

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – APRIL 28, 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 called upon Rev. Bill Levering, First Reformed Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Ms. King then called upon Pat Zollinger to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered to 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, City Clerk Carolyn Friello and  
Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden, Esq.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. In relation to increasing fees for the purchase of the City Zoning Map and the Zoning Code.

Ms. King invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:15 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Ms. King declared the Public Hearing closed (7:16 P.M.).

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of April 14, 2008 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Mr. Blanchfield. Hearing no objections, Ms. King declared the minutes approved as submitted.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Official –**

From the Mayor, a list of appointments.

From the Department of Finance, a letter accepting the bids of and awarding the contracts for “Fertilizer, Pesticides and Turf Supplies” for the Schenectady Municipal Golf Course Season – 2008 to Lesco, Inc., UAP, Matrix Turf Solutions and Harrells, LLC for a total amount of \$51,674.80.

**General –**

The Bellevue Preservation Association will hold its monthly meeting at the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Hall at 1911 Fairview Ave. on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 P.M. The Guest Speaker will be Carl Olsen, General Services Commissioner of the City of Schenectady.

The Upper Union Street 12309 Neighborhood Association will hold its monthly meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:15 P.M. at the Price Chopper Community Room on Eastern Parkway. Eric Ely, the Schenectady City Schools Superintendent and the Board of Education Members who have indicated that they intend to run for the office at the annual May 20<sup>th</sup> school elections. All are invited.

**PETITIONS:** None.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Della Sala stated that last month, we passed a resolution wishing the Odyssey of the Mind Team “Good Luck” in their quest for State Championship. They did well – Paige School finished 6 out of 17 and Central Park School finished 7 out of 17.

Mr. Allen called on Brian Damian and June Poltrac to explain some updates at the Golf Course. Brian said that last week, we were awarded a \$5,000.00 grant from the USGA – that’s a “Hook a Kid on Golf”. It’s going to be June 3<sup>rd</sup> to raise funds for the event. That event is sponsored by Mayor Stratton. There are scholarships available. We are looking to fund 80 Juniors and the leftover money will provide for further events. We are looking to send 2 or 3 Juniors to a National event this year. Also the Golf Course is in fantastic condition, probably the best that its been in years. June Poltrac thanked the City Carpenters for all the improvement to the Golf Course. It’s beautiful. We have added TV’s, additional seating and now, we accept credit cards. Brian Damian said that we do have some season passes available - \$650.00 for Seniors, \$750.00 for the residents and \$1,000.00 for non-residents for unlimited golf. Mr. Allen stated that this weekend, there were some 60 volunteers headed by Jason Planck who

cleaned the Fitness Trail. Also, people are walking their dogs and not picking up after them. Also, please pick up your own trash after lunch or a picnic.

Mr. Blanchfield explained Agenda Item #6. We have afforded several companies the opportunity to bid on these.

Mr. McCarthy explained Agenda Item #2 which upgrades computer equipment in cars. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, I would like to start some of the programmatic review of the Police Department. We have had input from sworn personnel of the department, but, I would ask for about 45 minutes or an hour and I would also like to re-extend our invitation to the State Legislators who have been unable to join us. If they are available, it may add another 15 minutes to the agenda.

Police Commissioner Wayne Bennett stated that gun violence is a disturbing, growing problem. In 2006-2007, we were not out of line as to what we experienced in previous years. My review indicates that this is not a result of drugs, but rather personal attacks. The perpetrators seem to know each other. I reached out to the State Police for additional service and they started last Wednesday. We will discuss where we will go with the program tomorrow. Bob Hamilton is notifying his officer that this is a complete and total effort by everyone involved.

Mayor Stratton called members of the Clergy to come inside the rail to accept a resolution on Gun Amnesty.

**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 speaker rose to be heard and her remarks are summarized:

Mary McClaine, 1505 Unadilla Street, spoke on Agenda Item #4 regarding 744 Eastern Ave. I looked over 744 Eastern Ave. and I don't object to the sale. The owner wants to live upstairs and use the downstairs for a Day-Care. I object to that because of the area and the fact that there is no back yard. It's no place for a Day-Care.

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

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

**Consent Agenda –**

Resolution No. 2008-75	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-76	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-77	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-78	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-79	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2008-CS20	Adopted Unanimously

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:**

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

Jason Planck, Woodlawn area, stated that this weekend, 60 people cleaned the Fitness Trail. Next Saturday and the following Saturday, we will continue cleaning. Also, the Access Festival will be June 27<sup>th</sup>.

Harry Brand, 2108 Van Rensselaer Drive, said – I am happy about the things happening in Central Park and the Golf Course, but, how can you allow a dump to be next to the Golf Course? How can you allow this? We are just now putting the police on the streets. You should have done this years ago.

Anthony Ackerman, 225 Nott Terrace, stated that 2 weeks ago, I was brutally attacked. I am running for City Council next season. We will reorganize this city. Three seats are coming up. You have a new watch dog – it's me.

Fred Lee, Schenectady resident, stated that the loud music seems to come out in the Spring. That music does more than disturb the peace. It doesn't take a "high decibel level" over a long period of time to cause permanent hearing loss and eventually, it can cause nerve damage. It's difficult for young people to go to school after a long weekend and concentrate. It's important to bring

complaints on loud music to a higher level than disturbing the peace or an irritated neighbor. Also, I notice that the American Flag is not being displayed a lot. After 9/11, flags flew all over. It's important to display your patriotism to the country. I hope that we encourage the residents to do this.

James Weaver, 1918 Euclid Ave., said – I volunteered to watch the cameras and we are still willing to do this. I have had a basketball hoop in front of my house for 5 years. Now today, I'm told that I have to take it down. I think that it was done by a neighbor – out of vindictiveness.

Jim Livingston, Union Triangle, stated that many of the problems that we heard about tonight do exist in other parts of the city. A few weeks ago, I spoke regarding the Grouper Law and long term problems with absentee landlords. As a result, I was cited at my house with the initiative of the Zoning Officer. That was an administrative abuse of authority. I appreciate the Mayor's call when he apologized for that act. I regret that in the newspaper's article that the Zoning Officer was unapologetic and the Corporation Counsel said that he did nothing wrong. The apostasy is abundant in the city. In regard to the Grouper Law, we have repeatedly asked that it be enforced. I was told that it is a valid law and it would be enforced, however, the Corporation Counsel said that the Union College team that lives for 9 months on Union Ave. is a family. That defies the Code that he has misinformed, misrepresenting the law and it is outrageous. This Council needs its own representation to decide whether he is in a position of nullifying, in effect personally, the laws of this city. I would like to hear what the Council thinks of the Grouper Law. We need someone to represent the Council. The Corporation Counsel is not doing their job.

John Polimeni, Schenectady resident, commented on how nice the City Council Chambers looked. I'm anxious to see the final results.

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

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Ms. Blanchard agreed that we need further discussion on the Grouper Law. Also, fuel consumption – if you drive 55 mph rather than 75 mph, you save 25% of your fuel. Even 65 mph, you would save 15%. Also, a suggestion is that the local government can ban drive up windows. If you are sitting in your car for more than ½ minute, you should turn off the car. Finally,

if you are going to buy a new TV, please buy an Energy Star TV and please recycle your old TV's.

Mr. Allen stated that Sunday, we had the Jazz Festival at the Muddy Corporation. It was a very calm, enjoyable event. In regard to energy, what – as a city - are we going to do about gas prices? Perhaps, we could work longer hours for 4 days rather than 5 days. In regard to the Building Inspectors – what are all these inspectors doing? On the issue of garbage cans – we talk about this constantly and still there's garbage cans all over.

Mrs. Brucker stated that this is the season when a lot of us are doing work on our homes. I caution people that you need to make sure the person performing the work is licensed and check their references. Every year, we hear about people who aren't happy with the work and it is very expensive. If they are reluctant to give references, then, I suggest that you don't hire them. We used to have a Consumer Protection Office here and now, it's with the County. I called today for some information and unable to speak to someone. I hope to speak with someone this week. I am going to see if someone can come to our meeting on Monday and give us a brief overview of that department and what people can do for some remedy. I know that in the city, there is a Small Claims Court, but, I would like to see if there's any other avenues.

Mr. McCarthy stated that Mr. Ackerman was the victim of a tragic assault. He called me and I returned his call; I have not heard from him. It's unfortunate and one of those things that has just manifested itself in this community where a two tier society is evolving. There's thugs, hoodlums – those who put their values ahead of society and are functioning without rules. Our response has got to be community based. There isn't one simple solution. My opinion is the ideal configuration – when someone calls for the police, we put a car on scene within 2 minutes and give them the resources to do that. I believe, currently, that it would require 18-22 officers. That's a huge number. We have to balance with what we can pay for. I suggest that the Ackerman case is solved rapidly so we can send a message to the thugs and hoodlums who are pulling fear in this community that this is not tolerated. Our response is going to be quick and forceful.

Mr. Blanchfield said – “Thanks” to Mr. Lee who put a new spin on loud music and that it's a public health issue as much as a nuisance. Also a few weeks ago, we passed legislation that banned smoking at Tiny Tots Land and also at the pools because of its affect on young people as loud noise does and its disruption to their lives. We have to pay special attention when its in public places. Also,

the Day Care on Eastern Ave., I think that it's important to fill in services of Day Care as downtown expands. Maybe another look at the property may shed a better light on it. I think the property was unfairly cast. Lastly, Mr. McCarthy has dedicated his life to crime prevention and it's unfortunate what happened to Mr. Ackerman.

The Mayor spoke in regard to the colors in the Council Chambers – it's part of our on-going restoration of this building and it is funded by the OCA. One of the benefits of turning this room over to the courts is that they are funding some of the things that have been needed to be done for many, many years. We have a dynamic scheme picked out for the ceiling. Also, I look at every way that we can to consolidate our gasoline consumption. By consolidating vehicle maintenance, we reduced our gasoline consumption in 10 months by 15,000 gallons. In regard to Code Enforcement, I would like to invite Keith Lamp and Carl Olsen to come to a future meeting and explain what the 12 Code Enforcement Officers are doing and ways that we can be more responsive. The City, because of our financial progress, has been recognized on a State and National Level. None of this would have been possible without the Council's support and that of the residents; they have taken the tough medicine. Thank you for your partnership and we will be presenting the 2007 Audit results to you soon.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Ms. King declared the meeting adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO  
CITY CLERK**