



## **Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier Maryland City Council Meeting**

**Date: 4-7-2015**

**Place: One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier**

**Presiding officer: Councilman Jesse Christopherson**

**Councilmember's present: Brent Bolin, Brian Knedler, Jacqueline Reposo**

**City Hall Staff: City Manager Jeannelle Wallace, Assistant City Manager Veronica Owens, Chief Scott,**

**Public Works Director Mike Barnes, Economic Development Director Samantha Olatunji, City Clerk Janis Lomax**

### **Agenda**

Rhode Island Development

Arbor Day Funding

Elections Board Chair

**Motion to move new business first**

**Councilman Knedler**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Councilman Bolin**

**4-0**

**Motion to approve the agenda**

**Councilman Bolin**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Councilwoman Reposo**

**4-0**

### **Rhode Island Avenue Development- City Manager Jeannelle Wallace**

The city submitted questions to Streetsense and Neighborhood Development Corporation asking for clarity on certain points of their last submittal. Based on the city consultant's review, the responses of the developers were not consistent with the information they gave in the past.

The developers are willing to do LEED Gold on the project if the City is willing to move forward on the project. The Mayor will have a conference call with the developers this Thursday to clarify what the city wants and then debrief the council.

### **Arbor Day Funding – Councilman Christopherson**

An Arbor Day observance is required for Tree City USA. Councilman Christopherson suggests planting a few memorial trees for notable people who have made contributions to the city and passed away in the last few years.

## **Elections Board Chair Report**

The candidates for the upcoming elections are as follows:

### *Ward I*

Sharnette Robinson- 4 years

Tracy Loh- 4 years

### *Ward II*

Shivali Shah – 4 years

Bryan Knedler- 2 years

Any candidate that wants to be on the ballot must turn their petition in on the first Monday of April. They will be write-ins if they do not make that deadline, according to Title V- Section 505(a- d).

Councilwoman Reposo will not run for election in Ward I.

**April 8, 2015- Candidates' Forum** at the **Mediterranean Café**, 3237 Rhode Island Avenue at **7:00pm**

## **Official Reports**

No Council Reports

### ***City Manager's Report- Jeannelle Wallace***

- **Perry Street Bollards.** The Perry Street bollards were run over by a Bladensburg Fire Truck. Prince George's County filed a report on the incident and a claim was put in with the city's insurance carrier. The Bladensburg Fire Department is responsible for and liable for their replacement. The contractor, Long Fence, will be out today or tomorrow.
- **Traffic Circle Bollard.** A bollard was knocked down by a vehicle at the traffic circle. The party responsible is known, so the city put in a claim with LGIT.
- **Local Government Insurance Trust.** The City Manager requested a meeting with the Local Government Insurance Trust because they have failed to notify her and Chief Scott when cases have settled recently and to see if they can provide training to the police department on some of the issues they deal with, including the responsibility of officers to deescalate events when they happen and how to properly testify for cases.
- **Demolition of Eastern Avenue Funeral Home.** A partial demolition was done on the former Eastern Avenue funeral home. The city is waiting on WSSC to mark it to complete demolition. She and the Assistant City Manager Veronica Owens have been working with the Department of Housing and Community Development because they have received funding for the demolition but have not received a signed grant agreement.

Councilman Bolin is concerned about how the property will be secured after demolition. Councilman Christopherson expresses the interest of residents to salvage materials from the demolition.

- **Buchanan Street Project RFP.** An RFP was issued a month ago for the Buchanan Street Project. No credible responses were received for it. Biohabitats was contacted to help the City revise the scope of work so that it is clearer. The two grants supporting this project are from Community Legacy and Chesapeake Bay Trust. It is required by Chesapeake Bay Trust to have a pre-bid and pre-construction conference.
- **Business Improvement Program.** A \$50,000 grant was received to help with improvement of local business façades.
- **City Election is May 4<sup>th</sup> at Mount Rainier City Hall**
- **Recyclables.** Recyclables will not be accepted in plastic bags. Trash receptacles must be 33 gallons or less.
- Possible relocation of **trash street cans on 34<sup>th</sup> Street.** Some residents from the apartments are using the street cans for their personal waste. In the meantime, public works will investigate who, specifically, is using the bins.

***Police Department Report- Chief Scott***

- **Police-Community Dialogue.** On **March 19<sup>th</sup>**, there was police-community dialogue at the Nature Center about police procedures. Officers, city hall staff and council representatives attended, including the Mayor and the City Manager. To continue the dialogue around the city, another event will be held in another location.
- **De-escalation Training.** To help the Mount Rainier police practice in de-escalation, the police department is doing training with LGIT and Caliber Press.
- **1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Crime Report.** The first quarter of the year shows a crime decrease close to 6.5% compared to the crime report in 2014. Showing a steady decrease over the past decade, the city is 53% below the crime level in 2006.
- **Three major crimes have occurred so far this year.** In District I, two juveniles were arrested on February 7<sup>th</sup> for a citizen armed robbery. They were Mount Rainier residents at the time. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, James William Diggs, of Bladensburg, was arrested for the citizen armed robbery that occurred on 35<sup>th</sup> and Perry Street. And on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, detectives charged Carlton Newellin Jr. for the January 20<sup>th</sup> bomb threat for the Western Union at Luskin's Plaza. He also tried to rob a Suntrust bank with a bomb threat.
- **The Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment** is a program to identify victims of domestic violence and the severity of their situation.

***Public Works Department Report- Mr. Michael Barnes***

- **Potholes.** The department is diligently working on the potholes
- **Trash Code.** He reminds residents to keep up with the city code regarding trash
- **Replacement Bollards.** The replacement bollards will be installed tomorrow, **April 8<sup>th</sup>**.

***Economic Development Report- Ms. Samantha Olatunji***

- **ICSC Conference.** She attended the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Conference at National Harbor in February. While there, she networked with retailers, site selectors, and economic development professionals from all over the country. As a member, the city gains exposure for its local property owners and business owners.
- **Property owner meetings.** She has been meeting with property owners and discussing with them how to prepare for potential new retailers

- **Gateway CDC MOU.** She has been working with the Gateway CDC to prepare a MOU agreement for how the Gateway CDC will assist the City in its goals.
- **MRB.** She is keeping in contact with MRB to make sure they are promoting and developing the business district
- **MUTC Committee.** She has been working with the MUTC committee to consult businesses on façade improvements and outdoor seating. The MUTC Committee is meeting tomorrow evening.
- **Mediterranean Café.** She is working with the new restaurant, Mediterranean Café on Rhode Island Avenue, to make some improvements.
- **Bird Kitchen and Cocktails Opening.** The new Bird Kitchen and Cocktails, located at 3801 34<sup>th</sup> Street, is slated to open this summer. She is pushing to help get them open by Mount Rainier Day. She has been working with him on permitting and signage.
- **ATHA Grant.** Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) was the most recent grant submitted. The city must match the grant funds (75% in cash, and 25% in kind). The grant is to support a new wayfinding and public art program.
- **Complete Streets.** She is in contact with Complete Streets technical assistance to address issues.

***Assistant City Manager- Ms. Veronica Owens***

- **National Mainstreet Conference.** She attended the National Mainstreet Conference in Atlanta, Ga. Mount Rainier is beginning the process of gaining a Mainstreet designation and will be the first to do so in the county.
- She has been working with the City Manager and Economic Development Director on various projects, including funding.
- **Morning Huddle.** She participates in the Morning Huddle twice a week. In this meeting, they are working on creating an assessment of applications and creating a code brochure handbook for residents.
- **CDBG Grant.** The City secured the CDBG funds in the amount of \$139,965 pending the upcoming hearing of the CDBG. The funding is for street improvements, street furniture, wayfinding signage, gateway signage, banners, and lighting.
- **Marketing Meetings.** There will be a series of meetings regarding the future marketing of the city and its various activities.
- **City Website.** She updates the City website and works to keep it current

**Public Comment**

**Ms. Lydia Ledbetter** announces that she submitted her certification yesterday around noon to City Hall. She would like to know if her Biography could be placed in *The Message* as a write-in candidate.

**Mr. Nathan Drakeford (4200 30<sup>th</sup> Street)** has observed the nomination process for forty years. He has concerns about making concessions and waivers to people who are not following the process. How viable can a candidate be when they have not done their homework about a process?

Councilman Knedler would like to see how other cities address issues regarding the nomination process.

**Ms. Robin Bliss (3800 30<sup>th</sup> Street & MUTC Committee member)** states that regarding the LDA from Streetsense, the MUTC committee has not received another rendering with the massing. She wonders if that would be a consideration when the council makes its decision.

Councilman Knedler would like to update the public on the Street Sns project.

**Motion to move into closed session to discuss personnel matters at 8:22pm**

**Councilman Knedler**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Councilwoman Reposo**

**4-0**