

Official Minutes of the City of Mount Rainier

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

DATE: March 19, 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 (By Phone)

Officials Present

Councilmember Celina Benitez (Vice Mayor)

Councilmember Luke Chesek

Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Councilmember Shivali Shah

Staff Present

City Manager Miranda Braatz

Acting City Clerk John Hoatson

Minutes provided by:

Acting City Clerk John Hoatson

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Reading of Agenda into Record by Councilmember Celina Benitez

Motion to Approve the Agenda: Mayor Malinda Miles

Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler

Second: Councilmember Shivali Shah

Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Presentation on Renovation on Potts Hall and New Civic Center

Jill Scheck of Sheck/Goldstein Architects presented on construction designs for the new Potts Hall and the connection to City Hall. The drawings are almost done and once approved the the architects will be ready to go get permits and the Mayor can begin fundraising for the project. Ms. Scheck presented the latest drawings to the Mayor and Council and reviewed them one by one for feedback. She reminded the Mayor and Council that there can be a future green space outside. The lower/retail space will be left raw and tenants will build it out as they see fit. There will be an added outdoor, but covered stair from upstairs to the street. She reviewed kitchen, reception, storage areas. There was a discussion of

need for full a bathroom with shower or a bathroom and sink only. Mayor Malinda Miles said that she wants the building to be ADA compliant as the new construction will remove it from being grandfathered out of ADA regulations. Geothermal vs. solar was brought up. Ms. Scheck felt the building should make use of both geothermal and solar power. Mayor Malinda Miles said there is funding and loans for geothermal. Ms. Scheck said that geothermal and solar is not in their scope. Solar and Geothermal design will cost the City about 20K extra for her contractors to do due drawings. City Manager Miranda Braatz wants the geothermal vendor for the Police to be contacted if the City decides to have it a Potts Hall. Mayor and Council agreed on geothermal (Councilmember Shivali Shah was neutral). They agreed for new x Potts Hall that keeps the kitchen and bathroom with shower that are ADA compliant. Councilmember Bryan Knedler will be sent an email confirming what the Mayor and Council decide. Councilmember Luke Chesek would like a session soon that explains financing for the new Potts Hall. Mayor Malinda Miles said that a second energy audit is needed for Potts Halls.

Public Comment

Diane Slade 28th Street – There is no money to fix potholes, how can we fix Potts Hall? Mayor Malinda Miles said there has been a study of the streets and funding has been allocated to fix road problems in phases throughout the City.

Ordinance 1-2019 Moving to Five Tax Classes

City Manager Miranda Braatz previously presented and read into record Ordinance 1-2019 which will move the City from one tax class to establishing five tax classes, which are Single Family, Residential, Multifamily, Commercial and Residential tax classes. During the previous discussion the Mayor asked about the official County zones and how they are applied to the City, so City Manager Miranda Braatz presented the zone map of the City. Mayor Malinda Miles and Councilmember Bryan Knedler said the taxes must be on use versus zone. For example, many industrial zone businesses are no longer industrial, instead they are artist studios. Director of Finance said the tax classes are based on the County use code (County has 11 classes, but City proposes 5). Councilmember Shivali Shah asked for County map for taxes be shown at next session. City Manager Miranda Braatz said that it better for the future that the City establish separate tax classes, and should not be combined. You can set the same tax rate for different classes or different rates. The State SDAT system is the basis to determine use for classes. Councilmember Luke Chesek and Mayor Malinda Miles asked the City Lawyer to define how the tax classes were determined. Mayor and Council will give Director of Finance specific addresses within each zone in the map to check against the SDAT. The Mayor reviewed the discussion and asked Council if they were prepared to move to five classes or do they want to combine them. The issues of billing the classes is a different discussion. The Council told the Mayor said the support the move to five tax classes without combining them.

Vacant Property Tax Law

The Director of Finance discussed the billing issues with taxes for vacant property and aligning with County billing. Exemptions are causing an administrative burden for the City. Mayor Malinda Miles asked how Mayor and Council can help him? He asked for the City to move to fiscal year assessment clause versus daily or monthly rate. Councilmember Luke Chesek said that City is paying refunds to

people that paid too much vacant property tax due to different billing cycles between the City and the County. The Director of Finance wants to give the refund on a yearly basis. Vacant tax will be enforced until the sale of house. City Manager Miranda Braatz said she will update the Ordinance and the Director of Finance will write a one-pager explaining what was discussed tonight. Councilmember Shivali Shah asked for legislation be reviewed for any needed updates.

Vacant Property Tax and Property Vacancy Due to Natural Disaster and Tragedy

Councilmember Shivali Shah proposed an amendment to change the vacant tax law regarding owners that experienced natural disaster and tragedy (fire, death, etc.). She would like a grace period for these owners or next of kin. Within 90 days owners or next of kin, would have to request the grace period. She would give one-year grace period and then code enforcement can extend it up to but not longer than total two-years. She wants to change the definitions. Councilmember Celina Benitez said she was in support of the amendment. She said the property had to be uninhabitable, to be clear on paperwork the property owner has to resident and owner to get an exemption. She wanted language that excludes owners/family that commit intentional harm to property to vacate, and example would be arson. Councilmember Luke Chesek wants the Cert Team or another group that responds to disasters in the City to let owner know about this exemption. There need to be more clarification about people that gain property control via death.

Public Comment

- Resident – Discussed a property that burned down and sat vacant. And developers that buy many properties and let them site. She wants exemptions on a case by case basis. In Takoma Park, they can destroy a house after one-year or vacancy.
- Nick Williams 4104 42nd Street – He supports the amendment. He described the process of rebuilding after disaster or tragedy, and that is the reason for having a grace period. He thinks maybe the grace period should be up to three years.

Mayor Malina Miles wants further discussion on exceptions. Councilmember Celina Benitez suggested the severity of a fire and whole or partial destruction of home should be considered. City Manager Miranda Braatz says the appeals process is strong and works well at stopping fraud. Councilmember Shivali Shah agreed to change the amendment to say three years. City Manager Miranda Braatz hopes that there will be second reading in April.

Bike Coop/Library Funding

This is regarding 10K for the Bike Coop that was not drawn down the last fiscal year. Mayor Malinda Miles wants to know where we get funds. Contingency was suggested as an easy way to get this funding. It should have been done in the budget and was overlooked. It was agreed that Budget Amendment for next meeting will have Contingency budget line be used for:

- 20K will go to Library
- 10K will got to Bike Coop

City Manager Miranda Braatz asked that reminder of Contingency be spent on street and sidewalks. She was allowed to add this to agenda for next session. Mayor and Council agreed to 30K total coming out of Contingency.

Cell Towers/Poles

Mayor Malinda Miles said the City needs legislation about small cell towers. The proposed legislation ensures cell towers will not be placed in the City without look, size, and placement being set by the City. The Council agreed. The legislation will go up for vote next session. Mayor Malinda Miles discussed light poles by Mobile Light in the City. The company now has a stop order in placing additional poles. Should the company take them down and pay for it? City Lawyer joined the discussion by call. Mobile Light wanted to do MOU with the City for use of the poles. Mayor Malinda Miles asked City Lawyer his recommendation on this issue. If the City passes the Ordinance, then Mobile Light will have to comply to it. City can go back to Mobile Light about MOU. The question is they are placed in a proper way for the City? If so, Mayor and Council will pass this legislation, Mobile Light will pay an illegal construction fee, and Mobile Light must follow rules from now on. Councilmember Bryan Knedler wants to tax utilities with the City Railroad and Utilities tax. Councilmember Luke Chesk asked the City Lawyer. City Manager Miranda Braatz will address this issue at the next Budget Meeting.

Code Enforcement for Repeat Offenders

Code Enforcement would have ability to levy a higher penalty for nuisance neighbors that are repeat offenders. This gives residents an incentive to complain and gives Code Enforcement some power. Mayor Malinda Miles wants stronger penalties against the apartment owners for mattresses and overflowing trash. She would like the Council to work on these issues. City Manager Miranda Braatz said we need something that will hold up in court to deal with these issues. This will be worked on in other sessions.

Editorial Guidelines

Councilmember Bryan Knedler proposed new editorial guidelines for City of Mount Rainier newsletter. There was discussion and the City's Communication Contractor joined the table.

- Councilmember Bryan Knedler said community sponsored events and organization can be included in newsletter.
- Councilmember Luke Chesk wants Council report to be 350 words.
- Councilmember Luke Chesk asked why no paid ads? Currently, only the Mount Rainier Business Association can put a paid insert.
- Councilmember Celina Benitez asked about paid translation and should the City's newsletter be so long.

Mayor Malinda Miles said this will need more discussion. Also, she said what are other tools that can be used to get info out. There is MRTV, social media, and website.

Public Comment

Resident – Mount Rainier Business Association should have their own newsletter. She said translation is not necessary because it not in all other languages spoken in the City.

The Mayor and Council agreed that Councilmember reports will be 300 words. Mayor Malinda Miles said yes there are more language in the City. If there are persons in the City that would like to translate

other language, please volunteer. Councilmember Shivali Shah said Spanish-speakers are huge demographic in the City and that is why the newsletter is translated in Spanish. Mayor Malinda Miles wants to make sure the public can comment on these guidelines.

Introduction Communication and Events Coordinator

Reina Walker is the City of Mount Rainier Communication and Events Coordinator. She is from Miami and she is majoring Public Relation and will graduate soon. She is a Spanish Speaker.

Youth Scholarship Application Logistics

Councilmember Celina Benitez presented application guidelines and process. May 20th will be deadline. May 25 to June 8 review. June 11, the parents will be notified. Next Year the process will start in November or December. Mayor and Council can each give their appointments for the Committee to City Clerk now. Council liked the application content and look.

ICSC Meeting at Gaylord at National Harbor Recap

Director of Economic Development Ronald Hopkins joined the table to talk about the ISSC meeting. He distributed the Mount Rainier giveaways that were distributed at the meeting. He showcased an updated brochure on the City for Economic Development. He said the items where all a big hit. Attendees had to leave a business card to get the City of Mount Rainier candy. He felt Mount Rainier had the best display. He will post pictures. Local graphic artist, Justin Bobst, designed materials and HW Printing printed them on quick turnaround. City of Mount Rainier was invited to present their economic development package at the event. The City had 15ft booth. They met over 300 developers. Mayor Malinda Miles wants a presentation with pictures to the public about this event at next meeting.

Redevelopment Authority Grant for Spring Park Urgent Item

Motion to Amend the Agenda to add Redevelopment Grant for Spring Park and Art Commission: Mayor Malinda Miles
Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler
Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez
Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed

Councilmember Shivali Shah discussed urgent matter for Redevelopment Authority Grant for Spring Park at Sheppard and 33rd Street. The proposal was for 80K and The Redevelopment Authority Grant would be 50K. Redevelopment Authority Grant wants to know if the City will do 40K match. The Redevelopment Authority works on reimbursable basis. This will be in next budget. Redevelopment Authority Grant needs to know the City is committed to the match. The Roger's Park money was not spent and momentum went to Spring Park. Mayor Malinda Miles asked if the match must be in-kind? Councilmember Shivali Shah said the proposal was cash and in-kind, but she is not sure about the match. There was discussion of the match in the amount and 10K to 30K.

Arts Commission and Public Art

Councilmember Luke Cheseck quickly went over of process for commissioning public art by the City Arts Commission including the RFP process, payment of artist, and maintenance of art. He asked the Mayor and Council to go over his legislation, he will confer with local artists for feedback, and it can be brought up a legislation session. Mayor Malinda Miles asked for wording that stated a strong preference for Mount Rainier Artists to receive the commission. Mayor and Council agreed Art Commission is strong legislation.

Motion to Move to Closed Session 3200 Rhode Island with City Real Estate Agent: Mayor Malinda Miles Move: Councilmember Bryan Knedler Second: Councilmember Celina Benitez Vote Recorded: 4-0-0, Motion Passed
