

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

January 27, 2014

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President Margaret King at 7:11 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called on Rev. Alan Kinney of the Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church who then provided the invocation.

Ms. King called on Fire Chief Michael Della Rocco 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 Carl Erikson, Margaret King, John Mootooveren, Leesa Perazzo, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Also Present – Deputy City Clerk Chad Putman, Corporation Counsel John Polster and Mayor Gary McCarthy.

At this point, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to take agenda item number 11, 12 & 15a out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2014 – 14 – A Resolution Recognizing the Historic Street Sign Initiative. Beth Petta and representatives from the DSIC & Heritage Foundation extended their gratitude to the City Council and Mayor for the recognition. The DSIC is acting as the fiscal agent for the initiative and all donations are tax tax-deductable. Ms. Petta noted the fundraising continues.

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

Resolution No. 2014 – 15 – A Resolution Recognizing Habitat for Humanity. Executive Director of Schenectady's Habitat for Humanity Jeff Clark extended his gratitude for the recognition and thanked the Mayor for his support. He closed by noting he is looking forward to working with the City in the coming year.

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

Resolution No. 2014 – 16 – A Resolution Honoring Chief Michael Della Rocco. Chief Della Rocco extended his gratitude for the recognition and thanked the residents of Schenectady for their years of support and partnership. Chief Della Rocco will have his official retirement and walking out ceremony on January 30 at the Fire Department Headquarters.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. Regarding a Proposed Ordinance to Amend Chapter 228 and Chapter 138 of the Code of the City of Schenectady regulating Vaults within the City Right of Ways.**

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady – Noted her review of the City's Code online and sections related to permits. She noted the City's Charter should read differently and state that the "City has the right of way". She agrees with the closure of underground vaults.

Seeing no further speakers signed up to speak on the above noted public hearing, Ms. King declared the public hearing closed.

2. Concerning Housing and Community Development Needs for the Federal Consolidated Plan (CDBG).

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted the City has been hosting the public hearing for the CDBG funding after the plan has already been developed for the last four years. He questions where the \$69,000 will be coming out of. He noted this would be a 20 percent cut across the board. He is concerned about money going to private developers. He noted the five year plan will be due in May and he has not heard anything about a public hearing. He questioned the Erie Boulevard Project and noted the affirmative action requirements were not met. He referenced a Gazette article in 2010 and noted the City's record for hiring persons with disabilities is worse now. He questioned the results of the Affirmative Action Officer and noted there has been no progress on the stated goal of 100 jobs.

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady – Noted in 2010, 90 percent of CDBG funding went to salaries. She added she does not have access to the statistics. She noted the CDBG funding calls for community volunteers and there has been none. She noted this is poor leadership and more attention should be paid to the 50/50 employment program.

Jeff Clark, Schenectady – Noted he is the Executive Director of Schenectady's Habitat for Humanity. He noted the organization does not currently receive funding from the CDBG funds. However he noted his support behind the City's management of the funding.

Seeing no further 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 January 13, 2014 meeting as submitted by the City Clerk; Mr. Riggi made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Mootoveren seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday, January 27, 2014

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated January 27, 2014.

Letter received from Paul LaFond, the Director of Water & Wastewater, recommending the Hydrofluosilicic Acid lowest BID be awarded to Key Chemical, Inc. of Waxhaw, NC in the amount of \$40,592.00 to be charged to the 2014 Operating Budget.

Letter received from Paul LaFond, the Director of Water & Wastewater, recommending the Sodium Hypochlorite lowest BID be awarded to Surpass Chemical Company of Albany, NY in the amount of \$67,590.00 to be charged to the 2014 Operating Budget.

Letter received from Paul LaFond, the Director of Water & Wastewater, recommending the Chlorine Gas lowest BID be awarded to Jones Chemical, Inc. of Warwick, NY in the amount of \$18,250.00 to be charged to the 2014 Operating Budget.

General:

None

Petitions:

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Erikson – Finance – Noted two of the water & wastewater contract awards referenced in the communication and Council agenda came in below last year's cost. He added several bids were received related to the contracts and although he does not have exact figures this is good for the City.

Ms. Porterfield – Parks & Recreation - Noted the Council has chosen to hold further discussions related to the RFP process and at this time will not be approving the award for design improvements for the Schenectady Municipal Golf Course. She is interested in ensuring the RFP process is fair and adequately explained to the public.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

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

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted that dumping snow on sidewalks and blocking access to areas designated for handicap parking is illegal. He added the current fine is \$150. He then noted concerns related to pay raises and lack of job descriptions for City employees. He added the average pay for a City employee is \$42,000 which is above the average resident income of \$32,000. He noted Hamilton Hill resident average salary is \$13,000 and police/fire is \$70,000. He asked about the hiring of persons with disabilities and concerns related to outdated contracts. He noted the need for a cost benefit analysis regarding police and fire. Noted the Department of Development has received \$10-\$15,000 raises. He closed by suggesting the City review the annual 4 percent raise.

Harry Brand, Schenectady – Noted concerns related to taxes and that he does not agree with salary increases. He noted a \$10,000 raise is a gift and employees who make \$100,000 a year should not be paid overtime. He asked when will this behavior stop, the City can't afford it. He noted the City is giving clothing allowances to City employees which is another burden on tax payers. He asked, how could the City sign off on the new construction at Foster Avenue and not ensure warranties are in place for major equipment in the facility? He asked the City officials to stand beside City residents and do the right thing.

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady – Noted she reviewed the City Code online related to residential lots. She views the administration as having a "sugar daddy" mentality. She noted the County

auctioned several utility buildings without completing a proper survey of the property. She added property lines are important and surveys need to be conducted before the sale of properties.

Mary McClain, Schenectady – “I fail to understand why Council insists on spending money on fluoride. Council members had one year to check out other communities to learn how they handle the fluoride issue. Did any of you bother to look into it? Don’t take my word for it. Ask your counterparts on other legislative bodies in the Capital District about fluoride. The City can eliminate the expenditure of fluoride. I say eliminate not “savings” because Council doesn’t save anything. It just spends needlessly. This is a perfect example. Fluoride is an unnecessary item in the City budget and should be removed. Forget the controversy. Consider the cost. Vote No on item #14.”

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 – 03Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 17Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 18Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 19Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 20Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 21Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 22Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 23Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 24Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 25Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 26Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 27Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 28Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – 29Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS- 01Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS- 02Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2014 – CS- 03Adopted 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 he last attended the City Council meeting held on December 23 and spoke about his concerns related to snowplowing and emergency access to residents in the case of emergencies. As an example he noted the recent loss of four homes due to fire which simultaneously occurred around the time of the last big snow storm. He then noted Moyston Street has one drainage unit and one fire hydrant that works. He also noted the street

has not been repaved in the last 10 years and the sidewalks are in need of repair. He noted neighborhood improvements lead to more neighborhood pride. He closed by asking for his pictures back.

Deborah Rembert, Schenectady – Noted the tenant rights group has been contacted related to mold problems at 214 Liberty Street. She noted a letter related to the concern has been provided to all the City Council members. She noted the Code Enforcement office should be able to address mold as an issue in apartments and related rental certificates. She is also concerned that the department also does not address bed bugs. She noted these issues are dangerous for youth and she asked the Mayor to require the Code Enforcement office to address mold as an issue in the City's housing stock. She noted people are living in poor housing stock and she would like to see an increase in the standard of living.

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted there are just four weeks until March 1, which is the deadline for residents to file a grievance with the City related to property assessments. He noted the City Council has shown major concessions in the Claims Committee and homeowners can expect to get a 20 percent reduction on their property assessment with a grievance. He then noted the County has a new purchasing policy which is not inclusive. He noted seven percent of the workforce should be persons with disabilities. He added the City has a strong apprentice program however the City is not utilizing it.

Joy Hall, Schenectady – Noted the City has one big problem when it comes to vehicle traffic turning on red lights and arrows. She wants to see the City clean up the streets and program more time on the crosswalks for the elderly and disabled.

Harry Brand, Schenectady – Noted the residency law has been ignored for far too many years. He noted too many people work for the City and live outside the City in towns like Glenville, etc. He asked what interests do these employees have in the City but their own benefits and salary. He noted the Mayor promised he would only hire City residents. He then noted Albany Street has pot holes and that some staff only get a one percent raise.

Marva Isaacs, Schenectady – Noted the success of the *American Made Movie* event held last week and thanked those involved in organizing the event.

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady – Noted she will have her mortgage paid in two year and at the same time the rent is increased. She noted people are paying to park their cars and their taxes and some don't benefit from the STAR program. She commended the Schenectady Gazette for extending its readership to students. She noted the exposure to the news is positive for them. She spoke on the seating arrangements for the State of the City address. She noted City partners and investors were seated prominently. She closed by noting the PILOTs don't provide the City enough in the way of taxes.

Prof. Dwight Williams – Noted he is not a resident of Schenectady however he attends church in Schenectady and is a professor at the SUNY Albany School of Public Health. He noted on February 15 there will be an information session on the Affordable Care Act. The event will be taking place at 955 State Street (Friendship House Church) from 9-12 p.m. He added healthcare navigators will be on hand to answer questions. He closed by noting Martin Luther King, Jr.'s reflections on healthcare being a right and the lack thereof as an injustice.

Angelicia Morris, Schenectady – Executive Director, Schenectady County Human Rights Commission. Thanked the City Council and the Mayor for supporting the January 19th Martin Luther King Jr. event. She noted the event was a success with the highest turnout yet including representation from the Neighborhood Associations. She noted 2014 marks the 50th anniversary

of the War on Poverty. She added the Commission is making plans for an event to be held this year and is looking forward to working with community partners.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – “On Thursday, November 28, 2013, representatives from the City of Schenectady went to the home of a veteran’s widow and foreclosed on her house. Her husband passed away several years ago. She lost her job and didn’t have the money to pay her taxes. Consequently as neighbors watched from their porches the City took her house from her. November 28, 2013 was also Thanksgiving Day. Why didn’t City Council members help her? It is the same group who carved out a section of the Westinghouse Monument plot to include a memorial for the Belleview Veterans. It is the same group who carries wreaths to the Veteran’s Memorial on Memorial Day. All meaningful symbols to be sure but when the situation involves the human condition, Council fails the test. Why wasn’t she helped? Was I supposed to help her? I would have helped her, were I a Council member but I was passed over for those of you who sit here for another day. I hope the 4100 voters who put you here are paying attention. You are their government. The City resident who lost her home was not a registered democrat. She wasn’t a union member. She was a veteran’s widow who was trying to survive in a difficult world and her world reached the depth of helplessness when she suffered the embarrassment of foreclosure on Thanksgiving Day. On that day, she left her nine-room Victorian home in Schenectady for a one-bedroom apartment in Niskayuna. She wasn’t a dead beat. She fell on hard times and Schenectady’s government turned its back on a veteran’s widow.”

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. Perazzo – Noted the Schenectady Business of Professional Women’s Club will be hosting “Life Unplugged” on Saturday, March 8, 2014 at 8 p.m. at Schenectady County Community College. There is no fee to attend this program. She added young people will learn about their career options, evaluate their choices, and plan appropriately for their future while practicing budgeting. She also noted there will be a training for small business owners related to payroll on January 30 at 6 p.m. at 818 Albany Street. More information is available at 372-4409.

Ms. Porterfield – Noted individuals can start to file their taxes after January 30. She added VITA is a community resource for those who are income eligible with offices in Glenville and Rotterdam. She noted there are several community partners and more information can be acquired by calling #211.

Mr. Riggi – Noted he has been on the Council for the last two years and has observed misconceptions that residents have regarding the role of City Council members. He added in essence the Council is a board of contract and supply. If someone is not doing their job correctly it’s the Mayor’s job to discipline. He added regarding City departments it’s the Mayor’s job to manage the City. Regarding foreclosed properties he noted the City Council is not aware of who is being foreclosed on. He added these are not issues the Council has control over. However regarding the vacant City Council seat he noted the Council does have control over that appointment. He recommended the seat be left open and to wait till November for the voters to decide. He suggested this would take out the back room deals and reduce the pressure on Council to make the appointment. He suggested using the unused funds to purchase new energy efficient air conditioners for the Council Chamber and tablets for the Council to use rather than spending money on printing paper. Regarding pay raises discussed tonight during privilege of the floor he

indicated he is not aware of any recent raises passed by the City Council. He noted the Council is well aware of the work City employees do. He added if there will be any raises for City staff this would be something the Council would deliberate on further.

Mayor McCarthy – Noted the reported foreclosure on the veteran’s widow did not happen. He added some residents are looking to make the City a better place and others often complain and make statements not based in facts. He noted as Mayor he believes he has a healthy relationship with the City Council and looks forward working together.

Ms. King – Repeated the announcement related to the community forum on health insurance. She added the Capital Area Baptist Association will host the forum on February 15 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at 955 State Street at the Friendship House. For more information residents can call 518-402-0370.

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 8:24 p.m.

A true record

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chad Putman', written over a horizontal line.

By Chad Putman
Schenectady Deputy City Clerk