

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

January 13, 2020

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President John Mootoveren at 7:00 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. Mootoveren asked Reverend Daniel Carlson of the First Reformed Church to offer the invocation.

Mr. Mootoveren then called on the Council Member Carmel Patrick 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, Carmel Patrick, John Polimeni, Marion Porterfield, Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas, Leesa Perazzo, and John Mootoveren.

Also Present – City Clerk Samanta R. Mykoo, Mayor Gary R. McCarthy, Corporation Council Andrew Koldin.

Absent – none.

At this point, Mr. Mootoveren asked if there were no objections, he would like to take agenda item number 4 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2020-004 A Resolution Recognizing Reverend Phil Grigsby

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

The resolution was accepted by Reverend Grigsby. He thanked the Mayor and Council for their recognition and spoke about his longtime service to the City of Schenectady.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Mootoveren asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 23, 2019 Council meeting as submitted by the City Clerk. Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas made a motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Patrick seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Official:

From the Mayor, a list of appointments, dated January 13, 2020.

General:

None.

Petitions:

None.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

Mr. Mootooveren invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward:

David Giacalone – Agreed that there should be a public hearing for the Ardsley Road assessment. He then pleaded to have an explanation publicized on-line showing how high and what the price was, also how high the subsidized amount will be. When the price came in too high, the petitioners should have been informed before project began.

Having no one signed up to speak, Mr. Mootooveren declared the privilege of the floor, regarding the legislative agenda, to be closed.

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

Mr. Kosiur made a motion that Council approves the Consent Agenda and the motion was moved by Mr. Polimeni and seconded by Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas.

Consent Agenda

- Ordinance No. 2020 – 01Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2020-004.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2020-005.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2020-006.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2020-CS-01.....Adopted Unanimously

2020-007 A Resolution Calling for a Public Hearing Amending an Ordinance Creating a Special Assessment District on a Portion of Ardsley Road.

The motion was moved by Mr. Polimeni and seconded by Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas.

7:0:0

Voting AYE: Mr. Kosiur, Ms. Porterfield, Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas, Ms. Perazzo, Ms. Patrick, Mr. Polimeni, and Mr. Mootooveren.

Voting Nay: None.

Abstain: None.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Mr. Mootooveren 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:

Diablo – Thanked Council for the opportunity to speak because he knows that privilege of the floor is not a requirement of the meetings. He then said that some people come up to speak for political career ambitions and to have the ability to reach the viewers at home. He also spoke about the difficulties of selling art and friends helping friends.

Mary McClaine – I have been observing City Council meetings for the past 40 years, either sitting in the Council Chambers or watching from home. Why is Council suddenly interested in diversity? You weren't interested in diversity when I wanted John Ferrari's vacant seat. Is there anything more diverse than an 83 year old senior citizen seeking public office? Mr. Mootoveren's election to Council President is a mistake. His entry into the political arena has been riddled with scandal. Last year his own countryman tried to tell Council his story and Mr. Kosiur would not let the man speak. Those of us who are limited to the 3 minute rule are educated, don't lap and stay out of bar room brawls. Unfortunately, the new Council Member is off to a bad start. I had hoped that Mr. Science would teach all of you the scientific importance of a clean city.

At this point Mr. Kosiur made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. and Mr. Polimeni seconded the motion.

Meeting was reconvened at 7:31 p.m. motion made by Mr. Polimeni and seconded by Mr. Kosiur.

Deborah Rembert – Stated that there should be 3 minority seats and 3 non-minority seats. She then stated that Ms. Porterfield should have been given the opportunity to be Council President and the people should have a say. She then proceeded to quote a portion of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech: "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hiss and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," She then stated that we have a pastor offering the invocation, we need to do God's work and be fair to everyone. "and all the flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith we will be able to hew out of the mountains of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood." Then she said we should go back to how things were when she was in school "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride," we need to get back to these kinds of things. If America is to be a great nation, we must become true to let freedom ring, we have to be fair to everyone. She then asked that she is not referred to as a colored person, but as an American.

Dr. Odo N. Butler – President of NAACP #2175 branch in Schenectady. Stated that their mission is to ensure the political, education, social and economic equality rights for all. The organization has been around for 110 years and gives a voice to the voiceless and to allow those that feel marginalized to have an opportunity to have some say in an area that they live in. He then explained that members of the community were upset when a Council Member made an error when he said "color, people of color". It was understood as being an error, but the problem was that the comment was then marginalized. He spoke about a bible quote Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We need a vision for equality in this city; we need one that has objectives that can be measured.

Carl Williams – 57 years old Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered these words and I believe it is befitting today that I recite this in the presence of this Council. Dr. King stated that: I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation. Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of

withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. My name is Carl Williams and I ask that you NOT refer to me as colored, but as a person of color.

Michelle Williams – Dr. King continued on to say: In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the Architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring the sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds. But we refuse to believe the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. My name is Michelle and I ask that you NOT refer to me as colored, but as a person of color.

Ellie Pepper – Further along in his speech, Dr. King said: But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: in the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny, and they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating for whites only. We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote. No, no, we are not satisfied as we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. My name is Ellie Pepper. I'm an NAACP Member and I ask that you do not refer to my fellow human beings as colored but as people of color. I also ask that you do not dismiss what we have said tonight because we are members of NAACP. I ask that you listen and hear.

Lucretia Padin – Dr. King said: I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day we will not be judged by the color of our skin, but by the content of

our character. I have a dream today. My name is Lucretia Padin and I ask that you NOT refer to me as colored, but as a person of color.

Portia Alston – Dr. King concluded: I have a dream today... I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This is our hope. This is the faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning. "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that. Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountain side. Let freedom ring. When we allow freedom to ring – when we let it ring from every city and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants' and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, Free at last, Great God almighty, we are free at last." My name is Portia Alston and I ask that you NOT refer to me as colored, but as a colored person in God's name.

Renee Bradley – Stated that she usually watches the meeting from the comforts of home but after the last meeting she was compelled to come in person. She said that she was insulted by Mr. Polimeni's reference to colored people. It was an ugly micro-aggression on Mr. Polimeni's part whether intentional or unintentional. She is a proud African American and wishes to be referenced as such. In addition, Mr. Polimeni's statements in the Times Union last week gave connotation that Marion Porterfield and anyone who supports her, including the NAACP, is negative. That was another micro-aggression that is a lie, another insult or assault to the African American community here in Schenectady. Such verbiage and behavior should not be tolerated by any elected official. She then stated that Marion Porterfield should have been Council President and should not be punished for supporting a qualified African American running for County Legislature. There is no African American in the County Legislature. Also, she has heard that we are one of the most diverse localities in the area, which is not true. Schenectady has a long way to go. She hopes that the elected officials take the challenge to operationalize activities to become a diverse community that was spoken about.

Marva Isaacs – Spoke about Mr. Polimeni's dislike for people of color.

Chad Putman – Supports friends, neighbors and members of the NAACP. He also stated that Ms. Porterfield should have been supported by the members of this City Council to be Council President. She is inspiring the next generations of individuals to be part of the political process; to get off the sidelines and be involved. He thinks the party is punishing her for encouraging people to be part of the process. He then spoke about the increased issue of homelessness and lack of representation.

Tony Buonome – He stated that there is a big snow storm predicted for the upcoming weekend and has hopes that we do not get caught with our pants down again. Last storm he was stuck at home and could not get to the hospital. He hopes the City has a better plan.

Ed Varno – Stated that the ideas of Mr. Polimeni are completely wrong and he is not what he is being accused of.

Kent E. Goldwire – Stated that there is a reason why many are at the Council meeting tonight; they know who they are and whose they are. He recommended that the Council get diversity training and that the NAACP is willing to help. He then stated that his name is Kent Goldwire, he is not a colored person but a person of color.

David Giacalone – Spoke about the Casino and that we should not look any further for tax increases since they have stabilized. He also commented on Mr. Polimeni making a verbal flub when praising diversity. That kind of hypersensitivity cannot help a community come together.

Seeing no other speakers come before the City Council, Mr. Mootoveren declared the privilege of the floor, regarding general City business, to be closed.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas – Announced that on Thursday SUNY SCCC will be hosting a roundtable regarding the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and all are welcome.

Ms. Patrick – Reminded everyone that the 34th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration will be held on Sunday, January 19th at 2:30 p.m. at SUNY Schenectady Community College.

Ms. Porterfield – Thanked everyone for coming out tonight. She then responded to the public's response stating that it is all a matter of perspective and conversations are needed. She then stated that she is proud to have served the City for the past 8 years and we do need diversity. She also congratulated Reverend Grigsby. She then announced that the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) has begun. She also said that this year the 2020 census will begin and spoke of the importance to be counted.

Ms. Perazzo – Thanked everyone for coming out. She stated that she is a member of the NAACP and recommends that all the Council joins and come out to the meetings. She hopes that moving forward a more diverse slate will be supported. She then stated that she was unsure why the meeting was adjourned earlier. One point of order is that the words are addressed to the president and the second speak with respect and without profanity. Ms. McClaine did not say anything was heresy, third party or inaccurate. She hopes that this Council does not shut down the words of the public in the future.

Mr. Kosiur – Stated his disagreement with Ms. Perazzo. He said that all the speakers spoke well and with respect and appropriate, but the comments made by Ms. McClaine were insults to the Chair. He recalls that when he was Council President beginning 2018 one of the stipulations was that if any of the comments were slanderous to any of the Council Members directly it would be out of order.

Mr. Polimeni – Stated that at the last meeting his words were inverted and apologized to those that were offended; it was not his intent.

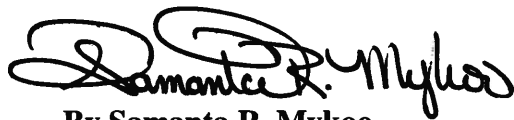
Mayor Gary R. McCarthy – Thanked everyone for coming out and letting their thoughts be known. He then thanked Reverend Grigsby well on his new phase in life.

Mr. Mootoveren – Reminded everyone that the next Committee Meeting will be on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 because Monday is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Adjourned:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Mootoveren asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Mr. Polimeni and seconded by Mr. Kosiur. The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

A true record

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samanta R. Mykoo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "S".

**By Samanta R. Mykoo
Schenectady City Clerk**