

**Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
DATE: January 21, 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 (via Conference Call)
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 the Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to Approve Agenda: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Agenda Read by Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Zoning Standards

Councilmember Bryan Knedler presented the County zoning standards as they are currently written. The City's Design Review Board (DRB) reviewed these standards in December and then they went back to Park and Planning staff. This version has clarifications on the zoning standards the County is finalizing. Councilmember Celina Benitez wanted the next steps in the process. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said there will be a meeting in March that will take in the City's final comments and there will be a vote. There will be final vote on total zoning for the County by the end of 2020. Residents can review the current draft of the zoning standards on file at City Hall.

Strategic Planning for City of Mount Rainier

Councilmember Luke Cheseck said that last year the Council included money in the budget for strategic planning. The Mayor and Council will hire a contractor to help the City craft a strategic plan and has received three proposals from On Strategy, University of Maryland, and Yard & Co. Councilmember Luke Cheseck gave review of the proposals. The On Strategy proposal cost 21K includes access to their proprietary software and an additional year of support. University of Maryland proposal was the lowest amount at 18K but weak on details and they cannot start until the Fall. The Yard & Co. proposal came in at 24K, but it did not include software or any extra assistance. Councilmember Luke Cheseck recommended On Strategy and presented examples of their work with past clients and online platform. He stressed that the platform would help with accountability. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said that he needs the cost of the licensing fee beyond second year. Councilmember Scott Cecil said he does like University of MD, but the timeframe is a issue. He will go with Councilmember Luke Cheseck recommendation. Councilmember Celina Benitez is in favor of On Strategy because of the tracking, follow-up, and accountability their proposal provides and it has controls in place to monitor costs. She also believes it will give the City strong data to apply for grants. She liked University of MD, but thinks On Strategy is better choice. Mayor Malinda Miles likes all three proposals but is leaning toward University of Maryland. She is concerned about the propriety software of On Strategy. What are the licensing costs? Who owns the data? What happens if City does not want to continue working with them? She was not concerned with University of Maryland timeline to start in the Fall. She wants the vendors to come to the City for face to face meetings as all three plans are good. She asked for a comparison sheet with costs and pros and cons of each vendor as they are all between 18K to 24K. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said some vendors have extra costs for travel and supplies. The budget for strategic planning is 40K. Councilmember Luke Cheseck said that Yard and Co. seemed to be project focused and University of Maryland proposal was more concept and not detailed enough. On Strategy proposal was detailed in process and included long-term planning.

Actions:

- Councilmember Luke Cheseck will get numbers from On Strategy on licensing costs.
- Councilmember Luke Cheseck will arrange presentations for Mayor and Council.

Mixed Use Town Center Design (MUTC)

Councilmember Luke Chesek presented the MUTC design with new sidewalks and streetscapes. The western side of 34th will have tree breaks installed and a redesigned sidewalk with stone pavers of different colors. The sidewalks are large enough for this work. The eastern side of 34th has smaller sidewalks, so there will be a curve bump out of 1 or 2 ft. every so many feet that allows for trees. Near Glut you can install trees on both sides of the street. He is working with Mr. Kamali, Director of Public Works, as to how and where to place the trees and not block signage. 180K is cost of the project. Mayor Malinda Miles was concerned about bump outs causing flooding in the past. Councilmember Luke Chesek said no bump outs on the western side near the laundry mat. Mayor Miles is concerned water problems and about trees blocking the lighting. Councilmember Luke Chesek said the trees will be no more than 20ft due to restrictions by PEPCO, but he will discuss ways to not block lighting with Mr. Kamali and water flow was considered in the plan.

Councilmember Bryan Knedler said MUTC plan allows for 2ft extension to sidewalks and that will allow for trees. He also commented on ADA ramps and costs. On the 4000 Block at ZZ's, he wondered if there is space for trees. He noted that utilities companies routinely tear up the sidewalks because they have destroyed pavers before and have not replaced them. Councilmember Celina Benitez had same questions as Councilmember Bryan Knedler. She also wants Councilmember Luke Chesek to look at how to use tree placement for traffic calming and consider crosswalks. Councilmember Scott Cecil added that they needed to consider how trees can interfere with cameras. He has lot of questions about pavers and replacement if they are torn up. He thinks painted sidewalks maybe better and cheaper than pavers. He has looked at the MUTC design plans and wondered why the plan has not be implemented and wants to know the challenges. It is hard for him to imagine trees on both sides of 34th as its so narrow. He also called for the southbound lane on traffic circle with a bad bump to be fixed before doing some of this fancy work.

Action:

- Councilmember Luke Chesek said he will talk to Mr. Kamali about the sidewalk widening according to MUTC, cost of raised sidewalks, ADA ramps, amount of area for trees, trees for traffic calming, and crosswalks.
- Councilmember Luke Chesek will get the engineering study for this plan to Mayor and Council.
- Councilmember Luke Chesek will ask for WSSC work schedule.

ATHA Anacostia Trail Heritage Area

Councilmember Luke Chesek said there is a 5K mini grant and larger grants from Anacostia Trails Heritage Area. He is thinking of applying for a 5K art grant for a mural for historic bank building Compass is renovating. For 3300 Block redesign, he thinks installing the street car lines would work and he is glad there are GHCD. For Potts Hall, the City might be eligible if the space has an area that explains the buiding history. Mayor Miles and Councilmember Bryan Knedler said that Potts Hall is not at the stage yet to apply. Councilmember Luke Chesek said

for large grants it requires a two paragraph letter of intent by Jan. 31. May 30th is the deadline for the mini-grant. April 3, is the deadline for state grants. Mayor Miles said the City has two ATHA grants that are only partially drawn down. So, the City cannot get additional money until the remainder of previous grant is spent, about \$2500. Mayor Miles said that a letter of intent can be submitted, but it should not the City will be drawing down the approximate \$2500 left from previous grants. Mayor Malinda Miles would like to apply for bike trail signage. Councilmember Scott Cecil would like detailed report on the City's current Anacostia Trails Heritage Area grant to sent to the Council.

Action:

- Councilmember Luke Chesek will draft the Letter of Intent for Jan. 3, deadline for murals, street banners, and City and bike trail signage.
- City Manager will send the Mayor and Council a detailed report on the current ATHA grant.

New Residents

Tori Partridge and Resident of 36th Street South of Perry - They have just moved to the City. Councilmember Scott Cecil gave them a tour of the City that help them decide to move. The Mayor welcomed them and thanked them for coming.

George Washington University Engagement Lab Student

Veronica, Michael, Johnny, Dana, Joe, and Kevin are students at GW Engagement Lab working on improving how the City engages with its residents. Michael said for the last few months that they have spoken to staff in every department in the City except Public Works (this will happen soon). May 5, they will have a report on strategies for the City around engaging businesses and permits, residents service requests to Public Works, and engaging artists in the Artist Building and Red Dirt (how can they be better integrated in City), and engaging apartment dwellers with the City, City services, and the Census. They will have suggestions for the website to make easier for engagement and using non-digital platforms. They presented a copy of a survey they want to send to residents for the Mayor and Council's feedback. Once approved, the survey will be sent out to residents in City in English and Spanish. Mayor Miles said they need to go to the Hilt building, which has a lot of senior artist. It was first artist housing in the City. She also said they should go to Otis Street to talk to the artist there too. Councilmember Scott Cecil asked that the survey be sent to him. Councilmember Celina Benitez said the City Instagram and Twitter accounts need to be added to the survey. She told them that Council also send information from personal social media page, website page, and use e-blast services too. Councilmember Luke Chesek said the comments should have much space. Engagement Lab will interview Mayor and Council too

Action:

- Engagement Lab will reach out to artists in Hilt apartments and Otis street along with those at Red Dirt and the Artist Lofts.
- John, the City Clerk, will send the survey to Councilmember Scott Cecil.
- The Engagement Lab will add Instagram, Twitter, and Mayor and Council social media, web, and email account where they engage with residents in this work.

- Engagement Lab will add more lines for resident comment to the survey.

Davita Dialysis Drop Off Space on Varnum Street

There is a request for a Drop Off space in front of Davita Dialysis on Varnum Street. Councilmember Bryan Knedler discussed the history of Varnum Street and the request for a Drop Off Zone. Councilmember Celina Benitez wants to know how it will be enforced. Councilmember Bryan Knedler presumes they want signage that says 15 minute parking. Mayor Miles said they have not made that ask. Councilmember Scott Cecil noted he understands Davita feels they need this, but how will it be enforced. Also, there is cost of removing meters. He would like to hear from Davita stating why they need it and how they would monitor it. The Police Chief was asked to join the table to address this issue. From a Police stand point if people are parking illegally, they will get a ticket. They do have a lot of wheelchair bound clients. Right now, with the new meters they will be ticketed and towed. He said we can put up a sign. Councilmember Celina Benitez asked if there was a grace period. Chief said yes. Mayor Miles said the request was for Metro Access and Davita Trucks only. City Manager asked how long have they been there. Mayor Miles said five years. City Manager felt that they did not do a good feasibility study before renting the location. Mayor Malinda said they did ask for it from Park and Planning and the City, but it never came back to Council. At the time there was a lot of vaccines, so there was a lot of parking.

Action:

- City Manager/Police to give Mayor and Council a report on options for Davita.
- Davita's owners/manager will be asked to come to a meeting to discuss this issue.

Schedule of Fee

Code Enforcement presented recommendations for permit fees with a comparison chart between current fees and recommended fees.

- Building Code from \$250 to \$100
- Fencing \$75 to \$50
- Roofing \$50
- Demolition \$250 to \$150 and \$350
- Structures more than 500 Sqft \$250
- Dumpster \$125

Do we need the fees at all since the County has fees and what do residents get? This was asked by Mayor Miles. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said we need fees and dumpster fees need to be higher to prevent dumpsters on the street for months. Mayor Miles said a dumpster on a property should have a lower fee and maybe they need time limits. Councilmember Celina Benitez said the dumpster on property can bring vermin or block site lines for neighbors trying to leave their property. They need a fee too. She said that animal hobby license needs to be explained. This is a person has five animals and more there is a fee. She said some of the fees need definitions that explain the fees and what they apply to. She suggested the Communication Department can help make the fees more readable for the residents. Councilmember Luke

Chesek agrees with the fees, but wants a discussion on the dumpster fee. Councilmember Scott Cecil does not want to dissuade people from repairs and renovations. He thinks we get rid of the permit fee for those the County has, but the City should have fines for those that do not have proper County permits. He feels the process to fix the fees has been long and wants next steps and deadlines. There was a discussion of whether to have fees or fines or no fees. Mayor Miles suggested we go through each fee line by line. Councilmember Celina Benitez suggested one/low fee and that people come to the Mayor and Council to present to the Council the work they are doing. If we are not inspecting, why are we charging fees. Councilmember Luke Chesek would be open to no fee or flat fee, but he wants to know the budget impact. He wants to hear from Alma from Code Enforcement. Alma said that she is getting calls from owners that bought flipped homes looking for a paper trail because the work was shoddy. So, some permit with fee to get the records the City needs is necessary. Councilmember Luke Chesek said the City does inspect fences and apartments and we do need a paper trail on buildings so a permit is necessary.

Public Comments

- Jimmy Tarlau came to the table. He is okay for flat fee as long there is someone to talk to a permittee. Dumpster on property may need more time beyond three months, maybe six months.

Councilmember Scott Cecil said he was concerned that we have fees that we don't collect on. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said there are only a few things on the list that the County charges. I agree on lowering the building fee and working out the dumpster fee. Councilmember Celina Benitez wants the penalty fees added to comparison chart. Councilmember Luke Chesek said there seems to be a consensus expect for a few fees. To move this it needs two readings since it is an ordinance. The first reading can be Feb. 4, 2020. Mayor Malinda Miles said that once this is passed, Mayor and Council will need to set a the effective date and decide if it will be retroactive. Councilmember Bryan Knedler it should not be retroactive. Councilmember Scott Cecil said that there needs to be a point person on this issue and he does not want this to be retroactive.

Action:

- The fee discussion will go to the agenda of the next session.
- Alma of Code Enforcement will add the County Fees to the comparison chart, so duplicates can be noted and eliminated.
- Each remaining fee will be reviewed for necessity and fairness.
- City Manager is the point person for this issue.

Motion to Adjourn Meeting: Mayor Malinda Miles

Aye: 4

Naye: 0

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed