

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – JULY 9, 2007**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Mark W. Blanchfield at 6:15 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. Blanchfield called upon Rev. Franklin Wright, affiliated with Faith United Methodist Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. Blanchfield then called upon the young men and women of Youth Build of Schenectady to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy 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,
Margaret C. King, Gary R. McCarthy, Denise K. Brucker,
Barbara Blanchard and Mark W. Blanchfield

Absent - None.

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy City Clerk Eileen M.
Versaci 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 Items #4, #6 and #3 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2007-133 Adopted Unanimously

Ms. Blanchard invited Mr. Don Rittner to come inside the rail to accept a resolution congratulating him on the publication of his new book – “Schenectady Then and Now”. Mr. Rittner thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2007-134 Adopted Unanimously

Mr. McCarthy invited Assistant Fire Chief Michael Della Rocco, Lisa Wilkinson and James Reese, two employees of Verizon, to come inside the rail to accept a resolution thanking them for their quick actions in rescuing a victim from a burning house. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2007-135 Adopted Unanimously

Mr. McCarthy invited Bart Chabot and members of his support staff to come inside the rail to accept a resolution congratulating the achievements of the youth participants in the Trout Unlimited Program held at Central Park. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Blanchfield called upon Councilmember Brucker and the Mayor to present the “Certificates of Appreciation” to Youth Build of Schenectady. Mrs. Brucker and the Mayor congratulated the young men and women of the Youth Build.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. On a Local Law regarding the proposed amendments to Article II, Chapter 192 of the City Code of the City of Schenectady-Graffiti.

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (6:45 P.M.). The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Charles Thorne, 1831 Eastern Parkway, stated that one month ago, Nell Burrows from the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce asked us to consider initiating a city-wide mural project. The board felt the idea had merit and we are forming a committee to determine what form that it will take and what resources are available and necessary. We believe that a mural project will provide an opportunity for Schenectady artists, youths and residents. In 1984, the City of Philadelphia initiated the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. The community mural project’s main purpose was to reduce or eliminate city-wide graffiti. By reaching out to the graffiti artists and engaging youths, graffiti was dramatically reduced in Philadelphia through the 1990’s. The project, which began with no funding, has completed over 2000 murals and now operates with the annual budget of over \$4,000,000.00, of which only 25% is funded by the city. Other cities have had similar success with mural programs eliminating or reducing graffiti. But beyond reducing graffiti, community mural programs have the added benefit of instilling a sense of neighborhood pride and ownership. Neighbors come together for a common cause; the murals become symbols of community pride and accomplishment. Young people gain a sense of accomplishment and ownership through their participation. Neglected vacant lots have become community gardens or playgrounds after the completion of a mural. The 440 Board encourages the city to consider supporting a community mural program as part of the solution to Schenectady’s graffiti problem.

Gerald Plante, 227 Front Street, said – I support the anti-graffiti legislation. I first approached Barbara Blanchard a couple of years ago with a proposal to combat the ever-growing problem of graffiti vandalism. That proposal leads to a search of the national organization **Graffitihurts.org** which helps to combat the graffiti vandalism that was known several years ago in the Los Angeles,

California area as a problem caused by the bloods and crisp gangs and their cohorts. **Graffitihurts.org** has been instrumental in getting many areas affected, repainted and rehabbed to counter the blight that seems to follow or allow for graffiti to show up in the first place. The neighborhood in which I live has been plagued w/graffiti for several years, not only on commercial buildings but, on private property as well. Just within the last two months, graffiti vandals overnight sprayed “tagging” symbols on 4 buildings along Front Street: one commercial and three private. All the graffiti has been painted over with the exception of the Laundromat on Front Street. To prove that graffiti is not stopping in my neighborhood districts, I have come up with 2 recent **walls of shame**: The first **wall of shame** is: Erie Blvd. Bowl on the John Street side: show pix. The second **wall of shame** is the newly renovated parking lot behind Cornell’s Restaurant: show pix.

What to do: Other than passing comprehensive legislation to combat the graffiti vandalism, an anti-graffiti van and 2 workers would fit in perfectly. The City of Albany now has such a system in place. Also, why not meet with the graffiti vandals, whoever they may be, and ask what it is that they would like to see from the city concerning this vandalism and other social ills that plague our modern day society. Perhaps they would instead spray paint positive messages instead of derogatory ones. Or, if gang related, perhaps, they would be so inclined to take up the cause of protecting the worst neighborhoods in the city. See, they do have a choice and so do we. Instead of the war of words and symbols defacing buildings, walls and, monuments dialogue is key to getting to the root cause of such anti-social behavior. Of course, murals are a good idea, but, as they do in Boston, Massachusetts, a blank wall on a building is fast painted over with impressions of another classical style building or a wall of gardens and so forth. The time to turn the tide of destruction into reconstruction is in our hands. Let’s do something now before the problem gets any worse. Thank you.

Frederic Lee, 706 Stanley Street, encouraged the City Council to adopt this legislation to help put an end to Graffiti.

Rev. Phil Grisby, SICM, appreciates the opportunity to speak on this issue; this is really an important “quality of life” issue. The new location of the Food Pantry has been hit with Graffiti and, unfortunately, our trucks have also been tagged. I trust that this ordinance will help stop this.

Elaine Willi, Bradley Street, said – I totally agree with this – whatever measures that have to be taken to deter this, please do it. I would like to bring up that there was some graffiti on my church and my Pastor had to pay \$1,000.00 to get it cleaned, and actually, they knew who it was by the sign; the gang members have a

sign. Do I have any suggestions, I certainly do. The police know their gang member's signs and they should get them to clean up whatever they do – that would get them off the streets, too.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #1 closed at 7:15 P.M.

2. Regarding the Golf Course Tee Sponsorship Proposal.

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #2 to come forward (7:16 P.M.). The following speaker rose to be heard and her remarks are summarized:

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, said – I used to be a season ticket holder of the Saratoga Flat Track; it was like going to the park every day. I even told friends that the Saratoga Race Course was so classy that nothing could spoil it, but, a contract to one of the plastic card companies changed all that on Travers Day, the tote board was plastered with the Companies Logo. Throughout the grandstand hanging from the ceiling were huge, gaudy advertising signs – the place looked like a depressed Coney Island Midway. Is this what this Council wants for the Municipal Golf Course? Don't let corporate America spoil our Golf Course with this foolish idea.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #2 closed at 7:30 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Blanchard moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of June 25, 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 Engineering Department, a letter accepting the bid of and awarding the contract to Carver Construction for the "2007 Paving Contract" in the amount of \$838,047.00.

General –

The Civilian Police Review Board which was scheduled for this week, July 11, 2007 at 6:00 P.M. has been cancelled.

PETITIONS: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Maurizio stated that the City Development & Planning Committee met. I want to thank the folks that came out for the Public Hearing on the Graffiti – that resolution will be back on the CD&P Committee Agenda next Monday night for discussion and voted on at the next City Council Meeting on July 23rd. I would also like to mention that from the CD& P Committee is Agenda Item #2 which calls for another Public Hearing on July 23rd for a moratorium from the Development Department on backyard paving.

Ms. Blanchard stated that at the last Government Operations Committee, it was brought up about the Landlord's responsibility and we have found out that it is very difficult to locate some of the owners of property who live out of the area and we are trying to find a way to make it mandatory for them to register or file an agent or contact phone number or address for non-owner occupied property.

Mr. Allen stated that on June 29th, there was a Handicapped Festival at Central Park and the big motivator for this was Jason Planck; a lot of different things happened at the park. There were many demonstrations and different vehicles for the handicapped; it was quite impressive. Jason Planck did an outstanding job; he is away now in California for further studies.

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 speaker rose to be heard and her remarks are summarized:

Elaine Willi, Bradley Street, spoke in regard to the resolution for the moratorium on rear and side yard paving – I think that front yards should be included because, believe it or not, some people try to do their front yards with blacktop and I think that is just as important.

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. 2007-136	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-137	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-138	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-CS23	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-CS24	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:

Vince Riggi, Campbell Ave., commended the Mayor for taking the initiative to lobbying the Governor to give this administration disciplinary authority over the Police Department. We fought for years to have the police contract give the administration rights. The Police Department is seeming to be moving in the

right direction and hopefully, this will continue. I believe the City Council should get on broad with this and forget special interest groups. I applaud anyone that will forget politics and do what's right for the people.

Al Jurczynski, 906 Londonderry Court, said – I would like to make a little announcement – this weekend, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, is holding its annual Fiesta. I will be working there 2 of the nights and I hope to see all of you there. A little over a year ago, I got a call from a reporter with the LA Times named Ellen Barry. A few years earlier, as a reporter for the Boston Globe, she had called me and told me that she was interested in doing a story on the Guyanese. She stated that the Guyanese who are coming to Schenectady has set a national roll model for how the immigrants can help a community. I invited her to come up to Schenectady to meet some of the Guyanese families; she did and I introduced her to several families and it is my understanding that she took several more trips up here. Shortly after the Mayor announced that, he was going to restart the Bus Tours. I was pleased to see that because I think that is very productive for the city. There was one Bus Tour. I believe it was last August and getting back to Ellen Barry – she was on that Bus Tour. Several weeks later, I talked to her and she warned me that she wasn't going to be doing the story about the Guyanese in Schenectady because she didn't know how to wrap it up. She felt that the story wasn't going any place and she shared with me that the Mayor planned on doing monthly bus tours. I have been here since that time and I was wondering if there are going to be any??

Barbara Katz, Schenectady resident, said – I would like to report on the garbage on State Street and on Liberty Street. I find bags of garbage on State Street next to the main bus stop. Something should be done about these people.

Harry Brand, 2108 Van Rensselaer Drive, stated that the Mayor is running again this November; he is so proud of our city that he drives a Jeep and it has no logo on it. He is getting a \$30,000.00 raise. Whoever is Mayor should pay for his own car – the same with the City Council; they are going almost double their salary. You want salary increases – now produce.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, stated that last month, I would not address the words that are obvious during the committee meetings until the campaign, but after the article that appeared in the Gazette on Thursday, June 28, I feel compelled to address a timely issue on that the Gazette reported that the Director of the Downtown Improvement District had been fired, that is unfortunate, for some reason his peer saw fit to let him go.

On the other hand, about two months ago, the Director recommended a woman for a seat on the DSIC and the Council approved that recommendation and voted to appoint her to that Board. I would have objected to the appointment at the time, but, I did not know that the vote was emanate. The appointment was made at a Caucus meeting, I do not attend Caucuses; I would have objected to this woman because she lives in Albany.

Tanyetta Jackson, 923 Stanley Street, thanked the City Council and the Mayor for helping with issues that I had in my community. The last time that I was here, I lived in Hamilton Hill and there was a drug house next to me and I had a lot of comments with the Mayor and he helped me. Also, I think you folks don't get enough credit for the positive things that you do in the city. I am proud to live here and proud of this administration and the City Council. You have done a fantastic job and I hope you continue your service here in the city.

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

Ms. Blanchard said – I have several things that I would like to remind people of: Tomorrow morning, July 10th is the Farmer's Market at St. Luke's Parking Lot – there is lots of produce already, go there and buy local. This Thursday, July 12th, the Farmer's Market will be out in front of City Hall – this is a larger market with different things for sale, such as wine, which I can attest to, is very good. The second thing that I want to bring up is the Ingersol Home on Balltown Road which is very endangered. There is a benefit to help save this property and it is on July 21st at the Moon River Café which is located at 115 South Ferry Street. It starts at 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Lastly, this is a compact florescent bulb and it uses a lot less energy than a regular bulb. The bulb that provides 60 watts of light only uses 15 watts of energy; this bulb lasts 5 to 7 years. If you only put only one of these 60 watt florescent bulbs in your house over the life time of that bulb, you would save \$44.15 on your energy bill and you would prevent 248 lbs of CO 2 admissions. I think that is impressive; they are all over. You can buy them in a hardware store or at discount stores.

Ms. King said – I would like to clear up one question regarding the DSIC; some of our members spent a lot of time in our downtown district but do not live in Schenectady; they do have a lot to offer. I would also like to remind everyone

that July 20th is our Summer Nights Program and if you remember, last year, it was very successful. There will be many attractions this year and I am sure that there is something for everyone.

Mr. McCarthy stated that so many people have called which I have not been able to keep up with them; they want to ask Al why he has been to more meetings now than when he was Mayor that he never attended. He raised taxes higher than any other Mayor in the history of the city; we all know that.

Mr. Allen said – There is something that annoys me to no end; that is, to see people walking in the streets – sometimes, they walk in the streets at night and they have dark clothes on. Don't they know that they are risking their life walking in the street with dark clothes on? We have perfectly good sidewalks. I see mothers pushing baby carriages down the middle of the street. These people should be picked up for Jay walking; it is a crime to walk down the middle of the street. I know in the winter time - when some people do not shovel their sidewalks, you have to walk in the street, but this time of year, there is not any excuse for it. A few years back, I made this same comment, I saw 3 people walking in the street and a dog was walking on the sidewalk, at least the dog did know better. Another thing that concerns me is the fireworks; I like fireworks, but, they seem to be all over the place. People were shutting down streets and having their own fireworks display. I don't know where these people get them from, but, I always thought that it was not legal in the State of New York to have private fireworks and if it is not legal, the police should put an end to it. I have other concerns. There is still a lot of burned out buildings around; the one on Wiley Street is causing a lot of trouble for the neighbors. The owner who actually lives in the city and he has his address as 80 Wiley Street and you know that he is not living there. These are the things that I would like to check on – walking in the street, fireworks and burned out buildings. Thank you, Mr. President.

The Mayor said – I want to thank Mrs. Jackson and her husband for coming down tonight on the Police Response. I want to thank Mr. Riggi for his comments which I heard loud and clear which I will have put on our Web Site to call the Governor to veto the Police Arbitration Bill. It is vitally important in reorganizing the Police Department. Also, I want to commend Councilwoman Blanchard on her Graffiti Bill and I want the public to let us know if they have graffiti on their garage or anywhere else on their property and to clear it up and the best way to tell these people that we are not going to take it and continue to take pride in our city. As far as the bus tours to Queens,

I did have one bus tour – I think that it was in April of 2005, but when I came in to office, this city was in such financial disarray – that I had no business asking people to come here. Job #1 was, as you can see by these charts that Mr. McCarthy had me put up and it was to restore financial stability and to get these outrageous tax hikes down. We are doing the hard work and I welcome the Guyanese families and anyone else.

Mr. Blanchfield said – I do want to comment on Mr. Allen’s remarks regarding the fireworks. I think that it is very important that we enforce the laws regarding fireworks; we have a lot of children in this city and every year, you hear about some child being harmed by the misuse of fireworks. They are illegal in this State and we should be enforcing the law.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Blanchfield declared the meeting adjourned at 7:55 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

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