

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTDY CITY COUNCIL – MAY 26, 2009**

A special award was presented to several Firefighters by Liberty Mutual for heroism and education. Giving the award Chief Farstad, Ms. Brucker presented the resolutions.

At this point in the meeting Ms. King called on Councilmember Blanchfield to present a Resolution to Carolyn Friello on her retirement.

Mr. Blanchfield read the resolution and Carolyn Friello thanked the City Council.

Mayor Brian Stratton also presented Carolyn Friello with the “Patron Award” The highest award that is presented in the City of Schenectady.

Ms. Friello accepted the award and thanked the Mayor.

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

Ms. King called upon Rev. Philip Grigsby, SICM, to deliver the invocation.

Ms. King called upon Carolyn Friello 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  
Blanchfield, Gary R. McCarthy, Thomas Della Sala, and Margaret C.  
King

Absent – None

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

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Blanchfield reported on Agenda #8, #12, #13 and #14.

Mr. McCarthy spoke on item 2, this is going to deal with private parties which last year resulted in three homicides. This Legislation is somewhat a work in progress. These parties circumvent the law. They conduct gatherings to sell alcohol without complying with any rules and regulations. We want to send the message that this unacceptable here.

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LESISLATIVE ITEMS)**

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

Jason Planck, Schenectady – No records exist which responds to Restore NYRFP/applications.

Rev. Phil Grigsby, 930 Albany St., Schenectady – We have seen tonight recognition of dedicated public servants well deserved. I have always found Carolyn to be very compassionate, very loyal with a good sense of humor. We've had great example of dedicated service. Also, the tax lien item I hope that gives us the occasion to look at a home ownership strategy. It raises the question of all the vacancies in the city.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

Dick Purga – Schenectady- The application is due June 5, 2009. The City will use the funds for Street Rehab. We are entertaining a seven day comment period. It's usually 30 days, but as mentioned we are under severe time constraints.

P.D. Voris –Schenectady – Over the years I've been disgruntled about funds being distributed. These acts have to stop. You have to take responsibility for the people you are funding.

Rev. Phillip Grigsby- 930 Albany St, Schenectady – Stimulus funding comes rapidly and makes for rapid decisions. There were applications submitted that need to be reviewed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the Meeting of May 26, 2009 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:**

None

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

**Consent Agenda –**

Resolution No. 2009-71	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-72	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-73	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-74	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-75	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-76	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-77	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-78	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-79	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-80	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-81	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-82	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-83	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-84	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-85	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2009-86	Adopted Unanimously

**Consent Agenda (Continued)-**

Resolution No. 87

Adopted Unanimously

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

Ms. King invited all who wish 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:

Vickie Herowitz – The Science and Tech Center should be linked with GE. I propose we establish the “Electric Museum”.

Marva Isaacs – I put a petition in months ago for Duane Avenue to be paved. We need more on Hamilton Hill.

Pamela LaBrake – My taxes quadrupled on my lot next door. I had to wait in line today on 1 ½ hours to get a ticket, then go to the Hellenic Center and waited again. I couldn’t wait, I did an informal review. They didn’t drop the assessment at all. The lot is way to narrow to build on. I didn’t get to grieve it today so now all I can do is file a Law suit. I’d like a Councilmember to represent me.

Mary McClaine – One, two, three, four, five. Five – 5x8 cards, hand written and spaced. In the past, I have timed my comments at home. I know that 5 (5x8) cards will cover three minutes. I was not trained to speak fast and my palsy has slowed down my speech a little, but the five cards have stayed the same. Over the past 17 months, the chair has repeatedly interrupted my comments and I only have one or two sentences left to make. Often Rev. Grigsby speaks here on behalf of those less fortunate amongst us and the chair interrupts his presentation. Others who are passionate about an issue is stopped after 3 minutes. There is no rational reason to enforce the three minute rule for city council meetings. Most nights there are less than 10 people who speak during privilege of the floor. That adds up to about 30 minutes every 2 weeks for council to hear what their constituents have to say. The council president is not the only one responsible for the limited speech. Council members must take responsibility for it too. Have any of our representatives spoken privately to the council president and asked her to relax the 3 minute rule? The county legislature doesn’t do it. Other counties have the 3 minute rule but it is seldom enforced. I have seen in print and heard the spoken comment “We must emphasize the positive and not dwell on the negative”. The negatives take place in this chamber every 2 weeks when the chair interrupts the speakers. The constant interruption to a citizens speech is an arbitrary decision on the part of the

presiding officer and it needs to stop. The chair was gained through the ballot box. Blood was shed for my right to speak here. Limited speech dishonors everyone who has ever worn a military uniform.

Sarah Michener – I urge all of you to “walk” Erie Boulevard as it is to be reconstructed. I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Vince Riggi – The whole reassessment process is flawed from the beginning and is bullying. You should be ashamed of yourselves for doing this and stop it.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Mr. Della Sala – The Pentagon Restaurant is about to reopen and that’s good but I’d like to know what’s going on with the Silver Diner.

Mr. McCarthy – How do we put forth a plan to revitalize our neighborhoods? What I suggest is we start formal discussion on a multi-year plan. Unfortunately our first response has to come from the police department. I don’t see how other than increasing the police department my applying for a COPS Grant. I think we have to provide that “brut force response” in the neighborhoods to dislodge the negative influences. Right now there is no neighborhood that’s immune. Also, how do we create incentives for 1 and 2 family occupied? Our expenses, the large bulk of our problems are in non-owner occupied houses. New York City and Westchester City the Legislature enabled them to shift tax structures, so they can tax parcels at a different rate. We have to look at that. How do we structure a package where we are creating incentives for owner/occupied houses, and shifting our cost of doing business to those entities that drive up the cost? We have the police response to drive them out. We do this for a 2 to 5 year period where we’ve upped police staffing. This allows people to purchase homes and include owner/occupancy and the attrite down the police department. Then spend money on repaving, porches, etc. This isn’t simple and it won’t happen over night. It requires effort and money.

Mr. Vince Riggi – What’s going on with this Assessment Review, should send up some real signals to you as a City Council. The boards act under your direction. A homeowner can only take three numbers. This while things are wrong, it’s bullyism. Also, the Patroon is a great award, no question. I’m going to miss Carolyn Friello for a lot of reasons. She’s a professional and runs her office with the utmost integrity. Also, loose her as a neighbor. I have agreed and disagreed with Council over the years but re-appointing her nine times and giving her the patroon award was a good thing. “Thumbs Up” from all the people, thank you Carolyn.

Mayor Brian Stratton – Regarding Assessment. We will began at 9 A.M. and by 8 P.M. we gone thru 350 plus, begin again tomorrow and continue. There were 720 grievances out of 20,000 on properties. I offered Ms.LaBrake the opportunity to come back tomorrow and assured her I would do all that I could to help with any physical condition she my have. Also, we absolutely need to do more to encourage home ownership the key to neighborhood stabilization, is to have the owner living there. Between 1950 and 2000 we have lost about 30,000 people. When you have a neighborhood like Mt. Pleasant, with a 28 percent vacancy that concerns us. We want to do everything we can to rehabilitate homes but we also, have to look at our ability to take houses down. The second round of the stabilization program allows us to compete for over \$50,000. Finally from Gold Star Mothers and Veterans the second wall that's being built is almost full with names. If you'd like your veterans name on that wall contact the Veterans Service Agency. I also salute the Schenectady Purple Heart Organization who unveiled a stunning monument yesterday.

Margaret King – On Saturday, June 6, 2009 is the Kids Arts Festival. If it rains we move into City Hall. Also, Schenectady Foundation has awarded \$253,000 in new grants. One grant for \$100,000 went to Schenectady Free Clinic. Also, there is a community farewell on Saturday June 30, 2009 for Dr. Karpowitz.

**RECESS:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King recessed the meeting at 8:59 P.M. until Monday, June 1, 2009 at 5:30 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO  
CITY CLERK**