

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

March 9, 2015

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President Margaret King at 7:04 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called on Rev. Arthur Butler to provide the invocation.

Ms. King then called on Mark Blanchfield to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The 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 Mootoveren, Leesa Perazzo, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Also Present – City Clerk Charles Thorne, Corporation Counsel Carl Falotico and Mayor Gary McCarthy

At this point, Ms. King turned the floor over to Council member Ed Kosiur who introduced Mark Blanchfield and students from the Central Park International Magnet School who performed two songs from their upcoming performance of Alice in Wonderland. The performances will take place on March 13 & 14th.

Joe Piazza, Media – Noted the live video cable which was attached to the building across the street and allowed for the live broadcast of City Council meetings was lost in the fire. He noted tonight's meeting will be streaming online at www.livestream.com/cityofschenectady and he will be looping the internet stream back on the public access channel through Open Stage Media. He noted the quality will not be as good and he is not sure how long the interruption will last.

At this point, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to take agenda item number 8, 9 & 10 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2015 - 54 – A Resolution Honoring the John F. Kennedy Division 1 Ancient Order of Hibernians, as well as All People of Irish Descent Throughout the City of Schenectady on the Occasion of the Feast of Saint Patrick, this March 17th, 2015. – Prior to the presentation of the ceremonial resolution there was a dance recital featuring youth from a local Irish dance group. Then representatives with the Ancient Order of the Hibernian accepted the resolution and extended their gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

The resolution was moved by Mr. Ferrari and seconded by Mr. Mootoveren. The resolution passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 2015 - 55 – A Resolution Recognizing Jennifer Lawrence as the 2015 YouthBuild Director of the Year. – Jennifer Lawrence was on hand and extended her gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council. She was also accompanied by students and faculty from the YouthBuild program.

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

Resolution No. 2015 - 62 – A Resolution Recognizing the Festival Cinema Invisible of Persian Speaking Countries and Communities. – Professor Mahmood Karimi-Hakak involved with the festival was on hand and extended his gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. King asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 23 and March 2, 2015 Council meetings as submitted by the City Clerk; Mr. Riggi made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Perazzo seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday March 9, 2015

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated March 9, 2015

General:

A letter from the Schenectady Veterans Council to the City of Schenectady extending their gratitude for the donation to support their organization.

A letter from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Post 357 to the City of Schenectady extending their gratitude for the donation to support their organization.

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:

Seeing no 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:

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

Consent Agenda –

Local Law No. 2015 – 02Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 56Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2015 – 57	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 58	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 59	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 60	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 61	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – CS - 08	Adopted Unanimously

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:

Joe Rodriguez, Schenectady – Noted that he is proud to be using the new car wash that opened up on State Street which he says offers a fair price. He then noted it’s unfair for the Gazette to run a story related to residents who owe taxes and to only picture people of color. He noted the lack of Caucasians pictured who are also named in the article presents a bias. He then asked why there is a City Code Enforcement officer still issuing violations when this officer has failed the test related to their position twice. He closed by questioning if the City is being held to the same standard related to its own buildings that don’t meet code requirements.

Marva Isaacs, Schenectady – Noted concerns related to Avery Street and Duane. She added Avery is a one-way street following the death of a child. She noted she is asking for a *Do Not Enter* sign on the corner to help direct traffic. She noted follow up with City staff with no response. She noted speaking with Council member Mootoveren and the Clerk’s office whom assisted her further. She noted a follow up email from Mr. Coluccio which referred to her as “that woman” which she found to be offensive. She then recognized the City firemen for their service especially following the recent fire. She noted they should receive specially recognition.

Ed Smith, Jr. Schenectady – Noted concerns related to snow emergencies. He noted other municipalities in the region do issue snow emergencies when applicable. He added when he drives around the City he encounters streets that are reduced to one lane due to the snow build. He noted this increases the probability of car accidents and reduces the ability for emergency services to navigate the streets. He noted he has been a resident of the City for over a decade and has watched winter by winter the deterioration of cleared City streets. He shared an example of when there was an emergency near his residence and emergency personal had to take alternate routes to get to the call due to vehicle access issues. He noted Becker Avenue is listed as a priority street however it was not adequately cleared following the buildup of winter snow. He noted the lack of parking enforcement and cars on the street despite alternate street parking. He noted repeated attempts to contact the Mayor’s office and related departments regarding his concerns with no response. He noted it was not until he contacted the media that the no parking signs went up on his street and the City crews came out and cleared the street of snow appropriately. He closed by noting this reminds him of the leadership styles of Mayor Corning out of Albany and added the citizens of Schenectady deserve better.

Joy Hall, Schenectady – Noted she is a senior and trustee with the GE Union. She noted the City needs to do a better job cleaning up the streets. She added it is difficult for seniors to navigate the streets. She noted the Police and Fire Departments are doing a good job. She closed by encouraging residents to make sure they check their fire extinguishers and detectors to make sure they are working.

Tony Buonome, Schenectady – Noted he did not get a response on the Oak Street Bridge from the Mayor at the last City Council meeting. He noted he would like to hear from the City Council when the repairs and renovations on the bridge are going to start.

Stanley A. RuCharne, Jr. Schenectady – Noted there have been attempts in the past to close the pedestrian tunnel between Watt Street and Grout Park. He noted he supports the City closing the tunnel. He then asked the City to continue to fill the potholes on the City streets as well.

Patricia Smith, Schenectady – Noted she is the Mont Pleasant Neighborhood Association President. She noted on behalf of the neighborhood residents she is asking the City to please close the pedestrian tunnel. She noted the tunnel contributes to a lot of criminal activity and it is past its useful purpose. She noted the neighborhoods would be safer if it was closed.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – “City Council is spending taxpayer’s dollars needlessly. When Council voted for the 2015 budget back in October (2014) the budget included money to cover bonuses for the trades union whose contract was being negotiated at the time. The public could also speak on the item at the December 8th Council meeting. Had 15 people stood at the microphone and asked Council to vote NO the taxpayers’ pleas would have been meaningless because the money was already in the budget for the bonuses. On February 23, 2015, Council finalized the deal. The bonus was a gift and not a financial necessity for the City. The item involved couples who are City employees. They have a two income household, steady paying jobs, medical coverage for both partners and other lifetime benefits. All the things I don’t have but my tax dollars are used to give to others who want more for themselves. It is wrong to spend tax dollars this way. As for the \$40,000 Council spends on fluoride every year, it is an unnecessary expenditure. Council needs to look at other communities to see how they handle their item. Another unnecessary expenditure that recently came to my attention is the purchase of software so taxpayer can pay their taxes online. For the past 10 years, the City has tried to draw pedestrians to the downtown area with the blink of an eye, that concept has been turned upside down with Council’s vote. What has Council done? A. Reduced foot traffic downtown. B. Diminished bus ridership. C. Lost business for restaurant and store owners. D. Destroyed a concept that had been nurtured for years. E. Bought something that was not needed. F. Spent money needlessly. Even the City department head told me when people go downtown, they don’t go there just to pay their taxes. Council took it away. This is nuts. Four seats are up for election this year, folks. Go elsewhere for your representation, you are not well served with the present group.”

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

Mr. Riggi– Noted his appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service related to the recent Jay Street fire. He extended his sympathies to the victims and families impacted by the tragedy. He noted there was a County dispatcher who handled calls related to the tragedy and did it with professionalism and patience. He then noted the Bellevue Preservation League will host its monthly meeting on March 12 at 7:00 p.m. with special guest speaker, Schenectady City Fire Chief Senecal. He also noted the Bellevue Farmers Market is looking for more vendors. He added interested parties can contact 393-0403 to learn more.

Ms. Porterfield– Noted her appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service related to the recent Jay Street fire. She also extended her sympathies to the victims and families impacted by the tragedy. She then noted special appreciation for Christ Church which opened their doors to the victims of the fire and acted as a temporary shelter in collaboration with the Red Cross. She noted she had an opportunity to visit with fire victims at the church and many of the victims were still in a state of shock. She also thanked all

the individuals and organizations who donated items and money to assist the victims. She then expressed her appreciation for the Irish youth dance group that performed at the start of the Council meeting. With regards to pot holes she noted it's important for the City to actively follow up on addressing the pot holes in the city along with the narrow side streets which have been difficult to pass this winter with all the snowfall. With regards to the pedestrian tunnel between Grout Park and Watt Street she noted there will be a public hearing on March 23. Lastly she noted the Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association will host its monthly meeting on March 12 at 6:30 pm at the Bethel AME Church.

Ms. Perazzo – Noted her appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service related to the recent Jay Street fire. She then thanked the local press for their coverage related to the fire and noted the extent of the coverage helped to keep people away from a dangerous scene.

Mr. Ferrari – Noted he echoed the sentiments above by his colleagues. Then he noted the Millennial Council in collaboration with Kelly Marr, founder of #SchenectadyDoesntSuck, has raised over \$5,000 for the victims of the Jay Street Fire via GoFundMe.com. He closed by noting his appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service related to the recent Jay Street fire.

Mr. Mootoveren – Noted his appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service related to the recent Jay Street fire. He also extended his sympathies to the victims and families impacted by the recent tragedy on Jay Street. He noted he had an opportunity to visit with fire victims at the church following the fire and he encouraged everyone to donate what they can to help those impacted by the tragedy.

Mayor McCarthy – Noted the Jay Street fire is a tragic event and the Cities Fire and Police Department issued an impressive response. He noted emergency services provided a coordinated effort, providing mutual aid, and contained the fire too two buildings. He also thanked Scotia and Grand Blvd Fire and Christ Church for establishing the emergency shelter. He noted the NYS ATF is now on the scene conducting an investigation to determine the cause and origin of the fire. Given the scope of the fire and extent of the damage he noted travel restrictions will likely run through this week which he understands will be an inconvenience. He also recognized there will be parking restrictions and he appreciates those working with the City to minimize the impact. Regarding the pedestrian tunnel he noted it is owned by the State of New York and maintained by the City. He added the state has asked the City to hold a public hearing before closing it in order to solicit public feedback. Regarding the Oak Street Bridge he noted the City has had trouble coordinating with the railroad and that the cost estimates should be ready shortly. He added that he hopes the proposal will be within budget and then the City can move forward to rehab the bridge. He closed by thanking all those who have stepped up to assist with the tragedy including the Millennial Council to ease the impact on the victims of the fire.

Ms. King – Extended her sympathies to the victims and families impacted by the recent tragedy and extended her appreciation for the Cities first responders in relation to their bravery and act of service regarding the Jay Street fire. She closed by suggesting residents concerned with the issuance of snow emergencies in the City to read the Mayor's letter-to-the-editor in the Schenectady Gazette today. She added the Mayor addressed the issues related to snow emergency in a very thorough manor.

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. Mootoveren and the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

A true record

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles W. Thorne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "C".

By Charles Thorne

Schenectady City Clerk