

**Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier  
EMERGENCY MEETING  
OF MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
DATE: March 20, 2020  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, UPPER-LEVEL CITY HALL**

**Call to Order**

6:00 PM, Council Chambers, City Hall, One Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, MD

**Presiding Officer**

Mayor Malinda Miles

**Officials Present**

Councilmember Celina Benitez

Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Councilmember Luke Chesek (Phone In - Announcements & Adjournment of Meeting)

**Staff Present**

Interim City Manager Latasha C. Gatling (Phone)

City Clerk John Hoatson

**Minutes provided by:**

City Clerk

**Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM**

Mayor Malinda Miles called the special meeting to order. Meeting was called because Mayor & City Council had to issue a local state of emergency for the City of Mount Rainier.

**Motion to Call Meeting To Order Mayor Malinda Miles**

**Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler**

**Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez**

**Vote Recorded: 2-0-0, Motion Passed & Meeting Was Called To Order**

Vice Mayor Bryan Knedler read the agenda into the record.

Emergency declaration and to suspend the rules that require a quorum in person to conduct meetings.

**Motion to Approve The Agenda Mayor Malinda Miles**  
**Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler**  
**Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez**  
**Vote Recorded: 2-0-0, Motion Passed Agenda Approved**

Councilmember Bryan Knedler read the following into the record.

In light of the national, state, county and local government declaration of a State of Emergency, Mayor & City Council are holding an emergency meeting to set rules and regulations for City operations.

As an outgrowth / outcome of the recent national, state, county, and local government declaration of a State of Emergency the City of Mount Rainier hereby suspend its rules of operation in the following categories:

1. Face-to-face quorums for public meetings, i.e., legislative, work sessions, special, and closed meetings are suspended for the duration of the national, state, county, and local government declaration of a State of Emergency.
2. Such meetings will be held as necessary by audio or video conference calls.
3. The suspension of the face-to-face quorums will be revoked when the State of Emergency has been lifted by the national, state, county, and local government declaration of a State of Emergency.
4. At least three or more members of the Mayor and Council must participate in the online meeting for it to be deemed an official meeting.
5. Meetings may be called by the Mayor or three Councilmembers
6. Make emergency monetary decisions and approve emergency actions without adhering to its standard rules of operation, e.g., shifting resources from one area
7. Such actions must be documented and maintained for City records throughout the course of the national, state, county, and local government declaration of a State of Emergency.
8. Other rules and regulations may be established as deemed necessary by Mayor & City Council during the duration of the declared emergency.
9. These emergency rules and regulations will cease when the national, state, county and local government emergency ends.

A word for word reading was provided by Councilmember Knedler of what Mayor & Council was proposing moving forward.

**Motion to Approve: As an outgrowth / outcome of the recent national, state, county, and local government declaration of a State of Emergency the City of Mount Rainier hereby suspends its rules of operation Mayor Malinda Miles, Bryan Knedler**

**Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler**

**Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez**

**Vote Recorded: 2-0-0, Motion Passed**

Mayor Miles, Councilmember Bryan Knedler and Councilmember Celina Benitez each took turns to sign the document. Document was provided to City Clerk has recorded it as part of the City record.

**Mayor Miles stated the following:** “First of all this is probably one of the most unusual times we have ever lived in. At this time, I’m asking all of our residents, our neighbors, our businesses everyone in the City of Mount Rainier to remember that this too shall pass, but we will have to do this together. When I say doing it together, it means keep your social distance. Make sure you check on your neighbors or older people that you know are in your neighborhood. If you have to go shopping or going out to the stores remember someone else needs exactly the same things that you need at your house and make sure you leave some for them or pick it up and carry it to them. Mayor and Council will be as available as our phones, our emails and any other social media that is out there. We are asking you to be reasonable and to use your time wisely as well as ours. If you know of families that will need help, we are asking you please call either the City number or one of our numbers which you should have but if you don’t have we will be posting them on the City website to make sure you can get in touch. Our police force will continue to be out there in staggered numbers. Our public works department will continue to the best of their ability to pick up our trash, our garbage or whatever. If there is a change, Mayor & Council will try to get it posted and you notified as quickly as possible. I’m certain that we are not covering everything that needs to be covered, but we are trying our best to stay in front of this. I have and will continue to participate in every single conference call from the Governor, from the County Executive and from the Office of Emergency Management. I have also tried to get those notes and minutes out to my Council and we will continue to do that as we get information we will also get it out to you. If you have an issue or feel that you are sick, or feel that you may have contracted the virus, please call your doctor before going in. Please keep your distance and self-quarantine. Many of you are now home from work and that is going to pose a hardship as we move forward. We are working very diligently to figure out how we are going to compensate for that and how we are going to keep us all at least in our homes with food and proper medical care. Again don’t hesitate to call your Council representatives or your Mayor or if you feel more comfortable call our police department. They will respond a lot quicker than we will and can help to arrange transportation. They can also help us to arrange food if you need it. For example we had a senior earlier this week who was out of food and we were able to pick it up and have it delivered. So do not hesitate to let us hear from you. Again stay safe, stay your social distance, but don’t let that stop you from going outside. You can walk, you can go outside. Enjoy some of the good weather. Air your houses out. Take time to take care of yourself and to love each other. Thank you so much”.

**Councilmember Bryan Knedler stated the following:** “Thank you Mayor for such a great speech and hitting all the key points I would have included myself. The only thing I would add to that is it is beautiful weather, get out there, keep your social distance but please walk and enjoy our beautiful blooming trees and neighborhood. Please be safe when doing that. I do want to announce that the CERT Team is doing a food drive tomorrow Saturday from 10:00 am until 12:30 pm right here in the City parking lot across from City Hall. They will be taking donated food. If you cannot do that you are welcome to leave food on your porch for them to come and pick up if you would like to donate that way. You can call 301-655-5274. We will try to get it on the website. If you need food as the Mayor just mentioned, contact your Councilmember or City Hall and let them know you are in need and we will get the CERT team to help you out. Thank you. Be Safe.”

**Councilmember Celina Benitez stated the following:** “Thank you. I think it’s not an understatement to say we are highly involved in every single communication or call the Mayor and I are there, day in and day out and every single sphere to gather and share information and we are passing information as fast as we possibly can. Follow us on our social media. Some of the information is coming fast, stuff is changing very rapidly. We also ask the community to also keep in touch following us through this. One other important thing to add is Thomas Stone has been added to the grab and go schools. I want to be sure to send a big thank you to the whole entire school system, Pamela Boozer-Strother from Board of Education, Councilmember Deni Taveras, Dr. Goldstein. They had a whole entire system. It went from a few schools to now having over 36 schools open for grab and go. You receive a breakfast, lunch and a snack to take to your homes. At the same time it is open to any child 18 and under regardless if that is their school. If another school happens to be closer to you, you could go to that location. It runs Monday thru Friday from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm. You will receive the three meals to take to your house and they ask you maintain social distance. It is also time to give a big shout out to everyone out on the front lines helping us out, police officers, the nurses, the doctors but also public works, and also every single person who is helping to provide meals to our residents kids have meals. They leave the safety of their homes to make sure they take care of us. I want to send special thanks to them. Your Mayor and City Council will continue working as we do to keep you informed. Walk around but try and stay away from the park equipment. Even if you might be immune, be aware that there are other people in your circle who may not be and you could be hurting them. Stay positive, stay healthy open your windows and get some vitamin D. There is plenty of good weather out there. We will continue to work for you”.

**Mayor Miles stated the following:** “I’m going to go back for one minute. I placed a post on Facebook earlier last weekend and again this week. It has to deal with the filing of your income taxes. They were telling me that they were confused that they felt you could only make the payment between now and July 15<sup>th</sup>. As of today, the deadline of July 15<sup>th</sup> applies to the payment as well as the filing. They are saying there is an extension you can automatically ask for. I will be posting it with the name and the phone number that you can follow-up with them. Thank you Emily for getting it to me so quickly”.

**Councilmember Luke Chesek stated the following via phone:** “Just want to thank everyone for their comments that were made so far. I want to encourage everyone to get outside and enjoy the weather. Gabe Popkin of the Tree Commission has organized a tree walk at the Park located at Bunker Hill Road and Eastern Avenue observing social distancing. If you are going to get a refund on your taxes, I would encourage you to do that now. The IRS systems are up and running”.

**Mayor Miles stated the following:** “If you are in the house and looking for something to do, now is perfect time to get the Census done. Mount Rainier needs you, wants you to please do your Census. Can’t find the envelope that it came in, just type in Census USA and they will walk you right through it. We had a number of activities scheduled that we are not going to be doing now. We are going to find ways to keep us on target. Thank you”.

Councilmember Bryan Knedler and Councilmember Celina Benitez made some additional comments regarding the tree walk and Census.

Councilmember Celina Benitez stated the following: “It is important for us to be counted. Please visit [www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov). It is easy, safe and confidential”.

Mayor & City Council also gave a special thank you to staff for organizing the emergency meeting of Mayor & City Council.

Mayor then asked for a motion to adjourn the emergency meeting.

**Motion to Go Into Adjourn Session Mayor Malinda Miles**  
**Move: Councilmember Celina Benitez**  
**Second: Councilmember Bryan Knedler**  
**Vote Recorded: 3-0-0, Motion Passed, Meeting Adjourned**