

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – OCTOBER 27, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Margaret C. King at 7:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called upon Rev. Bill Levering, First Reformed Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Ms. King then called upon Peggy Anderton and Karen Connaught to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered to being present:

Present – Councilmembers Joseph L. Allen, Denise K. Brucker,
Mark W. Blanchfield, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard
and Margaret C. King

Absent - Councilmember Gary R. McCarthy

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, City Clerk Carolyn Friello and
Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden, Esq.

At this point in the meeting, Ms. King asked if there were no objections, she would like to take Agenda Items #9, #10, #11 and #12 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2008-172

Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Della Sala invited Margaret Brody and Linda Bellick to come inside the rail to accept a resolution recognizing Breast Cancer Awareness Month during the Month of October in the City of Schenectady to raise awareness of this disease. Ms. Brody and Ms. Bellick thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2008-173

Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Blanchfield invited Sister Sue to come inside the rail to accept a resolution congratulating the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine De Ricci and wish them well in their future endeavors. Sister Sue thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2008-174

Adopted Unanimously

Ms. Brucker invited Phillip Morris to come inside the rail to accept a resolution proclaiming, participating and celebrating the Month of October as “National Arts and Humanities Month” in the City of Schenectady. Mr. Morris thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2008-175

Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Blanchfield invited Peggy Anderton and Karen Connaught acknowledging Karen’s accomplishments over the last 6 years that she has lived at the Lighthouse. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. On the 2009 Operating Budget.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:31 P.M.). The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Jason Planck, Schenectady resident, reviewed Line Items in the budget, i.e. the Golf Fund. The money is there; you need to put in Disability Access. The Parks Revenue should remain in the Parks Budget for repairs.

Pat Zollinger, 150 Clement Ave., said – Fact: The 2003 proposed Jurczynski budget was \$51 Million Dollars, the City Council upped it to \$52.8 Million Dollars – in anticipation of a Million Dollar plus deficit. That’s where we got that 25.1% property tax increase. Mr. Blanchfield was the Chairman of the Finance Committee. Fact: The 2004 proposed Jurczynski budget was \$57.5 Million Dollars. The City Council cut that budget to \$55.3 Million Dollars, purely an election year political tactic so that our taxes wouldn’t go up so much, but, the budget still grew 4% from 2003 to 2004 – 4%. Fact: Stratton’s first proposed budget for 2005 started out at \$63.4 Million Dollars. The Council cut it to \$62.7 Million Dollars, but the increase was \$7.4 Million Dollars, which was close to the supposed deficit that was claimed, making the budget growth from 2004 to 2005 a devastating 13%. Fact: Stratton’s second budget for 2006 came through at \$64.6 Million Dollars and I guess all the taxpayers of our city must have been grateful that it only increased by 3% - and I remember so clearly Mayor Stratton

claiming his administration had cut the rate of growth for the budget. His budget increase, 13% down to 3%, but, he still hired patronage, didn't economize in any way and gave us a garbage tax. Fact: Stratton's third budget for 2007 came through at \$68.6 Million Dollars and this Council upped it to \$68.7 Million Dollars. That amounted to a 6% increase in the budget and still, no economizing for the budget, no cut-backs on anything, nothing was done by this Council to help the tax-payers. Fact: Stratton's fourth budget for 2008 came through at \$72.8 Million Dollars. An increase of 5.9%. That must be another instance of his curtailing the rate of growth of the budget – by a half a percent. And now FACT: Stratton's fifth budget for 2009 came to you at \$76.6 Million Dollars, an increase over last year's budget of 5%. Still, no job cuts, no curtailing any expenses and we will probably have increased expenses again due to Wall Street and the heavy burden of paying RETIREMENTS. The FACT of the matter is simply this. For the Stratton Administration, the Budget total has increased from this Council's 2004 budget of \$55.3 Million Dollars to Stratton's 2009 budget of \$76.6 Million Dollars giving us a \$21.3 Million Dollar INCREASE over 5 years, 2005 through 2009. That's 39 PERCENT. Over just 5 years, 39 Percent! This Council is supposed to be working for the people of this city. You are supposed to be working for us, not your politics, not your patronage, and not your political resumes. Brian's argument that Mark is trying to make cuts purely for political reasons is as lame as I've ever heard one, and I cite the 2004 City Council budget as proof. Every other city, town and village in the country is cutting. They are not hiring, they are doing what they can to reduce the load. And you know why? Because everyone's hurting. Everyone has to bear the cost of gasoline and heating. Everyone has to pay higher prices for food and the basics of necessities. And not everyone gets the nice health care benefits that you do.

Richard Rhinegold, Schenectady resident, said – If you are going to increase fee, you need to make adjustments for Seniors. A \$35,000. limit is too low, even for Seniors. It's not fair, it's not right. I don't know where this amount came from, but, it needs to be looked at.

Carol D'Elisiis, 248 Ward Ave., praised Mark Blanchfield for proposing cuts to the budget. She said that the Mayor's budget proved that he was out of touch. She said that she didn't think that he was aware of the total picture since the budget doesn't help city residents. This is not the time to focus on hiring and paving. It suggests that Schenectady is living in a fantasy world.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., said – I think that the Council is now feeling what we have for a long time; we have been in the dark. Mr. Blanchfield said that he was left out of the planning process. He said that the Manhattan Project is kept under loose seal than this. It's not good that the Council isn't part of the process. The Council's job is to scrutinize the budget. We can't afford more money. I hear that there's a \$300,000. surplus in the trash fund. Is that true? This is "Voodoo Economics". Put a freeze on all non-contractual pay raises. You need to do what's best for us. I can't afford to live in the city anymore.

Cathy Lewis, 1164 Van Curler Ave., said – I would like to comment on the 2009 budget. First of all, I am here to urge the Council to examine the budget very thoroughly and to exercise fiscal restraint. In these volatile economic times, I am most afraid of a couple of things: 1) What the State government giveth, the State government can taketh away. What do I mean? In looking at the State Aid, the amount for 2009 is a little over \$10 Million Dollars with another amount in Discretionary State Aid of \$2.3 Million Dollars (Page 5 of the Revenue section). In fact, while the State Aid line is up a little over \$500,000. from the 2008 budget, the Discretionary Aid is down almost \$1 Million Dollars. As I said, what the State government giveth, the State government can taketh away. 2) I remember from my years on the Council that pension costs grew from half-a-million dollars in 2002, I think, to \$1.9 Million Dollars the next year and \$5.7 Million Dollars after that. I know that the State has put into effect a method, which is intended to reduce some of these ups and downs as a result of stock market volatility. Nevertheless, the current market situation is unprecedented and I am not sure that even the revised methods could have foreseen these changes. In other words, I am concerned that all municipalities may see significant increases in order to ensure that the pension funds remain funded to meet their obligations. I

do realize that some of our pension costs may be reduced because of having employees who are younger and have fewer years of service, but, I am concerned as to whether this has been adequately addressed. A few other comments---I believe the contract with the County for distribution of sales tax receipts should be closely examined. Ask questions, as I did in 2004, but for which I never received answers. I know that in the fiscal year ended March, 2007 – over \$80 Million Dollars was collected by the County in sales tax receipts, and we are perhaps very close to the point where cost-sharing of the sales tax revenue comes into play. And I know that the County has its own difficulties at the present---but, as I said before, the city could lose some of its State revenue and we do not have many places to make up those amounts. Besides that, the city has received only \$11 Million Dollars a year since 1992, and we do not share in any growth that the County has realized---and with the exception of one year, the sales tax revenue has continued to increase. So---I urge you to look at the math in the proposals, to not give up the potential for revenue sharing and to not sign an agreement for 6 years. If you want more information on this, please see me. Next---I have some comments on specific accounts, and I apologize if these matters have been addressed in the budget hearings, but, I was not able to attend any of these this year:

Other Payments in Lieu of Taxes---down \$150,000. from 2007. Why?

Late Fees from School Taxes---how do these reach us since the residents pay school taxes directly to the district?

Mortgage Taxes---the market is down, I understand, but do we ever have these figures audited with the County? The mortgage taxes are down to \$800,000. from the \$1 Million Dollars estimated for 2008 and the \$1,131,000. actual for 2007. I urge the city to audit these payments from the County.

Reserves---I see that we intend to draw down the reserves by more than double the amount in 2008, by \$4 Million Dollars rather than \$2 Million Dollars just in the General Fund. What is the estimate of reserves in all the funds at year-end 2008? I notice also that the Golf fund draws down in reserves by the exact same amount in 2009 as in 2008---namely \$350,681.00. That is a very precise amount to be the same for 2 years! With regard to expenses—I thought that the salary increases for the Council did not take effect for all members until after everyone had stood for re-election. The amounts shown here have everyone getting the same amount, but maybe, I am off an election cycle. (Page 1 of Expenses).

Was the Siemens Maintenance Agreement left out of the 2008 budget for \$32,672.00, although it was there in 2007, or has something changed? (Page 3). What fees for Services are there in connection with the Board of Assessment Review? I see that the Department request was for \$53,500.00 and this has been reduced to \$16,000.00. Normally, I would applaud that, but, I doubt if it is realistic (depending on what it is), given the changes in our assessments to be grieved in May, 2009. I believe the city needs to move to an accounting method which accrues vacation and sick pay on an annual basis so that when retirements are taken, the budget is not so severely affected as it is now.

Phone expense---Page 19---seems high by about \$50,000.00. What happened in 2008 which causes the higher projections?

Fire Department Repairs (Page 31)---in 2007, they were \$107,000., but in 2009, they are estimated at \$150,000., yet I believe we have some sort of lease contract whereby the equipment would be replaced before we incurred many, if any, repairs. In fact, on Page 64 – under Debt Service, the amount of Debt Service on Principal Installment Purchase---Fire---has more than doubled from \$236,000. to \$473,000. So why are the repairs still budgeted so high? I note also that motor vehicle repairs have been reduced in Police administration.

Police Review Board---Page 38---there is \$25,000. of expense shown here in Fees for Services, when in 2007, less than \$7,000. was expended. What is the situation in 2008? Is this a reasonable number?

Repair costs for Service Mechanical Equipment---Page 42---Parts increase from \$92,000. in 2007 to \$160,000. in 2009 (with 2008 budgeted at \$115,000.). What is the nature of the agreement with the County at this point? When we transferred our maintenance to the County as a cost-cutting measure, I personally looked at the County's build-up of charges for us. What are we receiving now? This seems like a major cost buildup.

Employee Benefits, specifically, Workers' Compensation. There is a substantial increase (\$450,000.) in these estimates. I know there were changes in workers' compensation laws this Spring, but, I thought there were supposed to be reductions. So, what happened?

In the Water fund, there is a \$7,000. increase in Advertising over 2007. What are we advertising in the Water Fund?

On Page 3 of the Golf fund, \$20,000. has been left out of the totals in the Unemployment Insurance line.

In the Capital Budget, what are the “rededicate” items in the Capital Budget? This is a reduction of the amount required as a capital expenditure, but what is the concept?

I have had to do this quickly, but, I hope that before you pass the budget, you will take these concerns into account. I look forward to hearing from you.

Rich Antokol, 514 State Street, stated that the tax increase was reasonable; \$60.00 to \$70.00 is the price of a tank of gas today. It’s not a lot of money. If we can keep it to a tank of gas, that’s good.

Seeing no other speakers, Ms. King declared Public Hearing #1 closed at (7:50 P.M.)

2. On a Resolution approving the DSAD Budget.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #2 to come forward (7:51 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Ms. King declared the Public Hearing closed at (7:52 P.M.).

3. On a Resolution relating to the proposed conveyance of a revocable easement by the City to SEFCU for a portion of Upland Ave.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #3 to come forward (7:53 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Ms. King declared the Public Hearing closed at (7:54 P.M.).

4. On a Resolution re-establishing property lines along Olean Street near Turner Ave. to conform to property lines.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #4 to come forward (7:55 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Ms. King declared the Public Hearing closed at (7:56 P.M.).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Blanchfield moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of September 22, 2008 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Ms. Brucker. Hearing no objections, Ms. King declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official –

From the Mayor, a list of appointments.

General – None.

PETITIONS:

With 500 signatures from city residents against the proposed Erie Blvd. Reconstruction Project (Referred to Bernie Sisson, Engineering Department).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Della Sala stated that the Intergovernmental Relations Committee met. On October 15th, John Paolino and I met with the Superintendent of Schools. We spent an hour discussing ways that the City and the District could work together to save money and to share expertise. Among the areas we might be able to cooperate were warehousing space, gasoline purchases, garbage collection, change date of tax lien sales, grounds keeping, snow plowing, vocational internships, management of the Casino in Central Park. Health Insurance premiums and computer system backup, Mr. Paolino, Mr. St. Angelo and Carl Olsen will have a meeting on Wednesday to delve deeper into these areas. I hope that we can come up with a decision that will benefit both of us.

Mr. Blanchfield stated that the Finance Committee met. We have been gathering information towards our Budget Hearings to identify savings and refine the numbers. We will come out with a balanced budget, no matter what happens. We need to look at every option to be sure our tax base grows. We need to continue our efforts to get what was promised to us by the State of New York. There are some positions in this budget, some created, some eliminated. The effect in freezing them is not only savings in salary, but, fringe benefits, as well. We will consider these positions and rank them in priority order. The new Health Plan, presented last week for retirees, is frankly better than the current one and will save \$2,500. per retiree. There are other benefits, as well, the vehicle fleet. There will be money left in maintenance. We have been able to find savings in several miscellaneous places. Both pension lines have been increased, but, new employees are costing less money. We have some opportunities to save

money. In regard to transferring money from the Golf Fund – revenues generated are used to pay expenses. People who qualify for the trash fee reduction are disabled or income qualified. That level is set by the State. No one is doing anything irresponsible. We have to come to a decision on a policy plan that makes sense and allows the tax base to continue to grow. I will try to address any questions to the best of my ability.

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PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on any item of the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Pat Zollinger, 150 Clement Ave., stated that in general, I see where the budget is being amended and the proposed 2009 budget is still not on-line. I would appreciate it if the City Clerk or any Councilmember would tell the public where they can view the budget at no cost. Item #1, in particular, is a problem because a position is being added which may or may not save the taxpayers any money – in either the short or the long run. Really now, how many bright legal minds does it take to run our city into the ground? And how many finance wizards does the Mayor need to keep up this charade of supposed fiscal responsibility on his part? And whose fiscal responsibility is it anyway? Is it the Council's or the Mayor's? My understanding is that the Mayor produces the budget, but ultimately, the Council is responsible for it. We don't have the money to support his duplication of services, his political cronies who need a job or his pie-in-the-sky ideas. This is Schenectady, not Utopia. The Mayor wants to hire all these people, and he's ignoring the Residency Law to do it. He is playing the CEO game, claiming that because he's in charge of a \$70 plus million dollar budget, he's got to have the best people to do his job for him. His best people. We don't need more lawyers especially since we will have to farm out the work for negotiations anyway. We don't need more high-salaried titles, what we do need more fiscal restraint. And we need to manage the Police Department properly and stop with one Supervisor for every 2 cops. That City Audit by the Comptroller's Office done in February, 2004 stated specifically what the Mayor and this Council should be doing to correct the problems with the Police Department. But it seems the only thing that happened was that the taxpayers got that sham of a garbage tax. Did this Council do anything about the previous audits? Isn't there a list of things the Council should be working on? The 2002 Audit listed the problems with city owned vehicles and the cell phones and it gave suggestions on how to correct them. HELLO! We are in a RECESSION. The State of New York has a multi-billion dollar deficit. County taxes are going up. Our school taxes always go up and under the Stratton Administration, so do our city taxes and fees. The time has come for all of you to get enough backbone to say ENOUGH! for all of us. Your taxes are killing us and so is the Mayor's vision for Schenectady. And combined with the County and the school system, I would bet that the City of Schenectady has the highest taxes in the country. Again, this is not Utopia, this is Schenectady. Let's all come back down to earth and start managing this city responsibly.

Seeing no other speakers to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the Privilege of the Floor on the Legislative Agenda closed.

INTRODUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON LAWS, ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS:

Consent Agenda –

Resolution No. 2008-176	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-177	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-178	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-179	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-180	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-181	Adopted Unanimously

Original Consideration –

Ordinance No. 2008-10	Adopted 4:2:1 Voting Aye – Blanchard, Brucker, Della Sala, King Voting No – Allen, Blanchfield Absent – McCarthy
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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:

Pat Zollinger, 150 Clement Ave., said – I wish to address the statements made by both the Public Safety Commission and the new Chief of Police regarding the use of consultants. It's my opinion that the city did not need to hire a "Fat Coach" for the cops at \$42,000.00 earlier this year. Therefore, it is also my opinion that the city shouldn't even consider hiring consultants for yet another study of this Police Department.

If the Public Safety Commission, someone who supposedly led a Police force of thousands, as the New York State Troopers are, cannot lead a Police force of a hundred sixty, then why did we hire him? Why does he need a study? Why does he need to hire a consultant? Didn't we study his credentials before we hired him? Why does he need a study? Why does he need to hire a consultant? Didn't we study his credentials before we hired him? If a consultant can tell him how to do his job, then the consultant can tell the city directly so we should hire the consultant for the Public Safety Commissioner's job and save near \$50,000.00 a year. Likewise, it took a while for the Mayor to decide on who to hire for the Police Chief's job which unfortunately, in my opinion, turned out to be an inside job. Any business knows that you don't hire someone's peer to become their boss. It just doesn't work out. It's that "familiarity" thing. And even the Daily Gazette pretty much nullified the need for that position as being negligible in their September 19th editorial titled "Good choice for symbolic appointment". It's just too bad that symbolic appointment costs so much money and now the appointee wants to hire consultants. We pay the cops to protect the lives and property of the people who live here, from the vermin who sell drugs, rob and beat citizens and businesses, kill people – even innocent bystanders and what do these two top cops want to do? They want to study the problem. They want to hire consultants to tell them what to do? The time has come to abolish the Police Department and declare municipal bankruptcy because we can't afford to buy these guys out. I don't see where the State of New York can stop it. They have got enough of their own problems. Why don't we do what Clifton Park does. Use the Sheriff's Department and the State Police. Schenectady is pretty much already viewed as a mini-third world country by outsiders. From our dangerous schools to our dangerous neighborhoods, all that's happening is a whole lot of politicians and administrators screaming that it's all a lie. Tell that to the guy who got beaten up on the hill, or good people living in Mont Pleasant and Bellevue who are scared to death to leave their homes because of the gangs of hoodlums on the street. Tell them that all the talk of crime and danger is just nonsense. Tell that to the property owners who get graffiti tagged. And just try to look me straight in the eye and tell me how safe this city is. What it is time for – is for all of you to open your eyes and see that our city cannot go on with this status quo. Drastic measures have to be taken and that doesn't mean another study.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., stated that we can't afford any more taxes. We are in distress. We can't afford any more money. Crime is at

its highest. We need to do more with less. That's the way it works. Please listen to us. There's nothing left. Seniors can't afford to live here anymore and then, they get hit again with these petty code violations. In regard to residency – there's people here that need jobs. The Mayor is violating residency requirements.

M. William Roth, P.O. Box 1054, spoke on the City of Schenectady – Objective: Becoming L.E.E.D. Certified Silver. Over all Plan To achieve Objective: 1) Create a grant from the Federal bail out to help the small business' and or the Mom and Pop's shops. To keep from closing, by a form of a very low interest loan of 6.89% to be paid back within a 10 to 20 years. If the Business Owner defaults the City of Schenectady to receive ownership of the business to be sold to recoup the loan. The Minimum - \$5,000.00 – Maximum - \$350,000.00; 2) Attract Green Business' to come and set up here in Schenectady, NY by creating an incentive to do so; 3) Expand the recycling network by making it more attractive to be more alert and more conscience to do so. By eliminating E-waste and becoming proactive in recycling in all wastes; construction, Demolition, Recycling used or broken lights, giving everyone a tax break by creating Electric power, Reclaiming Rainwater Finding ways to clean-up Rainwater/sewer water run offs and all our waterways; 4) Giving Business' an incentive to hire the elderly and or disabled or by going through a sheltered, or the City of Schenectady creates such Sheltered work-shops to which will add revenue to the city's budget and coffers to assemble products locally for business for a piece rate to help supplement their already low fixed income. These are just a few ideas that will help with our national emergency of debts outstanding. And these are the main issues that concern most of the low income and small business' and family business' are facing today.

Harry Brand, 2108 Van Rensselaer Drive, said – I wonder if you are qualified to hold the positions that you hold. There are ways to cut back and no one makes an attempt to do it.

Sabrina Heilman, spoke in regard to the Erie Blvd. Project. We need answers to many questions before this project can go forward. We are trying to come up with an alternative project. Also, we need to see the traffic study report before we can decide on the round-about . Also, please include an Erie Blvd. business person on the Advisory Board.

Stan Ducharam, 196 Erie Blvd., stated that we come to meetings hoping to get cooperation and we get nothing. When will we get some

cooperation. We had an alternative to the round-about which we think Clough, Harbour will like. All we want is cooperation.

Sarah Michner spoke in regard to the Erie Blvd. Project; she submitted a petition. We have no intention to sue the city; we adhere to a spirit of cooperation. This is a publicly funded project and it should be transparent.

Richard Antokol, 514 State Street, stated that there are 2 issues regarding Erie Blvd. – 1) calm the traffic and 2) upgrade the businesses. The two need not be connected. We need to look at a list of ways to calm the traffic.

Seeing no other speakers to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the Privilege of the Floor closed.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Ms. Blanchard said – I hope we can work out a plan that's acceptable to most people regarding Erie Blvd. Also, thanks to Mr. Roth for mentioning the environment. The Golf Course is working on an Audubon Certificate. That cuts down on water usage. It should be successful when they are done. Also, the Schenectady Green Market is opening on Sunday. Lastly, I hope everyone votes.

Mr. Della Sala stated that on October 18th, the Harvest Festival on Union Street was a terrific event. Lots of people and vendors. It was also the kick off for "Toys for Tots" which I think everyone can get behind. I encourage you to purchase an unwrapped toy and bring it to Sondra's Fine Jewelry. It's a nice thing to do for needy kids. Also on October 24th, I attended a dinner honoring Paul Tyler representing the City of Schenectady. The School District has named a new wing at Paige School in his honor for his 15 years as Principal at that school. The Mayor declared Saturday, October 25th as "Paul Tyler Day" in the City of Schenectady. Paul did wonderful things in that school and was loved by all. Finally regarding the budget, while we don't always appreciate the tone of some of the comments, we do appreciate the fact that citizens take the time to come to the meetings to make their feelings known. It's safe to say that no one on this side of the rail wants to raise taxes. We are looking to present a budget with no tax increase. No

one takes the process lightly, seeing the County tax will go up – that’s more reason for us to work towards – “no tax increase”.

Mr. Allen commended Mark Blanchfield for an excellent job on the budget. This is hard times for everybody. There’s a lot of retired people on fixed income. Also, some good things have happened this past weekend. Walter Simpkins has a “Fathers Group” and met this past weekend at the Monastery on Duane Ave. A lot of information was provided for men and children. Also, I encourage everyone to get out and vote. My church is having a chicken and ribs dinner. I hope everyone attends.

Mr. Blanchfield said – “Thanks” to all my colleagues for all their help during the budget process. Also, thanks to all the volunteers who helped out with youth soccer. The children love it and its thanks to all the volunteers. Also, the Schenectady High School Football Team who continues to conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion, thanks for setting a remarkable example. Regardless of who your choice is – Please vote on Tuesday.

Ms. Brucker said – I, too, thank Mr. Blanchfield for all his hard work on the budget. He has truly been the hardest, working Councilmember on the budget and he helps us understand it. I don’t know where he finds the time. He makes us look good again. I encourage everyone to get out and vote on Tuesday.

The Mayor said – I would like to express my respect and admiration to all the Councilmembers for the role that you have in the budget process. I regret that the financial situation has forced us to bring to you, for the first time in 3 years, a budget that actually has a tax hike. My budget does not ask the taxpayers to accept the full responsibility. There’s \$4.1 Million Dollars in our hard earned surplus that’s being transferred to offset what would have been an even larger tax hike. Prior to this administration, I can’t remember where there was as much interaction between the Council and the financial management. I think that this budget has been a transparent process. Also, the amount of money generated from non-tax revenues has grown to 65% over 4 years. The amount of money in 2004, generated outside the tax stream, was \$27.8 Million Dollars - in 2009, it will be \$46 Million Dollars. That means that we can provide more without going back to the taxpayer. Thankfully, we have done the hard work to allow us to have that backup. We were relieved when our State Aid wasn’t cut this Summer, but, what’s going to happen after November 18 when they come back and may have to plug a \$3, \$4 or \$5

Billion Dollar hole. While I regret any tax increase, we have to be prepared for what may come. We need to protect all the financial progress that we have made. Our State Aid payment is at the end of the year and as it stands now, it is \$11 Million Dollars – that’s today. I don’t know what it will be after November 18th. We may be amending the budget again. I urge you to work with me to protect what we have achieved. Finally, the decision at the meeting on Friday was by Clough, Harbour.

Ms. King said – For those who mentioned it, the proposed budget is available in the City Clerk’s Office for review.

RECESS:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King recessed the meeting at 9:20 P.M. until Saturday, November 1, 2008 at 10:00 A.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO
CITY CLERK**