

**Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE MEETING
DATE: January 14, 2020
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
Councilmember Scott Cecil
Councilmember Luke Chesek
Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Staff Present

Interim City Manager Lastasha C. Gatling
City Clerk John Hoatson

Minutes provided by:

City Clerk

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to Approve Amended Agenda: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Amended Agenda Read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Announcements

Recognition of Officer of The Year

Mayor Malinda Miles on behalf of the Mayor and Council and residents of the City of Mount Rainier awarded Officer Private First Class Anatoliy Brodskiy with the Officer of the Year Award. The Police Chief reviewed his accomplishments in 2019. Officer Anatoliy Brodskiy thanked the Mayor, Council, the Chief, Police and City for the award. The Mayor and Council noted his good work, good will in the community, and thanked him for his service.

Request for a Letter of Approval from 3602 Oak Lane

Councilmember Bryan Knedler said the County needs a letter from the City saying that the planned work on the street scape at 3602 is approved by the City of Mount Rainier. The owner of the home presented his plan for the streetscape to Mayor and Council. Because the streetscape is owned by the City, the County requires the homeowner to get the City's permission to add a sidewalk and improve that area around it. The sidewalk he wants to build is 5ft. There was a discussion of the size of his lot and project, tree planting, and a creek that is partly on the property. He is planning to plant two trees in the back and few trees in the front along with adding some sculptures. The area he is working on is the portion adjacent to Oak Lane. He said the County wants him to protect the Creek, so he will have 15ft easement to make sure he won't disturb it. He wants to submit the letter as soon as possible to start grading in March. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said the tree commission has been involved in thid process and it is not under the Design Review Board. Vote was called by the Mayor.

Motion to Authorize Work and Send Letter for Sidewalk Work 3602 Oak Lane: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Second: Councilmember Scott Cecil

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Councilmember Scott Cecil asked the owner to continue to be proactive in letting the neighbors know when construction will be happening.

Action: Councilmember Bryan Knedler will draft the letter and have the tree commission review it. He will have it to the owner by Friday.

The 3rd District School Board Representative Pamela Boozer Strother

Pamela is a resident of Brentwood and her son goes to Mount Rainier Elementary. She gave the Mayor and Council an update on her work on the School Board and what the Board hopes to achieve. The School Board is working for the full funding of the Kirwan Recommendations which include Universal Pre-K, better training for teachers, expansion of technical programs for student, and accountability. Another bill she is working on addresses overcrowding and aging infrastructure in the 3rd District with the building of a new school. She asked residents to contact their representatives in Annapolis to support of the Kiran Recommendations and infrastructure bills. In three years, there will be a new Hyattsville Middle School for 6th to 8th grades, which will help students acclimate and provide greater resources for improving math

skills. She is pleased to be serving with the current School Board and with their positive attitude and work ethic.

She said this District 3 has 14 schools and one of the highest populations of poverty in PGCS with 85% of the schools have kids on free and reduce lunch. It also means that the District has a lot of children living in poverty. District 3 is getting more funding that includes monies for family mental and social services. The first budget meeting is Jan. 2, at 5pm at Northwestern High School with public comment for three minutes. Mayor Malinda Miles wanted to know when the mold and mildew and overcrowding will be addressed at Thomas Stone. She stated that Rosa Parks was built, but there is still overcrowding. There are concerns around crosswalk safety and busing. Pamela said they are working with local police to renew the school crossing guard program and the report is due on the bus driver shortage. Councilmember Scott Cecil said that children in poverty have parents in poverty and they don't have time and the resources to go to these meetings. If you have the resources to attend these meetings please do and reach out to those who cannot. He was thankful for her bringing attention to the large amount of high poverty students in District 3.

Councilmember Luke Chesek said community schools are very important to supporting high poverty kids and that the costs of the Kiran recommendations is high but needs to be funded. Councilmember Celina Benitez agreed with Kirwan recommendations but is worried they are not currently funded, she applauded the effort to have principal teach once a semester to stay in touch with work and challenges of their teachers. Mayor and Council thanked Pamela for her report and for her hard work and dedication.

Closed Session Summary Read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler

A Closed Session was held Dec 17, 2019, at 11:50pm - 1:00am. The entire Mayor and Council were present and the City Lawyer, Ken, called into the session. They discussed the City's Collective Bargaining Agreement and pay scale.

Public Comment

- Resident Diane Slade 4805 28th Street - She was not aware of the permits where her daughter lives and she got a \$30 ticket. She had a permit, but it is her friend's car with DC tags. She has lived in the City for 30 years. She was surprised she did not get a warning. Parking meters are for an hour for businesses, but she thinks they should be two hours. One hour meter shows a lack of friendliness to business and discourages people from visiting more than one business.
- Desire Dubose, Business Coordinator MRBA - She presented the MRBA Highlights for 2019. They had monthly business opportunity breakfast meetings with an exciting roster of speakers. MRBA is now partners with County Chamber of Commerce. They expanded Shop Saturday to Shop Local Week, Mount Rainier Day Bake Off, and All Roads Lead to Mount Rainier. They also held a Spanish Business Networking Event and Business Plan Event. Mayor and Council were provided with the written report.

- Charente Robinson Perry Street - She has a question about Maryland Public Information Act Request. She feels that information that should be readily available and should not cost residents exorbitant fees to obtain them. Some residents have been asked to pay \$1500 to \$3000 for public records. She feels the Pitt Bull Ordinance is being pushed through unfairly, she wants it on the ballot during the next election. 37th Street Park is not fenced or handicap accessible and neither are the other parks in the City. This can be a liability for the City.
- Resident - She is concerned about the Pitt Bull Ordinance being changed in the City to allow them. She wants it left as is. She does not want the City to have this liability.

Old Business

Resolution 01-2020 Setting the Budget Calendar

Fair Summary was read by Mayor Malinda Miles. The calendar has been created and reviewed over a few sessions and requires a vote.

Motion to Approve Resolution 01-2020 to Adopt the Budget Calendar: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Resolution 02-2020 Appointments to Tree Commission

Fair Summary was read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler. The Tree Commission has seven members and there are three openings. Two residents have expressed interest in joining the Commission: Brad Barton Ball and Jacqueline Sabath. Brad spoke and said he is a resident and a developer. He felt he has the passion and interest in keeping the urban canopy maintained and has the skills to help the City do that. Jacqueline Savage could not attend.

Motion to Approve Resolution 01-2020 to Appointment Two Nominees to Tree

Commission: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Resolution 03-2020 3209 Shepard Street

Fair Summary was read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler. This first City resolution with a photo. This allows for the City to recognize special trees in the City. The City has recognized the Eastern Hemlock at 3209 Shepard Street (private residence). The Eastern Hemlock are dying due to climate change and a bug that is destroying this tree. This is biggest tree of its kind locally and may be the only one in Mount Rainier. It is over 100 years old. It is now a

considered an exceptional tree. It will get a plaque and special protection against cutting it down.

Motion to Adopt the Eastern Hemlock at 3209 Shepard Street: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Resolution 04-2020 Pit Bulls Lowest Priority for City of Mount Rainier Police

Fair Summary was read by Councilmember Scott Cecil. This puts in writing the current practice of City Police. It says that the City Police will not willfully enforce County ordinance banning pit bulls, unless the owner or the dog has committed a crime. Those in the City with the dogs would not be targeted for enforcement, but the Police can still remove dogs or make an arrest if there is criminal act that takes place or is suspected to take place. Councilmember Luke Cheseck supported the resolution because it codifies current practice by City's police. Councilmember Celina Benitez feels the title is throwing residents and police off and making them unsure about Resolution 04. She thinks a better example should be used to explain it to residents. She wants it back in work session to work on language. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said that people can call the County to have a pit bull taken away. The County can still enforce the law. Mayor Malinda Miles has had many residents say they are against this and they want the City to follow the County. She agreed that it needs to go back to session. Councilmember Celina Benitez suggested it go back to session, get comments, and she if its ready for vote.

Motion to Adopt Resolution 04-2020 Pit Bulls Lowest Priority for City of Mount Rainier Police: Councilmember Scott Cecil

Move: Councilmember Luke Cheseck

Second: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Vote Recorded: 3-1-0, Motion Passed (Mayor Miles, Nay)

Resolution was signed.

First Reading of Ordinance 01-2020 to Amend Building Code of City of Mount Rainier

Fair Summary was read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler. This Ordinance is a reaction to how the County reviews roof work and contractors after community feedback on roof permits. This Ordinance has been written to help make sure roof contractor are bonded and work is done properly. It also cleans up the out-dated language in the Code. It creates a City roof permit.

Motion to Adjourn Meeting: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Second: Councilmember Luke Cheseck

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed