

Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION
DATE: September 24, 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
Councilmember Scott Cecil
Councilmember Luke Chesek
Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Staff Present

City Clerk John Hoatson

Minutes provided by:

City Clerk

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to Approve Amended Agenda: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Second: Councilmember Luke Chesek

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Reading of September 17, 2019, Closes Session Summary by Councilmember Bryan Knedler

CLOSED SESSION SUMMARY SHEET TO BE READ INTO RECORD

Date: September 17, 2019

Time: 10:19 P.M.

Location: City Hall 1 Municipal Place Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712

Closed Under Annotated Code: 3-305 (b) 1 & 3-305 (b) 9

Those Who Voted To Go Into Closed Session: All

Unanimous Of Elected Officials In Attendance: All

Those In Attendance:

Mayor Malinda Miles, Councilmember Celina Benitez, Councilmember Scott Cecil, Councilmember Luke Cheseck, Councilmember Bryan Knedler & Kenneth Sigman, City Attorney

Actions Taken: No Votes Were Taken, Please See Relevant Notes: Action given to City Attorney

Topics Discussed: Personnel, Compensation & Collective Bargaining Agreement

Relevant Notes: None

City Cellphone Policy

There is a number of City staff with cell phones. Councilmember Scott Cecil would like to give City cell phones to Council and Mayor too as he does not want to use his cell phone for City business. Some Councilmembers have out of state numbers and residents that call on landline have to pay long distance charges. Councilmember Celina Benitez agrees that the Council and Mayor should have City phones. Councilmember Luke Chesek is not in support of this and feels it is a part of his salary and does not want another phone. Mayor Malinda Miles wants a City issued phone since she would be expected to give it up if subpoenaed. She also wants all emails to come to her City email. Councilmember Bryan Knedler asked about cost. Councilmember Celina Benitez said the cost is \$6000 and it is City Plan that uses iPhones. Plan cost \$150 for each phone and \$40 a month per line.

Motion to Approve City Mobile Phones for Mayor and Council: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Scott Cecil

Vote Recorded: 3-1-0, Motion Passed, Councilmember Luke Chesek

Reading of Agenda by Councilmember Bryan Knedler

HVAC in Police Department

The Chief of Police said the geothermal HVAC system is not working. It costs the Dept. About \$2400 a month to keep it going and it only heats part of the building. A new geothermal HVAC system would be too costly, so the Chief recommends going with regular HVAC and recommends Jiffy Plumbing as the vendor. PEPCO offers a grant and two-year financing. Mayor Malinda Miles asked about Maryland Energy Administration and Washington Gas grants and loans. She asked if they had been contacted. Chief said the system is electric only, so Washington Gas was not contacted. He will talk to Director of Public Works Kamali to contact the Maryland Energy Administration tomorrow. Mayor Malinda Miles will give Chief the contact for Chris Rice at Maryland Energy Administration. Councilmember Scott Cecil said its October, so do due diligence, but we need heat in the building. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants the money for HVAC to come from the Police Fund. Also, he said City have spent over 200K on the geothermal system, so he is concerned about using one in Potts Hall. He wants those over Potts Hall remodeled to reconsider that system. Councilmember Bryan Knedler asked if we can contact Washington Gas to see if HVAC can be a gas connect vs. Electric as gas is more efficient and costs less. Mayor Malinda will send Chief a contact at Washington Gas. Mayor Miles confirmed via the Chief that the system will cost \$149K –174K.

Motion to Direct the Finance Director to Create a Budget Amendment for Police Dept. Gas and/or Electric HVAC for Next Work Session: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Councilmember Luke Chesek

Second: Mayor Malinda Miles

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed, Councilmember Luke Chesek

New Meters Discussion with Chief of Police

There was discussion with Chief of Police about payment for new meters and payment of any tickets. Mayor Malinda Miles rejected using all electronic or credit card payment systems because many residents do not have credit cards or handle payment online. She was onboard with adding instructions to pay via mail or in person. Councilmember Luke Chesek agreed, but said then the City needs to have personnel assigned to process the non-electronic payments and that would require using tax-payer money. Councilmember Celina Benitez was comfortable to vote for the resolution if it includes language to address concerns of Mayor Malinda Miles. Councilmember Scott Cecil wants the discussion tabled and asked about using hybrid coin and credit meters. Mayor and Council said hybrid meters are available.

Motion to Table Meter Issue to the Next Work Session Agenda: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Second: Councilmember Luke Chesek

Vote Recorded: 3-1-0, Motion Passed, Nay Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Moving Date of October Work Session

The Mayor, three Councilmembers, and the City Clerk are attending the Maryland Municipal Conference or MML in Ocean City, MD during Oct 12-15, 2019. MML conflicts with the next Work Session date, so there would not be quorum to hold the meeting. There was a discussion to move the current October Work Session. Councilmember Scott Cecil mentioned another event and the Bay Bridge lane closure to emphasize the need to move the Work Session.

Motion to Move the Current October Work Session Date with the New Date to be Decided: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Ring Camera Program

Councilmember Bryan Knedler said that the Mayor reminded him that Mayor and Council did not vote on the Ring cameras. He asked Chief of Police if there was a deadline. The Police Chief stated if the Mayor and Council approves tonight he can sign the contract tomorrow. This way program can be live

by Public Safety night. Councilmember Bryan Knedler asked for motion to add Ring Cameras to the agenda.

Motion to Amend Agenda to add Ring Camera Issue: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Councilmember Scott Cecil said the Public Safety Night Friday, October 27, Nature Center at 6:30pm. Mayor Malinda Miles said that residents want the program, but it is voluntary. Councilmember Scott Cecil trusts the City's Police and residents, but not Ring nor Amazon. He will vote no on this issue, any resident is free to contact him about his vote. Councilmember Celina Benitez asked that Chief of Police to make sure it communicated to residents that the plan is voluntary.

Motion Mayor and Council Support the Ring Camera Voluntary Program: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 3-1-0, Motion Passed, Nay Councilmember Scott Cecil

Parking Meters

The Police of Chief asked if Mayor and Council would like a representative to come to the meeting. They are vendor handling the meters. Councilmember Bryan Knedler said this should be handled offline and thanked the Chief.

Human Resources

D'Alizza Mercedes addressed the Mayor and Council on behalf of the City employees. She said that employees that have been here more than 3 years have now worked under two City Managers and under turmoil. She said this affects employees work and morale. They are not sure who is in charge and who to report to. She said during the search for a new City Manager, there should be employee engagement. She would like an anonymous survey that would allow employees to say what type of leadership and managerial qualities they would like in a new City Manager. Councilmember Bryan Knedler asked for her recommendations of how the Mayor and Council can proceed in the search. She said the Mayor and Council should engage an external search firm that works with local governments, MML, and the recruiter that was used of Chief of Police.

Comments: Mayor Malinda Miles will not agree to a nation-wide search for local talent. She wants to review resumes from the last search. She would like an external panel to help review resumes. She is supportive of an employee survey. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants the survey to happen and wanted to know timeline. Human Resources Officer said that it would take about half a day to create the survey itself, but she would need input for all City Directors and Mayor Council. She said that she will draft the questions and get feedback in week. Councilmember Luke Chesek said bringing in a new City Manager will be his most important vote. He wants City Directors on the panel. He wants to figure out how the community can be involved and wants to know about a procedure for involving residents.

Councilmember Scott Cecil thanked Mayor and Council for pulling together to work done without a City Manager and he stated that employees have been through a lot. His priority is getting an Interim Manager, so City and Council can take the time we need to select a new City Manager. Councilmember Celina Benitez said the City Clerk Association is a great resource for looking for new City Manager. She wants City staff, not just Directors to give input on new City Manager. She is open to a search for City Manager. Councilmember Bryan Knedler is not for spending for search, but he feels with online/social media the City can broadly send out the notice. He wants to know if the Mayor and Council wants to do an internal or external search process. He wants Mayor and Council to decide tonight. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants to look at internal candidates and wants to use the previous search brochure if its owned by the City. Councilmember Celina Benitez wants it noted that internal search will have a cost too. Mayor Malinda Myles said we can look at New Carrollton and Cheverly because they just hired City Managers. Councilmember Scott Cecil said he has not done a search before, so he is not sure of the best process. Councilmember Bryan Knedler agreed with the Mayor. Councilmember Luke Chesek asked the Human Resource Officer if she would like to run the search. She would. Councilmember Scott Cecil said he open to internal candidate, but he feels the City has been through a lot and needs a person that has experience as a City Manager. Councilmember Bryan Knedler could not get motion, so he asked for Special Session on this issue.

Action: Mayor Malinda Miles said there will be a Special Session on the process to hire an interim and permeant City Managers after the next Work Session. Councilmember Luke Chesek said that Mayor and Council is asking D'Alizza Mercedes, Director of Human Resources to review how the cities of Cheverly and New Carrollton hired their City Managers and think about a process for the City of Mount Rainier. Based upon her research she will present proposal by Friday. She and Mayor and Council agreed. This proposal will be discussed at next Session.

Closed Session

Motion to Move to Closed Session: Councilmember Luke Chesek

Move: Mayor Malinda Miles

Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed