



City of Mount Rainier

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CITY MANAGER REPORT APRIL 6, 2010

Property Liens

The City Manager has requested the following liens against property owners: failure to register vacant property and pay appropriate fees \$ 27,025.00; failure of property owners to correct code violations that were abated by the city \$2,570.00; Court judgments \$2,157.50. Additionally, another property owner is in arrears of vacant building fees in the amount of \$4,800. The owner has been instructed to remit payment within a 30 day period or a lien will be placed against the property. There are five other properties that went into foreclosure in September 2009 and January 2010 representing another \$3,000 in vacant building fees and \$2,000 in late fees if not paid within the next 30 days.

Business District

Many of the city's businesses are in disrepair in terms of unsightliness and other property maintenance issues. The manager has been working with the board members of MRBA to address some of these issues and code enforcement has been instructed to increase the city's zero tolerance of property neglect. As a result of this effort, fines will continue to increase and a request for court adjudication is being requested authorizing the city to take action and lien the property for the cost. Letters have been sent to several businesses regarding property maintenance issues. In some instances the violation is for unclean interior structure. Non compliance will result in court requests for adjudication and subsequent property liens. In most of these cases the city has been more than lenient and tolerant by giving extensions to the business owners to improve the conditions of their property.

Community Legacy

Two of the three grants with this program have been closed out with the final reports submitted by the manager. These grants represent \$210,000 for the library development which will pay for approximately 2/3 of the cost for the design drawings. The program monitor has allowed us to close out these grants utilizing the funds awards up front as opposed to the normal reimbursement procedure. The third grant was awarded for \$25,000 and we are approaching our one year anniversary with this project which has focused on the architectural plan for the 3200 block of Rhode Island Avenue.

Meetings with the firm of Torti Gallas resulted in discussions regarding the possibility of developing three-four story residential apartments or townhomes on the site which formerly housed the Bass Liquor store and the Dudley Funeral Home property. Torti Gallas agrees with the firm of Cunningham and Quill, architects and consultants with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) that this site should be used for residential development for several reasons:

1. The retail market is at an all time low and is expected to remain in this position for at least the next 5 years
2. It is extremely difficult for developers to obtain financing for retail development
3. Parking requirements for retail almost double that for residential
4. Mount Rainier already has substantial retail with a mix of those doing fairly well versus those that are struggling
5. There are a number of existing retail spaces that are vacant in the business district which supports the difficulty in the retail market

Torti Gallas expects to impact the final M-NCPPC proposed development guidelines because the final approved guidelines will of course impact any future development. A meeting with the M-NCPPC development team and the city's MUTC committee is scheduled for April 14, 2010 at 7:00 pm at city hall to review the proposed guidelines.

Training

The Assistant City Manager attended an economic development conference which basically supports the findings of Torti Gallas. The conference also focused on soliciting development proposals through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) when the responses are expected from a wide variety of sources. This affords the city the ability to narrow down the search to the most qualified firms or individuals and then solicit responses through a Request for Proposal (RFP). A RFP is usually the tool used when the responses are expected to be at a minimum and for smaller development projects. The square footage of the potential development of the 3200 block of Rhode Island Avenue is considered a small project. Council members from both wards attended this conference as well.

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Code Enforcement officers attended property maintenance and housing inspection certification training and will renew their membership with the Code Enforcement Zoning Officials Association.

Staff will attend an Injured Worker's Insurance seminar entitled "Best Practices for Supervisors" this week as well.

Federal Transit Administration

Management has submitted its request to the Federal Transit Administration to use the federal award for property acquisition of the former Blue Bird Cab lot for use as a parking lot for bus passengers and bus operators. In all likelihood the city will have to amend the original application and we are currently awaiting instructions on how to accomplish this.

Department of Housing and Community Development

The City now has a signed agreement with the Community Development Block Grant program for Program Year 34 for \$100,000. Due to a decrease in funding, the award was not initially approved for that program year however the city was successful in seeking approval and an extension to use the funds. The projects for this grant award will repair curbs and gutters on 30th, 31st and 32nd Street and re-pavement of the 35th Street alley. The city is still awaiting approval of the reprogrammed funds from other jurisdictions for Program Year 35 for repairs to city bridges and improvement in the lights in Kaywood Garden Apartments. A hearing is scheduled for today in Upper Marlboro to take public comment. Assistant City Manager will be in attendance. The amount of this funding is approximately \$260,000.

Public Works

This department has been working on a number of projects related to the April 9, 2010 Centennial Event in addition to graffiti removal, grass cutting, etc. They are behind schedule in terms of striping the lot at 3200 Rhode Island Avenue but are expected to get this done by Tuesday, April 13, 2010. The parking by permit only signs were delivered last week.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement will resume the spring and summer trash detail for violations of the city's trash code. The officers have been instructed that there will be zero tolerance for trash accumulation and property maintenance code violations. The trash code violations summary booklet has been revised and will be distributed to those who are in violation.

