to gather data as Herzl's new school opens and grows to understand, in-time versus forecasting, the actual impacts. Granting a permit to the JCC that has even a remote chance of increasing traffic to the area makes no sense at this time.

Second, the JCC currently runs summer programming out of its facilities that adversely affect traffic along EMW. I have only lived on the island for a few years, and have experienced the adverse impacts of this increased traffic flow. When I first reached out to the JCC, the response that I received was that the public roadway is not under their jurisdiction. Rather, they informed me that they wanted to update their facility, a process that would include a traffic study. As we have learned from the Herzl process, a traffic study does not require that the entity seeking the permit make the changes to the roadway because, as the JCC aptly notes, the public roadway is not under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, in the meantime, the JCC could have been taking steps to ameliorate the problem. The JCC has the option to contract certified flaggers or traffic control companies, or even hiring off-duty police officers, which large-scale camps, sports complexes and venues do when experiencing heavy congestion at specific peak times. Instead, the JCC uses the traffic snarls to advocate for its position that it needs the rezone rather than acting in a safety conscious way respectful of the residential neighborhood within which it operates.

Moreover, the JCC's rezoning would inevitably increase traffic flow into its property. The rezoning would allow for higher-density use. The JCC does not need rezoning for the operations it runs, nor for remodeling that would allow it to update its facilities nor to conduct a traffic pattern study on its property to address traffic issues, including the

potential hiring of personnel during peak time. Even the Shore Club along EMW, which has a pool and tennis courts and which hosts events and swim competitions is zoned residential. Rather, the JCC seeks rezoning to change the nature of its property, adversely impacting the character of the area. Their website accurately portrays what they intend to do – it is not simply to renovate or remodel, but rather to “refine and reimagine [their] facilities” in a way that would increase use of their premises, including a field for evening games.

EMW currently runs through a residential neighborhood not meant to accommodate commercial uses. Thus, until/unless the City is able to make modifications to EMW to accommodate greater traffic flows, granting permits that would necessitate the existence of these modifications would be irresponsible.

## 2. Changing Residential Nature of the Community

Mercer Island is a community that is intersected by I-90, an eight-lane highway that connects Seattle to Bellevue, on its northern end. The traffic flow on I-90 is heavy, emitting pollutants into the air and generating noise pollution. Mercer Island professes pride in its trees. Trees are known to help clear the air that we breath and buffer sound. Based on the City’s website, the City Council’s priorities are to provide outstanding municipal services that enhance and protect the environment, the quality of life, and our community’s health, safety, and welfare. As a highway island, Mercer Island needs trees to protect the air quality for its residents. In fact, Mercer Island (on the books at least) has stringent regulations on the removal of trees. These are not equally enforced. Despite the City’s professed care for the canopy of the island, the City does not have an arborist overseeing decisions made regarding trees. When Herzl’s proposal to clear cut the green space on its property to make way for its building was before the hearing examiner, the hearing examiner noted that “MICC 19.16.010 defines ‘City Arborist’ as ‘the person designated by the code official to administer the provisions of chapter 19.10 MICC’; therefore, the Hearing Examiner must act as the ‘City Arborist’ for the purposes of allowing a reduction in required replacement trees under MICC” and granted Herzl’s request to pay a fee in lieu of required replacement fees. (Design Review DSR25-009 dated Nov. 21, 2025). The hearing officer is an attorney by training, not a trained arborist, geo-technical engineer, scientist, pulmonologist nor any other profession with the skills to be making a decision on the impact of the removal of so many trees to the land or the health of its residents. In short, the City is not equipped with the appropriate personnel to grant these proposals. Similarly to the Herzl plans, the remodel that the JCC is proposing would require removal of several exceptional trees, some including Western Red Cedars, in order to create space for an open playfield that would invariably involve evening time activities, along with additional light and noise pollution. Below is a picture from the JCC’s website of the playfield, which would be located where several of these trees currently call home.



The area along EMW and onto SE 40<sup>th</sup> St, where the JCC’s property borders, is a residential zone. It is not intended for the high density rezoning that a commercial rezone would allow, nor the operations that would impact residents returning to their homes in the evening. If the JCC needs a commercial zone to conduct its operations, the most correct course of action would be for the JCC to move its location, not change the character of the neighborhood within which it resides just to suit its individual, commercial needs. If they want to renovate and remodel, they have what they need to do that. If they want to own a commercial property, then find a commercial property to own. To allow this rezone would be to grant the JCC special privileges, since the rezone would allow for the private gain of the JCC to the detriment of their neighbors. It baffles me that residents have to fight to keep a residential area zoned residential.

On a final note, this hearing has been scheduled (and rescheduled) to take place during the summer months. I object that such an important hearing is scheduled when many families are fitting in final vacations before the start of the school year. We are the residents of this residential area who are experiencing the pressures of an institution with employees who get paid to advocate for these changes. Then, they leave our residential area and go to their neighborhoods and home. Meanwhile, we are trying to live our lives while additionally finding ways to inform ourselves of changes in hearing dates, educating ourselves on complicated city issues, and finding a way to make it to meetings in order to preserve the residential nature for which our neighborhood is zoned.

Please do the right thing and allow the many to keep our residential neighborhood residential instead of changing it for the sole benefit of one.

Sincerely,  
Merkys I. Gómez