

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL - SEPTEMBER 24, 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. Franklin Wright, affiliated with Faith United Methodist Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. Blanchfield then called upon Fire Chief Robert Farstad 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,  
Margaret C. King, Gary R. McCarthy, Barbara Blanchard  
and Mark W. Blanchfield

Absent - Councilmember Denise K. Brucker

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 Items #7, #8 and #9 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2007-182 Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Maurizio invited Carlo Carabalous to come inside the rail to accept a resolution declaring September 15 through October 15, 2007 as “Hispanic American Heritage Month” in the City of Schenectady. Mr. Carabalous thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2007-183 Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Allen invited Fire Chief Robert Farstad and Police Commissioner Wayne Bennett to come inside the rail to accept a resolution designating the month of September, 2007 to be “National Preparedness Month” in the City of Schenectady. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

Resolution No. 2007-184 Adopted Unanimously

Ms. King invited the Sheehan family to come inside the rail to accept a resolution honoring “The Costumer” on their 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. They thanked the City Council for the resolution.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. On Local Law Intro. #7-2007 amending Chapter 168-1-19 of the City Code to regulate the rental property industry and repealing Chapter 167-56 through 167-70 of the City Code.

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:30 P.M.). The following speaker rose to be heard and her remarks are summarized:

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady resident, spoke in regard to tenant's rights. There's nothing here stating that the owner has to notify the tenants of the managing agent and how to reach him. I haven't had a contact name since 2000. We are owed something.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #1 closed at 7:32 P.M.

2. On a Resolution regarding changes to the Schenectady/Glenville Empire Zone Boundaries to add Rotterdam tax parcel 48.00-2-8.2

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #2 to come forward (7:33 P.M.). Seeing no speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #2 closed at 7:34 P.M.

3. On a Resolution to "Restore the New York Community Initiative" Grant Program (RestoreNY).

Mr. Blanchfield invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #3 to come forward (7:35 P.M.). The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Chuck Steiner, President of the Chamber of Schenectady County, 306 State Street, stated that on behalf of the Chamber, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight and voice the Chamber's endorsement and support of the City of Schenectady's Restore New York application. The Restore New York program design is to help cities restore and renovate buildings that by doing so, the creation of jobs and increases the tax base in the central city. The City of Schenectady's application meets the New York Restore design, as well as builds upon the momentum of the revitalization of downtown Schenectady. The City's proposal calls for using the State funds to

renovate the 170,000 square foot Center City Building, putting the building for the first time on the tax rolls and the creation of office space for the opportunity for the creation of new jobs in the City of Schenectady. The Chamber applauds the focus of increasing the tax base and the creation of new jobs. This type of development is exactly what the recipe for downtown development requires to assure stability and growth. The second building in the City's Restore New York application is the former Gazette Press Building and now a part of the Edison Exploratorium. The building has a wonderful and beautiful façade that offers great opportunity to be restored and contribute greatly to the ambience and appreciation of period architecture that the core of downtown Schenectady offers and celebrates. The resurgence of downtown Schenectady has been significant and has occurred because of the collaboration and partnership of the City, County and Metroplex working together with the Chamber and the private sector. The City of Schenectady's Restore New York application is yet another opportunity for the city and in this case the State of New York to partner for the benefit of increasing the tax base and the creation of new jobs. On behalf of the Chamber of Schenectady County, we are in support and endorse the City of Schenectady's Restore New York application.

Colleen Merays, Executive Director of the DSIC, 184 Jay Street, thanked the City Council in advance for this application to restore 2 key buildings essential to the rebirth of Downtown. Without grants like this, these buildings would continue to have a blighting effect on our business district. The availability of these funds and this application is fantastic for all of us.

Ray Gillen, Commissioner of County Economic Development & Planning, 830 Karenwald Lane, said – So much progress has been made downtown since 2004, but 2 challenges remain. With Restore Funding, Center City will be back on the tax rolls for the first time since 1979; 35 properties have been added to the tax rolls since 2004, but, Center City, with 170,000 square feet is critical. The Gazette Press Building has a beautiful façade, but the funding is needed to restore its appeal.

Thurston Sack, President of Edison Exploratorium, 1924 Townsend Road, said – 132 Broadway's history dates back to 1896. The Edison Exploratorium has invested 10's of thousands to preserve the interior of this building as a repository of Schenectady's historic artifacts, to be used as an educational tool. The Restore grant will bring the façade of the Gazette Press Building back to its earlier splendor.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared Public Hearing #3 closed at 7:45 P.M.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. McCarthy moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of September 10, 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:** None.

**PETITIONS:** None.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mr. Maurizio thanked everyone who spoke at the Public Hearing. Two of the Public Hearings came out of the City Development & Planning Committee. We will revisit Resolution No. 2 at next week's Committee cycle. In regard to the Resolution regarding RESTORE, normally, we don't take action on an issue of a Public Hearing on the same night. However, there is a tight turnaround on this; there is an application deadline or we lose \$4,000,000.00 to \$5,000,000.00. These projects are vital to downtown. We are going to waive our own rules and happily support this legislation. Also, Mr. Maurizio explained Agenda Item #1, Graffiti. We believe that we put together legislation that will limit the Graffiti problem and still protect the financial interest of the stores. We all worked very hard on this, especially, Ms. Blanchard.

Ms. Blanchard spoke in regard to taping of the Committee Meetings, even though this was defeated by the Council; a local resident, Pat Zollinger, has taken it upon herself to tape these meetings and to provide the tape to Channel 16. Then, they are broadcast on Tuesday at 7:00 P.M. and Friday at 2:30 P.M. Any resident can submit a tape to Channel 16. I would like to thank her for her time and investment of a camera.

**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. Seeing no speakers, Mr. Blanchfield declared the Privilege of the Floor on the Legislative Agenda closed.

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

**Consent Agenda –**

Local Law Intro. #8-2007	Introduced Only
Resolution No. 2007-185	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-186	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-187	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-188	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2007-189	Adopted Unanimously

**Original Consideration –**

Resolution No. 2007-190	<b>(Roll Call Vote) – 6:0</b> Voting Aye – Allen, Maurizio, King, McCarthy, Blanchard, Blanchfield Voting No – None Absent – Brucker
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**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:

Harry Brand, 2108 Van Rensselaer Drive, spoke in regard to the campaign funds; instead of covering all the lawns with all this advertising, how about feeding the poor. I read that the Mayor had funds over \$125,000.00. That's a lot of money. It would feed a lot of people. What a waste of money. All over the country, we are throwing money away. Also, the use of city vehicles – it's time that our Finance Department people – our advisors, the Council and the Mayor to sit down and find a better use of our city vehicles. They shouldn't leave the city unless it's for work. The employees shouldn't take vehicles home. You got to start looking out for us. You got to start listening to us.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., said – Here’s a safety tip – everyone who owns a car, generally, has a little burglar alarm with them. On your key pad, there’s a panic button. Instead of leaving the keys on the table, put them on your night stand. If someone tries to break in – push that the horn will blow until you shut it off or your battery runs dead. Also, when walking to the parking lot, have your hand on that button; if something happens, press the button. This is a clever tip. Also, thanks to the Mayor who met with me about the issues on Hegeman Street. The Director of Signal Control told me that they would be acting on this soon, but, I haven’t heard anything. Also, the sign that was in the wrong place hasn’t moved either. Also, thanks to the Sheriff’s Patrol – they have been canvassing Campbell Ave. well. Up to Thursday, they wrote 40 tickets – again, that’s where the Sheriff’s Department can work, in concert, with our police to handle low priority calls.

Al Jurczynski, 906 Londonderry Court, stated that when the PNA was torn down, a small piece of property was set aside for a flag pole. The flag there is in dire need of replacement. Post #357 will donate a flag if the Fire Department will remove and replace it.

Katherine Delain, 214 Liberty Street, stated that there has been so much focus on downtown; the neighborhoods have been neglected. Schenectady is far more than downtown. Base your progress reports on what you have done for the neighborhoods, not the downtown.

Julia Holcomb, 1773 Avenue B, stated that Goosehill is having their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Garage Sale – Steinmetz Park and various Goosehill residents. It will be on October 6<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and October 7<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Proceeds will buy radios for the Schenectady Neighborhood Watch and also the Goosehill Project.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, said – I have encouraged the citizens to come to the City Council meeting to sing the praises of representatives, if they so desire. I have said that on more than one occasion and I urged it to be the night of the garbage fee rally. Everyone appreciates a compliment. However, if anyone is so inclined, their fellow citizens have no place in the equation. A woman spoke in praise of the City Council at the last meeting. I am sure she had good intentions, unfortunately, she got the message. By the time she was done, she told the citizens to leave the city if they were not satisfied. To that, I say that it’s easier to do that than to stay and tough it out. It’s easy to bury your head in the sand and pretend that nothing is wrong.

It's easy to say – why go down, they will do what they want anyway. The Council has done past and present – 1) They have disenfranchised an entire city. Instead of our vote, they appointed a woman who was working on a Master's Program on our time, not hers; 2) The Parking Garage – it was a \$30,000,000.00 piece of real estate sold for \$5,000,000.00. The sale also includes 7 city lots – 6 of which are income producing for Metroplex; 3) The exodus of police from the city. They employed 160 officers who leave the city as soon as their 6 years of service is complete because the City Council approved a policy change in 1994. That policy compromised the safety of our neighborhoods; 4) The City Council approved the purchase of 2 pieces of property – the night that they voted, they didn't know how much that they would cost the taxpayer; 5) The Council appointed an Albanian to represent SDIC, a Schenectadian was never considered. Lastly this Summer, the Council voted against the homeless. The business community wanted to send them elsewhere. The New News is a tattoo parlor which is moving in on Jay Street. That will bring in the “pillars of society”. These are just a sampling of what last month's speaker validated. Anyone who accepts that representation is also foolish enough to accept an Ambassadorship to the Bermuda Triangle.

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

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

Ms. Blanchard asked if anyone has an old TV, computer monitor, fluorescent light bulbs, telephone, VCR or computer parts. There will be a collection date on September 29<sup>th</sup> between 7:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. If there is any in Schenectady, they can drop these items off. This is a great way to recycle. It can be dropped off at Scotia/Glenville Park and you need a coupon which is available at City Hall or you can call 377-9900. I hope people take advantage of this.

Ms. King stated that this Sunday is the Grand Opening of Proctor's Theater. They have a whole schedule of events planned. We encourage people to come down and realize what a jewel this is. Also, I want to thank Carl Olsen and his crew who have worked so hard in Riverside Park. It just looks beautiful. I hope people stroll through while at the Walk-About this Saturday.

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Mr. Allen said – Take advantage of these preparedness items. We need to be prepared for potential calamities. If we had planned better, we could have prevented some of the problems of 9/11. Let's keep prepared.

The Mayor stated that he wants to thank the Council for supporting the RESTORE Application which is an accelerated schedule, but receiving up to \$4,000,000.00 to rehabilitate the former Gazette Building and to restore and reconstruct the old Robinson Building. This is absolutely critical to downtown revitalization which in turn helps build a better tax base or more stable tax base, then support neighborhood redevelopment. Hopefully, the application will be successful. Also, I will look into the Fire Department replacing the flag. I look forward to presenting my 2008 budget to the Council on Thursday night at 5:00 P.M.

Mr. Blanchfield thanked everyone involved in last Friday's Arts Night. Also, thanks to the folks from the Costumer for coming down to celebrate their Anniversary.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Blanchfield declared the meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY CAROLYN FRIELLO  
CITY CLERK**

