

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

July 25, 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 James Konicki of the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church to offer the invocation.

Ms. Porterfield then called on Council Member Doreen Ditoro, 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, Carl Williams, Carmel Patrick, John Polimeni, and Marion Porterfield.

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

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Amending the Code of the City of Schenectady Section 248-101-c Regarding Redeeming of Off-Road Vehicles

Ms. Porterfield invited all who wished to address the Council regarding Public Hearing Number One to come forward:

Seeing no speakers come forward, Ms. Porterfield declared the Public Hearing Number One, to be closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Porterfield asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 11, 2022 Council Meeting as submitted by the City Clerk. Mr. Mootooveren made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Official:

None.

General:

From Matt Nelligan, Chairman of the City of Schenectady Republican Party, a letter addressed to the Mayor and City Council formally requesting “God Bless America” be painted on Erie Boulevard.

Petitions:

A petition submitted by Matt Nelligan, Chairman of the City of Schenectady GOP, of 223 signatures requesting the Black Lives Matter Mural be removed or to allow for other alternative messages paid for by the City.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

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:

Seeing no 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. Mootoveren and seconded by Ms. Patrick.

Consent Agenda

- Ordinance No. 2022-05 Adopted Unanimously
- Ordinance No. 2022-06 Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-184..... Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-185..... Adopted Unanimously
- Resolution No. 2022-CS-17..... 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.

Diablo Montelongo – Spoke about the lack of funding for public art and that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) mural is not considered public art. This mural opens the door for graffiti.

Dean Mirabito – Expressed his happiness about the pedestrian safety project that will finally be implemented after the delay due to COVID. He also added that the BLM mural on Jay Street does not need to be altered or added to.

Tom Carey – President of the Schenectady United Neighborhood (SUN) Association and member of the New York State Safe Street Coalition, asked that measures be taken to make the city more livable and inviting to visitors by making the streets safer for walking and biking. He acknowledged the work the City has done to incorporate a complete street policy in certain other areas and downtown and encourages the Mayor and Council to do more. He suggested lower cost interventions such as newer crosswalks and bike lanes in the neighborhoods. We need to educate the public on safe driving through improved signage and other information sharing; we also need to lower speed limits. A slower speed limits means better quality of life. **See notes submitted.*

Geri White – Expressed the aggravation she is experiencing with a neighbor on Swan Street who plays loud music all day and through the night.

Charles Moore – Also spoke of the loud music on Swan Street and a dog owner that does not clean-up after their dog. He said that the police are called and they do not always show up. It is impossible to get rest or have quiet enjoyment of their property. He asked for better enforcement.

Matt Nelligan – Chair of the City of Schenectady Republican Party, stated that he agreed with comments regarding the noise issues and then spoke of the petition that was submitted by his party. This petition was in response to the BLM mural that was put on a City street, it is their stance that their preferred position is not to have the BLM mural leave, but to have it stay. However, they would like any other groups in the City to have the same opportunity to have their message on a City street and have it funded by the City. He seeks an answer to the process for implementing their own mural.

Michael Peppiel – Stated that the BLM mural should not be removed, graffitied, or marked in any way. There has been much criticism regarding the mural because some races and ethnic groups feel left out and interpreted as their lives do not matter. Therefore to resolve this, something should be placed in a more prominent location because everyone matters.

Claudia Cavanagh – Stated that this Country was torn apart by Antifa and BLM a few years ago. She has been working towards having the sign removed for the past two years.

Fran Lehman – Spoke of the rent increase and the lack of protection for residents in the City.

Aubrey Corrigan – Reported that rent has increased after several years but there has not been any improved conditions for renters. It is unfair for landlords to increase rent.

Dan Brogan & Michelle Brown – Advocated for additional stop signs or speed bumps on Rugby Road where he has witnessed many accidents. Too many people speed down these roads and we ask that the safety of everyone that lives on the street be considered.

Matt Marshall – Stated that if anyone believed the phrase Black Lives Matter is political or a terrorist organization, that viewpoint is racist. He then implored the City of Schenectady Republican Party to look up prior case law, *Women for America First v. Adams*, before threatening a suit. The Government cannot regulate your speech on private property, but the Government has a Constitutional Right to voice their opinion as they see fit.

Tom Kennedy – Vice Chair of the City of Schenectady Republican Party, stated that there are many rulings that have been made and they are within their rights under the first amendment to say and do what they want. We all have a right to free speech and are within our rights to ask for redress.

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

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

Doreen Ditoro – Thanked the City and County for organizing Summer Nights, it was well attended, lots to do, plenty to eat, and it was safe.

Carmel Patrick – Announced the special Music Haven event on Thursday and the continuation of the Sunday concerts.

Damoni Farley – Black Lives Matter.

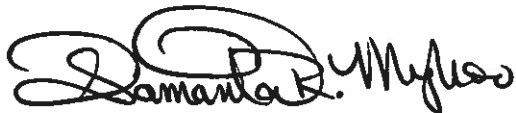
Mayor McCarthy – Announced the many great events planned throughout the City and urged everyone to take advantage of the festivities. He also encouraged everyone to stay cool and hydrated, and check on your neighbors during this heat wave.

Marion Porterfield – Thanked everyone for attending and participating and voicing their opinion on the BLM mural, rent control, and stop signs. She then responded to a question regarding the BLM mural on Jay Street and reminded everyone of the reason for the movement, not the organization, but the movement that was caused by the death of George Floyd. It s a reminder that certain lives are not given the same amount of consideration and care. She then explained that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Review Committee did turn in their rating sheets and it is being evaluated by the Department of Development who will then give their recommendations to the City Council.

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. Williams and seconded by Mr. Mootooveren. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

A true record

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samantha R. Mykoo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "M".

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

Notes for speaking to City Council July 25, 2022

Hello, I am Tom Carey, president of Schenectady United Neighborhoods and the Upper Union Neighborhood Association. SUN is a coalition of 13 neighborhood associations from across the city, and a member of the NYS Safe Streets Coalition.

I am here tonight to again ask you to take actions to make our city more livable for residents and more inviting to visitors by making our streets safer for walking and biking. I would first like to acknowledge the good work the City is already doing to incorporate complete streets policies downtown and in certain other areas, and encourage you to do more, including lower-cost interventions such as new crosswalks and bike lanes in neighborhoods. We also need to do a better job of educating the public about safe driving, through improved signage and other information sharing. And, we need a lower speed limit.

I've heard from some council members that there is opposition to lower speed limits, but I haven't heard anyone present facts to support that opposition. Lower speed limits have proven to be effective throughout the country and in many other places around the world. Here are a few reasons why the City should join with the many other places that have adopted a 25-mph limit in residential areas:

- the National Traffic Safety Board has conducted research to show that a lower speed limit significantly reduces the risk of injury to pedestrians and cyclists;
- The National Association of City Transportation Officials recommends speed limits of 10-25 mph for most city streets;
- a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that after Boston lowered its speed limit to 25 in 2017 the number of drivers exceeding 35 mph was reduced by nearly a third;

- a study in the City of Seattle showed that lower speed limits resulted in fewer traffic accidents;
- the states of Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island have all adopted laws permitting cities to establish a 25-mph limit in residential areas, and many cities in those states have already lowered their limits;
- driving slower improves gas mileage and will save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with State and City climate goals;
- lower speed limits have no significant impact on travel times within the city, due to all the stop signs, red lights and congestion;
- slower traffic leads to a better quality of life by making people feel more comfortable to move about in their neighborhoods.

And to those who say a 25 MPH speed limit won't make a difference, I would ask you “why have a speed limit at all?” Of course it will make a difference – even without increased police enforcement. Now, a lower speed limit will be more effective if it is done along with design improvements and public education. The City should continue to install complete streets measures wherever possible, and require them in all repaving contracts.

Complete streets designs such as raised crosswalks, narrower travel lanes, separated bike paths and other traffic calming features make streets safer for everyone, but especially for children, seniors, persons with mobility limitations, cyclists and others who are not in cars. With a lower speed limit, complete streets policies and public education, the City can finally begin to address speeding and unsafe driving in a meaningful way.

Each member of this council is on record as supporting a 25mph speed limit in our neighborhoods. I encourage you to move forward with this as soon as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to address the council on this important matter.