



*City of Mount Rainier*  
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**CITY MANAGER REPORT**  
**November 3, 2010**

**Meetings/conferences**

Management attended the annual International City Management Association Conference in October which focused on building strong and resilient communities, developing community libraries as strategic partners, the technology horizon in the US, field demonstrations at San Jose City Hall, and the NASA Ames Research Center. For a complete description of the workshops attended and how some of what was learned will be implemented in the City of Mount Rainier, go to the city's website at [www.mountrainiermd.org](http://www.mountrainiermd.org), click on the government tab, then "reports and documents", and scroll to ICMA Conference 2010.

Management also attended Governor Martin O'Malley's Housing Conference in October as well which focused on Neighborhood Commercial Districts and small businesses remaining open and viable to the community, the role of government in advancing sustainability policies. Many of the recommendations discussed in these workshops are currently being developed by the Mount Rainier Business Association including a MRBA Welcome Package which is almost ready for printing and distribution. This package is being developed by the associations' marketing manager who is also a business owner, board member, and resident of the city. The city manager has worked with MRBA on many issues during the past year including this package which includes pertinent information to both property owners and business operators relative to permitting issues, *City Code* and significant information that will enable the business to be more successful. Plans are in the initial stages to work with local artists to refurbish store fronts as well as vacant properties. These activities will compliment the upcoming Better Block Project that will occur sometime during the spring in partnership with the Neighborhood Design Center, MRBA, and the city. Please refer to the reports and documents section under the government tab on the city's website for an in-depth report on this conference as well.

**On-Going Projects**

The city has worked daily on implementing the city's **Green Home Initiative Program** in partnership with the Washington Area Community Investment Fund (WACIF) and the Department of Housing and Community Development. This has turned out to be much more cumbersome and time consuming than initially anticipated but with good results.

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A total of 18 applications have been received, with 16 approved and 2 denials based on the applicant being over-income. We have one application that is pending approval if funds are available. The Green Home Initiative Program provides funding up to \$5,000 to eligible applicants to receive energy star appliances and weatherization improvements to their homes, as well as a state approved energy audit (worth \$5,000) through the Maryland Department of Energy.

The energy audits have been completed for 50% of the applicants to date. The audits are very thorough, comprising detailed analysis of existing problems regarding health and safety issues that require remediation in order for the homeowner to receive maximum benefits of the program, and to ensure that necessary corrections are made. The auditor has issued reports which specify the conditions which must be met prior to the implementation of weatherization improvements.

The City Council has met with the architects and developers that are working on the new **“Civic Center/Municipal Complex”** design, and has approved entering into a contract for the **purchase of the former Blue Bird Cab lot** on Perry Street which will improve the parking availability of the city’s downtown. The Mayor and Council will take public comment on both of these issues at a Public Hearing scheduled for November 16, 2010 at 7:30 pm at city hall. A portion of the expenditure for the purchase of the Blue Bird Cab lot will be used from funding through the Federal Transit Administration. A survey boundary and environmental impact study will have to be conducted on the former cab lot as a part of federal regulations for approval of property acquisition.

Management staff has conferred with the city’s consultant and the council has approved the final draft of the **RFP** which will be issued within the next few weeks on the development of the former Bass and Funeral Home properties. Currently, the properties are being surveyed and real estate attorneys have been consulted to develop additional agreements which will convey the council’s priorities concerning the appropriate mix of development for commercial/office retail, residential housing, parking strategies, etc., given the current economic climate conditions.

**The City, MRBA, and business owners developed a partnership last year to improve the facades of local businesses.** Glut Food Cooperative and Nisey’s Boutique are almost complete. Additionally, the city received notice that funding from the County in the amount of \$125,000 has been approved by the Prince George’s County Council which has been reprogrammed from Gateway CDC. It is anticipated that the funding will help to greatly enhance the storefronts and building facades once the parameters have been established.

The current project under **Community Development Block Grant program** is curb and gutter replacement for 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>, and 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets. While management has written, submitted and revised proposals and re-submitted documents for other infrastructure repairs, the city is currently waiting for signed contract approval from the Prince George’s County.

The assistant city manager and public works director are developing a City wide **Infrastructure Improvement Plan** which will be submitted to the council in a few weeks.

The public works director has spearheaded **the city's tree planting project** which has occurred through funding from the County's Tree Grant Program. It is anticipated that the completed planting will take place with the next few weeks. The contractor is waiting for delivery of approximately 20 additional trees.

The **replacement of the bollards** on Route 1 in the vicinity of the traffic circle has been discussed by the council. Management inquired of State Highway Administration whether all of the bollards were going to be replaced on just the broken ones. The concern is to determine which replacement will work best. Mr. Greffen of SHA responded to the city manager (on October 7, 2010) that SHA was trying to find another vendor for the concrete bollards that are currently in place and that the procurement process should take approximately two weeks. Mr. Greffen has been contacted this week for an update and his response is as follows:

Ms. Wallace,

We have the procurement process completed, however, I have been asked to wait until we have confirmation that they are our responsibility to replace before we purchase them. I just had a discussion this afternoon regarding this. We have asked the Office of Highway Design for this information, have reiterated our request this afternoon, and are waiting for their reply.

Generally, when bollards are installed as part of a project of this nature, maintenance becomes the responsibility of the city or county, the same as sidewalks.

Hopefully, I will hear something soon, and as soon as I do, I'll get back to you.

Manager Wallace also conferred with Felecia Murphy, Assistant District Engineer for Traffic, State Highway Administration concerning the traffic light, repair to the street markings, and pedestrian crosswalk between Eastern Avenue and the traffic circle. Ms. Murphy indicated that she would review the area and respond.

### **Fiscal Year 2010 Audit**

The management team has received the draft audit report from the firm of Bridgette Mock & Associates which shows that the city ended the 2010 Fiscal Year with a slight deficit of approximately \$45,000. Federal Emergency Management Administration has indicated that the city will be reimbursed \$55,000 for its' snow removal expenditures. This information could not be included in the audit report for FY 2010 because the city did not received the formal notification from FEMA within the 60 day window of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010.

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Despite experiencing a loss of \$180,000 due to the elimination of revenue from the State Highway User Fee category, and expenses exceeding \$160,000 in the Highway and Streets for snow removal due to the blizzard during the winter of 2009/2010, the city manager and city treasurer were able to implement measures to ensure that the financial condition of the city remained strong. These measures include implementing a spending freeze excluding routine maintenance for vehicles and equipment, office supplies, etc. These efforts must also be attributed to the great financial management of both the Chief and Public Works Director. The treasurer has a more detailed report which will be posted on the city's website once approved by the Mayor and Council. The audit report will be presented to the council at the work session on November 16, 2010.

***Other Newsworthy Items***

Another business has recently opened in the City. Rosa's Floral and Gift Shop is located in the 3200 block of Rhode Island Avenue. A small eatery in College Park has some interest in relocating to Mount Rainier. The MRBA and management are working to see if this can become a reality.

***Snow Removal Equipment***

Management has received new quotes for the cost of a 2011 Dump Truck and bobcat. It has been determined that the purchase of a backhoe is cost prohibitive. Now that the quotations have been received, City Treasurer Manjani will research the best financing options and provide feedback to the Mayor and Council.