



Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier Maryland City Council Work Session & Special Meeting

Date: 1-20-2015

Place: One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier

Presiding officer: Mayor Malinda Miles

Councilmember's present: Jesse Christopherson, Brent Bolin, Brian Knedler (via intercom)

Councilmember's absent: None

City Hall Staff: City Manager Jeannelle Wallace

Closed Meeting: Mayor and Council met with the RDA to discuss purchasing a property

Meeting called to order at 7:40 pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Special Meeting

Ward I Vacancy

MUTC & Street Sense Meeting

Public Comment

Agenda

Resolution establishing the Charter Review Committee

Social Media Policy

The Vice Mayor Rotation

Election Board

The letter of Support for the PG417-15 that will have Delegate Jimmy Tarlau introduce legislation regarding the tax differential

Ward I Vacancy – Councilman Christopherson

Councilman Christopherson received five resumes for the Ward I vacancy. He recommends Jacqueline Riposo for the position.

Jacqueline Riposo speaks to the council about her interest in the seat. She wanted to run for Ward I after Bill Updike's term but had only been in the city for one year and was ineligible at that time. Instead she turned her efforts to smaller projects in the city, including the community garden, the 5k, the toolshed and other community activities. She wants to get more involved in the city. She is currently in her last semester of an MBA program, which she believes has provided her with a better understanding of business and an ability to help with the city budget. All of her past experience has been with non-profits.

She is familiar with grant writing, shoe string budgets, and engaging a lot of the stakeholders in the community that the non-profit is serving.

Councilman Bolin speaks to the re-development going on in the city and the challenge to keep the Mount Rainier character and make the community better. He asks Ms. Riposo if she has any experience with community development issues and transit/ pedestrian issues.

Ms. Riposo believes that it is important to keep the Mount Rainier character, especially because that is why she was drawn to the city. Her experience with community design is related to public health and the environment. She finds that the priorities for any city moving forward with development are focused on walkability, safe bike trails, safe transit stops, and welcoming small businesses. She pursued her MBA because she wants to manage non-profits and small businesses that need consulting and help to get off the ground with a small budget.

Mayor Miles communicates that one of her concerns is diversity on the council. She asks Ms. Riposo how she sees herself working with some of the other parts of Mount Rainier.

Ms. Riposo informs the council that some of her closest friends in Mount Rainier are from the Spanish-speaking community. Also, her closest neighbors have this huge extended family and are very open with her. She attends their close family events such as their weddings and baby showers as if she were family. She feels that she can reach their community because they have such a big family and close friends that she feels they can open up to her. Not only can she be their voice, but she feels she can encourage them to get involved.

Mayor Miles: What about your seniors?

Ms. Riposo is more than happy to help seniors out with what is needed. She admits that she is not very connected with that community right now but is always looking to get connected with different communities of people.

Mayor Miles: Ward I has a large senior population concentrated in the Rainier Manor area. They often tell me about being neglected and forgotten. And so, being the representative for that area, they want to have themselves taken seriously... One of my concerns, and I have said it for years, I love downtown Mount Rainier but Mount Rainier is not downtown. There is Mount Rainier on Arundel Road, on Queens Chapel Rd... What kind of connections do you have or see yourself there?

I would love to see more services and more businesses come to the Queens Chapel area. I think that that area is underserved. There is a dense population there without a lot of services. A lot of the focus on development has been on Rhode Island Ave. I think that is great and there are a lot of spaces that are going to be great for development along Rhode Island Ave. but there are a lot of other pockets that can use services and encourage other small businesses to move into those areas.

Councilman Knedler is satisfied with the questions asked and has no additional ones.

Motion to appoint Ms. Jacqueline Riposo to the Ward I Vacancy
Councilman Christopherson
2nd Councilman Bolin
3-0

Public Comment

A resident brings up an issue about an unexplained increase in her Pepco Bill. Mayor Miles agrees to intercede with Pepco on her behalf.

Mr. Ernest Wheeler (Rainier Manor Apartments) has an issue with his Comcast service and the bill. Mayor Miles suggests two ways to address the issue: contacting Comcast and filing complaints directly with the Prince George's County Cable Commission. She wants to tackle this because there are probably other residents experiencing this issue. Mayor Miles also proposes that the city sit down with the county to discuss ways to decrease the cost of living for residents, especially seniors in Mount Rainier. The city will follow-up on the water issue in Rainier Manor and have all of the water units tested.

Ms. Gady speaks of concerns about the traffic at the stop light on the corner of Buchanan and Queens Chapel Rd. Two people have been killed there. One lady was hit twice. Instead of blinking lights, there needs to be a stop light. People with walkers and wheelchairs take a longer time to get across Queens Chapel Rd. According to Mayor Miles, there is not enough pedestrian and car traffic going down Queens Chapel Road to warrant the installation of a traffic light at the corner of 30th and Queen Chapel Rd. or at the corner of Buchanan and Queens Chapel Rd. To get this change, residents must voice their concerns to the state delegates and state senators. The city has been urging them to put in a light but was unable to.

Another resident talks about walking across Buchanan and Rhode Island with her daughter to get to the stores. Walking down to 30th is still an issue because crosswalks are not on both sides and the timing of the lights are off. Mayor Miles adds that it is one of the busiest intersections in Prince George's County. Also, the light blinks for you to walk across. She proposes a light called the HAWK, which stays green for pedestrians until they completely cross the street.

Councilman Bolin states that the city has asked State Highway Administration and D-Dot to do that in the city. D-Dot was more receptive than SHA. The resident states that this type of light was experimental five years ago and that it is worth it to approach them again.

Monday, January 26th @ 2:00 p.m. there will be a meeting with State Highway engineers.

Councilman Christopherson welcomes residents to come and voice their concerns so that SHA puts a face to the voice.

MUTC & Street Sense- Councilman Bolin

MUTC has worked with Street Sense over the past two years. As part of Street Sense's attempt to close the long-standing gap in the financing, they have considered some changes to the design of the building that were brought up in December. They were asked to return to the MUTC committee to discuss those potential changes. That meeting occurred last week. They were asked to consider and present a smaller building model, different LEED standards, and different options for the massing of the building.

Councilman Bolin did not believe that Street Sense provided a sufficient answer to any of those items.

Street Sense wants to add units to the building that were originally taken away as part of the MUTC process and take away the community area. The building they are now proposing is the one MUTC rejected a year ago. They were asked to look at other options and then come back but they simply showed what they showed in December.

The committee is concerned with the height of the building as it affects nearby residents and the zoning issue. Six stories is going to be a non-starter and they will have to get an exception for zoning. The property was initially negotiated to be five stories and then stepped-down to four. Street Sense explained that it still needed the density and the fifth story across the board. In an effort to get optional ideas for ways to achieve an end that all parties can come to an agreement with, the offer was to provide a solution

that has six stories but will provide LEED gold certification. The other option was to come back with five stories and get LEED Silver certification. The committee does not have any jurisdiction to argue LEED certification. The committee is in a bind because the cost-savings solutions did not add up and very little additional information was provided to it by Street Sense.

Mayor Miles has two concerns. She wonders if Street Sense can do the project and is the project going to be significant enough to make Mount Rainier a destination place. Right now it does not seem that way to her. She suggests cutting the city's losses. If Street Sense cannot deliver the project to the level that is Mount Rainier worthy, then there is no need to continue further discussions.

Street Sense wants an additional commitment from the council before it spends any more money and the council wants to see more options before making a commitment.

Councilman Knedler: Five years ago when we were ready to issue the RFP, the county councilmen came in with Street Sense and they tried to convince us not to issue the RFP. They wanted us to give them that contract or that deal, without an RFP. So then, we had all those closed door meetings with politicians. This whole thing was political from the beginning. We ended up issuing the RFP. They did not like that. We got three bids and we went with them because we got strong-armed. I was not with the council at that point, but I was watching what was going on. Here we are how many years later. My word for that would be arrogant. They had no respect for us. They thought they could come in here and twist our arm. We had to play ball. I think we are done.

Mayor Miles: I was done on October the 15th. Where do we go from here? Do we continue to throw good money after bad or do we cut our losses? Now one of the things that has changed tremendously since we first got duped or scooped into where we are is that we are no longer desperate for developers. There are people out there now that are really interested in that corner. There are people out there that are looking at Mount Rainier as a potential place to do their next project. We can see a lot more or better proposals.

Mayor Miles asks the Mount Rainier City Hall staff to have a new RFP ready.

Motion to recess from special meeting to go into the Work Session

Councilman Bolin

2nd Councilman Christopherson

3-0

Move to table the entire Work session agenda to the February 3, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council with the exception of the letter of Support for the PG417-15 legislative piece that is being introduced by Mr. Tarlau that would ask for the county to provide information on how they come up with the formula tax-differential for municipalities that provide services that would be duplicate of what is provided by the county.

Councilman Bolin

2nd Councilman Christopherson

2-0

Motion to Approve the Letter of Support for PG417-15

Councilman Knedler

2nd Councilman Bolin

3-0

Motion to adjourn at 8:59 pm
Councilman Bolin
2nd Councilman Christopherson