

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

June 27, 2016

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

Ms. Perazzo asked Rev. Bill Levering to provide the invocation.

Ms. Perazzo then called on Pat Smith 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, Edward Kosiur, John Mootooveren , Leesa Perazzo, John Polimeni, Marion Porterfield, and Vincent Riggi

Excused - John Ferrari

Also Present – City Clerk Charles Thorne, Corporation Counsel Carl Falotico and Commissioner Wayne Bennett

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

Resolution No. 2016-160 – A Resolution Recognizing the 2015 NYS Associated Press Awardees. Haley Viccaro and Peter R. Barber from the Daily Gazette were on hand and they extended their gratitude for the resolution and recognition by the Mayor and City Council.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Perazzo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 13, 2016 Council meeting as submitted by the Deputy City Clerk; Mr. Polimeni made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Kosiur seconded the motion.

Communications Presented to the City Council for Monday, June 27, 2016

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments dated June 27, 2016

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

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

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – "Agenda Item #15 - first of all why are agenda items taken out of order? When the Council President asks, if there are no objections to take the item out of order, from whom is the question intended - Council members or the general public who will address the item? Is it asking too much of recipients who are being recognized by this body to wait to be called in the order that their time appears on the agenda? As for item #15 - it would have been thoughtful and gracious on the part of this body to have included Kathleen More for recognition for the years she covered the City Council meetings. Gazette readers do not receive the same Council coverage that Ms. Moore provided. She was thorough, her stories were timely, no item was insignificant, she listened and paid attention to details. For instance on May 9 a citizen was arrested in front of this podium. No story was written on it. Kathleen would have made it front page news. On June 13, 2016, three city officials were not present for a City Council meeting. No story. American flags fly tattered and torn throughout the City. No story. On June 6, 2016 a Council member left the Committee meeting early. He was not present for the executive session. On June 13, Council voted to sell 10 city houses. The Council member also voted to sell them even though he was not there. When Council discussed the properties in Committee, no story from the reporter. Some Council members sit here today because Kathleen Moore and Mr. Cernak of the Time Union would print the names of community activist in their stories. Those reporters were people oriented. Kathleen Moore lives in Schenectady. Please acknowledge her and the work she did reporting on the city's political scene and her professional awards."

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Spoke on the Police Department union contract reported on in the Schenectady Gazette. He noted three million dollars in overtime was reported. He also stated that he has suggested to the Police Department to go out to other cities, like New York City to seek out minority officers. He said the department transferred in two white officers in the past. He added \$60,000 is the cost of a police officer in the City. He said that figure is closer to \$95,000 when benefits are factored in. He added, multiply that by ten and you get one million dollars. He said the Police Department can have trained officers on the street in 90 days, it's that simple and easy, he said. He then noted the Gazette article reported the department did not know where the overtime was coming from. He questioned why the department can't cut overtime in order to hire more officers? He said the City is giving officers a two percent pay raise and yet senior citizens are not getting a cola raise. He asked why are unions getting a raise when seniors are not?

Robert Harvey, Schenectady - Noted he resides on Plymouth Avenue. He said that he was in attendance tonight representing himself and with questions related to the Police Department's JAG item on the agenda. He added the backup on the agenda item indicates that it is recommended that the Police Department seek input from the City Council and the community. He said if the public was given the opportunity to provide input, he was not aware, and he is unsure where the input came from . He added that he is the President of the Eastern Avenue Neighborhood Association and asked if he missed something.

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

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

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

Consent Agenda –

Ordinance No. 2016 – 14.....	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2016 – 15.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 161.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 162.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 163.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 164.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 165.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 166.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 167.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 168.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 169.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 170.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 171.....	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2016 – 172.....	Adopted Unanimously

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Ms. Perazzo then 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 – Noted his praise for the Schenectady Police Department and added that he respects the law and law enforcement. He then noted Mr. Bennett and the Mayor do not consider the victims of crimes when reporting on crime in the City. He added that he can relate to victims and last year in Hamilton Hill a young girl was killed by a stray bullet. He noted he has three loved ones who died of natural causes and has a friend who had family members die in a fire. He noted again the Mayor and Commissioner do not take victims into account when reporting crime.

Marva Isaacs, Schenectady – Extended her appreciation to the President of the City Council and others for coming to the Hamilton Hill block party. She then expressed her concerns that Paul LaFond gave permission to allow the YMCA to paint their logo in Jerry Burrell Park without talking to neighbors or residents in Hamilton Hill. She added it would be ok for the YMCA to put up a banner on the fence but the logo in the park needs to be removed.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady – "Good evening to the City's decision makers. Madame President, I don't share your opinion of the City Engineer. As a matter of fact, I will sell my house to you or to him so that either one of you can live with the decision that you made for others. The engineering department is not into beautification. They told me so. I am and so is this document. It is the comprehensive plan that Council ordered and taxpayers paid big bucks for it. The goals of this document have not been met but the City looks for new toys. Mr. Mayor, there is enough trash on Albany Street to start a new City dump. Not smart. The weeds along Veeder Avenue are high enough to choke a horse and the fallen, rotting vegetation is a natural breeding place for vermin. Not smart. As for the blanket recognition program that Council approved for all city workers, recently they installed a City road sign in the garden plot that I maintain. The workers used my stones to brace the City's sign. I needed the stones for shepherd hooks. They really were prepared to do their job, smart. And I invite all of you to come see what the buffoons did on Grand Blvd. beside the garden. After I spent five years trying to beautify the corner. There are demons running around Goose Hill and I hope they go to State Street and do the same thing in front of Proctors Theater. Another issue, there has been some activity on the Ellis Hospital corner. It is not satisfactory. That monstrosity must be concealed as indicated in the presentation picture and the guardrail painted like the ones in the downtown area. Lastly, how many elected officials have academic backgrounds like the list of Councilman read for the kids from the high school? He should have told this community about the 90 percent non-residents working in our school

district. The Councilman sold us out. It happened during his watch. The Donny Burch's of the world don't bluff their way through life. Schenectady's elected body does."

Jason Planck, Schenectady – Noted a recent presentation by City Council on the Community Needs Assessment which has been conducted through HUD was a snow job. He added that basically the assessment was done without community participation. Rather, he stated the Democratic Party facilitated the focus groups and public comment was collected afterwards. He asked where are the jobs and affirmative action? He said that he was told the topics did not come up in workgroups. He added the City is experiencing multi-level housing and the tax payers are paying for it through Metroplex and a regressive tax on the poor. He noted 90 percent of the housing in Schenectady is non-affordable housing. He said a new rental development is setting a household income base of \$60,000 a year and that figure is 5x the average salary of Hamilton Hill. He added we need more housing for the poor, we don't need to take from the poor and give to the rich. He then reported a petition was filed three to four years ago asking for a national LGBT civil rights memorial at or near the Stonewall Inn. He said the request was recently granted and approved by President Obama and turned over a five page report to the Council President.

Michael Glenn, Schenectady - Reported that he lived in Schenectady his whole life and has resided in Bellevue for the last 40 years. He added that his pets are very much a part of his family household. He then spoke about concerns related to fireworks going off and being sold in the City. He said they are going off every evening since mid June. He noted his frustration that the City is allowing carpet-baggers to set up shop in the City to make a profit from the sale of fireworks. He asked who in local government thought it would be a good idea to allow the sale and use of fireworks in the City? He said that his dog is well behaved and in the last few years he has been inundated by fireworks especially in recent weeks. He added that his oldest dog had a seizure the other night and remained in that condition for hours. He noted that ironically the responsible party will continue with the behavior while the dog suffers. He asked if anyone can justify the positive social value to allow the sale and discharge of fireworks in the community? He noted the majority of City residents don't engage in this behavior. He closed by asking if it will take a death to address this serious quality of life issue?

Robert Harvey, Schenectady - Noted the Schenectady Gazette reporter recognition was well deserved. He added his support with the gentleman who spoke prior related to concerns surrounding fireworks in the City. He asked if the City's noise ordinance could be an avenue to address the concern? He then reminded residents that Schenectady Smiles is hosting a photo contest with area partners. He noted residents ages 13 and up can submit an entry now through July 22. He added there will be prizes, a pep rally and the winners will be framed. He encouraged residents to take pictures that give you pride in Schenectady.

Patricia Smith, Schenectady - Noted she is the President of the Mt. Pleasant Neighborhood Association. She noted her comments are reflective of the broken window syndrome. She added how homeowner keep their properties up is an issues for other residents. She highlighted a property on Avenue M where she reports there is a house with chickens which are reportedly part of a 4-H project. She noted chickens are prohibited in the City and the odor is awful. She noted some neighbors are afraid of repercussion and that non-emergency police referred her to Animal Control. She noted she spoke with Mr. LaFond and was advised to file court papers to assist Asst. Police Chief Falvo. She noted the chickens are still there and she asked why Mt. Pleasant is being ignored? She added Mt. Pleasant residents are trying to maintain integrity and quality of life in their neighborhood. She asked what kind of good neighbors will be attached with these conditions? She closed by adding other neighborhoods are already on this path.

Seeing no other speakers come before the City Council, Ms. Perazzo declared the Privilege of the floor closed regarding City Business.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

Ms. Porterfield - Noted the three Community Need assessment meetings were hosted by HUD. She stressed the importance of correct information going out to the public. She added the meetings were not related to a political party affiliation and she would have liked to see more community participation. She noted that she attended two meetings and information on jobs and affirmative action were discussed. She added the community can now complete an online survey to provide input which can be found on the City's website homepage. She noted the input helps direct the City's Planning Department over the next two years. She added hard copies of the survey are available at City public libraries or residents can contact her to participate.

Mr. Riggi – Thanked speakers for coming out and sharing their concerns tonight many of which highlight quality of life issues. He addressed Mr. Plank's concerns and noted issues related to binding arbitration. Regarding Jerry Burrell Park he noted concerns regarding after-hours activity and that Asst. Chief Falvo has addressed this. He added an email went out and reiterated people don't belong in park after hours. He noted he is glad to see movement on the Oak Street Bridge renovation. He added the Amtrak Northeast Director is now involved and will help with the project which has a long way to go. Regarding concerns raised by Mr. Harvey he noted maybe the Commissioner can explain about public input for the JAG grant or Ms. Perazzo can add where the public input came from. In relation to Mr. Glenn's concerns related to fireworks he noted that he shudders to think what residents will be facing this holiday weekend. He added there has been indiscriminant use of fireworks across the City and urged residents to call the Police Department when they hear fireworks in their neighborhood. He noted he had a dog that had a bad reaction to fireworks as well and he wished people would wise up related to fireworks. He suggested maybe the City Council could pass a resolution to urge the Schenectady County legislature to reconsider the allowance of fireworks sale in the City. He closed by reminding residents of the Bellevue Farmers Market on Thursday's from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at 2176 Broadway.

Mr. Kosiur - Noted fireworks are illegal and sparklers are what have been permitted to be sold in the City of Schenectady. He noted inspections were completed over the weekend on permitted tent retailers. He encouraged residents to call the Police Department with firework concerns. He thanked Council member Porterfield for following up to clarify earlier comments made on the Community Needs Assessment. He added to claim the process was done by the Democratic party is ridiculous. He noted he attended all three Community Needs Assessment work groups and that the Development Department and Mayor have done a great job. He noted the Schenectady was one of six cities in the country to receive funding from HUD for the needs assessment. He also noted there is a bike path survey that is now out for feedback from residents as well. He encouraged interested parties to visit the City website for more information. He encouraged everyone to have a safe and happy holiday. He closed by noting he is a dog owner and can relate to the concerns raised by an earlier speaker.

Mr. Polimeni - Noted he understands the concerns of City residents related to fireworks. He noted the ones sold in the City are not fireworks, rather the fireworks being brought into the City are illegally. He added perhaps more effort can be taken to address the illegal fireworks. Regarding the Oak Street Bridge and Amtrak, he noted outreach to Congressman Paul Tonko's office and thanked Corporation Counsel Carl Falotico and Council President Ms. Perazzo for helping move the process forward. Regarding the Schenectady Gazette ceremonial resolution presented to local reporters and a photographer, he noted in the past Mr. Cermak has turned down the recognition. He added the recognition is well deserved. He noted he recently returned from Romania as part of the academy where economic forecasting discussions took place. He

added that many European cities have embraced smart city initiatives and there are more advances in Europe. He noted he is pleased to hear Schenectady is moving in that right direction with more fruit to bare.

Commissioner Bennett - Noted the transfer of Police officers from other jurisdictions to the City must follow the civil service process. He added New York City has tons of Police officers with huge salaries, pensions and financial benefits in comparison to Schenectady. He noted the sale of fireworks in the City is related to a County statute. He added 30 plus counties have approved the sale of fireworks in the state. He noted the fireworks tent retailers are selling are not the same fireworks disturbing the dogs and people in the City. He added today City Code Enforcement and Planning Departments inspected four fireworks retail sites and shut down three of them. He noted the closures were due to code violations and the sellers have not yet meet requirements to reopen. Regarding the noise ordinance he said it's hard to enforce given the number of calls received. He noted it's difficult to identify the location but the Police Department will make house visits when information is provided by residents. He noted the non-emergency number is routed through County dispatch and added it might be easier to email the Police Department and/or the Commissioner with these details. He noted he expects the department will struggle to keep up with calls over the 4th of July holiday. Regarding concerns raised about chickens in the City he had previously spoke with Steve Strichman who was the Zoning Officer for the City. He was later informed that Mr. Strichman did not cite the owner because he was told the chickens would be gone. Now, he added the City does not have a Zoning Officer with Mr. Strichman's departure. However, moving forward he noted perhaps a Police Officer will need to get involved and issue a summons for a nuisance with the support of documented statements. He noted that Mr. LaFond was at the residents on Avenue M three times and did not observe any birds. He added he hopes the issue will be resolved this week. He later noted regarding the JAG grant he was not familiar with the call for community input but noted the Justice Department is strict on what the grant funding can be spent on.

Ms. Perazzo – Noted she agrees with Mr. Glen and added the County passed a law for non-explosive sparklers which has blurred the line related to what's legal and not legal. She noted she has been woken up at 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. by fireworks. She noted phone calls to the Police Department are not that effective because the firework explosions occur so quickly and the location is often difficult to identify. She noted safety concerns related to old housing stock remain and that it's good news on the closure of the three tent retailers due to code violations. Regarding an update on the Oak Street Bridge she noted progress with Amtrak. She then noted the new Capoccia Wine Lounge in the Foster Building is a restored treasure in the City and she congratulated the owner Jeff Buell. She also noted the New York State Commissioner of Education visited the Phyllis Bornt Branch Library on State Street recently to encourage young people to read over the summer. She noted on July 8 the Vale Park Taskforce will host a free movie in the park with popcorn and other treats. She promoted the Schenectady Smiles photo contest taking place now through July 27. She encouraged residents ages 13 and up to submit an entry online at [daily gazette/schenectadysmiles](http://dailygazette/schenectadysmiles). She closed by noting the next City Council Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, July 5th due to the July 4th holiday on Monday.

Adjourned:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. Perazzo asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Mr. Polimeni and seconded by Ms. Porterfield. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 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 long horizontal stroke at the end.

By Charles Thorne

Schenectady City Clerk