

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – OCTOBER 14, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Margaret C. King at 7:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. King asked the Chamber to stand for a moment of silence.

Ms. King called upon Jennifer Wells to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered 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** – Mayor, Brian U. Stratton, Deputy City Clerk Eileen  
M. Versaci and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION:** Ms. King called upon Robert Scofield of HUD – Albany Field Office Director to present the HUD Award for Green Universal Designed, Affordable House at 1005 Glendale Place to the City.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Not ready.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Official -**

From the Mayor a list of appointments.

From the Engineering Department a letter recommending the amendment of the contract for the “2008 STREET PAVING PROGRAM TO CALLANAN INDUSTRIES INC.,”.

**General** – None

**Petitions:** One petition with 76 signatures from citizens of Hamilton Hill to repair the sidewalks of Duane Avenue and McClyman Street.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Blanchfield stated that the Finance Committee met; he explained Agenda Item #10 relates to our street paving program, the contracts are awarded and Funded as the money comes in from different sources and the CDBG funding has come through.

Mrs. Brucker stated that eh Public Service and Utilities Committee me and she explained Item #6 is the environmental remediation at Nos. 834 – 838 State Street, this is to complete the sale of this property to Bethesda House.

Mr. Della stated that he would like to report that he has been invited to a meeting with the superintendent and other members of his cabinet on Wednesday to discuss a grant the Schenectady School District is pursuing that may also benefit the City.

Mr. McCarthy stated that the Public Safety Committee met; he explained agenda item #4, Child Passenger Safety Grant for the Police Department and also at the last committee cycle our State Senator and Assemblymen met the City Council to discuss State Mandates.

**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:

Peg Miller, Ashford Lane, Niskayuna, N Y – I would like to express appreciation to the Council for Legislative Item #1 and to provide and information on this matter if needed.

Pat Zollinger, Schenectady resident – regarding item #8. A Resolution calling for a public hearing for the approval of the 2009 Budget for the City of Schenectady. I would like to point out a few things that Council could be doing to bring the budget to the public as well as save on some of the costs. The entire document could be converted to and probably is in PDF format so that it could be posted to the official city website and downloaded for viewing by any member of the public. The county posts theirs in PDF format and the city should also. I haven't seen it yet but I know that I can purchase a hard copy of the budget. It used to be \$35 dollars, but with everything else going up, I would imagine that its more expensive now. Especially with the maintenance contract on that fancy color printing equipment that you leased a couple years ago. And are there copies of the budget that maybe looked at by the members of the public, perhaps in the

Clerk's Office or the Library. No one should have to buy a copy of the budget in order to know what's inside. And that brings another concern to mind. Was the budget printed in color this year for the Council and news media? That's very expensive and if you were truly interested in cutting costs, that's a big one that you could. But, if you budget were posted on-line in PDF form, just as these meeting agendas are, then the public and the Council could print it out as they see fit and huge amount of savings could be had. I ask once again as I have in years past. Did the Mayor finally draft a summary introduction of his proposed budget? A summary letter is very important for introducing his reasons on why the budget was formulated as it is. So hopefully one was drafter this time. Oh, but there is a press release, which I guess could count as a summary. And I will quote one statement in that press release to address "Paying for garbage collection based upon your hold's typical output rather than by the assessed value of your property, is the most equitable and fair method possible, "Mayor Stratton said that is a flat out lie. There is no measurement done by the City to determine any household's typical garbage output. In fact many cities have a "pay as you throw" method for determining what is charged for waste disposal. In order for a public hearing on the busdget to be meaningful, you must try to encourage as many people in our community to come to the hearing and give you their ideas. If you put the Mayor's proposed budget on the internet in PDF format, you would be giving people a change to really offer their ideas and impute. There is time to post the budget on-line at the city's website. You already have the reassessment data for the properties in the City and the Mayor's public service announcement regarding mortgage foreclosures on it. Isn't the budget just as important?

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 –**

|                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Ordinance No 2008-9       | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-164   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-165   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008 -166  | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008 – 167 | Adopted Unanimously |

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|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Resolution No. 2008-168   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-169   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-170   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-171   | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2008-CS-31 | Adopted Unanimously |

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

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

Sondra Stevens – Schenectady resident state that she was here to kick off the Toys for Tots drive and the Harvest Festival on Upper Union St., I represent the U. S. Marines, Fox Company who have been deployed to Iraq and we need to represent them. Please join us Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Thank you

Sabrina Heilmann – 112 Erie Blvd. – As you can see, the blue tee-shirts, we are all here to oppose the roundabout on Erie Blvd., the shirts have been donated by Rudnick's and we have put together packets for the City Council and the Mayor to review and these include questions that we would like to have answered.

Mayor Stratton – I believe that in the letter I sent out to Sarah Michener, in regard to these questions and the meeting that has been set up with Clough Harbour on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008, these questions should be answered at that time.

Sarah Michener – Erie Blvd Group – I have a petition with over 500 names of patrons of Erie Blvd and are not necessarily tax payers, but do not want the roundabout. The reason we submitted our questions in advance is so that Clough Harbour and yourself can have the information on hand that we are looking for.

Gary Sawyer – Erie Blvd Group – I stand here today to ask the people to Schenectady to stand up against this design for Erie Blvd. This project does not set up a business profile. This boulevard is lined with long established business on both sides of the street and this design is a more urban design not fitting for this area. This design will do more to drive these businesses out of Schenectady that to help keep them here.

Chris McAllister – Erie Blvd. Group – I am concerned about the Erie Blvd. beautification project. I am originally from Troy and a few years back they had a beautification project, it was to bring in expensive stores and build a big parking garage all it did was drive out the “Mom & Pop” stores and when the new businesses did not happen it turned into a place for the homeless and drug dealers. Sometimes these projects don’t go as planned and people end up with abandoned buildings and higher taxes.

Tim Tuttle – Erie Blvd. Group – I am a business owner and tax payer on Erie Blvd and I like the idea of beautifying the boulevard, however I am opposed to the medium and the roundabout as proposed in the plans I know of today.

Manuel Montal – Erie Blvd Group – This Street does need beautification it does not need a roundabout. A street can be made safe without a roundabout. This does not serve the citizens of the City.

Vince Riggi – 2138 Campbell Ave., - First of all I think the Administration made the right call on the promotion of Vincent Krewiecki, everyone deserves a second change, so thumbs up on that. This meeting that Mr. McCarthy is talking about with Chief Chaires about putting more officers on the street without hiring more is what we have been talking about for years, and I’m glad the new chief is going to look into that and get more officers on the street. Thumbs up on that also. On the budget, the garbage fee, Pat and I are on the same page, until we establish a unit of measure there is no equity in this garbage fee. Secondly, we have to segregate the fund, you can not have it in the General Fund. Sarah and Sabrina have done their home work on the Erie Blvd. Project and I as a taxpayer support them, they are doing good things, their livelihoods are on the line. No one wants this roundabout that is the bone of contention.

Marra Isaacs – 204 Duane Ave., - I would like to have the subject of Duane Avenue sidewalks on the next City Development & Planning Committee.

Barbara Katz – City resident – Please repair the sidewalks on lower State Street.

Harry Brand – 2108 Van Rensselaer Dr., Over the last four years I thought I was the only one that complained. Now you are hearing from many more. When you go to spend the kind of money you need for this project you need to have the taxpayers on board. You people just want to spend money and that taxpayers are fed up.

Pat Zollinger – Schenectady resident – I would like to offer my suggestions on what should be included, excluded and changed in the Mayor’s 2009 budget

proposal for the City. First, no employee or department head, or even the Mayor himself, should be using the city owned vehicles for their personal business. The cost of fuel and insurance is still too high to continue that perk. And the opportunity to abuse that privilege is also pretty high. That is a policy change that this council can implement immediately and should. Second, there is no reason to have duplication of department heads as in Director and Deputy Director. Many positions have been created and abolished over the years, but the City doesn't need to become top heavy with management. That's just like our police and fire department. With conjured up titles comes bloated salaries. It would be best to cut down on the patronage rather than pump that up. Third, the garbage fee is not a user fee. We all know that. We would have to pay this fee even if we had someone else come get our trash. That's why it is a tax dressed up as a fee. If you are really interested in cleaning up this budget and taxing us fairly, you will extricate all waste removal revenues and expenditures and put that into its own fund, like water and sewer funds, so that a measure of accountability can be obtained and ideas can be presented to reduce those costs. The garbage fee was a sham from its beginning, and now you are increasing it to plug a few holes? That makes no sense. Fourth, it's a known fact that the cost of retirement increased by several hundred percent after 9/11 and the stock market drop and it looks like we are in a genuine recession now. So with the current stock market crash and its crazy roller-coastering our retirement liability may again increase dramatically. And the budget has increased from \$58 million in 2004 to its current \$76.6 million proposed for 2009? That is nearly \$19 million in five years, an increase of nearly 33 percent. So stop creating new jobs for your buddies. Stop making these jobs available outside the city. Enforce that residency law that this council created for good and valid reasons. Since we have to contribute to the retirement fund, let's do so for our own. And let's get off the levitated claim that you all just want the best people for the job. We've got the best people for these jobs right here. Those are just a few suggestions. I'm sure that you can learn a whole lot about budgeting simply by listening. Our ability to pay the highest taxes in the capital region is overstretched now. Come down off your pedestals, open your eyes and see how hard it really is for a great many people in our City.

Crystal Hamelink – 930 Albany St., Coordinator of SICM Summer Lunch Program in Schenectady. We served at 14 sites in Schenectady. Most sites were in low income areas in Hamilton Hill, Vale and Mont Pleasant. Included into city Parks – Jerry Burrell, Quackenbush, Central Park, into Community Rooms at Yates Village and Steinmetz and MacGathan Municipal Housing sites, and on to Church lawns at designated sites including the SICM back yard in Hamilton Hill.

Mary McClaine – City Resident – Back in July I sent a letter to the editor and it was not printed and I was very disappointed, believe it or not, it is a thank you

note to the City. First, I mentioned in the letter the wonderful horticulture program that the City has. I mentioned the thank you to the City Staff for all the materials and the yards and yards of top soil given to us. I went on with my thank you by thanking my neighbors who with their hard work made the garden a thing of beauty. All summer long there was praise for the garden.

Carl Liss – Erie Blvd. Group – My family has had a business on Erie Blvd for the last 50 years. This project of a roundabout is like placing a round peg in a square hole. It will not work.

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

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

Mr. Della Sala – I think I speak for all my colleagues when I thank the speakers for all of their suggestions. I attended the 12309 Neighborhood meeting on September 30, 2008, and there were two things that were discussed that I felt everyone should HEAR ABOUT. – The lack of sidewalks on the streets leading to SHS, Zoller and Oneida Schools continue to be an issue. McClellan St., Grand Blvd., and Nott St., all need sidewalks installed or improved to insure student safety. I have discussed this with the Superintendent of Schools, and he is looking into those sidewalks that abut school property. - - Code enforcement notices led to a heated discussion. Two points raised deserve some consideration; 1) perhaps Mr. Lamp could appear at a neighborhood meeting prior to his team entering a neighborhood to explain the process and identify what the inspectors will be looking for; 2) A mailing to residents at least four weeks prior to code visitations to residents at least four weeks prior to code visitations to allow some time for repairs to be made before the inspectors get there. Finally, I attended the Hispanic Culture Celebration and dinner at Proctor's last week and every one involved in that endeavor deserves applause, especially Carlos Caraballo.

Mr. Blanchfield – First of all I want to wish one and all a happy Columbus Day, I had the privilege and honor of joining the Sons of Italy for the anniversary celebration last Saturday night and it certainly was a happy day. I would be remiss if I let a week go by without offering congratulations to Schenectady High School Football Team; it really has been tremendous and great for school and community spirit.

Mrs. Blanchard – The Sunday Gazette in the Business section had an article on the new Green Market that will be opening in the Proctor's Arcade on Sunday, November 2, 2008. Saturday, October 25, 2008, you can recycle your TVs

Electronics and such for free. You can pick up an application in the Mayor's Office and it is sponsored by the County. The Woodlawn Preserve will be getting new signs that will allow hikers and people that want to fish in the preserve. Also, I think putting the budget on line would be a good idea; we can use all the help we can get to bring this budget down.

Mr. Allen – A couple of things about the current proposed budget we have concerns about the hopefully people will be working on it. I'm very concerned about increasing taxes, our taxes high enough. One thing we need to talk about is recycle, really it pays off. One thing I have seen happens is people bring their garbage to our City and leave it to be picked up. That costs us money, if you see that happen, call and report it. It happens a lot, they have friends or relatives that want to save money, so they bring their garbage to us. Sidewalks, a petition was put together to remind us that the area over near Duane Avenue and McClyman Street need attention. I have to agree these sidewalks are very bad and hopefully we can do something there. Some good news that I have is about Central Park, we are moving along with the new play land for the kids and all the new black top and sidewalks to make it safer for all of us.

Ms. Brucker – I would like to thank all the people involved in the HUD project for the Green Universal Design Housing. This project involved a number of people and agencies and took a lot of cooperation and it is good for the City to have people buy affordable and energy efficient housing and for people to become home owners and tax payers. I would also like to thank the people from Erie Boulevard for all the information; you can tel that you took a great deal of time and effort on this. I want you to know that the Council is taking this under consideration and thank you for that. On the budget, none of us want to see an increase in taxes or fees and we are going to work hard to keep any increase at a minimum and we will be working diligently on this. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Gary on his up coming marriage and wish him all the luck in the world from all of us.

Mayor Stratton – I would like to express my appreciation to al the speakers that came down to speak tonight and to our distinguish guest from Buenos Aires, you must have brought a calming influence with you, because these folks are usually much, much harder on us. I want to thank all the Erie Blvd. business that come here tonight and I want to encourage you to com to the November 24<sup>th</sup> meeting because a lot of misinformation and wring information came out tonight, when we do not have our team here to help to answer your questions and to understand this project. We really need to work together on this project in order for it to succeed.

City Council Mtg.  
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Ms. King stated that I would like to remind all of the Harvest Festival on Upper Union Street and it is also the kick-off for Toys for Tots. The DSIC is hosting its building block party at Proctor's that is its way showing off what is happening downtown. Also, the Bow-tie Cinema is starting a classic film series on Saturday mornings; some of you might want to take advantage of that. Also, on a more serious note, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I just encourage everyone to do self exams and go for monograms, I am a survivor and can attest to early detection.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY EILEEN M. VERSACI  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK**