

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL –MARCH 23RD, 2009**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Margaret C. King at 7:10 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called upon Rev. Bell Levering First Reform Church.

Ms. King called on Pat Zollinger 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 – Councilmembers Joseph L. Allen, Denise K. Brucker, Mark W. Blanchfield, Gary R. McCarthy, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard and Margaret C. King.

Absent – None

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy City Clerk Eileen M. Versaci and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden

At this point in the meeting, Ms King asked if there were no objections, called upon Mayor Stratton to make a presentation for Chili Contest at the winter carnival.

Mayor Stratton called upon Pin Head Susan's the winner of Judges Choice Award and Stuarts of Upper Union Street, the People Choice Award.

Mr. Blanchfield called upon John Isabella to recognize the life and career of Schenectady's Native Son, Bill Connors for his contribution to the game of baseball and wishing him the best.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Amending Chapter 26, Zoning of the Code of City of Schenectady to authorize various technical changes corrections.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:29 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Ms. King declared the Public Hearing closed (7:29 P.M.).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Blanchfield moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of March 9, 2009 be approved as submitted by the Deputy City Clerk. It was seconded by Ms. Brucker. Hearing no objections, Ms. King declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATION:

OFFICIAL-

From the Mayor a list of appointments.

From the Engineering Department one letter accepting the bid and awarding the contract for "1 Ton Cab and Chassis, Dump Body and Diesel Engine" to Latham Ford, Inc. in the amount of \$37,888.00.

GENERAL:

None

PETITIONS:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Blanchfield explained Agenda Item #6, was the result of the Re-bid for the "1 Ton Cab & Chassis" and I'm very pleased to report that we came in under budget.

Mr. McCarthy stated item #6 which is a resolution, that is really drafted in two parts, one is to oppose a Bill which has been introduced in the Assembly and Senate and passes, overwhelmingly and has the Governor VETO it. Three Governors' have been dealing with this law. We again are opposing this law and give Commissioner Bennett the power over the police.

Mr. Allen stated on April 5th is Global Youth Service Day. This is one special day of cleaning up their neighborhoods, school and parks. This weekend Schenectady will be part of a world-wide experience. Contact person is Ed Kosiar at 386-2211.

Mrs. Blanchard wanted to report that, Pat Mastro the City Assessor was at our Government Operations Meeting last week. He spoke on the new assessments that everyone has gotten in the mail. He told us that the first four weeks in May are grievance month. Anyone who is not happy with their assessment need to file a grievance during that month. The forms are on line, and you can only get them on line. The e-mail address is City of Schenectady.com.

Mr. Della Sala stated, as you know we have been working with the City School District to find ways to save money for tax payers. On Thursday there will be an event announcing the first of our joint endeavors.

PRRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

Ms. King invited all who wish to address the City Council on any item on the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speaker rose to be heard and his remarks are summarized:

Jason Planck, Schenectady, wanted to talk about the agenda item "Restore NY" Grant, these grants must comply with Affirmative Action and the hiring of persons with disabilities. Over the years we have not had opposition to it, but as the Mayor has been signing document saying these standards are kept and that is falsifying documents. I'm urging people to come down to the Public Hearing to protest the policies of this grant. Thank you.

Seeing no 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 LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES &
RESOLUTIONS:**

Consent Agenda-

Ordinance No. 2009-02	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-39	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-40	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-41	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-42	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-CS-15	Adopted Unanimously

With Unanimous Consent –

Resolution No. 2009-38	Adopted Unanimously
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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:

Mary McClaine – This is the P.B.A Contract. (Holding up Contract). All 58 pages of it and all pork. How anyone, who has taken the time to read it, can say he needs more information is a puzzle. Then we heard the choruses – good cops will be hurt. Let’s take a look at how the P.B.A Contract hurts good cops. As reported in the press, the Schenectady P.B.A. is the only union that refused to pay anything toward their member’s medical insurance. Other unions made concessions. Is this contract item hurting the good cop? No! Can this item be re-negotiated? YES! Does the rank and file propose it? No. Who is hurt financially? The taxpayers. Another contract item. The police department works under a sonority system, that means overtime goes to the most senior members of the department. It would be most effective for the city to pay overtime to those on the lowest and salary scale, rather than the police officers who earn the highest salaries. Can this item be re-negotiated? Yes. The rank and file have it in their power to propose change. Do they do it? No. Are the good cops hurt by it? No! Who is hurt? Taxpayers. Then there is the issue of squirreling away, comp time, sick time, vacation time etc. City resources are used like banks for retirement accounts for the benefit of PBA members. This issue maybe legal but it is also immoral because the final pay out is based on the policeman’s salary at the time of retirement and not on the salary earned during the years that the time was set aside. That time can span a 10 year period when the policeman’s salary was a lot less.

Is the good cop hurt by this issue? No. It doesn't take a genius to know who is hurt. It is the aging Schenectady population. The city can fire as many policeman as it wants but unless the pork come out of this contract your constituents taxes will remain high and the P.B.A. will continue to push the envelope. This brings me to a final issue, the exodus of policeman to other communities after six years of city service. This issue must be rescinded. A city of 60 thousand people needs its police at all times. Police should live in Schenectady and not some place else. The P.B.A. contract can be changed. Roger Hull said so in the Gazette's opinion page. Bring back the labor attorneys who made proposals that were turned down by the Mayor. Roger Hull has credibility. Do you?

Ms. King – One individual would like his comment read into the record. “I think that the Police are doing a great job”.

Pat Zollinger – Schenectady – They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over, over expecting different results. It must be that we are all insane in the City. We elect the same people over and over again and we get the same results, high taxes, a substandard school system, a police department we can't be proud of or afford. Neighborhoods that continue to deteriorate and are dangerous, higher fees and fewer services and people wishing they didn't live here. What we do get is the pie-in-the-sky idealism from this body except for Mayor Stratton's stance for real change in the Police department. This is the bold leadership that we need from this administration. The wish-list from the Stimulus Package is great but we can't live on dreams. It's not real money. For nearly two years I have reserved judgment on the Police Commissioner in the hopes he would straighten out the department but he can't so he says. We have heard this from several Commissioners before, Commissioner Bennett how their hands are tied because of the Union Contract. If things go well maybe we won't need a highly paid Commissar.

Raishon Artis – Marshall Ave, - I would like to address the City Contract on the lack of minority participation. At the last meeting, I asked the Mayor to meet with myself and some other contractors to talk about the problems to get involve in City projects. I have not heard from the Mayor and he made no attempt to contact me. If the Mayor thinks so little of minority maybe we, as minority can think little of him.

Harry Brand – Council has to start speaking up and being leaders not just members of a political party. We have a election coming up and what do we have, the same three candidate's running again. Whoever runs for City Council and whoever is our Mayor, better start supporting the taxpayers.

Joy Hall- I would like to point out the dangerous condition of the sidewalk on Erie Boulevard. Someone is going to get seriously hurt.

Rev. Van Stewart – Albany St.- I'm not a resident of Schenectady, but I was for 11 years. I would like to point out that SICM has been awarded a Grant for childhood obesity. We have been talking to the Mayor's people in the neighborhood to get this thing rolling. The title of this project is “Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds.” I think this is the time for people

to take hold of the future and the children are our future. "The Edible Playground" is taking small children and teaching them to grow vegetables and fruit. Secondly, we are looking at things in the Stimulus Package and how it effects the neighborhoods. We are planning a forum on how things can go to the neighborhood from the Stimulus Package. We want you all to get past all the foolish things that are happening in the City and start doing things that make some sense and I'll be here every week to remind you. Thank you.

Rev. Phillip Grigsby- 930 Albany Street- It's always a challenge to follow my collogue, but he did put the tease out there about the "Edible Playground." The playground is in collaboration with Roots and Wisdom which is a locally based organization. They have several gardens and we are going to help them expand their gardens.

Seeing no other speaker to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the Privilege of The Floor on city business closed.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Mr. Blanchfield – Great to hear from some of the speaker tonight in particular Rev. Grigsby and Rev. Stuwart. Along the lines of what you were talking about, Council is being honored this week by the Tobacco Free Champions for passing a resolution to establish tobacco free municipal pools and Tiny Tot land in Central Park. Maybe, during the year we can work with SICM on some of these health issues to help keep some young people to think of health.

Mr. McCarthy – As we start to enjoy warmer weather we see the increase of pot holes in the City. If you see pot holes or there is one by your house you can call the Mayor's Office and they will forward the message. You have to report the pot holes so that it can go on a schedule, Carl Olsen and Bernie Sisson have crews out working. Give a call and report these pot holes it speeds up the process. Thank you.

Ms. Brucker – I would like to clarify a few statements made by Mr. Plank. I know he spoke about a PILOT required by the IDA. We need to be conscience that the PILOTS established before Ray Gillen came and took over management of IDA. This very small and very under funded. All those PILOTS have been increased significantly. All the new businesses in downtown Schenectady are offered PILOT'S to increase their business and to increase employment in Schenectady. I'm very comfortable with the IDA as a member of the Board and as a Councilmember and also as a taxpayer. The transactions made though the IDA are very transparent and the board receives a monthly accounting at IDA meetings. Not only that we have been paid back, money that the City was owed, from many, many years ago from the previous administration which pretty much drove the IDA into the ground. The other point I would like to make, unless we encourage business to come into the City proper. I'd like to mention on other thing, until we have proper education and job training for those individuals who actually need the jobs. Those who didn't go on for any training and now need help, we need job training first before we start talking jobs. Again, we look to the IDA who puts those stipulations in their PILOT'S. So, I would caution individuals that unless they come to a

meeting and unless they ask the right people the right questions, they should not discuss things that they have little or no knowledge of.

Mr. Allen – Caught an article in the news about a father arrested for hitting his son with a belt. He was charged with a felony. In my day when parents went after you with a belt you deserved it. The problem today is parents don't take charge of their children. Maybe a few more should "take a belt" to their kids.

Ms. Blanchard – Our Attorney General, Andrew Cuomo is coming to the Community College. First Mr. Cuomo will speak and then the people attending will be broken down into groups. This is open to the public and if you want to reserve a space you can call 486-9704. Also, I would like to remind everyone of our Farmer's Market every Sunday. Many things are happening. It's worth the trip.

Mayor Stratton – I want to join with Councilwomen Blanchard and encourage everyone to come out tomorrow night for Attorney General Cuomo Community Forum at Schenectady County Community College, it start's at 7:00 P.M. Carl Olsen is going to come to the podium and speak about the storm damage pick up.

Mr. Olsen – Thank you for the opportunity to make a couple of announcements. We have completed negotiation with FEMA on the method that the City will use to clean up the storm damage from the ice storm in December, 2008. Our County was declared a disaster area and will re-coup about 90% of all clean-up expenses. The City will conduct Storm Damage Cleanup starting April 18, 2009, April 25, May 2nd, May 9th, May 16th, May 30th, June 6th, June 13th, June 20th, June 27th.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the meeting adjourned At 8:35 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY EILEEN VERSACI
DEPUTY CITY CLERK**