



## **City of Mount Rainier Maryland Mayor & Council Work-Session**

**Date: February 21, 2012**

**Place: One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier MD 20712**

**Presiding officer: Mayor Miles**

**Councilmember's present: Jimmy Tarlau, Ivy Thompson, Brent Bolin, William Updike**

**Meeting called to order at 7:10 pm**

**Agenda read by Mayor Miles**

**Mayor Miles met with Michael Gumpert from Gateway CDC and sent an e-mail out to Council to see if they can meet in a special meeting on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2012. One response was received from Councilman Bolin with 5:30 pm is good for him. Mr. Gumpert would like to bring it to the Council before it's unveiled at the breakfast, CDC's strategic plan. Mr. Gumpert would like to talk with the Council about installing gardens at the Singer Building, Café and in front of Larry Solomon's building. Tuesday at 5:30 pm is good for Councilman Tarlau and Councilwoman Thompson is not available. The Special meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 7: pm for the purpose of discussing Gateway CDC's strategic plan.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**Mrs. Thompson is requesting more time be given to the Council before scheduling meetings. Councilwoman Thompson wants to know if the Council will receive a copy to the plan prior to the meeting and would like to see the number of hours allocated to the project and what the fee is going to be.**

**Mr. Gumpert: Executive Director of CDC**

**I will try to get a copy of that prior to the meeting.**

**New initiatives called gateway conservancy is based on a proven model from Pittsburg PA Pictures are being passed around. The conservancy takes vacant land no one wants and its vacant blighted land and in high traffic areas. They provide the soil, flowers and garden design. A stipend is given to the garden captain and they partner with the community organizations that assemble volunteers.**

**These people have created 300 gardens through Alleghany County. We want to do something similar on a smaller scale. WE are proposing 4 gardens 2 in Mount Rainier 1 in Brentwood and 1 in North Brentwood. I took recommendations from Jan Townsend from the Neighborhood Design Center on the 2 proposed for Mount Rainier .She is willing to supply plants and garden design services for free and we have our eye on two sites.**

**The benefit from this program is that it will create a striking improvement and complement the existing gardens the city maintains. Each garden has a garden captain who is paid a small amount of money three to four hundred dollars. They are responsible for the garden but have a lot of help. The CDC will recruit the volunteers. The person to coordinate would be a Maryland AmeriCorps volunteer. The program cost \$6,750.00 and you get a person for one year and they get health insurance. We would have them recruit volunteers for the program.**

**Councilman Bolin thinks it is a great program.**

**Mr. Gumpert:**

**September 1, 2012 is when they will start and the planting will start in October.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**Have you approached Larry Solomon since one is in front of his building?**

**Mr. Gumpert:**

**We wanted to see your interest before we took another stop.**

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**I didn't know there was that much space.**

**Mr. Gumpert:**

**There is quite a bit of space in front of the Singer Building and the Café.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**The Council will get back with you on this.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**How do you want to handle the new parking lot? Do we want it to be free or install parking meters?**

**When we looked at this awhile ago staff thought we could do this as a free lot to ser the downtown with a certain amount of signage. MRBA wants a free lot to help serve their businesses.**

**Jeannelle Wallace City Manager:**

**The signage is no overnight parking. The purpose of purchasing the lot is to have free parking in the downtown area to encourage the use of public transportation and serve a dual purpose.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**Let's leave as is and build a good ridership and get good signage.**

**Councilman Updike:**

**Is there going to be a sign in the circle to show where parking lot is? And would it be helpful to have a two or four hour minimum?**

**Mayor Miles:**

**How would we enforce it?**

**Councilman Taralu:**

**Let's see how it works for one or two months and see if people use it and then re-visit it.**

**Councilman Bolin: agrees with Councilman Tarlau and he says I worry that the fee would be unnecessary because it's already paid for.**

**Councilman Updike:**

**Did we spend all the money from the grant? There is couple of spots we could put tree planters and we could do a public education sign about storm water benefits.**

**Atha Grant**

**Councilman Bolin:**

**Jeannelle, I haven't met with Atha yet. We hope the meeting will be Thursday afternoon. The funding for this program is bad and they estimate each heritage area will get \$38,000.00. They have an 1812 bicentennial priority.**

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**We should try and find out the waterways and roadways that went through our city.**

**Campaign Finance Resolution**

**Tina Silverman 4216 34<sup>th</sup> Street Mount Rainer, MD**

**Ms. Silverman is requesting from the Council to join other cities and states that are signing resolutions to amend the Supreme Court decision of Citizens United that equated corporations as people. If we decided to do it I would send the resolution to the MD Delegates so that we can join the roster of others who are on board with this resolution.**

**Brooke Kid Joe's Movement Emporium**

**As a follow up several Councilmember's ask to better develop the budget and share it and comeback to the Council to discuss and see if it is possible to get some support for the Better Block Project. The main part of the project is symbolic transformation of the former funeral home. It will paint the building white on two facings, Eastern Avenue and Rhode Island Avenue. At the Better Block Project citizens will be able to contribute to the transformation of the property; taking it from vacancy to vibrancy. We have some support with this project. The majority of monies will go to folks painting and supplies around that.**

**Councilman Updike:**

**I think it will be a great project and he is thanking Brooke for the hard work and he will be in support of the project.**

**City Manager:**

**My concern is the monies is not being utilizes on a building that's permanent. I think it would be important to put it on a building that's not going to come down like the side of Francis Carry Out. That would do a lot for our businesses on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. I think the money would be better spent put on a building that going to be around.**

**Councilman Bolin:**

I don't disagree with Jeannelle but the entry way is ugly. I think this will help u with some of the efforts trying to develop those properties to show that we are serious and it's cheaper than knocking it down. I think it would be worth doing.

**Councilman Updike:**

It will be up for two years.

**Councilman Tarlau:]**

I'm supportive and it will add to some kind of publicity for the town. I think \$4,000.00 is an appropriate amount.

**Councilman Updike:**

I'd like to create a public art fund in the next budget cycle.

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

The amount expected does not include any in kind services for the city.

**Brooke Kidd:**

NO, I did not include in kind services in the budget. I see the city as a partner just as MRBA and Gateway they all have staff time going into this project and I didn't reflect those because they are covered under our program budgets.

**Mayor Miles:**

I'm glad to see a 2<sup>nd</sup> Better Block Project but disappointed that painting on the ground painting didn't last. Mayor supports Brooke's project maybe not \$4000.00 worth but at least part of it.

**Councilman Updike:**

The Design Review Board has been reviewing banners for the Arts District. There is a proposal for a banner in size of 8x30 ft. that would go on the Art Space Building.

**City Manager:**

Is part of this project going to look at painting Newton Square Apartments?

**Brooke Kidd:**

Yes, that's part of the Project and we're looking at contracting property owner and doing two things. Some low level store front or façade improvements and matching some of the businesses from Anchor Insurance Company to Roses Florist with any open business with a professional merchandiser. We have two in the Mount Rainier area willing to work with the businesses.

**Mayor Miles:**

I think we have a consensus and it will need to be on the agenda to determine some amounts.

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

I want some recommendation from staff on how to allocate the money and what line item it will come from and we will have an answer for you by the next public meeting. Also, asking the city to partner in the community arts program to partner with Joe's.

**Mayor Miles:**

The street car program is running out of money. Send a letter stating we would like for the street cars to come through Mount Rainier.

**Councilman Bolin:**

The Rhode Island Avenue project is about 10 years in the future. Their first project is not going great so that put the future of the program in doubt. I think we should put the city on record that if the Rhode Island Avenue line happens we are interested in doing a historic turn around in Mount Rainier. We need to remember the asset we do have and that is excellent bus service. A subcommittee under MUTC is looking at how to make the area in front of city hall green without screwing up the bus service.

Councilman Tarlau feels we should talk to the County Executive about the street car program. There should be two letters not one to go out.

**Bryan Knedler: Resolution 2008**

Mr. Knedler is asking a zoning district be set up and it was put on hold. We failed to get local zoning control through the state legislature. Montgomery County was granted but we didn't get it. The county was going to set up an approach to limiting mac-mansions but it fell apart. In MUTC the only things that need reviewed are things that need a building permit from the county. In the last three or four years there's been a committee working on a detailed site plan. The architectural overlay zone seems to be the way to go. Each district has its own guidelines or book. Any town that wants to do this will have their own. It would be a local committee that will report to the planning board.

**Bryan Knedler: continued**

**We would set up our own process. The big stuff needs a detailed site plan and it is an expensive process. I ask that we be put first in line and they honor our resolution from three years ago.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**It sounds like a homeowners association without paying the fees. Park and Planning is not going to work on this with us to determine what the criteria are going to be. The community has changed three or four times in the 10 years that I have lived here.**

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**I have mixed feelings about it. I remember about the couches and the issue was what standards we have. There consistency issue. I don't see a strong reason for us to change on what we voted on three years ago.**

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**I thought it was a good idea.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**What's the difference between a detailed site plan and what you currently have to do? How different are the drawings.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Does it require a detailed site plan for a building permit?**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**I can get more information and revisit this.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Are their intention is not to consult with us before they write these standards?**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**Park& Planning is not writing the zones for us.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Yes, they will be directed by the planning board.**

**Resident Elizabeth Beasley:**

**I'm interested in historic preservation and when talking about developing standards there are groups within the county that can help you and historic preservation can help, historic cultural and trust.**

**Councilman Updike,**

**I thought this would give us the permission to do our own planning.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**It gives you limited say about extending width and height on homes depending on the size of the project.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**I would like to put my differences on record.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**Come up with those differences and a solution.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Each zone needs to consider what is considered maintenance, and what falls below the level of a county building permit and anything above county building permit we don't control anyway. The zone in between is the important one. If you want to come up with a list of things you don't want to see in the standards.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**There are so many issues and concerns I want to make sure we address all issues so if the idea is not to include all the small details I'm okay with that and if it includes only the front of the house and not the interior that's okay and I want that on record.**

**Councilman Bolin:**

**What under the process proposed can we control and what is out of our control? I agree with Mr. Knedler what isn't clear is where the new bill ties our hands and where it gives us freedom. If that can be mapped out for me so I can find out how comfortable. I am with the bill as written and then explore that in a focus way with Mr. Washington in terms of them providing specific feedback. That would be helpful.**

## **Skate Park**

### **Mayor Miles:**

**Park & Planning is not prepared to do anything with the skate park until the city makes a decision on what and where they will spend the remaining \$150,000.00 on. There have been questions and concerns about putting that money towards the park it was originally assigned for which is the park up from the skate or use it for a fence that really does not address the issue. The proposed dome is not on the table. What Park& Planning wants to know is do we want to use the \$150,000.00 to redo the upper part of the park or to put up the fence. We need to make a decision on the upper park or the fence. One of the things that could happen to the money is that it could be re-programmed to other projects.**

### **Councilman Updike:**

**Mr. Updike wants another meeting with property owners around the park and have a public meeting and asks if that's how they want us to proceed.**

### **Mayor Miles:**

**I'm not opposed to another meeting but asking them how you want us to proceed is off the table. We can talk about a fence or a park that what's on the table. It's not just a few property owners decision it's a community decision on a fence or a park.**

### **Councilman Bolin:**

**I think we should be differential to our ward I colleagues because both have been closely involved with this. I'm sympathetic to the people who have impacted by this. I'm suggesting using part of the money for the fence and the rest for the skate park.**

**The Mayor's direction is a call to Park & Planning about the fence and the rest on the park,**

**Councilman Tarlau wants it on the agenda.**

**Councilman Bolin will follow up on the Atha support letter for the 47<sup>th</sup> delegation.**

**A grant chart given of grants applied for and due dates for some of the ones upcoming. The Council would like to help apply.**

## **Gateway CDC**

**Gateway is putting up banners to grab driver's attention.**

### **Councilman Updike:**

**The Design Review Board has been meeting with the CDC to look at potential designs. The CDC would like to do crowd sourcing on the final decision and bring it to the Council and then the people to get the community involved about the banner.**

**Councilman Bolin:**

The MUTC met for the purpose of talking about the banner and I think they are supportive of the effort but there are questions about the size and placement of the banner. An architect on the panel had doubt that the art space building could support a 30x8 or something that big. The original concept for signage on that building was three blade signs along the Rhode Island side of that building. MUTC said it's better to go with that concept of the building and try to do three large signs instead of one enormous one. The question is can we do this because of the limitations of the MUTC so they are seeking a legal opinion on whether the government violates its own rules for signage or does the MUTC play trump it. MUTC's position is going with the original concept on that building for signage. Sarah from Park & Planning is going to go back and pull up that detail site plan.

**Mayor Miles:**

The new route one bus signs are going up and down the corridor.

**Councilman Bolin:**

They are up.

**Mayor Miles:**

All of the stops between here and IDEA are listed.

Councilman Bolin says that the Council is in support of the MUTC opinion.

**Councilman Updike:**

The problem is that the grant ends on May 30<sup>th</sup> or June 30<sup>th</sup> and everything must be done by then.

**Mayor Miles:**

I'm saying we would rather go with what's already out there in terms of the three way signing and if they say no we can't do it then we have concerns about the big one. The concerns are about the anchoring and the support of it and if the building will support it.

**Councilman Updike:**

The next council meeting we need to vote on the sustainability plan and get a resolution to create a green team.

## **Allison Street Levy**

The city manager and Mayor Miles met with the county about the current levy running from 31<sup>st</sup> Street up to the Seven -11 on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and continues down to the northwest branch has to be certified. The project is anticipated to go on for the next three years. The first two years will be planning the work is anticipated to cost around 10 million.

The major piece for us is the 34<sup>th</sup> Street bridge that takes us from 34<sup>th</sup> and Arundel to Queens town Apartments has to be completely removed and taken out which will lead to road closing that will last for a year. They have to raise the bridge 6 inches to 3 feet so they can widen the levy underneath. In some places they will build the levy taller than in order to guarantee the water flow. The levy will have to cross 34<sup>th</sup> Street where it stops at the 7-11 to the old track auto. In addition behind the standard press building the levy has a hole in it. They want to close up completely if the owner allows it so that the levy will be continuous.

With the new regulations the trees can only be planted 15 feet of the levy. The trees planted in the past years have to be moved. We have over 30 trees and we have no say on what's going to be done.

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**When does it start?**

**Mayor Miles:**

They started June of last year.

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**Will it affect the rain garden we just did?**

**Mayor Miles:**

No

**Councilman Bolin:**

They are pursuing some creative ways to solve some of their problems.

**Mayor Miles:**

The City of Mount Rainer has a pumping station and Brent I want you close t the project.

**Councilman Bolin:**

I suggest that we push back on them about the trees.

**Councilman Tarlau:**

**A lot of this looks like it's in Brentwood and the trees are in Brentwood.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Go to our congressman because they have power over the core.**

**3719 34<sup>th</sup> Street (Steve Paul) wants to tear the house down because it has no foundation and they want to turn it into a parking lot for this area.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**Do they have an engineering report?**

**Mayor Miles:**

**We need to get our own study done on the house before we let them tear it down.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**I would like to see what they have first before we spend money.**

**Bryan Knedler:**

**Federal money was used to buy that property and the national registry will have to sign off and it is a contributing structure to the historic district. Did they put that into the MUTC zone? If it's still in the R-55 zone I don't think they can put a parking lot there. Brent will follow up with MUTC on this.**

**Councilman Updike:**

**The GSA is moving and I thought we might bring them to our gateway.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**Make sure the county is on line with what we are asking.**

**Councilman Brent Bolin:**

**If it was located in North Brentwood it will still help us.**

**Mayor Miles:**

**Grants are spent for what they are approved for.**

**Councilwoman Thompson:**

**I want Council to vote on expenditures over \$10,000.00 and contracts to do the work.**

**Mayor Miles doesn't see the need for the Council to vote on who gets the contracts.**

**Councilman Bolin:**

**The bag fee program in Washington D.C. makes two million a year.**

**Mayor Miles doesn't agree with the bag program and people have changed to reusable bags.**

**The Mayor & Council are in support of the following.**

- 1. Gambling – opposed**
- 2. Gas Tax –support**
- 3. Online sellers sales tax –no**
- 4. Income Tax – no**

**Motion to Adjourn**

**Councilman Bolin**

**Second Councilwoman Thompson**

**Vote 4-0**