

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – JUNE 25, 2007**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Mark W. Blanchfield at 7:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. Blanchfield called upon Rev. Dominic Isopo, St. Luke's Catholic Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. Blanchfield then called upon William Roth 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, Frank J. Maurizio,
Gary R. McCarthy, Denise K. Brucker, Barbara
Blanchard and Mark W. Blanchfield

Absent - Councilmember Margaret C. King

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, City Clerk Carolyn
Friello and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden, Esq.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Blanchfield asked if there were no objections, he would like to take Agenda Item #10 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2007-123

Adopted Unanimously

Ms. Blanchard and Mr. McCarthy invited the City of Schenectady School Crossing Guards to come inside the rail to accept a resolution honoring them for their dedication and committed service to the citizens of this city. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of June 11, 2007 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Mr. Maurizio. Hearing no objections, Mr. Blanchfield declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official –

From the Mayor, a list of appointments.

From the Department of Engineering, one (1) letter accepting the bid of and awarding the contract to WeCare Transportation, L.L.C. of Jordan, New York for “Hauling Debris and Grit” in the amount of \$200,512.00.

General (Public Announcement):

The General Membership meeting of the Woodlawn Neighborhood Association will be held on July 11, 2007 at 7:00 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall of the Woodlawn Reformed Church, 1858 State Street. Mayor Stratton will be the guest speaker.

PETITIONS: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Maurizio stated that the City Development & Planning Committee met. He explained Agenda Item #1. We also discussed various ways to deal with Graffiti.

Mr. Allen stated that the Health & Recreation Committee met. The pools are now open for the Summer and the Central Park Pool should re-open tomorrow. The Central Park Pool will be open 7 days a week from 12:00 Noon to 7:00 P.M. The Front Street pool will be open 7 days a week from 12:00 Noon to 6:30 P.M. and charges \$1.25 for a child and \$3.00 for adults. All other pools are free. The Quackenbush Pool is open from 12:00 Noon to 7:00 P.M. and Saturday from 12:00 Noon to 5:00 P.M. They will be operated and supervised by the Boy’s and Girl’s Club of Schenectady. In addition to swimming, they offer several activities for the kids.

Ms. Blanchard stated that the Government Operations Committee met and we discussed reducing the use of paper. In the future, most of our committee will come via e-mail. Also, City Hall will begin recycling paper again. Thanks to Commissioner Carl Olsen for his help.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS):

Mr. Blanchfield 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:

Mary McClaine spoke in regard to Agenda Item #4 – how much is that? On Agenda Item #9 – how much? Also on Agenda Item #11, where are they located?

Angela Leverett, 2430 Albany Street, said – I am a Crossing Guard and I appreciate the resolution that you gave us tonight. Also, my sign is very worn and I need a new one.

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

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

Consent Agenda –

Resolution No. 2007-124	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-125	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-126	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-127	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-128	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-129	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-130	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-131	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-132	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-CS22	Adopted Unanimously

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Mr. Blanchfield 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, Schenectady resident, stated that the new theater is accessible and the Central Park ramp is fixed. Also, the Disability Access Festival is on Friday from 3:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

M. William Roth, 1326 State Street, from the Disabled/Elderly, stated that we, the disabled are not working. We can do everything you can but slower. We need help supporting ourselves.

Rich Rheingold, 107 Elmer Ave., stated that 2 years ago, we gave a wish list of things to be done. Two years has passed and nothing has been done. One thing is that we want police protection. Something has to be done on Eastern Ave. We are scared.

Al Jurczynski, 906 Londonderry Court, stated that on the charts that the Mayor has brought out – for the public – it would be in the Mayor's best interest to have an open, public discussion with me about the finances of the city. In direct correlation to 9/11, there's a property trend after 9/11, the credit rate dropped. Prior to that, things were stable. When I left office, the stock market was about \$7,000.00; today, it's \$13,300.00. It's higher than pre-9/11. How does 9/11 affect Schenectady? We contribute to the NYS Pension fund. After 9/11, we got a bill of \$1/2 Million Dollars; the following year –it was \$2/3 Million Dollars; the last year, it was \$5 Million Dollars; \$8 Million Dollars contributions to the pension fund – that pushed us over the edge. I would like the Mayor to show the effect of our recent Guyanese neighborhood who relocated to Schenectady and the impact they had. It reversed a 10-year spiral. These are things that I would like to have a public discussion on.

Katherine Delain, 214 Liberty Street, spoke in regard to the murder on DeGraff Street and the home invasion on Catherine Street. I worked to save that house and to increase security in all of Vale, including installing the only security camera in Vale Park. To date, the Vale neighborhood has seen a multi-million dollar renovation of some homes, but, plans for the neighborhood to be ringed by security cameras appear delayed, and it now seems that the crime rate in Vale has taken major steps forward, all in one weekend. The organizations that I belong to, like the Vale Park Task Force, try to plan family, friendly events to

promote Vale. The Board of Vale Cemetery refuses to lock the gates at night or to admit crime is still taking place there; and the gates between the cemetery and side streets have long been broken, inviting escapes like that of last Friday. I have asked Mr. Olson to repair them, to no avail. I am not here to criticize the police, nor any organization in Vale and I believe Commissioner Bennett will eventually make great strides with the Police Department, but, I am asking the help of the Commissioner and Chief Geraci – that request is that the police, Friends of Vale, Vale Cemetery and any other organization concerned with growing crime in the Vale neighborhood form a coalition, and meet together and meet together to formulate tactics to reduce crime in the Vale. To that end, I have sent letters to those I believe are concerned. As we meet together, we must revitalize the Neighborhood Watch, establish an anonymous tip line for crime reporting, demand rapid installation of security cameras and develop crime busting strategies for Vale, including increased police foot patrols. I am sorry to say “Weed and Seed” has not fulfilled its function and that all the renovations and plans could be for nothing, unless we reduce the crime in Vale. This city’s administration can no longer focus just on downtown. The Vale is the entry to downtown and was once a proud neighborhood of workers and immigrants who made Schenectady great. There are houses of historic significance there, as well as Vale Cemetery and park, already on State and national registers. We cannot surrender the Vale to the drug dealers, the thieves, the terrorists and the murderers. We must reclaim Vale and make it safe for all. So, I ask the police and anyone else concerned to join with me and Friends of Vale to fight back. You are welcome to contact me to begin taking back the Vale/Katherine Delain, Friends of Vale, Inc.

Last week, a young man was murdered on DeGraff Street and last night, a home-invasion took place on Catherine Street. Once again, crime seems out-of-control in our most vulnerable areas of Schenectady. For years, I have worked with Vale Cemetery and the Vale Park Task Force to make the Vale a safe and attractive place to live in and visit. Perception of high crime levels in the Vale deter some people from enjoying this historic, attractive neighborhood. Many of us have led tours, developed family, friendly events, and promoted the Vale to try to dispel the negative image some hold. I propose to you that Vale Cemetery, the Vale Park Task Force and Vale Neighborhood Organization join with Friends of Vale, Inc. to establish a Vale Neighborhood Safety Task Force. Sadly, all the tours, promotions and events cannot keep Vale safe, and with current issues within the Police Department keeping a less than full compliment of officers on the streets, concerned citizens must participate in keeping Vale safe. Those of us who care about Vale must find ways to work with Police and the Sheriff’s Department to increase security and battle crime. Let us work together to, first, arrange a gathering of all concerned with Vale and its safety. From this first

meeting, it is hoped that we can begin to coordinate safety measures meant to keep the Vale safe and once again, a nice place to live and work. I offer my assistance in coordinating these efforts, so please contact me.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., stated that last July, I spoke about problems on Hegeman Street and the parking and again in November, 2006 and again in March, 2007 – a total of 3 times. The problem is at the end of Hegeman Street near Broadway. I visited it in December with Councilmember McCarthy and discussed the problems. The problem with the Immaculate Conception was corrected. On Hegeman Street, the city made Broadway to Guilderland Ave. opposite side parking. The neighbors on the street have no place to park. The Mayor told the neighbors that the signs were placed there due to several calls including Vince Riggi. He said that Mr. Riggi reported to the Council and me that the majority of the residents wanted these signs. The documentation is here – the Clerk’s notes are clear. Not once did I say that the residents wanted “No Parking Signs” on Hegeman Street. These people need to know that this wasn’t my call. This was wrong and I deserve an apology. Also, congratulations to the Mayor for turning down the Conservative nomination. That’s a special interest group. I applaud him for taking that stand. We are headed in the right direction concerning the Police Department (The Past documentation and CD is on file in the City Clerk’s Office).

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, said – I read the PBA contract 3 months ago and knew the facts and figures contained in the Gazette article. Had I reported on this, I would have been accused of negativism and grandstanding. So to the Gazette, thank you. The Council is responsible for its contents. In regard to the televised committee meetings, the speaker was not frustrated. She was making a case for televised committee meetings. I have already given 4 reasons for that. The Council President gave another one during the Miscellaneous portion of the last meeting and the irregular format. You opened the door counselor. I didn’t use the word “inconvenience” – you did. Is it an inconvenience to go to a 5:30 P.M. meeting without pay? You bet; Is it an inconvenience to go out in inclement weather? – You bet; Is it an inconvenience to leave the room and go back because the Council needs a closed session? I think so. You can fix this, Mr. President. If the Council really doesn’t want to inconvenience its constituency – then bring back the issue and vote “yes”. Anything short of a “yes” vote means that the Council wants to keep the populous ignorant.

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

Ms. Blanchard said – I bought a low flow shower head which helps restrict the flow of hot water. By restricting hot water, it lowers emissions and lessens your bill. I encourage everyone to purchase one.

Mr. Maurizio stated that we feel strongly that we need to lead by example in terms of carbon issues. I enrolled in National Grids Renewal Energy Program called “Green Up”. You have 3 options – 100%, 75% or 25% renewable energy. I encourage everyone to go to the web – www.nationalgridus.com/greenup. There are a number of green power options out there. The next meeting of the Energy Advisory Group will be on July 5th at 7:00 P.M. in Room 22. Finally, USA Today had a story called – “Mayors Make Environmental Moves”. Mayor Stratton was among the first in the nation to take this stand. We are committed to keep an eye on technological advances. Out of 134 cities responding to the survey, 87% use energy efficient lighting, 73% use alternate fuel or hybrid vehicles, 67% have had an official responsible for climate protection, 52% offer incentives for public transit and 40% have laws encouraging green buildings. I believe that this is an important issue.

Mr. McCarthy stated that in the first month of operation, the movie theater had a little over 25,000 people. It’s a great success story. To reduce your carbon footprint, stay in Schenectady. Also last year, the State Legislature mailed out a rebate check around Election time to reduce property taxes. This year, those enrolled in Enhanced STAR doesn’t have to do anything. Anybody else who signed up for STAR has to go through an application process to receive that rebate. Can the staff prepare a summary of that process so it can be done at a committee meeting so people don’t lose this opportunity? Also, Schenectady isn’t that large that people don’t know what’s happening – disaster was coming. Thank goodness that Brian Stratton rolled up his sleeve and turned things around. The people know what happened and we all should be proud for our participation in turning things around and making them better. Look at the bottom line – the reality and the community is a better place because of the people you have in place today.

The Mayor stated that the repairs on the Central Park Pool should be complete tomorrow. In the meantime, the Front Street Pool will be free of charge as long as Central Park is closed. Mayor Jurczynski – nothing in any reports that I have read since I have been Mayor has mentioned that 9/11 caused the problems. In fact, they mentioned that it was very poor fiscal management. Even if 9/11 caused these problems, many of the things that we have done could have been done years ago. Much of the State Aide we achieved was done under a Republican government. Our credit rating was the lowest in the State and we brought it back to investment grade after it fell 7 consecutive times; 9/11 did not cause those problems. It was doing the right thing – a cooperative effort between the Council, the administration and the County. This Council deserves every ounce of credit for making it all happen. Finally Vince, I'm sorry that I led the wrong person to call you. If we were wrong, we will try again. It's a work in progress.

Mr. Blanchfield stated that Steve Rocco passed away last week. He was a great Schenectadian and a pleasure to deal with. I express my condolences to his family.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Blanchfield declared the meeting adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO
CITY CLERK**