

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

January 13, 2014

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President Margaret King at 7:06 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called on Reverend James Bookhout of the Bridge Christian Church who then provided the invocation.

Ms. King called on Denise Brucker 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 – Councilmembers Denise Brucker, Carl Erikson, Margaret King, Leesa Perazzo, John Mootooveren, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Also Present – City Clerk Chuck Thorne, Corporation Counsel John Polster and Mayor Gary McCarthy.

At this point, Mayor Gary McCarthy provided the State of the City Address (see attached).

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 – 04 – A Resolution Recognizing the American Made Movie Event. Event organizers and participants extended their gratitude to the City Council and Mayor for the recognition.

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

Resolution No. 2014 – 05 – A Resolution Honoring Denise Brucker. City Councilmembers, colleagues and friends extended their gratitude to Ms. Brucker for her years of service to the community. Ms. Brucker was presented with the Key to the City by Mayor Gary McCarthy. Ms. Brucker extended her gratitude for the recognition and noted highlights from her 14 years of service on the City Council.

The resolution was moved by Ms. King and seconded by Mr. Erikson. The resolution passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. Regarding a Proposed Ordinance to Amend Chapter 230-2 of the Code of the City of Schenectady related to Consolidation of Residential Lots.**

Seeing no speakers signed up to speak on the above noted 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 23, 2013 and the January 1, 2014 meeting as submitted by the Deputy City Clerk & City Clerk; Ms. Perazzo made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Mootooveren seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday, January 13, 2014

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated January 13, 2014.

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ms. Perazzo – Government Operations – Noted the release of the recent PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) report and its planned availability on the City website. She noted there has been a general misnomer that a PILOT does not produce any revenue for the City. As outlined in the report 38 of the 47 buildings were vacant buildings not generating revenue however under the PILOT these same properties are now generating revenue for the City. The other 9 PILOTS are company expansions. She added from 2012-2013 there has been a 53 percent increase in revenue from these PILOTS. She thanked the economic development team for their efforts and work related to these PILOTS. She added her ongoing commitment to fill vacancies on the CPRB. She noted the Council received six resumes for review and will move on an appointment at the next Council meeting.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

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

Eunice Chouffi, Rotterdam – Noted her support of Mr. Homenick’s appointment to the Civilian Police Review Board.

Seeing no further 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. Brucker made a motion that Council approves the Consent Agenda and the motion was seconded by Mr. Riggi.

Consent Agenda –

- Ordinance No. 2014 – 01Adopted Unanimously
- Ordinance No. 2014 – 02Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 06Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 07Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 08Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 09Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2014 – 10	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2014 – 11	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2014 – 12	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2014 – 13	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:

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted the City will be hosting the CDBG public hearing in two weeks. He added, every year the RFP goes out and then the City asks for public comment. He noted this is backwards. He then noted the Consolidated Plan included 100 jobs which have not yet been realized. Regarding the Affirmative Action Manager he noted a need to look at what failures have occurred. Then he added the Erie Blvd Project included \$13 million in Federal funds without affirmative action compliance. Regarding CDBG funding he expressed a need to know where the \$68,000 is going to come from. Will it come out of the 15 percent or the back of the house, he asked. He noted his concern that several non-profits will lose 20 percent of their funding. He closed by stressing the need to know what’s going to happen.

Joy Hall, Schenectady – Noted it’s important for the City snow plows to be able to plow alternate sides of the streets. She added her concerns about the potholes which are appearing and in need of repair. She would also like to see the sidewalks cleared off.

Tony Buonome, Schenectady – Asked whether or not new City Councilmember John Mootoveren is a citizen of the United States. He added he would like to see the documentation in writing in an effort to put this to rest once and for all. He closed by noting it seems silly that regular attendees have to sit in the back because they were not on the guest list.

Joe Kaczynski, Schenectady – Thanked the Neighborhood Watch group for their assistance with the Polish Festival and the work they do every day.

Spero Zoulas, Schenectady – On behalf of the Woodlawn Neighborhood Association and Woodlawn Park Redevelopment Committee thanked all who attended and supported the annual pasta dinner fundraiser held on Wednesday, January 8. He also noted some of the recent upgrades in the park including removal of the fences, filling in the pool and the creation of a reflection area. He closed by adding plans are in the works for a community garden and ice skating rink.

Eunice Chouffi, Rotterdam – Noted her excitement that the City Council has six resumes for review related to a pending CPRB appointment. She noted she is a member of the CPRB member and she is looking forward to the board operating smoothly once they have quorum. She closed by wishing Councilmember Denise Brucker best on her new endeavor.

Sharron Linn Schmidt, Schenectady – Noted it’s a proud day for Mt. Pleasant to have Reverend James Bookhout and Councilmember John Mootoveren participating in the City Council meeting. She thanked all those who attended the recent Mt. Pleasant workshop. She noted several groups were represented and the event was a successful networking opportunity. She added members of the Schenectady Police Department were on hand and they agreed with the plan for more programs for neighborhood youth. She then thanked Mayor McCarthy and City Department staff for supporting efforts to improve Orchard Park. Regarding neighborhood watch, she noted the program is useful and it should expand with the help of more volunteers.

She would like to see neighborhood residents feel safe when out walking in the neighborhood. She closed by thanking Councilmember Riggi for helping to secure the non-smoking signs for the park, Councilmember Perazzo for the anti-graffiti campaign and Councilmember Porterfield for the anti-litter campaign. She closed by noting her interest in working with Councilmember Mootooveren and Erikson in the future regarding improvements in Mt. Pleasant.

Angelicia Morris, Schenectady – Noted she is the Executive Director of the Schenectady County Human Rights Commission. She then highlighted the upcoming MLK event on Sunday, January 19 at 2pm at the United Methodist Church on State Street in Schenectady. She added the event will include a review of a video of Rev. King’s speech prior to his assassination. Immediately following, the main event will include guest speaker, President of Albany Law School Penny Andrews. She extended an invitation to the community at large to attend this annual commission event. She noted the theme this year is, “What role will you play to bring justice to all”. She added “we’re all leaders” and it’s important to be good role models. She closed by thanking Councilmember Brucker for her years of service to the community.

Chad Putman, Schenectady – Shared a public announcement from the desk of the City Clerk. “The Schenectady City Code is now online. The searchable Code provides 24/7 access to the City Code. The eCode can be accessed through the City’s website. There are links available on the main page, Corporation Council and City Clerk’s pages. The City Code is accessible on any PC, Mac or Linux computer platform and runs on any web browser. It automatically customizes for optimal viewing on mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. Specific chapters, sections or articles can be bookmarked on your web browser for quick access. Updated ordinances are published alongside the code in a “New Laws” section to ensure the most current version of Schenectady Law is always available. Council agendas and minutes from 2014 will be posted in a searchable public documents section. The interface is clean, clutter-free and highly intuitive. The online version is replacing the old blue binders.”

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 – Thanked Councilmember Brucker for her years of service to the community. Noted he spoke with the Superintendent of streets to discuss potholes. Regarding the freeze and thaw he noted the City crews are doing the best they can to keep up with repairs. He is excited about a new potential process that would include a permanent patch verse a cold-patch which is temporary. He noted residents should avoid potholes and puddles of water or they could damage their vehicle. Then he noted Cotton Hollow Factory Bridge was recently in need of repair. He thanked the City personnel for addressing the issues and opening the bridge back up to traffic. He added the City receives a lot of calls about streets related to weather and conditions and residents need to be part of the solution as well. He closed by noting three recent recruits graduating from the Police Academy and welcomed the new officers to the department.

Mr. Erikson – Thanked Mayor McCarthy for providing the State of the City which highlighted progress made in the City along with future planning. He noted he appreciates the different perspective and specifically cost saving programs like the street resurfacing project. He noted the likely benefit of the new recycling campaign with a focus on individual responsibility. Regarding the City Code he noted its good customer service on behalf of the City to make the Code more readily available. Regarding Ms. Hall’s concern related to a snow emergency and traffic

advisories, he would like to see “snow emergencies” on the agenda for the next Committee meeting. With the goal of clarifying what defines a snow emergency and what parking and related laws go into effect. He closed by thanking Councilmember Ms. Brucker for her years of service to the community.

Ms. Perazzo – Publically thank Councilmember Ms. Bucker for her mentorship and guidance along the way. She noted Ms. Brucker offered a thoughtful and historical perspective which was of great value to her and the Council.


Ms. Porterfield – Reminded residents, it’s that time of year for taxes. She noted programs are being held in Schenectady and VITA (volunteer income tax assistance) is a resource that provides free tax return processing for those who make \$50,000 or less. She noted there are locations throughout the City with a mega-site at Ellis Medicine on McClellan Street. She added, individuals can file taxes after January 31 and businesses can start filing taxes on January 13. She noted volunteers are certified and trained. She also added weatherization programs are available in the community and more information will be reviewed at a later date. She closed by extending her best wishes to Councilmember Ms. Brucker.

Mayor McCarthy – Thanked everyone for coming out tonight. He reiterated his gratitude and best wishes to Councilmember Ms. Brucker on her new endeavors. He then recognized County Legislator Gary Hughes and Superintendent Larry Spring who were in attendance tonight. He encouraged residents to assist Superintendent Spring were they can because the whole City benefits from a strong performing school district.

Ms. King – She commended Mr. Olsen and his staff for all their work.

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. Erikson and the meeting recessed at 8:27 p.m.

A true record

By Charles Thorne
Schenectady City Clerk

CLERK COPY

**State of the City Address
City of Schenectady**

January 13, 2014

Mayor Gary McCarthy

Good evening.

Council President King, Members of the City Council thank you for the opportunity to talk to you tonight to recap some of the things we did last year and outline some of our goals and objectives for 2014.

Welcome Community Leaders:

Caroline

Gregory

Anthony Jasenski, Chair – Schenectady County Legislature

Ed Kosiur – Schenectady City School Board

Lawrence Spring Superintendent – Schenectady City School District

Chuck Steiner, President – Schenectady Chamber of Commerce

John Roth – High Bridge Development

David Buicko – Galsei Corporation

Ray Legere – Legere Restoration

Antonio Civitella – Transfinder

Dr. Giuseppe Veglio and Giulio Veglio – Paul Mitchell, The School

Gerard Parisi – Angelo Santabarbara

Thad Rutherford – Philip Steck

Daniel Peluso – Cecilia Tkaczyk

I want to thank everyone for joining us tonight and those who are able to watch this and all our City Council meetings at home via Open Stage Media. Open Stage Media is a model of Public Access and brings a level of transparency that other communities envy.

2013 was generally a good year. We saw the continuation of development in our downtown with the completion of the new \$7 million headquarters for Transfinder, new restaurants Zen, Johnny's, Center Street Pub, transitioning of Thai Thai, expansion of Marotta's and Niko's Pizza. There were significant milestones for Frank Murken Products, Ellis Nursing School, Ellis Medicine's new emergency room, Warren Tire, Hermie's Music, Civitello's Italian Pastries and Browns Archery to name a few. We were fortunate to obtain \$5 million through the Governor's Regional Economic Development Council Consolidated Funding Process for the ALCO site on Erie Boulevard – one of the largest awards in the state. With help from our State Legislators we were able to restore the tax-exempt status of 13 churches, which allow their congregations to continue the good work they do for Schenectady. We continued our monthly open house program... working with the City School District, realtors and bankers to show the opportunity for home ownership in our community. We instituted health care reforms, which Schenectady County helped negotiate as part of our sales tax agreement. The CSEA Benefit Plan, Canadian drugs and our Medicare Advantage plans are saving about \$3 million a year.

Finance:

The financial condition of the City of Schenectady continues to be stable.

Schenectady will have a modest surplus from the 2013 budget. The city has managed within the constraints of the 2% Tax Cap set by the state. In 2013 we began using capital project reserves which will move Schenectady toward a "pay as you go" approach for funding some of our capital needs. After a review of existing bond proceeds conducted during 2013 as well as the use of capital project reserves created at the end of 2012, we adopted a 2014 Capital Budget that is 35% less than

the 2013 Capital Budget. This helps improve the City's liquidity by reducing the amount of debt we anticipate issuing.

Overall, I anticipate that the projected 2013 General Fund balance will have increased approximately \$1.4 million since 2011. Additionally to improve budget flexibility, we increased the amount of our fund balance designated as unassigned from \$76k in 2011 to 3.7million in 2012, an approximate 98% increase. I anticipate that the 2013 unassigned fund balance will closely mirror the 2012 amount.

Our enhanced in house collection efforts resulted in 42% of the 2012 Property Tax Liens being paid and reduced the number of properties with liens by 49.5%.

This year we will be able to accept online payments which will clearly make Schenectady more user friendly.

Police:

2013 continued the trend of efforts to reduce our part one crimes, the most serious crimes. We have seen a reduction of just over 13% in the last two years. Proactive policing produced just under a 30% decrease in car larcenies. Active warrants were reduced by 20%.

Our utilization of data driven policing is showing results. As we become more sophisticated in our data collection and better integrated in our analysis with our code enforcement efforts this trend should continue.

In October, Commissioner Bennett and Chief Kilcullen gave a presentation of our highly successful enforcement efforts dealing with problem bars. There were a few establishments that continually needed aggressive policing and as the Commissioner pointed out to you... during an approximate 24 month period they generated around 1000 calls for service. I met with the owners of each of the establishments, along with the Public Safety Commissioner, Police Chief, Fire Chief and the Building Inspector. I told each one of them that we wanted them to be successful businesses..... that we wanted to work with them and to help them any way we could. But if they continued to create a problem environment of nuisance calls, fights, stabbings, shootings and homicides I wanted them out of

business. Even with our efforts to work with them the underlying problems continued. Today every one of those places is out of business and this is a better and safer community. I compliment the Public Safety Command staff, the men and women in the police and fire departments and our friends with the State Liquor Authority for a job well done.

Over the last several years we have seen a proliferation of neighborhood stores. Many are great places run by good people who bring convenience and value to our neighborhoods. However, there are some that don't. Instead, they foster an environment of drug activity, buy stolen merchandise, their accounting is creative at best and they clearly have a negative impact on our neighborhoods.

I've directed the Public Safety Commissioner and Police Chief to put in place a proactive plan to deal with these businesses. Modeled after our efforts dealing with problem bars, I along with the Public Safety Commissioner, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Building Inspector and other appropriate staff will be meeting with these owners. We want them to be successful, we want them to make money, and they should add value to our neighborhoods. But if they don't play by the rules I want them out of business. I feel confident that next year I will be able to report back to you that we have made significant improvements in the quality of neighborhood stores in our community.

Fire Department:

Our regionally recognized Fire Department responded to just under 15,000 (14,953) calls for service in 2013. The men and women of this department continue to amaze me with their ability contain major fires and minimize damage to adjacent buildings.

Our arrest rate in arson cases is currently about 40% where the national average is about 7%. They are doing a good job of fire suppression, good cause and origin investigations and holding accountable those individuals who are intentionally starting fires.

More than 60% of the calls for service in the fire department are Emergency Medical Calls. This is a type of call that continues to grow and we need to look for

ways to better manage our response to a large % of these calls. These are the calls that come from individuals that have a medical condition or situation that does not need the full deployment of paramedics and ambulance transportation to the emergency room.

This is a problem that I will assign to our new Fire Chief in the next month or so. We must work with the health care community to look for ways to better educate individuals on the appropriate service providers they should turn to.

I want to thank Chief Michael Della Rocco for his exemplary service to this community and wish him and his family only the best as he retires from the Schenectady Fire Department in the next few weeks.

Golf Course:

We had a very successful year at the golf course. We had approximately 28k rounds of open golf and with league play our total is about 50k rounds of golf. The condition of the course remained one of the best in the area. The transition to a new pro, Matt Daley, went very well. Matt has done an exceptional job of projecting a positive, friendly and great community image at Schenectady Muni.

I want to thank the Golf Advisory Committee Chaired by Don Clough for the work that they have done. Soon we will present the City Council with a recommendation for a consultant to start drainage and irrigation improvements and the implementation of the course's long range plan. I would remind everyone that money spent at the golf course does not affect the General Fund. The course is self financing our golfers pay for it.

Office of General Services:

Last year we continued our focus on rehabilitating street surface in our city. We paved 6.5 miles of streets, started the rehab of Lower State Street and almost completed the reconstruction of Erie Boulevard. The top coat of blacktop and landscaping will be done first thing in the spring.

Our waste water treatment plant under the leadership of the Director of Water and Wastewater Paul Lafond, continues to be a model of municipal efficiency. It operated last year with 100% Regulatory Compliance and since we brought the

plant back under full city control we have had zero odor complaints from the neighbors.

Recycling – It Begins With Me

One of the areas we have talked about that we as a community need to improve on is our recycling. Commissioner Carl Olsen and I have had conversation about helping redesign some of our recycling brochures with Christopher O'Reilly, Al Fox and Chuck Hunt of Creating Why Media. Carl has some experience with different recycling projects and thought one that is community wide needed to have a youth component. Chris and his team came up with what I thought was a clear and simple message to start our new recycling campaign. **It Starts With Me!**

As we talked about it....the rules.... the goals.....the benefits of recycling are fairly simple to understand..... it's something that a fifth or sixth grader gets. As we thought about it some more Most of the things we do are not that complicated. If you do construction at your home you need a building permit, if you own a dog you need to get a license, if you own a house you need to pay the taxes, if you park in front of a meter you need to put money in it. If a fifth or sixth grader understands this, it is a message we must get to the rest residents of our city? So I say It Starts with me tonight, next week the City Council then the rest of the City..... then who knows

H. O. M. E. S. Program

Home Ownership Made Easy in Schenectady. My goal is to make homeownership, not only buying a home but the lifetime of ownership, easy, cost effective and to create real value in the City of Schenectady.

Distressed property in our community still remains our biggest challenge. 2 ½ years ago, when I assumed this position, all of our records in Code Enforcement were manual – paper files. Our Chief Building Inspector Eric Shilling and his staff have done a great job implementing the Landlord Registration Program and Vacant Building Inventory. Through their efforts our code citations are up over 95%. This continues to send the message that we are going to work with people that work

with us to improve their property, but those that don't I want them in court and held accountable for their inaction.

We have been fortunate to have so many community partners step forward to help in creative ways to help market Schenectady's housing to potential middle class homeowners. We first had Key Bank who came forward in the Fall of 2011 with a very aggressive mortgage package. The Daily Gazette was an early supporter of our efforts. We had NBT Bank, Citizens Bank, Prospect Lending, TrustCo Bank and other financial institutions step up and offer to work with home buyers in our community. We've had a broad group of realtors Prudential Manor Homes, Realty USA, Coldwell Banker, I semi joke that it is easier to list the companies who are not helping with our HOMES Program. But these realtors have been aggressively marketing property in Schenectady and I thank them for their help.

Last year we held a very successful Realtor Day that brought 200 realtors and bankers to hear about housing opportunities, economic development activities and initiatives in the City and School District. We will again hold this event this year. I thank Mary D'Alessandro who headed this effort. It clearly changed many people's mind about Schenectady's image.

I thank Larry Spring, Superintendent of the Schenectady City School District for his partnership and the help the school district has provided over the past year. Larry clearly has a more difficult job than I do and his success will have a greater impact on home values than the initiatives we are doing here at city hall. So if Larry asks for your help please help him in any way you can.

Tonight I'm pleased to announce a new partner Union Graduate College. We have with us tonight Professor Mel Chudzik, retired Dean of the College and Malcom Butehorn, who is the team coordinator for the Union Graduate College H. O. M. E. S. Capstone project, Bryan Gallagher, Molly MacElroy and Janet Tracey. Over the next few months this team working with city staff and our community partners will evaluate the many facets of our HOMES project.....looking to see what works, what needs improvement and put in place a

formal business plan that will enable us to better market and articulate the housing opportunities in Schenectady.

In conclusion, I want to again thank everyone for coming out tonight. I thank our great city staff, Director of Operations Bill Winkler, Commissioner of General Services Carl Olsen, Finance Commissioner Debra DeGenova, Public Safety Commissioner Wayne Bennett, Fire Chief Michael Della Rocco, and Police Chief Brian Kilcullen for the job they do every day.

The City Council and my administration have been tasked with answering the question – what makes a good and thriving community? We answered by proposing housing initiatives and revitalization efforts, striving to exemplify responsible and transparent government, making sure our Public Safety operations are responsive and effective, agreeing to make sound investments in our city's infrastructure, work with our School District to improve the education of our children, continue to build on the successes of our thriving unified economic development team by creating new partnerships, recruit new investments both large and small, in addition to supporting our already established businesses and community organizations. As you look around our city, you can see the results of our efforts. It is truly a very exciting time for the City of Schenectady; however our work is not nearly done..... So I thank you for your past support and look forward to working with you this year as we continue to make Schenectady a better place to work, visit and call home.

If you think you know Schenectady think again!