

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
OF THE SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL
September 26, 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 Brad Jones to offer the invocation.

Ms. Porterfield then called on the City Clerk, Samanta Mykoo, to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy 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, Deputy City Clerk Ekram J. Phanisnaraine, and Corporation Counsel Andrew Koldin, Esq.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Porterfield asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2022 council meeting as submitted by the City Clerk. Ms. Patrick made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Mootooveren seconded the motion.

COMMUNICATIONS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Official:

None.

General:

None.

Petitions:

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

At this point, Ms. Porterfield made an announcement regarding a Town Hall meeting that was postponed from its original date of Friday, September 23rd, 2022. The Council president stated that the rescheduling was not done intentionally, and offered her apologies to the members of SLIC and the local Jewish community.

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:

Claudia Cavanaugh – Voiced her support for Councilmember Polimeni. Stated that it is wrong of other Councilmembers to accuse other members of being racist when they don't get their way. Racism is a serious allegation and should not be directed at anyone without evidence to support their claims.

Wayne Harper – Expressed frustration with City employees hanging up the phone on him, to which he then referenced an experience he had with Corporation Council Andrew B. Koldin, Esq. Mr. Harper then commented on the current state of the Schenectady City Hall building, pointing out details about the building he found outdated or in need of repair.

Michael Zeppieri – Gave kudos to some City employees he felt are exceptional at their job. Says that we have good people working for the City and extended his gratitude for that.

Marva Isaacs – Stated that Councilmember Williams should not be accusing anyone of being racist. Recalled her experiences with Mr. Williams in a public setting where he walked past a group of individuals without acknowledging or greeting them.

Fran Lehman – Shared his personal story involving his rental apartment and a 14-day notice he received from his landlord due to an unpaid rent balance, to which he points out a large portion of the outstanding balance is from a rent increase that was imposed on him. Questioned Schenectady's lack of a rent-cap law despite many neighboring municipalities having one. Says City lawmakers were elected to help city residents, and that is what they need to do.

Audrey Corrigan – Explained viewpoint on how the City's reasoning for not wanting to enforce a rent stabilization law is invalid. Landlords may be facing hardship but so are renters. Says renters have kept quiet about many quality issues for years, but now it's time to speak up. Renters want to be able to live in their own homes without having to turn to public housing or homelessness.

Chris Morris – Shared her disappointment with the happenings following the postponement of the Town Hall, specifically Councilmember Carl William's explanation for the cancellation in Paul Vandenburg's radio show. Explains that threats of racism are damaging and unnecessary, and that instead, we should be working together as a unit for the better good of the community. We need to be more careful of the things we say, as they hold weight.

Mena Budhoo – Started by voicing her support for Councilmember Polimeni and praising him for his continued involvement in the SLIC community. Also spoke about the financial struggles that landlords face – such as the costly maintenance and upkeep expenses in order to keep apartments up to code, and why that means people should consider the rights of landlords as well.

Jacob Koehler – Expressed concern over the ARPA fund allocation to have the riverside tennis courts redone, and the impact it would have on the local skateboarding community.

Skateboarding deserves a place in the City. Also mentioned was a petition that was started to show that there is interest in the space, and pointed out that in just 4 days, they have obtained over 1,000 signatures. Koehler then began to read off some of the written comments left under the petition.

Gordon Hendrick – Skateboarding is no different from any other sport. It's a community that brings people from all areas of the capital region together. Says he is in support of the idea of building an entirely new skate park.

Tom Kennedy – Says the City Council has done a great job of separating the City's residents. Calling out people by name publicly is not a good idea, and instead should be handled privately. A Councilmember who makes allegations of racism at another Councilmember without proof should have to resign, or warrant an investigation in the very least.

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

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

Carl Williams – Spoke about his disappointment with events surrounding the postponement of the Town Hall meeting being miscategorized by Councilmember Polimeni, followed by an observation that Mr. Polimeni has been the most outspoken critic of the cancellation, despite him being against the idea originally. He explained that he felt the need to cancel the Town Hall meeting after health issues arose with him and his daughter, which he says led him to opt to cancel the meeting due to the logistical issues that would arise from his absence. Highlighted that he was the original Councilmember advocating for the meeting, although some of his fellow members did not see the use. States that he accepts full accountability for everyone inconvenienced and hopes to see everyone at the rescheduled meeting.

John Polimeni – Stated he was relieved to hear Mr. Williams and his daughter were feeling better, however, the statement Mr. Williams made to the radio channel Talk1300 could not be further from the truth and makes Mr. Williams a liar. Also mentions that Mr. Williams was untruthful about his promise to provide a response to the cancellation of the Town Hall, although one had already been made. That, along with his claim to be the sole organizer of the meeting, are some of the lies being exchanged. He points out that Mr. Williams constantly makes promises that he cannot keep, and Council takes much of the blame when those promises aren't met. The Town Hall did not need to be canceled and could have gone on. Also expressed the reason he opposes and is not supportive of ideas that Mr. Williams has because of race, but because he does not think they are good and will end up hurting the city and raising the taxes. Stated that he is tired of being accused of being racist every time he opposes an idea. Enough is enough and he is ready to fight back. He ended his statement with an apology to Councilmembers Farley and Mootoveren, since he originally thought they were involved of the Town Halls cancelation.

Carmel Patrick – Also extended apologies to Mr. Mootooveren and Mr. Farley. Says she has tried her hardest to bite her tongue and not cause a scene, but accusations of other council members being racist warrant a response and are highly inappropriate. She mentions she was happy to introduce Mr. Williams to many of her contacts before he became a councilmember & says she does not take issue with the fact that the Town Hall was not properly planned out, the other Councilmember's schedules weren't taken into account, or that it was abruptly canceled last minute. She takes issue with him implying that Mr. Polimeni, and by extension the other White people on the City Council are racist. Points out her numerous years of service given to the community, which include many communities of color. We were elected to serve everyone in the City, and that's what she will continue to do.

Damoni Farley – Gave a shoutout to the skateboarding community in attendance. States that he appreciates the apologies from his fellow Councilmembers, however, Mr. Polimeni has been given the benefit of doubt numerous times, however, his patterns do not help his case. He then pointed out that what Mr. Williams did is not irresponsible, but brave instead. He also mentioned how he, as well as Mr. Mootooveren, were unaware of the Town Halls's cancellation, however, they were still all grouped together when statements were made regarding the situation. Says that the actions of other Councilmembers speak for themselves.

Doreen Ditoro – Thanked everyone for coming out. Expressed frustration with the Council not being able to work together. Says she was very excited about the town hall, and the racism card is getting old. She is a good person who would give her heart out for anyone, no matter the color of their skin.

Adjourned:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. Porterfield asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mootooveren. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 P.M.

A true record



By Ekram J. Phanisnaraine

Deputy City Clerk