



Minutes for City of Mount Rainier Special Meeting

Date: 10-16-2008

Place: One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier Md. 20712

Presiding Officer: Vice Mayor

Councilman present: Bryan Knedler

Councilmember's absent: Alta Morton, Mayor Miles, and Pedro Briones

Staff present: Assistant City Manager Michael Jackson

Topic: Architectural Conservation Overlay Zone

Councilman Knedler:

The problem is Mac mansions in the city. We have had some homes that have been drastically altered to the dismay of their neighbors. In a lot of cases it towers over their houses. There are traditional historic districts but, we are a federally designated historic district. In historic districts you have a lot of restrictions on what kind of material you can use on homes. We think that's too restrictive. We want to pass a resolution on asking the county to move this forward on development.

Councilman Tarlau:

Once we ask the county to do this can we stop it if we don't like their plan?

Councilman Knedler:

If we don't like their plan hopefully we can get them to revise it and they will be consulting us along the way.

Resident Bruce Yarnell:

Examples of what a conservation district could do or would do or would prohibit or encourage someone to do something else. Mount Rainier has a sense of community. We have a library and it has a sense of community and a police department that a lot of neighboring communities don't have. We also have a fire department and a post office that not everyone has and two schools along with some special amenities like the Tool Shed and Bike-op. In the historic business district there's a lot of opportunity and a lot of work.

The National Park Service and the State of Maryland have looked at Mount Rainier's Historic District's community and they have determined that there is a development pattern here and a number of structures that retain their original characteristics and speak for a certain period of time and development in Mount Rainier from 1900's to 1940 when the community really grew and developed.

We talk about conservation districts and historic districts, in conservation districts more modern looks can be applied as long as you keep the character of the structure in tact. The Mount Rainier historic district was established in year 1990. Whatever currently exists in the community is grandfathered. The only time the conservation district guidelines would be applied was if you are applying for a building permit.

Councilman Tarlau:

As a resident my house is grandfathered, I don't have to retro fit it.

Bruce Yarnell:

If you are going to make changes to your home we are going to apply the zoning rules and regulations to your proposal. In a conservation district as well as a historic district the property owners have some assurance that the homes and commercial structures surrounding them will not be significantly altered or demolished. On the screen are some pictures of Mac-mansions in surrounding areas. Normally additions are not supposed to be larger than the original structure, they are supposed to be subservient or not overpower it.

In a conservation district we would try to have something in character with the original. In a historic district replacements would have to be of the same style of a replicate of the original.

Nathan Cederoth: (DRB representative)

The overlay district may actually make things easier and more seamless because it vests some authority in the city. Being able to work things in town I think would be a great benefit.

Councilman Knedler:

The permits would go through the planning board. It won't be much different from now. Coming before the D.R.B. residents have no idea of what there parameters are because there is nothing in writing. The county is currently rewriting the guidelines for the town center overlay zone. Its best not to include the town center within this overlay zone.

We also need to figure out whether we are including the multi-family apartment complexes in this. They are not within the federal historic district.

Bruce Yarnell:

For the National Registrar it has to be 50 years or older to be considered a contributing structure. The period of significance for the Mount Rainier Historic District is 1900 & 1940. Any property built after 1940 would be non-contributing. What I think the county would tell you is they would treat a property built in 1930 different from a house built in 1950. This would apply to Councilwoman Morton's house, the litmus test and to mine the 1921 homes. What they will ask is what you're proposing to do is it being true to that house. The period of significance for the National Registrar District has to do with the tax laws.

Councilman Tarlau:

Would this be a detriment to young people fixing p their homes? I think it's more positive in terms of keeping the character.

Bruce Yarnell:

As a general rule in conservation districts it's recommended to build to the rear not to the front of the property.

**Councilman Tarlau motion to adjourn
Second Councilwoman Morton
Vote 3-0**

