

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

May 11, 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 Pandit Vishnu Dutt Persaud to provide the invocation.

Ms. King then called on Marva Isaacs 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, Leesa Perazzo, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Excused – John Mootooveren

Also Present – Deputy City Clerk Chad Putman, Deputy Corporation Counsel Rachael Ward and Mayor Gary McCarthy

At this point, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to take agenda item number 12 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2015 - 115 – A Resolution Honoring the 2015 Schenectady Women of Distinction. – Adine Viscusi, Jamaica Miles and Marva Isaacs were on hand and extended their gratitude for the recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. King asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 27, 2015 Council meetings as submitted by the City Clerk; Mr. Kosiur made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Riggi seconded the motion.

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday May 11, 2015

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated May 11, 2015.

A letter from Christopher Wallin, City Engineer, dated April 13, 2015 recommending the contract for the “Hot-In-Place Asphalt Recycling” be awarded to Highway Rehabilitation Corporation.

A letter from Christopher Wallin, City Engineer, dated April 13, 2015 recommending the contract for the “City of Schenectady Police Station Roof Replacement” be awarded to Mid-State Industries, LTD.

A letter from Jeremy Howard dated May 6, 2015 recommending the contract for the “Liquid Chlorine for the 2015 Pool Season” be awarded to Surpass Chemical Company.

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Leesa Perrazo, Finance – Noted there is a resolution on the Council agenda tonight related to CHIPS funding which will help cover expenses related to paving of City streets.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

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

Steve Markham, Schenectady, NY – “I am a member of SLIC (Schenectady Landlords Influencing Change). According to the latest draft of the Housing Standards Review Board, Section 68-10 “Powers” regarding the review of complaint...” Any complaint about a specific incident shall not be reviewed by the board until any prosecution or other legal action taken on behalf of the City of Schenectady is deemed final and complete by the Corporation Counsel.” Therein lies our problem. From its onset, we understood the ultimate purpose of the this review board was to hear and evaluate cases of violation upon request before they went to court, trial, and “prosecution”. We’re not criminals! Most of us are just law-biding citizens trying to live a decent life and hope to be treated as such. It would seem that notices from Code are issued with the goal of getting problems resolved. We would expect owners to comply with “reasonable” remediation demands and schedules. (We emphasize that we would not be asking the board to stall or mediate violations regarding serious health or safety issues). We realize that the expense of repairs can be burdensome, but unavoidable. However, if it were felt that fines or fees accompanying a violation, or aspects of the violation itself are excessive, this would justify a request for a hearing by the neutral review board. We are concerned that we don’t see specific guidelines for the board to follow. We have questions. Will they have to re-invent the wheel? Is it expected that they design and determine their own format of function? How often do they meet, or will it be as needed? How is the hearing process made known and applied for? Will it be an application that requires acceptance in order to schedule a hearing? What determines which cases are eligible for review? What will be required for a deliberation? We feel the redesigning of this review board still needs work and further developed substance in order to provide an effective mechanism for its intended purpose.”

Chris Morris, Schenectady, NY – “I am Director of SLIC. At this time we are aware of a certain case involving a “vacant house registry” violation amounting to \$11,000 based primarily on a technicality. Upon notification in February, the owners took immediate steps to clear up Code’s issues. Three months later, after numerous interactions with Code and the completion of some required minor repairs, this case still drags on. Circumstances along the way gave cause for frustration and upset with no final outcome regarding an anticipated reduction in the excessive fine owed. Recently, the owners were informed that their situation

not only hasn't been resolved by Code, but has been passed along to the law department. A conference is finally scheduled. Eventually, they hope to find a resolution that makes some kind of sense. Their situation needs to come to an end. Perhaps the Housing Review Board as we envision it, would have been the answer. Again, we address the prospect of a SLIC candidate for the Housing Standards Review Board who we feel is amply qualified to contribute both 25 years of experience in the rental business and knowledge and credentials in construction, repair and home improvement. This candidate offers common sense and good, basic reasoning along with a professional aptitude and a willingness to donate the necessary personal time to the review board process. It should be noted, however, that there is some skepticism expressed regarding the actual functionality and effectiveness of the board should it be implemented without establishing specific guidelines of operation and purpose. We also feel that it should focus on mediation and fairness. Given the dramatic changes we've seen in code procedures and enforcement in these recent years, including the increased levying of fees and fines, we do feel there would be benefit in having a review board to provide an unbiased assessment on an individual basis, but only if it is given the ability and the provisions to actually make a significant difference. We thank the Council for its work and attention to the review board reinstatement and urge you to continue developing its structure and purpose."

Jason Planck, Schenectady, NY – Agenda item #9 regarding the tax certiorari for 401 State Street. He noted the property belongs to a major developer who received a façade improvement funds along with a PILOT. He noted the agreement called for the company to create 23 jobs and hosted the Commission on Quality of Care. He added the same developer owns property on Clinton Street along with the Bow Tie Cinema on State and Broadway which he reports benefited from a PILOT. He added owning a building on State Street comes with certain perks including flower baskets, street and sidewalk cleaning. He noted approving this tax certiorari is a slap in the face to tax payers with no additional job opportunities to show for it.

Mohammed Hafez, Schenectady, NY – Spoke on the Housing Standard Review Board legislation in front of the Council tonight. He referenced Chapter 138 and noted the board power has shifted. He noted the code previously spoke to allowing the board to prevent Code Enforcement over-reach and now it's structured to simply hear appeals. He noted the appeal process can be a time consuming process. He added if the board can only hear appeals it lacks any real power. He closed by noting the proposed legislation related to the Housing Standard Review Board does not incentivize homeownership in the City.

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:

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

Consent Agenda –

- Resolution No. 2015 – 116Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2015 – 117Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2015 – 118Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2015 – 119	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 120	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 121	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 122	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 123	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 124	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 125	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – 126	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – CS - 14	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – CS - 15	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2015 – CS - 16	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:

Anthony Carota, Schenectady – Shared an idea related to reducing violent crime in the City of Schenectady. He spoke about the violence taking place in Florida, Ferguson and Baltimore. He is concerned about similar outbreaks taking place in Schenectady. He encouraged the City to meet with community organizations and develop solutions. He noted the City can provide leadership and help curb violence.

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted the City Clerk needs to make the material which is passed out of executive session more readily available in the public domain. He noted the general public has a right to review the back up and the Clerk’s office needs to be more open about these matters. Regarding the CDBG funding he encouraged the Council to look at the number of jobs produced from the funding. He added funding Better Neighborhoods, Inc. (BNI) is great, but he asked who can afford a home on minimum wage. He closed by reiterating the importance of job creation.

Mohamed Hafez, Schenectady – Spoke about prior opposition to the casino in Schenectady. He then outlined a host community agreement set up between Springfield, MA and the casino developer (MGM). He noted the community is guaranteed \$50 million dollars per year which will be allocated to reduce property taxes. He noted there is a 35 page agreement that is available to review online. He noted the agreement speaks to the creation of a special district around the casino, allocation of funds and access to waterfront. He asked why the City of Schenectady could not set up a similar agreement with Rush Street Gaming and if it’s too late to demand one.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – “I’m going to touch on 2 items tonight- absences and litter. Absences- No one objects to city officials taking a vacation but if individuals are absent from council meetings because their primary jobs call them away, then they should not hold public office, because they do not have the time for constituent service. Madame President, in the future, when you excuse your colleagues for absences will you please tell the voters why they are not here? Thank you. Litter- Who is responsible for cleaning the main streets of the city? I attend City Council Meetings. I go to neighborhood meetings and I hear parks, parks, parks. Steinmetz Park is a beautiful park, but it is off the beaten path. Not too many people see it every day. On the other hand, when I drive to church on Easter Sunday and Eastern Avenue is a pig sty. I find such a situation problematic. State Street is deplorable. The litter accumulates and is left to sit on the ground day after day. Other main streets are just as bad. I realize that slobs put the trash there, but the slobs cannot dictate how the rest of us should live. Therefore, someone has to clean up the mess that others make. I know if I had one of your seats, the city would not look this filthy

even if it meant cleaning it up myself. That is the difference between what is and what could have been. Litter conditions have gotten out of control over the past 3 ½ years. In my 37 years of involvement with the community, I have never seen so much trash on the city's main streets, especially the corner of Nott St. and Van Vranken Avenue. I am convinced that no one in this administration has the will to address the issue. Where is your plan to clean the city? The city tears down a building, leaves the trash and called it improvement. The city has a very, dirty face. Please clean it up.”

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– Referenced earlier comments related to tax certiorari's passed by the Council. He noted the recommendations come from the City Assessment office. He added if the Council does not settle on the recommendation the case will go to court and the verdict maybe worse. Regarding the tragic Bradley Street fire he noted the City's public safety personnel acted heroically. He added police and fire personnel put their own lives on the line every day in an effort to save the lives of others. He noted the Bellevue Preservation League will host its next neighborhood association meeting on May 14 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Paul's and Fire Chief Ray Senecal will be the special guest speaker. He added the Bellevue neighborhood will host a flag raising on May 16th at 11:00 a.m. He added the neighborhood will also be hosting a garage sale on June 6 & 7, 2015 and residents interested in participating can call 374-0281 for permits.

Ms. Porterfield – Extended her gratitude for all the resident and City personnel support related to the Mayor's I Love My Schenectady Parks day. She noted it was a great effort and participants had a good time. She then noted there will be a public hearing related to the new apartment complex to be built in Hamilton Hill. The hearing will take place on May 12 at 6:00 p.m. at SCAP on Albany Street. She noted the developers are looking for community input. She added she is working with the Schenectady County Veteran's Council to arrange a flag display to take place on May 25th in Veterans Park. She noted the flagpole will have the name of a veteran from Schenectady that is being remembered. She noted flags can be purchased in the Schenectady City Clerk's office for \$25. If residents have questions they can contact her directly at 701-3078.

Ms. Perazzo – Noted that the Millennial Council hosted an event, which had a great turnout. She noted that the Millennial Council members are excited about the urban renewal occurring in the City of Schenectady. She closed by noting that she is inspired by the group.

Mr. Ferrari – Noted the Hometown Heroes Banner Program Ceremonial press conference will take place on May 15 at 11:00 a.m. at Veteran's Park in Schenectady. The banner program honors veterans and active duty servicepersons associated with the City of Schenectady.

Mr. Kosiur – Noted his appreciation for City personnel efforts and community feedback related to the City Development Block grant (CDBG). He added it was good to see the youth from Schenectady Boxing and Basketball Clubs speak at the Public Hearing for CDBG funding. He reported that there were around 30 to 40 youth at the Boxing Club when he visited recently. He then referenced an agreement with the Boys & Girls Club to offer open swim sessions on Saturdays at Hillhurst and Steinmetz pools this summer. He added the pools were not open on Saturdays last year due to funding and this was a concern for residents. He reported the Woodlawn Neighborhood and Woodlawn Park annual garage sale will be taking place on May 16 and 17th. He noted you can pick up maps for garage sale locations at the Sunoco on Albany Street. He noted that 'Nisky Day' and Highbridge Neighborhood garage sale will also take place the same day weekend as the Woodlawn garage sale. He then reminded residents the school

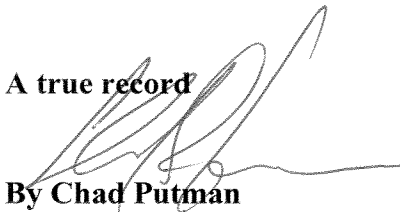
budget vote is coming up on May 19 along with a vote to fill two seats on the School Board .He closed by announcing the Summer Youth Jobs program, which will offer around 330 positions for resident youth and that the program is still taking applications.

Mayor McCarthy – Noted the casino development in Massachusetts is unlike the development planned for Schenectady’s Mohawk Harbor. He added the City and County will be receiving more than \$4 million dollars per year from the casino which is a better deal than the previously reported Massachusetts project. He noted the state is in the process of completing the background check on Rush Street Gaming and when the final approval is granted the company will write a check for \$50 million dollars to the state to move forward. He noted Lt. Governor Hochul was in town recently and toured various properties and new development in downtown. He added that Schenectady County Community College recently welcomed a new President and he thanked Dr. Martha Asselin for her service as Interim Director during the search process. With regards to I Love My Schenectady Parks Day he noted there were more than 100 volunteers and 15 organizations who participated in clean-ups at parks across the City. He added more than one-ton of debris was collected and removed and overall the event was a success.

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. Riggi and seconded by Mr. Kosiur and the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

A true record



By Chad Putman

Schenectady Deputy City Clerk