

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – AUGUST 25, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Margaret C. King at 6:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King called upon Rev. Paul Panos, St. George Greek Orthodox Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Ms. King then called upon Carmella Ruscitto 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, Gary R. McCarthy, Thomas Della Sala,
Barbara Blanchard and Margaret C. King

Absent - None

Also Present – Sharon Jordan, Director of Administrative Operations, City Clerk
Carolyn Friello and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the City Council Meetings of July 28, 2008 and August 11, 2008 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Mrs. Brucker. Hearing no objections, Ms. King declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official –

From the Mayor, a list of appointments.

From the Engineering Department, a letter accepting the bid of and awarding the contract to Syracuse Castings for “Furnishing Manhole Frames and Covers and Catch Basin Frames and Grates – 2008” in the amount of \$49,392.00

General – None.

PETITIONS: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Blanchfield stated that the Finance Committee met; he explained Agenda Item #8 which comes up yearly at this time.

Mr. Allen stated that the Health & Recreation Committee met. He spoke in regard to the stadium tennis courts. We are working to improve the bleachers and prepare for the fundraising to improve and maintain the facility.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the Public Safety Committee met. He explained Agenda Items #2 and #3. Both are Legislative Grants to purchase radios for the Neighborhood Watch and upgrade the system.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

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

P.D. Voris, Schenectady resident, spoke in regard to Agenda Items #2, #3, #6, #7 and #9. I am keeping track of all the grants that the Police Department has received. Also, the Robinson Building should have been condemned a long time ago.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, spoke in regard to Agenda Item #7. She is opposed to Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas being appointed to DSIC. She works in Saratoga. Her only connection with downtown is her employment at the bank. The appointment should go to the Schenectady business owners.

Richard Antokol, Vice President of DSIC, 514 State Street, spoke in regard to Agenda Item #7. He asks for your support of this board.

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 THE ACTION UPON LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS:

Consent Agenda –

Resolution No. 2008-144

Adopted Unanimously

Consent Agenda (Continued) –

Resolution No. 2008-145	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-146	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-147	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-148	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-149	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-CS30	Adopted Unanimously

With Unanimous Consent –

Resolution No. 2008-150	Adopted Unanimously
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Original Consideration –

Resolution No. 2008-151	Adopted 5:1:1 Voting Aye – Allen, Brucker, Blanchfield, McCarthy, Della Sala Voting No – Blanchard Abstained – King
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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:

Margaret Van Wormer, c/o Econo-Lodge, 759 State Street, stated that she is having problems with Honda blocking the parking lot.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., stated that it's not a good idea to change the meeting time until 6:00 P.M. It's wrong – you people have to remember that you are getting paid to be here, other people are not. In regard to Public Safety, we need “zero tolerance” here in the city. Harass everybody that's breaking the law. The elderly are afraid to leave their homes. Everybody has a drug dealer near their house. Crime is out of control.

Sabrina Heilman, 112 Erie Blvd., stated that the business people did meet for about 2 ½ hours with Clough Harbour. We had really good ideas. We have to remain informed so we can work together.

P.D. Voris, Schenectady resident, stated that nothing on State Street has changed. The streets are a mess. I still don't see what these people at DSIC do.

Pat Zollinger, 150 Clement Ave., said – I wish to address this Council regarding the recent published reports pertaining to Schenectady High School. But, before any of you decide to go and have a cow and conclude that this forum is limited to ONLY – “City Matters” and not to city school’s matters, I must remind this body that during the present calendar year, no less than 3 school-related agendas have been acted upon by this Council; specifically on January 28th, with Item #12; March 24 with Item #15; and tonight’s Item #1. Having said that, I know that unless one has been living on the moon for the last week, we all have learned that according to the New York State, Department of Education, Schenectady High School has made regional, if not national headlines. Unfortunately, its notoriety was not of a positive nature, but rather, it being 1 of 19 high schools within New York State to be placed on a list of “persistently dangerous schools”. A school achieves this label when it has at least 6 violent incidents per 100 students enrolled, for at least 2 consecutive years. The violent incidents include homicide, sex offenses, robberies, reckless endangerment, arson and possession or threatened use of weapons. I was astonished at the reaction of this report, both, by the media and by school officials. In totality, they adopted the old adage of “If you don’t like the message, kill the messenger”. In this case, the message was sent by the school. The messenger was the State Education Department. The figures contained in the report were provided by the school itself. Acting in a knee-jerking and delusional manner, in an Editorial – the Gazette called the report “a sham”. Carl Strock engaged in a litany – “whereas and wherefores” and summarily implied that had the school lied in its report, it would not have made the list. Mr. Strock, in his sophomoric style attempts to rationalize the report by implying that other schools must have lied in their reports to the State. In other words, justify bad behavior by pointing to someone else’s bad behavior. School Board President Jeff Janiszewski called the report “an insult and slanderous”. Well...talking about insult? The only people, who ought to be insulted by Mr. Janiszewski’s remark, are WE, the taxpayers. Aside from the report in question, the 2008-2009 School Budget is \$153,000,000.00, a significant increase over the previous year. With approximately 10,000 enrolled students from Pre-K to high school, it translates to a cost of approximately \$13,000.00 per year, per student. And what do we get for that? We get a graduation rate of 56%, a 2% drop from the previous year. So we have an increase in the budget and a decrease in the graduation rate. Albany High School,

which is often publicized for its violence had a graduation rate of 61%, that is 5% more than Schenectady High School. The Troy School System had a 68% graduation rate. Finally, Voorheesville School Systems, with a budget of approximately \$21,000,000.00 has a graduation rate of 97%. It is time for Mr. Janiszewski to get off his high horse and along with the rest of the school board, grab the bull by the horns, address and correct the real issues and stop attempting to justify their incompetence. We have a violent school and it needs to be addressed.

Carmella Ruscitto, 205 Front Street, spoke in regard to 203 Front Street. It has finally been taken down, but in the process – destroyed a lot of my property. I was informed to get estimates which I did. The person who demolished 203 Front Street said to make a list of repairs and he would fix them – to date, he has done nothing.

Richard Antokol, 514 State Street, spoke in regard to a letter to the Editor from someone out of State. They expressed extreme gratitude for a Schenectadian who took the time to show this person around the city. Also, Ms. Blanchard – I encourage you to attend our Committee Meeting at 8:30 P.M. on September 8. There are sentiments that agree with you. This is an important issue and it's not simple. Finally, I wish people who speak here have some idea on how to solve the problems and volunteer to help solve those problems.

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

Mr. Blanchfield said – “Just a Reminder” – School is opening next week. Please be mindful of the school buses and children getting on and off buses and crossing the streets.

Ms. Blanchard said – Mr. Riggi, our meetings will go back to 7:00 P.M., at least to next Summer. Also, our Committee Meetings are televised and SACC has the schedule. Lastly, the Democratic National Convention starts tonight and the Republican National Convention is next week. I encourage everyone to register to vote. Anyone turning 18 by Election Day can register now.

Ms. King stated that on Saturday, September 6 is Little Italy, The Stockade Art Show and the Greek Festival. Also on September 6, the Stockade Association is having a Gala to celebrate 50 years of its founding. The following weekend, there

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will be a 24 hour SciFi Film Festival at Proctor's Theater – "It's called, It Came from Schenectady" on Saturday, September 13.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO
CITY CLERK**