

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

**July 11, 2022**

The City Council Meeting was called to order by the City Council President Marion Porterfield at 7:00 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. Porterfield asked Reverend Ronald Hunt to offer the invocation.

Ms. Porterfield 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: John Mootooveren, Doreen Ditoro, Damonni Farley, Carmel Patrick, Carl Williams, John Polimeni, and Marion Porterfield.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Ms. Porterfield asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 27, 2022 Council Meeting as submitted by the City Clerk. Mr. Mootooveren made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Farley seconded the motion.

**COMMUNICATIONS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

**Official:**

None.

**General:**

From Naomi Agans, an email regarding fireworks being a nuisance throughout the City.

From Elizabeth Van Court, an online submission noting the difficulties and ineffectiveness of having a lower speed limit in the City and requested that the speed limit not be reduced.

**Petitions:**

A petition from All of Us Untitled and Free, a petition of 841 signatures requesting the Black Lives Matter Mural on Jay Street remain in place. It is a declaration to the people of the City of Schenectady of the need for structural change and commitment to equity, equality, and justice for all.

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):**

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

**P. D. Voorhis** – Stated that she did not understand the Off-Road Vehicle call for public hearing. Many vehicles can park on the street for any amount of time. Before an RFP is issued for towing, she asked that the businesses have proper credentials. She also asked that if a vehicle is towed, the police should be notified so that the owner is able to find their vehicle.

Seeing no other speakers come forward, Ms. Porterfield declared the Privilege of the Floor regarding Legislative Items, to be closed.

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

Ms. Porterfield made a motion that Council approves the Consent Agenda, the motion was moved by Mr. Mootooveren and seconded by Ms. Patrick.

**Consent Agenda**

- Resolution No. 2022-174.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-175.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-176.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-177.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-178.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-179.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-180.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-181.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-182.....Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-183.....Adopted Unanimously

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

Ms. Porterfield directed all who wished to discuss any items for City Business to come forward or otherwise submit their comments to the City Clerk.

**Anne-Marie Serre** – Spoke in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Mural because it is a call to action, a call for equity and justice for all, and a reminder that we are all in this together. It is on all of us to make this society work for everyone. There are no reasons other than a childish one or a politically motivated one that would recognize BLM as a threat. There has been some push-back from some groups saying that if that Mural isn't removed, we would like another Mural painted in a prominent location stating "God Bless America" – as if God Bless America is going out of style. It is healthy and respectful to share ideas from all points of views and political persuasions to work toward action plans that the community on the whole can support. This whole pressure campaign against the BLM Mural is nothing but a tactic to form conflict and attract attention to the Republican Committee. This was done to gain supporters by resorting to ugly attacks and made-up issues that play on division, fear, and anger instead of working on fixing the problems together to ensure equity and justice for all.

**Donna Bates-Cooper** – Recounted reading the online story about the consideration of removing the BLM Mural and feeling appalled. The Republicans felt it was unequal and wanted their money for a Mural that says, “God Bless America”. She then added how many black Americans thought life was unequal. As a LGBTQ+ woman, she understood what it was like to be unequal her whole life. The Republicans want \$12,000 to have a Mural so they could be equal. She suggested that those funds be invested into one of the thousands of causes that could be useful rather than making a political statement.

**Diablo Montelongo** – Spoke about the State Comptroller being in Schenectady to investigate how the City is spending the funds they’ve received. These monies that the City has received cannot be used for a political purpose or political gain. The BLM Mural does not qualify as art.

**Mikayla Foster** – Stated that the BLM Mural is a point of contention in Schenectady. Black people didn’t want the Mural, they wanted policy implemented to ban specific police maneuvers per the 13 Demands or the demands of hundreds of thousands of people in the community. We asked that police officers stop killing and maiming black people and people of color.

**Kasey Charles** – Expressed that the BLM Mural was performative, the black community did not ask for it, but it should be kept if only to invalidate the purposes of racist individuals that view it as political piece. He requested that the “God Bless America” Mural be prevented to not give the racist power. The money should be used towards better purposes such as schools, filling potholes, rehabbing something in Central Park, or other programs. Church and State should remain separate since that is what put an end to Roe v. Wade. We should not have to come to a Council meeting and pray when we don’t believe in the same thing.

**Marteo Uhaulde** – Black adults, children, and their communities need to know that they matter. Half the population in Schenectady is not white. The BLM Mural is the most pathetically smallest thing you can do to show that you care about your residents and if you intend on exchanging it for some weird propaganda then you are committing an act of racism.

**Steve Osuchowski** – Explained the history of the BLM movement, the meaning of Make America Great Again (MAGA) and how that slogan was used by the Klu Klux Klan. The need for separation of Church and State with the other requested slogan God Bless America. America should represent justice and equality. It’s silly to be talking about these letters on the street when there are much more important issues that should be addressed.

**Mother Grace Ferris** – of the Catholic Apostolic Churches, St. John of God Parish in Schenectady stated that the BLM matters Mural is here, it should stay here, there should be nothing added to it or altered. God Bless America is fine, but not in a Mural; we have many other symbols of it such as the flag in front of City Hall, we open the meeting with a prayer, and say the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Rev. Jeremiah Lennox** – He asked that the voices of the young people and people of Schenectady be heard, these are the voices of truth. He added that the tagline of God Bless America and Make America Great Again is a false narrative rooted in racist history. The Republican Party utilizes those taglines to undermine BLM. We have come so far and have so much further to go and if we are to get there in a meaningful way, then we must listen to the voices of the youth here before us, who are going into tomorrow. He asked how can we do better and ensure the wellness of all people.

**Raphael Wiklund** – Stated that getting rid of the BLM Mural is a green light to those who wear white hoods. They have taken off their white hoods and now show their faces wearing a MAGA baseball cap.

**Mabel Leon** – Expressed her outrage toward the Republican City Committee for demanding the BLM Mural be removed. That is an insult to all who live in Schenectady and the City Council. The BLM sign was painted when the nation was grieving over the horrible murder of George Floyd. It was painted as a sign of unity and to remind all of us that we need to fight for racial justice. It is upsetting that on Juneteenth this decision was made by the Republican Committee. They are red-baiting, attacking and further trying to polarize our Community by saying that BLM is a Marxists, radical organization. She challenged the Republicans to save our democracy because it's only when we come together that we can get solutions; this is a false issue.

**Jennifer Bennett** – Spoke in support of the BLM Mural and sees the symbolic gesture and its importance. When her students see a BLM flag, they say they feel seen. Getting rid of the Mural would be a horrible choice.

**Brianne Brinker** – Communicated that she has not heard a compelling reason to eliminate the Mural that is on the street. The only reason to do so would be hate; to divide people and show hate for the people that it represents. Removing it should not be a consideration.

**Ellie Pepper** – Stated that she is against making a change on the BLM Mural on Jay Street. She spoke of homeownership and the disparities between black and white homeowners. She added the Mural on Jay Street doesn't solve anything but does remind us to keep working to ensure that black lives matter as much as white lives, please do not minimize that message.

**Jamaica Miles** – Reported that a petition was circulated to keep the BLM Mural on Jay Street, and it will remain open online. The Black Lives Matter Mural on Jay Street is more than just symbolism. It is a declaration to the people of the City of Schenectady of the need for structural change and a commitment to equity, equality, and justice for all. Don't remove it. The total number of signatures, after removing the duplicates, were 892; these signatures are represented and reflective of residents, business owners, those who attend college, work & shop in the City of Schenectady. She also recognized that there was something additionally beautiful that happened during the meeting tonight, there is more to think about when representing the people of this City - people of different faiths and religions, and those who have no faith because they are Atheist or Agnostic.

**Fran Lehman** – Disclosed how the increase of rent after 17 years has created a hardship for residents such as himself and the need for rent control in the City of Schenectady.

**Dean Mirabito** – Told of how injustice has a long history in this Country as a result of an imbalance of power and control, and the abuse of that power and control. He urged the representatives of the City of Schenectady to go beyond supporting the BLM Mural and support policies that live up to what the Mural represents.

**Matt Marshall** – Believed that America should stand for its ideals, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness with liberty and justice for all. He holds these truths to be self-evident that all are created equal, but unfortunately, one side of the argument is plain silly, nonsense, and a waste of time for people who don't have time to waste fighting for this City. The Schenectady Republican Committee is petitioning for the removal of the BLM Mural and if it doesn't get removed, they would prefer you paint God Bless America elsewhere. If you think about this logically, their argument is that Black Lives Matter is un-America and the only defense against it, is to say God Bless America. This is patently racist; they think to acknowledge it requires a defense of God Bless America. As if fighting racism means fighting America. In a Country like America, perhaps saying Black Lives Matter and practicing the policies of Black Lives Matter should be a tenant of loving this Country and helping it to live up to the ideals that it has so disgustingly failed. He disagrees with removing the Black Lives Matter Mural outside City Hall and suggest

that it be painted outside every building as a reminder that although slavery is over, America has a long way to go in order to prove that the government believes Black Lives Matter.

**Shawn Young** – Explained that symbolism matters, Black Lives Matter isn't just words painted on the street, just as the flags aren't just cloth with paint. The actions that we take in support of Black Lives Matter also matter to us all and we need to continue to take those actions, not just paint words – but make the symbolism mean something. The Republican Committee has the gall to suggest that Make America Great Again or God Bless America should be parallel to Black Lives Matter, does not make sense and speaks towards the racism and fascism that is growing in this Country. It will not end with the Black Lives Matter symbol, there will be other actions and other statements being made by right-wing, fascist groups that want to roll us back. It has been seen time and time again where there has been progress made, there are so many that want to push us back away from that progress to make things the way they were, in other words, to Make America Great Again.

Seeing no other speakers come forward, Ms. Porterfield declared the Privilege of the Floor to be closed.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:**

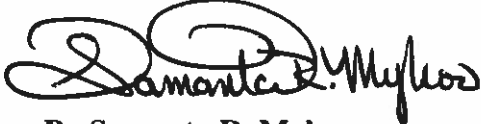
**Mayor McCarthy** – Thanked everyone for coming out and stated that as long as he remains Mayor, the Black Lives Matter Mural will remain on Jay Street in front of City Hall. We can't let people further divide the community. He asked that everyone rise above that and work collectively to make our lives better and stronger.

**Marion Porterfield** – Thanked everyone for attending this Council Meeting. She then stated that there were other people whose voices were heard that did ask for the Mural to be painted and as the Mayor stated, it will remain on Jay Street. She then made several announcements including thanking the Schenectady Rotary for the cornhole contest and congratulated the winners; the Mt. Carmel Festa will be held this weekend beginning on Friday and continue through Sunday; Culture-fest will be held this Saturday at Jerry Burrell Park and on August 20<sup>th</sup>; also on August 20<sup>th</sup> there will be a free movie screening at Central Park, she encouraged everyone to attend and take part of these festivities in the community. She then addressed Mr. Lehman regarding his comments on rent control.

#### **Adjourned:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. Porterfield asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Mr. Mootoveren and seconded by Ms. Patrick. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

**A true record**



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