

Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

DATE: February 19, 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 (Absent)

Councilmember Shivali Shah (Phone)

Staff Present

City Manager Miranda Braatz

Acting City Clerk John Hoatson

City Finance Director

City Economic Development Director

Minutes provided by:

Acting City Clerk John Hoatson

Call to Order and No Pledge of Allegiance

Reading of Agenda into Record by Councilmember Celina Benitez

Discussion on City of Mount Rainier Library

The new Prince George's County Memorial Library System CEO Roberta Phillips introduced herself and her staff in attendance. She has been on the job for six weeks. Her vision for the library is advancing the library for local communities, education, stem, entrepreneurs, arts, and innovation, She is interested in maker space programming. She is looking for grants and corporate partnerships. She is living in Brentwood in 3807. She is reviewing all Library plans and buildings in the County. She introduced her Michelle Hamill, CEO of Public Services and Michael Gannon, COO of Services. Mayor Malinda Miles and Councilmembers express how important the City Library is to the community. It is a community library created and supported by the residents.

Councilmember Luke Chesek asked if there is a commitment from County to reopen the library? The City will pay for repairs. If fixing repairs does not get the Library back, what does? CEO Roberta Phillips will talk to the County Council to see where they stand and how they want to move forward. She will meet with Deni Taveras soon. The Library need County approval to move forward. Councilmember Luke Chesek asked to reconnect in early March? CEO Roberta Phillips agreed.

Mayor Malinda Miles said the building was closed due to needed repairs and safety issues. She said Mount Rainier is the only local Library and said other adjacent municipalities will support the Library. She wants assurances that the Library will be reopened because she will be in Annapolis seeking grant money for Library.

Councilmember Celina Benitez asked about what to do with the books. Michael Gannon, COO of Services said they Library System will get new books. The computers must be abated too, wiped down. Mayor Malinda Miles said the City has plans for the upgrading the Library too. Michelle Hamill, CEO of Public Services said the staff was removed due to asbestos. These issues must be fixed along with fire door for staff to return. Councilmember Celina Benitez said she wants the line of communication to stay open between the County Library and the City. Mayor Malinda Miles seconded the need for two-way communication and have the City have regulation. Michelle Hamill, CEO of Public Services, said the vagrancy issues outside the building should be better patrolled. Mayor Malinda Miles said that City can look at timing of employee entry to go with patrols. City Manager Miranda Braatz said a camera tied to Police can be put up. Councilmember Luke Chesek asked for Library Staff Union Rep to send their list of concerns to City Manager Mirands Braatz.

There was a discussion of closed bathrooms and reopening them. City Manager Miranda Braatz said that the City has worked on the vagrancy. CEO Roberta Phillips said their lot of issues of overdoses, prostitution, etc. Mayor Malinda Miles asked the County to share how County runs all the County owned Library. Mount Rainier is City owned. He suggested cameras paid for by the City.

Public Comment

- Hines 3209 Sheppard St. - Her family relies heavily on the Library. They loved story time. They did not use other libraries, but they now use Woodridge in DC. The closing of the Library is further decay of the town center. This is a town of political organizers just let the residents know what advocacy is needed for the Library to be reopened and they will do it.
- Rick White 4000 31st – I would use the Library weekly. They now go to New Carrollton. The City Library is a great resource for the community, but it was not safe, professional environment for the Librarians. The last time he went Library, a man exposed himself to his daughter while using the bathroom outside. He talked to police about vagrancy and it's a 20-year problem. He suggested moving the Library to 34th St. it would help with vagrancy and help the businesses.
- Ariana Charlesman – She and her son are die-hard Library fans. She had a 177 comments in a paper that stated the importance of the Library from users. She said the Librarians are key part of the community. She said the residents are here and willing to help to get the Library doors back open.
- Valerie Solinsky 4100 31st – She gave impassioned comments on need and necessity of local Library. Mount Rainier aims for community. The Library is more than education, its assembly.

Place for people to go. It fosters civil society that is important to empathic democracy. Librarians are part educators and part social workers and hold the space for freedom of people to research. Library is integral part of community and so much more.

- Anthony Hall Friends of Mount Rainier Library – He is a former clerical aide of the Library. Library is accessible. Mount Rainier Elementary was built with knowledge that there is a community Library because their Library is very tiny. Library is needed so student can get book they need there or via interlibrary loan.
- Bill PG Adjunct Professor and ILA – Literacy (Reading and Digital) is thing of practice. People working on GED and MPD has to be done on computer. He has people without access to Library due to transportation or funds. He is happy to work with Library to start English Second Language Class.
- Jason a Representative of Deni Taveras – He was inspired by the support shown for the City Library and Deni Tavares will do her part to get Library reopened.
- Margret Boozer Struthers – This is a community of advocates and it will do what needs to be done to reopen the Library.
- Children – Save the Library!
- Local Child Simone McQuaid – She went there as a little girl and went to story time and color time. Every three weeks she would get new books. She did it until she read every book.
- Local Child Edda Vandermortel – She found the library fun and liked story time. She has good memories. A lot of people enjoy it and still can.
- Local Child Felix – He has good memories of going to Library with his friends to pick out books. He has not been there in a long time and wants it reopened.
- Melissa Glasser Perry Street Brentwood – She painted the mural near the Library. The ability to walk to Library is green. It is a justice and equity issue too that everyone has access to the Library. She is happy there is now a light is on the repair and safety issues of the Library building and the issues of addiction and vagrancy. The locals are able and prepared to lean in to reopen the Library.
- Krista Clark 3700 37th – She spoke about use numbers. The bathrooms are a huge issue. Walking with a tiny child to Library and once you are there you cannot use a bathroom is a problem. Also, the level of programming is low. More programs, more numbers.
- Kelly Bevis 3700 35th St – She lived here for eight years. She organized a book sale to help pay for asbestos. There were new issues mentioned after budget talks have already taken place. There is a need for more an open line of communication between the residents, City Hall, and County Library System. She really hopes Library is sincere in coming back and welcome to the neighborhood.
- Heather Ware 3700 35th St. – Prince George’s Library System has been one of the biggest constants in my life. She is at the Library 3x a week. Going to Bladensburg has been a hassle for her and she really wants the Mount Rainier Libraryr reopened.

CEO Roberta Phillips thanked everyone for coming and speaking. It was heartwarming to her. She is dedicated to bringing the Library back. Mayor Malinda Miles thanked Library Heads and locals for coming. Councilmember Luke Chesek reviewed key points:

- Union Library Rep will be put in contact with City Manager Miranda Braatz with list of items to be addressed.
- Mr. Kamali, Director of Department of Public Works for the City, will look at costs for upgrading electrical capacity, adding security cameras, and getting a new HVAC Boiler for the library.
- Follow-up meeting on moving forward on reopening the Library will be scheduled in March.

Status Update of New City of Mount Rainier Website

Peter Anthy from Granicus, website vendor, presented an update on the website. He used the City of Mount Rainier Department of Public Works pages to demo the development site the company has been working on. It is not yet live. He described the new website as secure, clean, crisp, easily navigable and pages will be translated with Google Translate. The new site is mobile and tablet compatible. It will work with a variety of screen shapes. The site will use an 3rd party app called User Way that is currently free. The City will have to request it and have code sent to the Granicus. This will facilitate ADA compliance for the site. He previewed ways residents can make requests on the website including forms that email staff or intake public service requests for Dept of Public Works or the Police. There is also an app for phones and tablets. Requests can be made from the homepage or within the site. Any changes to the website need to be given now and as launch is soon. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants hint of green in the logo for color. Councilmember Celina Benitez wants e-notifications via subscription. Mayor Malinda Miles asked if there are alerts? Peter Anthy was not prepared to discuss alerts and wanted future meeting.

Peter Anthy said will be two trainings on website for staff, Mayor and Council, or committee heads. He will then have Granicus implement a week after trainings. Last week, all City Departments submitted all their content. Recap:

- By March 5, all revisions should be into Peter
- Launch slated for early April
- Revision - Making Accessibility Icon Placement (this may or may not possible)
- Revision - Add Logo with hint of green and yellow
- Revision - Gov delivery for the subscriber list (he said to launch and then add gov delivery)
- Design approval is needed to move forward.

City Manager Miranda Braatz was authorized by Mayor Malinda Miles and City Council to the approve design.

Public Comment:

Ophelia Baxter – Have any residents or committees seen this or is it in bubble with Mayor and Council. If the website does not launch to end of April, it won't help us with the election. Is the cost more than what was in the budget now that things have been added? On Election Day, can you make the website homepage add a banner so users she election is going on. Mayor Malinda Miles said tonight we are seeing it for the first time. Miranda said money was allocated in budget. She will get her the costs.

Property Taxes

Councilmember Luke Chesek said taxes is .83 cent per assessed \$100 value for all types of property. The City is looking how the tax can be diversified to lower burden on single family homeowners. To do this

legislation is necessary in the form of an ordinance. The FY20 budget would have the new tax classes based on County classes. The new classes are single family residential, town house residential, multifamily residential, and commercial and industrial. New classes come in at \$4,375, 000. New Tax for single family home tax would be .73 cent per \$100 of assessed value. This is a 4% tax cut. Multifamily (apartments) would go up to .97 cents. The police spend a lot of time at apartments they will now pay their share to support policing in those areas. Commercial is lowered to .79 as incentive to come to the City. Industrial will go up by 4 cents. Townhomes will go down to .79. The difference between old and new taxes is about 51K. Luke Chesek is worried about apartments owner raises rents. Mayor Malinda Miles likes the tax classes. She said there is no longer industrial businesses except for steel works. So maybe the zones need to be changed. She asked since there are so few townhomes, should it be a class? She wants to know how the City management came to the tax rate per zone. There was discussion over the zones and if the multifamily (apartments) use police more. City Manager Miranda Braatz will bring the zone map and police data to meeting for discussion.

Public Comment

- Charnette Perry St. – Why can this note be done as an amendment? Also, this need to be a vote on a ballot for residents. Nine years ago the taxes are up 21%, so she looking for up to 10% tax relief. Also, people renting out their homes should not be taxed same as single family homeowner. Councilmember Luke Chesek said it a long-term question. Mayor Malinda disagreed that taxes have not gone up 21%. It was 21 cent increase.
- Ophelia - She was confused by tax rate increases. This was explained. She said there is no industrial. She asked about industrial areas and if they are being taxed at industrial rate if it is full of artist. Mayor Malinda Miles said we need to go to County to get correct zones that reflect what work is happening in the zone.
- Scott Cecil – College Park has rent control, so it is possible to do in the County. Also, please assume that rent will be raised to cover the tax. This is how gentrification happens displacing black and brown people.
- Jimmy Tarlau – 5 categories don't matter, you have tax burden from homeowners to renters. Don't distinguish services between apartments and other parts of the City.
- Resident – He agrees with the mayor, the apartments do not pay their fair share of tax to state, County, or City. They get subsidized loans, so they cannot raise the rents. Make sure the large real estate trusts are paying their fair share.
- Ophelia – Make sure comparison to other municipalities have the same tax rate.

Director of Finance said we do need look at the tax rate to make sure we have monies needed to run the City. City Manager Miranda Braatz said she wants to move the five tax classes no matter the tax rate. There was a review of City comparisons between what other municipalities charge apartments vs. single-family homes. There was a lot of discussion. Mayor Malinda Miles summarized saying she likes the idea of taxes but need supporting data to support tax hike rates and needs to review zones. Councilmember Celina Benitez suggested that vote for the classes be moved forward with any tax rate or zone attached. Ophelia and Mayor Malinda Miles want this announced to residents, apartment owners, and business owners. City Manager said next session will have zoning map, police data, and first reading of class ordinances. Finance will email full document on taxes to Mayor and Council.

Budget Amendment 2

City Manager Miranda Bratz took time to talk about actuals and budget amendments because of barrage of calls and emails from residents accusing her and the Finance Director of not using real actuals for the budget amendments. They are sure about their actuals. Quarterly actuals are what is spent in a line item. If a line is spent, then a budget amendment is triggered. Then the City Manager asks City Council and Manager for additional money via the budget amendment to move funds between line items. Funds is taken from an underspent line and moved to an overspent line. Budget Amendment 2 moves 45K from Parking Enforcement to lines for Tree Maintenance, Overtime Pay in Public Works, and Temporary Labor City Hall (Front Desk). Additionally, Budget Amendment to would move P/T Code Enforcement Officer to Full-Time using funds that have been allocated. Budget Amendment is not dependent on the City Reserves.

Councilmember Celina Benitez said she would like the amount lowered for Trees to 10K on recommendation of Councilmember Bryan Knedler. She was okay with adding F/T coder enforcer. Mayor Malinda Miles disagreed. She feels the administrative assistant and Director need to do more code in the field and F/T code enforcer is not necessary. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants Code Enforcement to have more funding. He gets more complaints and concerns about Code. Mayor Malinda wants schedule of staff before she agrees to more money for staff. She approves 10K for trees only. She wants the City to look at grants. She wants Code Enforcement funding to be in the new budget.

The Director of Code Enforcement said there is a 10 year back log. They have one car and one inspector and one administrative assistant. The City has grown, and now new items like food trucks are added by Mayor and Council. Code Enforcement works on a minimum to keep the City up to code and safe. He needs more support to handle backlog and keep up with City growth and needs. Mayor Malinda Miles still wants schedule of inspections in apartments and commercial, job descriptions, and how tasks are assigned currently, before she will add monies for F/T person. City Manager Miranda Braatz stressed the dedication of Code Enforcement to the massive workload. She has regularly asked for funding to resource the Code Enforcement and the funding has been rejected. Councilmember Shivali Shah asked for more data from Code Enforcement to justify extra person. She wants data on what is the backlog and what are current goals that are not being fulfilled. This information needs to come to Council Meeting for open discussion.

Public Comment

- Charette Robinson 3500 Block – Asked about the budget. City Manager discussed information in budget.
- Scott Cecil – If you have trust in the City Manager, she has improved departments with right resources , the Director of Department says funds are needed, and you all agree Code Enforcement need the resources, why is the budget amendment not being supported? As a resident, it seems there is lack of trust of the City Manager.

Mayor Malinda Miles said it not about trusting City Manager. It is her job to review data to approve the funds. Councilmember Celina Benitez has gone to the Code Enforcement and spoke to everyone both the current and previous staff. Her decision to support another staff member in Code Enforcement is based on her interactions with staff and feedback from the resident. Councilmember Shivali Shah said the information on Code Enforcement and what they do needs to get to the resident. For example, Code Enforcement has gotten houses that are vacant back on market due to fines. They are getting a lot

more done than they have in the past. The City can close the data gap and by bringing it to the Council. City Miranda Braatz and Director of Code Enforcement will provide a report to Mayor and Council on Code Enforcement and it will be put on the website.

Economic Development

The Director of Economic Development reported that his Department is working with the PG Economic Development Corporation EDI Fund and FCC First to launch and manage the City of Mount Rainier Economic Development Incentive Fund of \$1,000,000. He expects to roll it out on April 1, 2019. The program will have online application and there will be morning and evening information sessions. FCC First will determine credit worthiness, ROI, underwriting details, and provide quarterly management. This Fund would give forgivable 5k to 50K loans. Mayor Malinda Miles asked is FCC First a bank and does this take care of how the Fund will be administered? It is an entity that administers funds and is a nonprofit. FCC First has procedures. Mayor Malinda Miles wants procedures on how current businesses will be judged compared to new business. There needs to be written procedures on how local business can access the fund. City Manager Miranda Braatz said that the implementation of the Fund has been delayed for a year but is now on track with partnering with FCC. She apologized for the delay and the procedures not being completed yet, but they are working on it. Councilmember Luke Chesek and Councilmember Shivali Shah think that Fund seems to finally be on a strong base and at place to move forward with it.

Kaywood Feasibility Study

Director of Economic Development presented to Mayor and Council the Kaywood Study. There was a discussion of the Feasibility Study. Mayor Malinda Miles felt the Study was not what she expected. The other Council members and City Staff present were satisfied. There will be a meeting on March 11 where the Feasibility Study will be presented by Kaywood Team. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants Rhonda Dallas and other County people to come. Director of Economic Development said they will be invited. Biggest concerns raised is who will sign the lease and Mount Rainier should not be the biggest investor. Councilmember Shivali Shah is fine with the City providing seed money for the project, it but should not be a long-term patron of the project. She wants financials on how it will work with City's support in the future. Director of Economic Development wants the ROI. Mayor Malinda Miles wants to know the Return on Investment. The Kaywood Team should come back with the figures. Council and Mayor think that money can be better served in Potts Hall or a City owned building. They want a financial feasibility report to invest City money in the project. Mayor Malinda Miles wants County and State money. Once we have financials then invite people to the table.

Potts Hall

Councilmember Luke Chesek envisions a community work/maker space. He suggested a 3D printer. There was discussion about a band using the space. Mayor Malinda Miles said that it has to be open to all bands or artists in the City equally. The Council agreed. City Manager Miranda Braatz said that you cannot rent Potts Hall until it is up to City Code. She said City has not invested in bringing the building up to Code. The Library has to be brought up to Code. You cannot put a band in Potts Hall until it is up to Code.

Potts Hall needs a new cooling and heating system that require allocation of 100K. There is 100K draw down the City can use. This is for a thermodynamic system. City Manager Miranda Braatz said the

geothermal system at the Police Dept. and it gives the City a lot of problems and is costly to repair. Mayor Malinda Miles said it is 20 years old and it has not had proper maintenance. Councilmember Luke Chesek asked if solar would work? Mayor Malinda Miles said we should be asking for more options. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants option on solar, geothermal, or 3rd option. The design company will be told to provide options for heating and cooling. The design company will be asked to come and present to Mayor and Council. They need to project the drawing and copies.

HR530 Community Act

Letter from the City about the HR530 Community Act was read by Councilmember Celina Benitez. The Act relates to how local governments control public asset in they jurisdictions. The letter will be sent to Cardin, Holland, 47th Delegation, County Council, and MML. This issue will be voted on March 5. Councilmember Shivali Shah phone connection dropped, she will be contacted about this issue to ensure quorum on sending the letter. Mayor Malinda Miles is concerned that funding will be lost and feels it is important to speak on the issue.

Minutes

Minutes for Dec 4 and 18, 2018 and January 8, 2019 were presented. Any corrections should be sent to City Manager Miranda Braatz. They will be voted on March 5, session.

Motion to Adjourn Meeting: Councilmember Celina Benitez Move: Mayor Malinda Miles Second: Councilmember Luke Chesek Vote Recorded: 3-0-0, Motion Passed
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