

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

January 11, 2021

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President John Mootoveren at 5:31 p.m. by Webex Teleconference.

Mr. Mootoveren asked Council Member John Polimeni to offer the invocation.

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

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

Absent – None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Mootoveren asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 28, 2020 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:

None.

General:

From Bonnie Koshofer, an email requesting all COVID restrictions be lifted to allow our children, grandchildren, and all Americans to live in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Petitions:

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

City Development & Planning – Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas communicated the need for a discussion regarding speeding and dangerous intersections with the members of Schenectady United Neighborhoods (S.U.N.), the City Engineer, Police Chief, and Mayor.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

Mr. Mootooveren invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward or otherwise submit their comments to the City Clerk:

Seeing no speakers to come forward, Mr. Mootooveren declared the Privilege of the Floor regarding Legislative Items, to be closed.

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

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

Consent Agenda

- Resolution No. 2021-001Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2021-002.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2021-003.....Adopted Unanimously

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Mr. Mootooveren directed all who wished to discuss any items for City Business to submit their comments to the City Clerk.

Thomas Carey – President of Schenectady United Neighborhoods (S.U.N.) and member of the Upper Union Neighborhood Association, spoke about the need for traffic safety beyond police enforcement in the City of Schenectady and S.U.N.’s interest in meeting with City Officials to discuss possible solutions.*

** See letter submitted.*

Suzanne Unger – President of the Stockade Neighborhood Association, expressed her agreement with S.U.N.’s initiative regarding traffic safety. There are many dangerous streets and intersections that could be made safer with the additions of stop signs, crosswalks, and sensible traffic management. She also stated that a reduction to the local speed limit to 25 mph could significantly lower the risk of serious injuries. The safety of the residents of this City should be of utmost concern to our legislators.

Art Clayman – Founder and President of Cycle Schenectady, also spoke about the need for safe streets for cyclists and pedestrians. Speeding has always been a problem in the City and reducing the local speed limit will increase safety for everyone.*

** See email submitted.*

Seeing no speakers to come forward, Mr. Mootooveren declared the Privilege of the Floor regarding to be closed.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

Ms. Porterfield – Spoke about the protest the on 6th of January, 2021 at our Nation’s Capital, it was violent and should not have happened. She stated that many have been discussing the notable difference in treatment of the Black Lives Matter protestors and the riotous supporters of President Trump. As Elected Officials, a conversation is needed with our community addressing how people are treated differently because of their race, ethnicity, and background. We also need to examine how people are being policed differently in various communities. She then spoke about the Governor’s State of the State address.

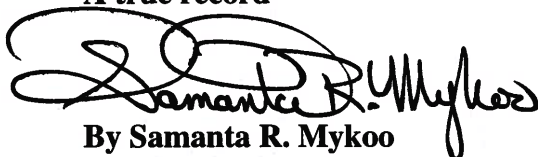
There were technical difficulties with the teleconference meeting; audio was no longer working. Mr. Mootoveren signed out and tried to reconnect but could not. Mr. Mootoveren texted Mr. Polimeni to chair the rest of the meeting.

Mr. Polimeni – Recognized the Mayor and Police Department for their effort with the Police Review that was implemented, it was acknowledged by the Governor.

Adjourned:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Polimeni asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas and seconded by Ms. Porterfield. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

A true record

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samanta R. Mykoo". The signature is stylized with large loops and a long tail.

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

Samanta R. Mykoo

From: John Mootooveren
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2021 5:10 PM
To: Samanta R. Mykoo
Subject: Fw: Don't curtail the rights of all citizens to protect me - please lift all COVID restrictions

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

John Mootooveren
Schenectady City Council

From: Bonnie Koshofer [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 6:42 AM
To: John Mootooveren
Subject: Don't curtail the rights of all citizens to protect me - please lift all COVID restrictions

Re: Don't curtail the rights of all citizens to protect me - please lift all COVID restrictions

Dear Council Member Mootooveren,

I understand that because I have lived 50 years or more that I am at greater risk of becoming ill and even dying from COVID-19. I also understand that if I am suffering from other illnesses, I may be even more vulnerable. Nevertheless—

I do not want the freedom of our citizens curtailed in order to protect me. I do not want the schools shut, depriving and frightening our children and youth, when only older people are at serious risk. I do not want people told they cannot work, businesses forced to shut down and churches closed. No one should be told how many people can gather in a private home, and no one should be stopped from crossing state borders whenever they wish. I want a restoration of constitutional rights in America — and an end to the shutdowns and restrictions forced upon us in the name of COVID-19 and protecting those at greater risk. We want our country back!

Older Americans care deeply about maintaining their independence, and they value their freedom. We will take care of ourselves, manage our own affairs, and avail ourselves of any voluntary services offered by the community or government, always retaining the right to make our own healthcare choices.

We reject living in fear. It breaks our hearts to see Americans made so afraid that they give up their liberty and their freedom to think independently and to openly debate public health measures. We want our children and grandchildren, and all Americans, to live again in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Koshofer
[REDACTED]

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Safe Streets Schenectady

Every Schenectady neighborhood has streets that are unsafe for pedestrians and bike riders due to poor design or neglected maintenance. Speeding in excess of posted limits is commonplace in all city neighborhoods. Sidewalks are often in such poor condition that people have to walk in the street. Schenectady lags behind other cities in the region in providing marked crosswalks, bike lanes and other facilities that make a city truly walkable. These are fixable problems, but it takes a commitment from the community to get it done.

Schenectady United Neighborhoods, Cycle Schenectady and the organizations listed below have formed the Safe Streets Coalition to make our City safe for pedestrians and cyclists. We call on Mayor McCarthy and the City Council to begin that process by adopting complete streets policies and reducing the citywide speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph. Our goal is a city where the streets are accessible and safe for everyone, not just those in cars.

Properly designed streets promote good health while increasing mobility. At the same time, they can help clean the air and fight global warming by reducing vehicle miles traveled.

This is also an equity issue. Schenectady's lower-income neighborhoods contain higher proportions of children, elderly, and people with disabilities. These groups often rely on public transit and don't have cars. It isn't fair that age, disability or poverty should put many city residents at greater risk of being seriously injured or killed by a speeding vehicle.

Area economic development agencies recognize the value of walkability and bicycle facilities in attracting new businesses and new residents, including young professionals, to the city. Complete streets provide an opportunity to build on the progress made downtown by attracting new households and businesses to Schenectady. A walkable city is an economically viable city.

Police enforcement is one way to create safer streets, but police efforts are hindered by streets designed for high speeds. Design strategies to slow down traffic and make our streets safe for ALL pedestrians and bike riders should be adopted in all parts of the city. Our members have lots of ideas for how to make streets safe and we are ready to share them with city officials and staff. It can be less costly and more effective than relying on police enforcement alone.

Safe streets create a healthier and more equitable community, a better business climate and stronger tax base. We are ready to help identify funding sources that promote SAFE STREETS for EVERYONE!

As signers of this letter, we are requesting the City of Schenectady to join with us to improve the quality of life in our city by making it safer for walking and biking. It is time to tackle this problem, and time for the Mayor and Council to show they care about all city residents.

Samanta R. Mykoo

From: Marion Porterfield
Sent: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 8:54 AM
To: Samanta R. Mykoo
Cc: John Mootooveren
Subject: Fw: from art clayman re safe streets remarks

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Sam,

Please see Art Clayman's email below and full statement for your minutes. I told him I would forward to you.

Marion Porterfield
Schenectady City Council

From: Art Clayman [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 9:21:02 PM
To: Gary McCarthy; kzaleeskiwildzunas@schenectadyny.gov; John Polimeni; Ed Kosiur; John Mootooveren; Leesa Perazzo; Marion Porterfield; Carmel Patrick
Subject: from art clayman re safe streets remarks

Hello,

Thank you for listening to my remarks about safe streets last tonight. Unfortunately, you did not hear all of them because I was cut off. I'm not clear whether the reason was that I went over the three-minute time limit (which I believe I did not) or because the president was having trouble with his audio and couldn't hear me. In any case, I wasn't able to complete my statement. It ended just before the paragraph below where I talk about "Fear of getting hit by a car"

I am enclosing the entire statement here for the official record and for your information.

Sincerely,
Art Clayman

As founder and president of Cycle Schenectady, it is a pleasure to join with SUN, an organization I have always admired, to work on this important issue: making Schenectady's streets safe and accessible to cyclists, pedestrians, everyone – not just cars.

Speeding has always been a problem in our city. It isn't just reckless drivers, but roads that are designed and encourage them to go fast. And during the pandemic, with fewer cars and even more open road, they are going faster than ever. It seems the city's 30 mph speed limit is not a ceiling, but a floor. Most drivers are well in excess of that!

They need to slow down, and there's little to lose and everything to gain from having them do so. There's a direct correlation between driver speed and pedestrian and bicyclist safety. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a pedestrian has a 10 percent chance of being killed or seriously injured by a car going 15 mph. At 31 mph, it jumps to 50 percent. That's why more and more cities are reducing their speed limit to 25 or even 20 mph. "20 Is Plenty" is their slogan.

Slowing down doesn't even cost drivers anything. In a city, it's not about how fast you go, it's about stoplights and stop signs, and Schenectady has plenty of both. Race 45 mph down some street and then wait behind the

other cars stopped at the light. You get to your destination the same time as you would have if you'd taken it easy and driven safely.

Less driving and more walking and biking aren't just good for people's health and the environment.

Outdoor recreation is an important way to build community. And that, in turn, is a key to reducing crime. If a street is a "place" -- one that people care and about and look out for, where they live, interact and enjoy themselves and one another -- rather than just a "space" to be gotten through on the way to somewhere else, crime is much less likely to occur.

That's where equity comes in. The people who live in lower-income neighborhoods want and deserve safe neighborhoods, just like anyone else. Also, many of them are young, elderly or disabled and don't have cars. It isn't fair that their age or poverty should put them at greater risk of being injured or killed by a speeding car. Fear of getting hit by a car is the No. 1 reason people give when asked why they don't bicycle. If they were made to feel safe, by slowing cars down and giving them bike lanes and otherwise protecting them, many more would. That is what complete streets are all about. But it's not enough to just have legislation on the books. What's needed is a philosophy and mind-set through all the city's departments: from engineering to streets and signals to planning to police.

The danger of legislation without action can be seen with the bike infrastructure master plan. It contains many sound recommendations to make Schenectady a bicycle-friendly city, but since its adoption in 2017, virtually nothing has been done. No bike lanes, no infrastructure, no signs -- even on something like the Greenway that runs between Central Park through Vale Park to downtown. It was created nearly 10 years ago, and still, not a sign.

Other local communities, including Albany, Saratoga Springs and Ballston Spa, are putting complete streets in the forefront of their planning efforts.

Call them complete streets or safe streets, they are one and the same. And the city needs them.

Thank you for listening.