

Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: January 8, 2019

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, UPPER-LEVEL CITY HALL

Call to Order

7:00 PM, Council Chambers, City Hall, One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier MD

Presiding Officer

Mayor Malinda Miles

Officials Present

Councilmember Celina Benitez (Vice Mayor)

Councilmember Luke Chesek

Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Councilmember Shivali Shah

Staff Present

City Manager Miranda Braatz

City Clerk Da'rrell Belton

Minutes provided by:

City Clerk

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Announcements

Summary of Closed Session

Councilmember Celina Benitez read summary of Dec. 19, 2018 Closed Session on sale of 3200 Rhode Island Property.

Reading of Agenda into Record by Councilmember Celina Benitez

Introduction of New Director of Finance and Director of Economic Development

- Mr. Blackwell is new Director of Finance of the City of Mount Rainier. He grew up in Arlington, VA. He has a background in accounting with a BA from DeVry and Master Degree from UMBC. He was previous Finance Director for Andrews Federal Credit Union.
- Mr. Hopkins is new Director of Economic Development. He is a graduate of Syracuse University in Management Info Systems, Transportation Distribution Systems, and International Marketing. He is

an Air Force Vet and has 20 years' experience in Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Adult Education.

Mayor and Council thanked City Manager Miranda Braatz for the two hires and the Directors for the work they have already started.

Public Comments

- Pat Sermon 3000 Block of Taylor Street - She has lived in Mount Rainier for 30 years and is a senior. She would like the City to have auto phone calls to seniors for checks. Mayor Malinda Miles is working with some residents to set up manual senior calls for wellness. She will have to check up on auto calls. Councilmember Celina Benitez said in the "The Message" there is a notice neighbors for list of seniors for calls and visits.
- Mark Possard 32nd and Upshur – Taxes are too high in Mount Rainier. He felt taxes paid by residents are not used efficiently. This is decades in the making. He wants City Manager and Finance Director to do a comparison of other municipalities for taxes and find best practices to begin discussion on high taxes.
- Cindy Alexander 35th Street - New tax assessments are quite high. Mount Rainier is possibly the 2nd highest tax bracket. We need to know the budget actuals for every line item for every month. If we have a reserve at end of the year, that can be used for tax break. She wants Mayor and Council to look at the tax rate vs. tax cap. She has homestead tax credit, but new buyers don't have it. That is hugely problematic for them. People have lost homes over this. In next budget cycle, please look at reducing the property tax rate.
- Charnette Robinson Perry Street – Happy New Year. Couple citizens could not attend this meeting and she is speaking on their behalf. They want actuals and detail line items in the budget. What is the status of Police Chief hiring? She thanked Miranda Braatz for crime stats and she hopes these stats continue under new Chief. Mayor Malinda Miles said City is close to announcing a new Chief very soon.

Councilmember Shivali Shah said Council and City are talking about the tax rate and the will be discussion at a upcoming Work Session. Councilmember Celina Benitez they are looking at tax assessment for vacant homes so new owners are not taxed at previous rate.

Police Department Report

Interim Police Chief reviewed crime stats. From the beginning of Summer we had problem of auto theft, so the Police put more cops on the issue and the stats have gone down by half as of December. Calls for suspicious autos has dropped to two by Dec. down from 11 in November. 123 crimes in August and now down to 83 by December. He maintained minimum mandatory patrol and mandated State training for officers. During the holidays, he had extra officers out using overtime and that may have helped lower crime rate. Council is happy about more visible Police with lights on car. Councilmember Shivali Shah is happy with the report and with new Police Chief and new City Website the reports will be more available. She also hopes the new Communications hire can get more news from the Police to the community. Interim Police Chief said the Police Officers have stepped up to do overtime when needed and reporting.

No Public Comment

Resolution 20-19 Accountability for Quarterly Reporting

Councilmember Luke Chesek reviewed a need for quarterly reporting from City Departments and for the City Manager. He wanted a way by calendar year that each City Department Head can report out goals, risks, progress, and area of concerns in bullet point form quarterly. Then the Council and Mayor can then address issues shown on the reports with the City Manager and give feedback to City Manager through out the year. Reports will be made public without personnel information. He is fine with an amendment to Council Rules or it can be Resolution. This is first reading of this Resolution and he would like an amendment to Council Rules. Councilmember Shivali Shah is in favor and wants specification for implementation. She wants to add that after the City Department Reports are received within one month each Dept. Head, City Manager, and Mayor and Council have Open Meeting to discuss the reports. Mayor Malinda Miles said we need clean copy of this Resolution. Councilmember Shivali Shah wants this Resolution to go to Work Session to hammer out details. Mayor Malinda Miles asked Councilmember Shivali Shah to send her changes to Council prior to next Work Session. Rules on assignment to the City Manager will also be reviewed.

Resolution 2-2019 – Confirmation of Collective Bargain Agreement, Timeline, and Negotiation Team

Ken Worthy, President, Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), was present. Council and Mayor asked for extension of current contract for six months. FOP and Mayor and Council agreed to delay bargaining for six months till July 1, 2019, with exception that bargaining on Section 9 on Compensation, Wages, and Time as of March 2019.

Motion to Adopt Resolution 2-2019 – Confirmation of Collective Bargain Agreement, Timeline, and Negotiation Team: Mayor Malinda Miles
Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler
Second: Councilmember Luke Chesek
Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Councilmember Shivali Shah she rather negotiate at once. If they want to start in March, all should be done in March. Councilmember Bryan Knedler wants the wage part done as the budget is crafted. Councilmember Luke Chesek is in favor of delaying bargaining. Mayor Malinda Miles said Mayor and Council need to set parameters to bargaining in March. FOP and City Manager have discussed bargaining in March, but agreed to six month delay and March start to bargaining on compensation. Councilmember Shivali Shah and Mayor were concerned with benefit costs that are not included in March negotiation that impact the budget. There was debate on the current resolution. Ken Worthy, President, FOP, said if there is not agreement, we must go forward with the full negotiation.

Public Comments

Resident – Chief of Police and City Manager were the negotiators. Now the City Manager and City Attorney are the lead. This is concerning.

Charnette Robinson Perry Street – She thinks Chief of Police would be integral part of negotiation and not just invited.

Councilmember Bryan Knedler appreciates comments. There is Chief Negotiators which is City Manager and City Attorney. The new Police Chief will be part of Negotiation Team.
Resident – Why pay attorney to negotiate the collective bargaining. City Manager Miranda Braatz read the Resolution 2-2019 is now Resolution 1-2019.

Motion to Adopt Resolution 1-2019 – Confirmation of Collective Bargain Agreement, Timeline, and Negotiation Team: Mayor Malinda Miles
Ayes: Councilmember Bryan Knedler and Councilmember Luke Chesek
Nayes: Mayor Malinda Miles, Councilmember Bryan Knedler, Councilmember Shivali Shah
Vote Recorded: 2-3-0, Motion Not Passed,

Motion to Adopt Resolution 1-2019 – Confirmation of Collective Bargain Agreement, Timeline, and Negotiation Team This Resolution failed and was sent Back to Work Session

Vote for Members of the Ethics Commission

Votes for members of the Ethics Commission have been counted. City Manager Mirands Braatz read into record the members of the City of Mount Rainier Ethics Committee: Mark Possard, Bob Lamb, Emerson Pigoli, and Don Hibbard.

Motion to Approve Mark Possard, Bob Lamb, Emerson Pigoli, and Don Hibbard for the Ethics Commission
Move: Councilmember Shivali Shah
Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez
Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Mount Rainier Library Renovation Funding and Repair

Councilmember Bryan Knedler said initially it was public stated that it would be 20K to repair the asbestos issue. Now the Department of Public Works says that it can be done by encasement by carpet. City Manager Miranda Braatz says she thinks it cost about 9K. Councilmember Celina Benitez said we can do a call out to the community to help move furniture and books out for the repair for free. She wants all the repairs done. There is new CEO for Library that start Jan. 15. Council is working to get on her calendar. City Manager Miranda Braatz says there is money in the contingency to pay for repair and Head of Dept. of Public Works most likely has quotes that she will have him share with cost specifics. Mayor Malinda Miles says books can go to local schools and Hyattsville Library. Councilmember Bryan Knedler says to put books in Potts Hall. Mayor and Council told City Manager to move forward on the steps needed so that repairs can get done now.

New Business

Cert and Recreation Committees Reports

- Danielle Carter Liaison for Cert Team - First year came to close in December. Elections were held and new President is Jack Priestly a former Scout Leader, Secretary is Sandra Joseph ham radio

specialist, and Charnette Robison is the Training Officer and a former First Responder, and Danielle will continue as Committee Liaison.

- Danielle Carter Chair of Recreation Committee – Parade of Lights and Cider Stations went very well and she thanked everyone involved. Citizens were very happy to see the City lit up for the holidays and the awards. She collected suggestions from this year and it will happen again in 2019. Joe’s, People Housing, 3200 Newton, 4606 26th, 27 36th Street all won awards. There were many honorable mentions. 29th Street and Southside were lit up. Stocking for Seniors was a big success at Rainier Manor. Next year they will be expanded it to meet the large response and they will reach out to seniors not living in senior housing. She invited public to come up with design for theme “Building Community in Mount Rainier 2019” with winner announced in Feb. They now have 5 voting members by picking up three new voting members. They also have alternative voting member. New members are: Robin Bliss, Marissa Gandi, and Janali Deleon (bilingual). Mayor Malinda Miles asked if the Recreation Committee has asked to be apart of the Recreation Council. Danielle Carter said they have submitted a letter of request, but Recreation Council has not responded. She asked for help. Mayor Malinda Miles said they should contact Antoinette Guerry or Steve Carter of Park and Planning and she will send the emails to her.

Motion to Adjourn Meeting: Mayor Malinda Miles
Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler
Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez
Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed