

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
OF THE SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL**

December 8, 2014

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President Margaret King at 7:05 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called upon Rev. Moon Hawk River Stone to provide the invocation.

Ms. King called on John Polimeni to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered to be present:

Present – Council members, John Ferrari, Margaret King, Ed Kosiur, John Mootooveren, Leesa Perazzo, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Also Present – Deputy City Clerk Chad Putman, Corporation Counsel Carl Falotico and Mayor Gary McCarthy

At this point, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to invite Kelly Gross from the School of Social Welfare at SUNY Albany to present on open enrollment for the New York State health insurance program. There were no objections.

Ms. Gross noted open enrollment is taking place from November 15 – February 15, 2014. She noted assistance with enrolling is available by calling 518-442-3854 and by email at navigator@albany.edu. She noted residents will qualify for open enrollment if they got married or divorced, moved to NYS, had or adopted a child, lost employers insurance or another life event took place. The information was then reiterated by a colleague in Spanish.

At this point, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to take agenda item number 9 & 10 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2014 – 285 – A Resolution Honoring TrustCo Bank for the Quackenbush Park Improvements. TrustCo Bank’s Executive Vice President, Bob Cushing extended his gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

The resolution was moved by Ms. Porterfield and seconded by Mr. Mootooveren. The resolution passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 2014 - 286 – A Resolution Honoring Winifred Elze Warlock. Ms. Warlock extended her gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

The resolution was moved by Ms. Perazzo and seconded by Ms. Porterfield. The resolution passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Regarding the Upper Union Street BID 2015 Budget

Seeing no speakers come forward related to the public hearing, Ms. King declared the public hearing closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. King asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2014 Council meetings as submitted by the City Clerk; Mr. Kosiur made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Mootoveren seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday, December 8, 2014

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated December 8, 2014

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

None

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

Ms. King invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward:

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – “With regards to item #8 on tonight’s agenda that deals with the sale of property. I request that in the future the sale price and name of the buyer also be listed on the agenda. I think it is important for taxpayers to know to whom the city is selling city owned properties. We are told the intent of the sale is to put properties back on the tax rolls but taxpayers have no assurances that sales will bring more money to the city. The last time the city revealed the names of the dead beat taxpayers on Open Stage Media, there were as many as eight properties listed for one owner who hadn’t paid taxes on any of them. At a neighborhood meeting I asked the Mayor if the city continues to sell city properties to people who owe back taxes on other properties. He said he didn’t know. Such a practice is counterproductive. Item #2 on tonight’s agenda contracts to give union employees a \$4000 yearly bonus if they waive their city medical insurance. In other words if the city doesn’t have to pay for an employee’s coverage, the employee will receive a \$4000 yearly bonus on family plan. Rather than breathe a sigh of relief that the city doesn’t have added expense it is creating an expenditure by giving bonuses instead of coverage. The contract applies to couples who work for the city. Does this mean that the Councilman who told us his wife is a nurse in the school system will be entitled to the same bonus he is being asked to approve on tonight’s agenda? In either case they are not entitled to bonuses. Medical insurance coverage is all the bonus they need especially when it comes from the taxpayers like the G.E. retirees who had their coverage abruptly taken from them. It’s payback time for endorsements. Anyone who votes for Democrats in Schenectady is voting against himself.”

Seeing no other speakers come forward, Ms. King declared the Privilege of the Floor on the Legislative Agenda closed.

INTRODUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

Ms. Perazzo made a motion that Council approves the Consent Agenda and the motion was seconded by Mr. Kosiur.

Consent Agenda –

- Resolution No. 2014 – 287Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 288Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 289Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 290Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 291Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 292Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 293Adopted Unanimously
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- Resolution No. 2014 – 298Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 299Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 300Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS - 22Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS - 23Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS - 24Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS - 25Adopted Unanimously

A Resolution Approving the 2015 Downtown Special Assessment District Budget. 2014 – 301 The motion was moved by Mr. Kosiur and seconded by Mr. Mootoveren. 6:1:0

Voting AYE: Ferrari, King, Kosiur, Mootoveren, Perazzo and Porterfield
Voting NAY: Riggi

Ms. Perazzo – Noted her support of the resolution and added the DSAD budget has not had an increase in eight years. She noted most of the feedback she has received from the public related to the proposed budget has been positive. She added most of the feedback came after the public hearing and she encouraged residents to use the hearing as a means to express concerns or support. She closed by noting the DSIC is doing a great job.

Mr. Ferrari – Noted the DSAD budget has not had an increase in eight years. He noted the DSIC is doing a good job and he supports the resolution.

Mr. Riggi – Noted he has heard from some of the churches in the district who have expressed financial distress related to the increase and noted they can't wait for a reduction in the fee until next year. He noted some would like to see more transparency related to the DSAD budget process and clarification on what services they receive. He noted he had asked the DSIC for a list of churches impacted by the DSAD budget and was told to follow up with the City Assessor. He noted his follow up with the Assessment office was not helpful. He noted he would not support the resolution.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Ms. King invited all who wished to address the City Council on any matter of City business to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – “Neither the Mayor nor City Council has done anything to publicly stress the importance of clean city streets. For the past three years the main streets of Schenectady have been perennially filthy. Downtown is free of litter because money is coming from the private sector to pay workers to clean it. The same thing is now happening on Eastern Avenue. Price chopper has offered to pay individuals living on the street to clean the litter. It’s working. The results are astounding. The positives are coming from the neighborhoods. Mount Pleasant residents have gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve their area. The Mayor says the city built the tennis courts but it was the Mt. Pleasant residents who painted the neglected chain link fence. A big job. The Mayor says he wants to demolish the dilapidated eye sores. But it was the Mt. Pleasant residents who painted 70 fire hydrants in their neighborhood. They even mowed the lawn in their park. This kind of work is the city’s responsibility not the homeowner. Mt. Pleasant deserves all the things they asked for. Please see to it that it happens. In my case, I have spent time on my knees planting flowers and pulling weeds in the island garden; bent over picking up cigarette butts 20 at time with the point of my scissors for 5 years all summer long on Sunday afternoon, gratis. While at the other end of Nott St. the business man is allowed to earn a profit and run his business like a city dump. Someone finally picked up sod that was lying on the dirt. The area was not swept. Mr. Mayor, you sent a crew to Buffalo. Now please send a crew to Nott St. and Van Vranken Ave. to clean up that messy corner. I refuse to do it. I have been thrown off the ballot four times and bi-passed four times by both the Democrats and Republicans for a City Council seat. It appears that the council seats are for a chosen few. The rest of us have the green right to do all the grunt work in the city.”

Joy Hall, Schenectady – Noted the City has big problems related to traffic and pedestrian safety. She noted lower Liberty Street is very bumpy. She noted concerns related to the closing of the Ellis Hospital Emergency Room on McClellan Ave. She noted the Ellis Hospital Emergency Room on Nott Street is too far for some residents to travel and especially for those who do not have transportation.

Anthony Cavota, Schenectady – Noted a recent article in the paper that reported crime is down. He noted this is a lie and the Council needs to be aware of the facts. He asked, if crime is down then life in the City would have improved. He noted on the national front the public is having issues with cops. He noted there are always a few bad apples. He noted the importance of looking out for oneself.

David Di Girolamo, Schenectady – Noted he has been a one man protest related to an experience he had with the Schenectady Police Department. He noted the department has a history of dirty cops and added a few still remain. He noted the department violated the HIPAA privacy law when an arresting officer required him to report specific health related information. He noted this was unlawful and the officer was wrong. He noted he will continue to protest but will not be filing a lawsuit.

Marva Isaac, Schenectady – Noted a recent cartoon in the Gazette which she finds offensive. She noted the illustration features two persons of color and the elder tells the younger person, “don’t act black” when you are outside and see the police. She closed by suggesting a boycott of the Gazette pending an apology.

Tony Buonome, Schenectady – Noted this was the 73rd anniversary since the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Noted this is also the anniversary of the start of WWII. He asked all those in attendance

to remember those lost in the bombing and the war with a moment of silence. He noted he recalls hiding under his desk as a child during air-raid drills.

Stefan Krueger, Schenectady – Noted he is with the Rotterdam Empire Rescue group and he extended his gratitude to the City officials, Mayor and Council for improvements at the City dog shelter. He noted it has been an extended process overall but improvements include longer hold times for dogs.

Patricia Smith, Schenectady – Noted there was another shooting in Mont Pleasant and the residents find it very unsettling. She noted the shooting is akin to a murder with bad aim. She added Mont Pleasant is primarily single family homes with young families with children. She noted it is important for residents to feel safe in their neighborhood. She noted the taxes are too high for families with limited resources. She noted troubled residents are moving in and causing an increase in police calls and decrease in property values.

Marienne Schuter, Schenectady – Noted she has three items to address: (1) She is requesting an ordinance related to restricting road side basketball set up. She noted she has had three broken windows as a result of road side basket ball's going astray and it is also a dangerous practice with speeding traffic. (2) She noted she has photo's of drug buys taking place near her home. She noted the activity has been taking place for the last 20 years. She noted these illegal activities add a negative element to the neighborhood. (3) She noted her tax assessment is 2x the value of her home. She noted that she has attempted to secure a reduced assessment on her property and has been denied twice with the same form letter. She closed by noting that she can't sell the home at the assessed value.

Carol Johnson, Schenectady – Noted she is with Rotterdam Empire Rescue. She noted the conditions at the Schenectady City dog shelter where not favorable. She noted the situation has improved in large part due to the persistent advocacy by people like her and related groups. She noted the new Animal Control Officers are compassionate and it's apparent by their actions when transporting dogs in City custody. She noted the City website needs to be maintained and updated on a regular basis regarding dogs in City custody. She appreciates that the dogs are being held longer. She noted her interest and intentions to work together and noted there are still volunteers in the wings ready to help when asked.

Vickie Hurewitz, Schenectady – “I am a local community activist and I am up here to tell you about Job Matching, Pathways a project I am doing with Councilwoman Marion Porterfield. The purpose of Job Matching Pathways is to help people find jobs. There is no charge for this service. We have an office in 920 Albany Street, where the SEFCU branch is in Hamilton Hill. Office hours are Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. No appointment is necessary during regular hours. The telephone number is 377-4516. We are offering an individualized, hands on approach to helping people find jobs. We have a 60 question test to evaluate client's areas of strengths and then we match these strengths with types of jobs that would fit and then actual jobs that are available. We will also recommend and help clients link up to job training and educational opportunities for targeted career advancement. Ms. Porterfield and I would like to extend an invitation for everyone to come by, see the office and if you are looking for work or would like to get a better or different job come take advantage of this exciting community based service.”

Colleen Merays, Schenectady – Invited residents to participate in the City's Holiday event taking place on Saturday, December 13 in downtown. She noted there will be plenty of activities for kids along with horse drawn carriage rides. She noted all the activities are free and the event

runs from 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Locations include the downtown Library, City Hall and event participants include MiSci and Proctors.

Seeing no other speakers to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the Privilege of the Floor closed regarding City Business.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

Ms. Porterfield – Noted the Affirmative Action Advisory Board will be meeting on December 18 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall in room 110. She noted the meeting is open to the public and business owners are encouraged to attend. She reflected on current events specifically related to law enforcement and race in America. She noted it is important to maintain open dialogue and conversation however she believes the comic in the editorial section of the Gazette was inappropriate. She noted the City needs to be part of the discussion in order to create better understanding. She noted this is less about race and more about developing relationships. She closed by noting she has family in law enforcement.

Mr. Riggi – Noted improved community relations is a good thing. He noted a few months ago, Schenectady Police were able to defuse a situation which involved law enforcement and a local youth with a toy gun. He noted a crisis was averted and advised caution related to youth playing with toy guns that look like the real thing. He noted officers would benefit from attending neighborhood association meetings and added other municipalities have policies like “stop, walk and talk”. He noted this can be a beneficial interaction to collect information and concerns from residents. He then noted Albany has a “cod blue” policy related to freezing temperatures and ensuring homeless are off the street. He asked the Mayor if the City has a similar policy. He then noted the Bellevue Neighborhood Association will host their annual Christmas Party on December 11 at 6:00 p.m. at St. Paul’s Church. He noted there will be a tree lighting followed by a reception.

Mr. Kosiur – Noted a save the date in relation to the annual Woodlawn Park Ziti and Meatball dinner fundraiser. He noted the event will take place on January 20 at the Hibernian on State Street. He noted proceeds will benefit Woodlawn Park redevelopment. He then thanked the DSIC for their work on organizing the City Holiday celebration scheduled for December 13th in downtown Schenectady. He then noted the passage of the Building Trades union contract as part of the consent agenda tonight. He noted the cost of health insurance for employees averages around \$25,000 a year. He noted the City offers incentives ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000 for employees who opt out of coverage for themselves or a family member.

Mayor McCarthy – Noted that he agrees with Council member Porterfield regarding relations between law enforcement and the community. He noted the Police and Fire department are looking for people all the time. He asked residents to assist with clean-up related to the expected snow fall. He asked residents to shovel around the fire hydrants and noted no parking on priority streets when there is three inches of snow or more.

Adjourned:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Mr. Kosiur and seconded by Mr. Riggi and the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

A true record


By Chad Putman

Schenectady Deputy City Clerk