

Adopted: April 2, 2019

## **CITY OF MOUNT RAINIER, MARYLAND RESOLUTION 05-2019**

Introduced by: Bryan Knedler

### **A resolution establishing policies and editorial guidelines for the official newsletter of the City of Mount Rainier.**

**WHEREAS**, the City publishes a newsletter that is mailed to all residents of the City to keep residents informed about City government, policies and programs, and community resources and events.

**WHEREAS**, the City Council wishes to ensure that the newsletter has accurate and unbiased content that is valuable to the widest possible range of residents.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and City Council of Mount Rainier, Maryland, that the following policies and editorial guidelines shall apply to the official City newsletter.

#### **Newsletter Policies and Editorial Guidelines**

##### **Section 1. Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of the City's newsletter is to inform City residents and businesses about activities of their local government. The goal is to enable and encourage residents and businesses to participate in local government and community life. To achieve the goals, the newsletter will:

- (a) Inform readers about activities of the City, County, and State governments, City-appointed bodies, and groups and programs that are City Council endorsed and/or funded.
- (b) Provide accurate information about City policies and programs.
- (c) Provide space for reports from elected officials, City staff, and official City bodies.
- (d) Publish official notices of legislation, hearings, appointments, elections, job vacancies, and other City business.
- (e) Be translated into Spanish and, if the City Council appropriates funding, be translated into other languages.
- (f) Be mailed to every address in the City and be made available in digital format on the City website and social media outlets.
- (g) Abide by the following editorial guidelines.

## **Section 2. Oversight**

- (a) The City Manager or designee will appoint and supervise the editor and is responsible for monitoring each newsletter issue for compliance with these guidelines before publication.
- (b) The City Manager or designee will review the editor's performance annually.
- (c) The editor is responsible for overseeing the production of the newsletter in accordance with these guidelines. The editor shall also supervise any hired individuals, contractors, volunteers, writers, artists, and photographers.
- (d) The City Council shall provide a budget for the newsletter and staff in each fiscal year.
- (e) The City Council, through the budget process, will specify the number of issues for each fiscal year. The newsletter may be published monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly. In addition, special issues may be published if authorized by the Council.

## **Section 3. Rights and Responsibilities of Authors**

- (a) Authors have the responsibility to abide by the word count limits, formatting, deadlines, and other requirements established by these editorial guidelines and the newsletter editor.
- (b) Authors shall edit, cut, and correct materials if requested by the editor to conform to these guidelines or meet production requirements.
- (c) When space is limited, the author may use a shortened version of the article for the print newsletter, and provide the full version electronically through appropriate means.

## **Section 4. Rights and Responsibilities of the Editor**

- (a) The editor has the right to reject or edit material that does not conform to these guidelines.
- (b) The editor has the responsibility to ensure that fair, accurate, and objective coverage is given on all issues.
- (c) The editor may edit material for grammar and length so long as the author's content, meaning, and intent are not changed.
- (d) The editor must prioritize the importance of the offered material for each month and may hold material to keep an issue within budget.
- (e) The editor is responsible for adhering to the budget provided by the City Council.
- (f) The editor may publish in more than one ink color, but must remain within budget for the fiscal year.
- (g) The editor sets the deadlines and production schedule for each issue. The editor timely shall establish and communicates the deadlines to the Council, staff, community and authors in sufficient time for the submission of content.
- (h) The editor enforces the deadlines fairly and equitably.

### **Section 5. Official City Content**

- (a) Official public notices and announcements will be published as directed by the City Manager.
- (b) Reports of City Council and department activities will be published in a timely, accurate, and objective manner.
- (c) Official City content will be given priority when allocating space in the newsletter.
- (d) Reports from public officials shall be limited up to 300 words in English and published as space allows, as determined by the editor, and may be edited, shortened, or otherwise modified as deemed necessary. When space is limited, authors should consider using a shortened version for the print newsletter, and then provide the full version electronically through appropriate means.
- (e) Public officials' reports will be related to City, County, or State events as a way to inform constituents.
- (f) The Newsletter will not include endorsement of candidates in any election.
- (g) Reports from City departments may be edited for clarity, conciseness, and adherence to these policies. The editor may provide a summary in the printed newsletter and include a link or email address where the full report can be obtained.
- (h) Reports from official City administrative bodies are limited to 200 words in English with an exception for the Board of Elections prior to a City election.
- (i) All content prepared by City officials and employees shall comply with Chapter 1D, Ethics, of the Mount Rainier Code.
- (j) The Mount Rainier Business Association and the Gateway Community Development Corporation may provide informational articles as long as they are not advertisements for specific businesses, contain no graphics, and are less than 150 words.
- (k) Articles about businesses that receive funding through grants or loans may be featured in articles by the City's Economic Development Department.

### **Section 6. Advertisements**

- (a) Advertisements are not published in the City newsletter.
- (b) The Mount Rainier Business Association and the Gateway CDC may include stand-alone inserts on an occasional basis, upon approval by the editor. Stand-alone inserts must be copy ready. The MRBA or CDC will pay the City for the cost of printing the inserts and any extra postage required to mail the newsletter because of the inserts.
- (c) Inserts must comply with these guidelines.

## **Section 7. Political Endorsements and Election Coverage**

- (a) Political endorsements will not be published in the newsletter.
- (b) Election coverage will be limited to City elections.
- (c) Coverage of City elections is limited to:
  - (i) a listing of all official candidates and issues on the ballot;
  - (ii) the municipal election results;
  - (iii) brief statements (limited to 150 words) from all candidates who will appear on the official ballot;
  - (iv) election publicity, procedures and deadlines.
- (d) Candidate statements guidelines are as follows:
  - (i) A brief candidate statement of 150 words or less in English that complies with other editorial guidelines in this resolution. If the provided statement exceeds 100 words, the editor will ask for the candidate to revise the statement if time allows, or may terminate the statement with the last full sentence prior to the 150 word.
  - (ii) Small photographs are permitted at the discretion of the editor who will provide the required formatting. All photos must be of the same size and quality.
  - (iii) Statements will be grouped according to the office being sought (Ward 1, Ward 2, Mayor) and then listed in alphabetical order.
  - (iv) Statements will not include personal attacks.
  - (v) Candidates may provide links to their websites and their email addresses for more information.
  - (vi) A disclaimer will be published that states:

“Each candidate was asked to submit a statement of no more than 150 words in English. The statements are published as submitted if they comply with the newsletter editorial guidelines. No endorsement of any candidate is intended. Every effort was made to provide equal access to all of the candidates.”
- (e) Ballot questions. The newsletter will publish arguments for and against City ballot questions and initiatives. The editor will determine the word limit, which will be applicable to both sides of each question or initiative.
- (f) The Board of Elections is permitted to exceed the 200 word limit for City boards and commissions when providing information about an upcoming election; however, the editor may limit the word count and provide a link to the City’s website where more detailed information can be provided.

**Section 8. Community Organizations and Events**

- (a) The printed newsletter is constrained by a budget, space limits, and ability of the editor to oversee production, including translation into other languages.
- (b) The only organizations and events that will be provided space in the newsletter other than as part of a Councilmember report are those that are City Council sponsored or funded.
- (d) Community organizations' events may be included in a list of upcoming events that provides, date, time, place, short event description, and contact information for further details.

**Section 9. Graphics and Photographs.**

- (a) Graphics and photographs should be used sparingly and are of lower priority than textual information. An article may offer a link to a photograph or graphic or provide an email address that can be used to request such material.
- (b) The editor will determine the best formatting for photographs.

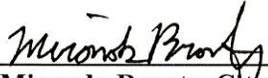
**Section 10. Opinions and Rebuttals**

Letters to the editor and rebuttals are not published.

**Section 11. Enforcement and Severability**

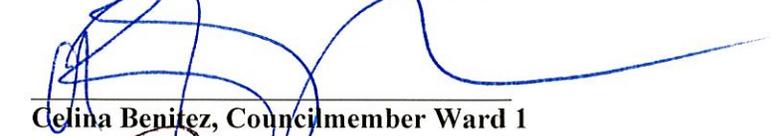
- (a) The editor and City Manager are responsible for compliance with this editorial policy.
- (b) If any part of these guidelines are found to be invalid or otherwise unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such finding shall not operate to invalidate any other part or section of these guidelines.

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Miranda Braatz, City Manager

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Malinda Miles, Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Luke Cheseck, Councilmember Ward 1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Celina Benitez, Councilmember Ward 1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Shiyali Shah, Councilmember Ward 2

  
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Bryan Knedler, Councilmember Ward 2

