

**Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier  
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
DATE: February 18, 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 Latasha C. Gatling  
City Clerk John Hoatson

**Minutes provided by:**

City Clerk

**Call to Order**

**Motion to Approve Agenda: Mayor Malinda Miles**

**Move:**

**Second:**

**Vote Recorded:**

**Agenda Read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler**

**2020 Census Materials**

County Councilmember Deni Taveras spoke about the 2020 Census material being provided by her office along with the Northern Gateway CDC. 50 % of the population in District 2 was not counted during the last Census 10 year ago. Mayor & City Council were asked to spend 2K of the 19K in grant money on posters and flyers in English and Spanish. The City has 19K from the Maryland Department of Planning for Census work. Councilmember Celina Benitez stated

that 2K is inexpensive for we will get that include the City Logo and videos. The translation alone of any materials would create would be more than 2K. It will cost the City more money and lots of time to come up with their own materials. Printing and mailing will still be a cost to the City. The First mail drop will be March 12, 2020, before the Census drops, and the second will be after April 1 Census Day.

**Action Item: Need to be placed on the Legislative Agenda for March 3, 2020. Mayor & City Council agreed to purchase the Census Materials from Councilmember Deni Taveras and Northern Gateway CDC. Funds will come form the 19K grant from Maryland Department of Planning.**

### **DaVita Kidney Care Drop-Off Zone Presentation**

Sandy Bozebury, Administrator with DaVita Kidney Care spoke to the Mayor & City Council regarding the proposed drop-off zone. The request was made a year ago to the City. The City did create a No Parking Zone as a result. To avoid the no parking zone, metro buses are blocking Davita. Chief of Police Anthony Morgan stated that once the zone is in place, parking meters will be placed around the zone accordingly. Patients to Davita come between the hours of 5:30am until 9:30pm at night. The patient drop-off zone will assist patients with getting in and out of the facility safely.

**Action Item: Needs to be placed on the Legislative Agenda for March 3, 2020 for a vote. Mayor & City Council approved a curbside drop-off without parking meters. Chief Morgan will assist with implementation of the new drop-off zone.**

### **Strategic Planning Presentations**

**On Strategy:** Katherine Colombo, Engagement Director & Eric Olson, COO Senior Strategist spoke via conference call. Based in Nevada, On Strategy work with small business and city government. They have 18 people on staff. They will use focus groups, council meetings, surveys and social media to bring in diverse voices early on prior to the action plan. Councilmember Chesek asked if the strategic plan could be implemented without using their software. The answer provided was that the City could use their software or use tools the City would like. Councilmember Knedler wanted to know if On Strategy has worked with any municipalities this small in size. It was stated back that municipalities in Nevada were the same size as Mont Rainier. Question was asked by Councilmember Luke Chesek regarding travel and Expenses. Per trip they could run \$3,700 to \$3,500 per trip. On strategy stated they could perform the tasks online due to the strong online community practices in place.

### **University of Maryland:**

Maria Del Marshall of the University of Maryland worked with the City on Memorial Park. She came to the City with a Strategic Plan Presentation to Mayor & City Council. Bobby Boon, lecturer at University of Maryland Urban Planning presented along side Maria. They will work with graduate students to develop a Strategic Plan for the City. 3 to 7 students will spend 16 weeks creating an action plan in Excel or Design .PDF. Councilmember Chesek asked if support could be extended beyond 16 weeks? University of Maryland responded by stating that

support could possibly be extended for the initial project. Mayor Miles asked when potentially the project would start. Mr. Book replied that the project would start in August to December 2020.

**Yard & Company:** Mr. Boon also presented for Yard & Company, company from Ohio. Boon is also a consultant with Yard and Company. The owner of the company (Kevin) did join the meeting via telephone. Yard and Company believe in active engagement. They would live in the City via a Pop-Up location to engage with residents for period of time. They also believe in implementing some projects to test ideas and get resident feedback. Strategic plans are based on their engagement. For additional cost, Yard & Company can provide follow-up work and accountability. Follow-up work starts at 10K depending on the type of follow-up needed. Councilmember Chesek wanted to know the pros and cons between Yard and Company and University of Maryland. Mr. Boon stated that the students are local and can engage deeply. Yard and Company has more experience but shorter time frame of engagement however they can provide more post-plan support.

Public Comment was invited. No one made comment.

### **Challenge To Chuck's Liquor License Renewal**

Resident Ayelet Hines joined the table and stated to Mayor & City Council that there is a petition of 71 signatures to remove Chuck's Liquor License. The petitioners would like a public hearing to obtain a letter of support from Mayor & City Council. Councilmember Cecil stated that the Mayor & City Council cannot talk about this issue privately for violation of the Open Meetings Act. Councilmember Celina Benitez is in favor of a public hearing to discuss this business and other related issues. Councilmember Luke Chesek stated the deadline for the petition was March 1, 2020. Ayelet Hines told Mayor & City Council that there is a culture of fear with regards to this issue. Residents pick up human feces in their yards and have a fear of attending a public meeting. One resident took to the table and stated it took 14 years to close Bass Liquor Store. The City got behind the resident at that time and won. Mayor Miles stated that Chuck would be given an opportunity to present his case and evidence at the Public Hearing.

**Action Item:** Public Hearing date needs to be determined. Meeting will not be held the same evening as a Mayor & City Council Meeting. Residents can bring videos and images to present.

**Mayor Miles departed meeting due to illness.**

### **Census Count Committee Update**

Councilmember Celina Benitez has formed the Mount Rainier Census Count Committee and also serves on the County Committee. City Committee is currently working on marketing, social media and appointments to talk about the coming of Census 2020. Currently at Rainier Manor there are four volunteers to assist residents with completing their Census. Census forms will be mailed out March 12, 2020 and can be filled out and sent back using the code provided. City Hall and Mount Rainier Library will also be serving as a Census Hub. Both locations will have trained staff to assist the public. Councilmember Benitez has also contacted the local schools

PTAs to help with the Census. All City Events in the City will have Census incorporated into it. The City of Mount Rainier was just awarded a 19K Census Grant from the Maryland Department of Planning. Annapolis a larger City was also awarded the same amount. Councilmember Cheseck and Cecil both want to assist by attending meetings and knocking on doors. The Census goal for City is 80% versus the 60% that achieved in 2010.

### **34<sup>th</sup> Street Revitalization**

34<sup>th</sup> Street Revitalization cost are now 108K vs 200K following the MUTC plan. Director of Public Works Kamali has reviewed the plan. For Fiscal Year 2021, 100K for Memorial Park will need to be budgeted. 400K will also be budgeted for streets and sidewalks. Councilmember Scott Cecil stated the brick pavers are expensive. Mayor and City Council will need to make consideration for the work and timeline. Planning and discussions should be taking place now. Nathan Cedaroth spoke on the subject and added that he would like to see the City focus on main power areas. Bricks could be used on the primary roads.

### **Spring Park / Peace Park Discussion**

Little Friends of Peace were awarded a grant for the park located at 33<sup>rd</sup> and Shepherd. City stated they would match the fund. No Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement was ever created. Little Friends of Peace is requesting the City pay the University of Maryland for some design work. Interim City Manager Latasha C. Gatling would like to know how Mayor & City Council would like to move forward. Grant is for 50K and letter to County states the City will give 39K. Grant was received in 2019. Meeting minutes from previous meeting states that the City will match 10K to 40K. Little Friends of Peace wants \$10,500.00 for community engagement, site assessment, consultation with engineers, stormwater management & design. Councilmember Bryan Knedler recommended to City Manager to review the previous meeting videos for clarity. The MOU is needed to outline what the City will do and what Little Friends of Peace will do. Councilmember Benitez stated their needs to be discussion to see if money is needed now to get started.

**Action Item: MOU is needed between City of Mount Rainier and Little Friends of Peace. City Manager will watch video again regarding Spring Park at 33<sup>rd</sup> & Shepherd.**

### **Potts Hall Mortar Inspection**

Potts Hall was painted over 100 years ago and the paint could be holding up the mortar because it is sand. The City needs an expert to examine the mortar. This was a recommendation from the architects. City has received money from the state for the project. The Grant money provided will allow for an expert to examine the mortar on the building.

**Action Item: City Manager has been instructed to send out RFP and determine the cost involved.**

## **Budgeting To A Surplus**

Councilmember Chesek stated that the quarterly reports in 2019 show risks and progress. The risk that has come up in the issue of having reserve funds. He would like to create a surplus fund with supermajority of four votes to access it and have the monies invested in a fund. Councilmember Chesek has been researching fund options. The City could put in 10K a year to build up the fund for certain amount of years and then access the interest to pay for various projects in the City (Streets and Sidewalks). Mayor & City Council discussed the matter. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said the City has a reserve and Staff, Mayor & City Council cannot touch it without a majority vote. Councilmember Celina Benitez said the major vote of 4 needs to be added to the City Code. Councilmember Cecil is interested but residents would want their taxes lowered instead of reserves. He is confused if the City has a full reserve or a fund balance. Councilmember Chesek stated he wants funds that are hard to access the collect interest over time Interim City Manager Latasha C. Gatling stated that there is a reserve account with money. The normal fund balance is in another account. Gatling supports Luke's idea, but the City is not there yet. Interim City Manager has a plan to slowly get the City there. The City has relied on grants and she wants to move to funding via a surplus. Councilmember Celina Benitez wants the City to get to having a surplus that gain interest. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said that in the past the City has balanced the budget using the reserves. Gatling stated that her proposed budget will be close to perfect as she can get it. She also plans to bring money into the City. Next budget should allow for a savings. Councilmember Cecil would like to see the account balance for reserve fun.

## **Schedule of Fees**

Revised Schedule of Fees was provided to Mayor & City Council that included three columns as requested: Fee, Fines and Description. Schedule of Fees had a 1<sup>st</sup> reading during the legislative meeting of Mayor & City Council back on February 4, 2020. Second reading would be provided at the next legislative meeting of Mayor & City Council on March 3, 2020. Mayor & City Council would be provided the markup document to see if changes have been made accordingly. The Mount Rainier City Code is on Municode. If Schedule of Fees is passed in time, it will go to the next update which is twice a year. Fees will be stricken from the Code. The Code will advise to check the Schedule of Fees so the Code will not have to be changed when a fee changes. Municode will just update the fees within code with new information sent to them by City.

Nathan Cedaroth a resident stated he would like the fees in the Code. It is hard to bounce from Municode to the Schedule of Fees.

**Action Item: Mayor & City Council requested the original red lined item from City Attorney be sent to them for review. Some minor updated to Ordinance 02-2020 before the final vote on Tuesday, March 3, 2020.**

**Motion to Adjourn Meeting: Councilmember Bryan Knedler**  
**Move: Councilmember Celina Benitez**  
**Second: Councilmember Scott Cecil**  
**Vote Recorded: 3-0-0, Motion Passed (Mayor Miles Went Home Sick)**