

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – AUGUST 28, 2006**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Mark W. Blanchfield at 6:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. Blanchfield called upon Rev. Peter Scofield, Christ Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. Blanchfield then called upon Barbara Katz 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,
Barbara Strangfeld, Gary R. McCarthy, Margaret C. King,
Barbara Blanchard and Mark W. Blanchfield

Absent - None

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy City Clerk Eileen M.
Versaci and Corporation Counsel Alfred L. Goldberger

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Blanchfield asked if there were no objections, he would like to take Agenda Item #8 out of order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2006-187

Adopted Unanimously

Mr. McCarthy invited Fire Chief Robert Farstad to come inside the rail to accept a resolution designating the month of September 2006 as “National Save a Life Month” in the City of Schenectady. Chief Farstad thanked the City Council for the resolution.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. King moved that the minutes of the City Council Meeting of August 14, 2006 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 Purchasing Department, a letter accepting the bid of and awarding the contract to Matthews Specialty Vehicles, Inc. for an “Emergency Mobile Command Center” for the Police Department in the amount of \$240,214.00.

From the Purchasing Department, a letter rejecting all bids received for Bid No. 5090260 for fire hose and related fire equipment and directing the Finance Department to re-advertise for bids.

General – (Public Announcement)

The Vale Cemetery Association and Friends of Vale, Inc. invite you to join them for the first Civil War Commemoration Day to be held on Saturday, September 16, 2006 from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. We are celebrating the brave men and women who fought during the War Between the States and who now rest in Vale Cemetery. This event is free to the public.

PETITIONS:

With 233 signatures from the Woodlawn residents proposing a Skate Park for the Woodlawn Park to be part of the Comprehensive Plan (Referred to Steven Strichman, Zoning Officer).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Maurizio stated that the City Development & Planning Committee met and he spoke on 3 agenda items: Agenda Item #1 is being returned to committee; Agenda Item #2 is a resolution calling for a Public Hearing regarding an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for 2456 Albany Street and Agenda Item #4 – authorizing the Mayor to apply to the NYS Canal Corporation for a grant up to \$250,000.00 and it would be our match for \$500,000.00.

Mr. Allen stated that the Health & Recreation Committee met. I would just like to remind everyone that Summer is winding down and we have had an excellent Summer in regard to our recreational facilities and pools; we had a few minor incidents. Looking forward to next year.

Mrs. Strangfeld stated that the Finance Committee met. I would like to review Agenda Item #5 in which we are awarding Staples, Inc. a bid for office supplies. We have been streamlining our purchasing over the past couple of years; we are taking this a step further and we are going to buy in bulk to save the city a significant amount of money. Agenda Item #6 is a resolution for repairs that are actually budget items for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. On Agenda Item #9,

the City has received a Homeland Security Grant and we are going to be purchasing an “Emergency Mobile Command Center”. These are used in emergency to coordinate all communications. For all of you that may be thinking about taxpayer’s dollars, I want to add that these are Homeland Security Dollars and have already been allocated; if we were to say that we did not want to spend these dollars, they would be awarded to another state or city – so please understand that. Lastly, another resolution was on for rejecting all bids. We sent out bids for fire hose and we received one bid and it came in rather high so we are going to re-bid on this item.

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:

P.D. Voris, Schenectady resident, commented on the “Act for Education Month” and the breakdown of the Education System in the United States. Every community is going to decide what is worth saving and what to keep in the system.

Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education – I am speaking tonight because of the fact that you are taking up the Resolution on the “Act for Education Month”; you will be joining the Cities around the State in declaring “Act for Education Month” between the City Councils, the Mayors, and School Boards. All different bodies of government are taking similar actions. What this is about is campaigning for physical equity and it’s a landmark decision regarding the State’s requirement to educate your children and we are seeking a Statewide Resolution to this because the School Districts around the State, including in the City of Schenectady, deserve a more equitable share of funding. I appreciate the fact that the City Council consider this Resolution.

Maryann Ruscitto, 205 Front Street, spoke in regard to Agenda Item #4. I just want to say “Thank You” for voting for this grant; you know how hard that we, in the Stockade, have worked for this Riverfront improvement and I feel that this is a step forward. One thing that I am concerned about and the neighborhood is that the communications is not coming back to us and I ask that the city keep the neighborhood informed so that the neighborhood does not have to keep bugging the city.

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. 2006-188	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-189	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-190	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-191	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-192	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-193	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2006-CS32	Adopted Unanimously

Contract & Supply –

Resolution No. 2006-CS33	(Roll Call Vote) – 6:1 Voting Aye – Allen, Maurizio, Strangfeld, King, Blanchard, Blanchfield Voting No – McCarthy
--------------------------	---

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, said – I was looking over the proposals from the last meeting here and I saw that you negotiated a contract with the Carpenters Union; there is nothing in the papers to tell the people about these contracts and I don't know what contracts have been negotiated and how anyone can speak about them when we don't know anything about what is coming up or already settled with the Unions. I think that the City should make people aware of the final contracts.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Ave., said – I really didn't know that Harry was going to speak on contracts, but, I will go a little further and I have the same ideas. I know that the Police and Fire Contracts are still outstanding. I know that a grievance has been filed and it may have been settled in the last month, with the CSEA, and I would like to know if that is true what the impact is on the city. The grievance should be filed and if settled, it should be public record; I am sure that it is so let's make it real public. On another note, as far as the pools this year, I know that in Bellevue, it was a positive thing and I thank the administration and this Council for getting that pool open with the help from a State Grant and it was a very positive thing for the neighborhood.

Barbara Katz, Schenectady resident, stated that people will be missing a good time if they don't come down to the concerts on Jay Street on Thursday; it is a great time for all.

Carmella Ruscitto, 205 Front Street, said – I am here tonight to speak about 203 Front Street. I have been coming down here for 3 ½ years now about this particular house. This year, the odor has been really bad and we have not been able to keep our windows open because we live directly next door. I have complained to everyone of the Council. I have invited you down to look at the beautiful estate there. A year ago, the city went into the house and threw pellets to kill off the rats and animals living in that house – no one has been there since – can you imagine what it is like in that house. I would appreciate it if you would do something; I don't think that the house is going to make another winter.

Mary Ann Ruscitto, 205 Front Street, said – I just want you to know that this morning, I woke up choking. My asthma is bad. I had to close the windows because of the smell coming from the house next door. I called the NYS Health Department today – they asked me if I had talked to the Council and I said that I did. They asked me if I talked to the Zoning Board and I said that I did – did we have petitions and I said that I did. He said that it sounds like you have done everything. The NYS Health Department told me that if I did not get any results this time with the local Health Department to call them back because this is a health issue. This house needs to be demolished.

Rich Rheingold, 107 Elmer Ave., said – I seldom come down to these meetings. I had a robbery at my house a month ago; I called the police – it took about 45 minutes before they came – I realize that it was not a life threatening issue – it took that long before the response. I told them about the house behind me, the strange traffic coming and going. I got the license plate numbers and I gave them that information; they said that they were going to have extra patrol cars coming around and checking. This is more than a "quality of life" issue. They came

in my house when I was asleep – I am very upset. Granted, I had left the door unlocked and I should not have and I do lock my doors now. I would like to have some follow-up by the City Council and get some answers.

Elaine Willi, 1571 Bradley Street, stated that along Fehr Ave., “Roots ‘n’ Wisdom”, this breathtaking Community Garden Project has made a gorgeous entrance to Central Park – such a successful enterprise. Can you imagine, there was actually a time when this very area had been considered for development. If it were, this project would have never had this opportunity. This new fertile compliment to Central Park has more than earned the right to become a part of this park and I strongly urge that this designation be considered. Further down Fehr Ave., the Amy LeMaire Woods is a section where typical Pinebush Flora has survived. During a tour last Saturday, the vital importance of the more pleasant mechanical removal of competing (invasive) plants – non-pinebush species starting to approach) rather than the unpleasant fire approach to remove them had been discussed. This is being done in the main Pinebush now. Around the corner on Oregon Ave. area of Central Park is now being considered for development; the Maintenance Garage is definitely in neglected disarray. Due to the fact that this area is parkland and so many are opposed to losing it, at least 700 signatures, it would better see development that would benefit the park so it would then not be alienated. So much talk of skateboarding or a sprinkler pool system, this would be a perfect location for both. It’s centrally located, already paved and already parkland. It’s surrounded by teenagers, mainly the Family Child Health Center around the corner on Park Ave. I could easily get hundreds of signatures in favor, but, since 700 signatures are being ignored asking that the parkland being kept as parkland – would these be also? No matter how context, sensitive or strict development standards promised, it does not deter the fact that once parkland is alienated, what protection or assurance is there that the wooded areas of Golf Road and Oregon Ave. around the Golf Course would not be developed in the future? Another entrance to Central park on Bradley Street is being considered as a connecting street to Vale Park (another large beautiful park). In doing so, it needs to be reminded that the parkland connecting the parkland needs lots of green space, tree lined streets and wide-flowered buds which Bradley Street has and will not be sacrificed as a highway. Just remember to keep in mind that this is a connection of nature, not industry! We will be keeping up with this. You will be hearing more as this subject comes up.

Scott Riggi, 2039 Euclid Ave., stated that about 2 weeks ago, a neighbor with a shotgun rifle with a scope on it, fired the rifle and there were witnesses who saw this; a neighbor flagged down a patrol car, stopped them – within minutes, there was probably 4 patrol cars there. As far as I know, the neighbor still has the rifle with the scope on it – it was on the third floor of the apartment building.

I called the Mayor's Office the next day and they patched me over to the Chief's Office and his secretary called me back for more information and that was the last that I heard.

Katherine Delain, 214 Liberty Street, said – I am still waiting for more to happen at the intersection of Liberty Street and Erie Blvd.; it is very dangerous. There are only 2 signs up and the cars are just ignoring them. The city has got to act before someone loses their life there. The Civil War Commemoration Day is on Saturday, September 16th at 2:00 P.M.; you have been hearing the announcements. I want to tell you a little about some of the people we are honoring. There is a man named Jared Jackson who is buried in Vale Cemetery – this man was a black soldier and he was assigned to guard white prisoners at a camp near Elmira. When a prison break came, he was blamed for it and was sentenced to hard labor in North Carolina. There are many interesting histories about the many men and women in the War Between the States.

Pat Zollinger, 150 Clement Ave., stated that the City of Schenectady has been giving the public a bit of an education about the city with its Web site. I see on there - cityofscheneactady.com and you have different departments now, which you didn't have before. You are putting the minutes up on the Web site being they are a few months behind, but, the agenda is a little more current. You have links to the City Council which is really helpful for the public as far as knowing who is who. There is a lot more information that we could use; you have links to Proctor's – that is very nice, but it really doesn't give us enough information. We could use a page of Press Releases on it so we could look up what the Mayor has released to the Press. It would be helpful to have a link to the budget. The City of Albany and the City of Amsterdam both have links to their budget online.

Mary McClaine, Schenectady resident, said – I have been away for the past month; this was the first opportunity to address the City Council on this issue. On July 24th, the Councilmembers presented the Community Pride Awards – missing from the presentations was the Senior Citizen Award. When I inquired about the omission, I was told that the committee decided to change the Senior Citizen's Award to Career Change Award because the committee felt that the term – Senior Citizen sounds like the person has one foot in the grave. The category was changed, not before – not after, but during the Selection Process – this government advertised for a Senior Citizen Award. There was a Senior Citizen category and it was listed on the official nominating form. The term Senior Citizen is a distinction, not a death notice – the term Senior Citizen is politically correct.

Jason Planck, Schenectady resident, said – Back in the first part of February and in March, we tried to get some of the parks made handicap accessible. I had raised money for the ramp for the pool, showed where you could get money for striping for disability parking. There is money to get these basic needs done, you just have to know where it is. We have no Affirmative Action Officer; we need someone in this position. We need to be up to standards for the Federal Government because we could not take an audit from the Federal Government.

Sam Hotaling, Campbell Ave., stated that the Bellevue pool was great. I enjoyed it and I met a lot of people. I met friends that I went to school with and I had no idea that they lived in that area. One thing that I want to ask is that now that the pool is closed, is the drain system working right? A while back, the rain water just sat in the bottom of the pool and mosquitoes was very high – I was wondering if something else has been done to prevent this. Also, behind the pool is a basketball court with only one hoop, but, there is enough room for a second hoop. I was looking for a second hoop to be put in because there is room.

J.R. Hotaling, Campbell Ave., stated that it was fun to see the pool open this year; we got some exercise and I enjoyed it. I want to congratulate Barbara Strangfeld on her moving to Pennsylvania – I wish her lots of luck. I am sad that we are not picking her replacement. I think that is a right that the Citizens of Schenectady should have had.

P.D. Voorhis, Schenectady resident, said – I want to speak about the Disenfranchising of people. I think that we are not given enough information or that the information is delayed. I want to say that the replacement of the Council, many years ago, someone told me that I had a very bad record. I had worked all my life; there are a lot of people that come to these meetings every time they are held and they have very constructive opinions and suggestions. They have a very bad work record. I do not see where they are being received very well by any of you.

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

Ms. Blanchard said – I wanted to thank Elaine Willi – we have many lovely things in our parks and around them. In regard to the “Roots of Wisdom Garden” Program, they grow organic produce and it just so happens that tomorrow morning from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., they will be selling that produce at the St. Luke’s Farmer’s Market, that is in the parking lot next to McDonald’s on

State Street. In regard to Mrs. McClaine's concerns about the Community Pride Award – since I was given that project this year, I take full responsibility for changing the name of the Senior Citizen Award. The 3 people who received that award for “Second Career” were, in fact, nominated under Senior Citizens and we did change it, but, hey were all senior citizens.

Mr. McCarthy said – I would revisit the problem that the Ruscitto Sisters brought to our attention again with the property adjacent to theirs and one that I have been following with the Mayor on Van Vranken Ave. Mr. Allen has a series of houses that he is interested in and all of us get complaints from time to time. I was wondering if I could ask the Mayor, if it is possible, without creating too much burden on the staff to compile a list of problem properties – some of which are owned by the city and some which are still privately owned and put a rough estimate in terms of costs to address the problem because we all know that – what it is – is money and a huge dollar amount so we could have that and be able to review it and periodically shift our resources. The building on State Street became an emergency situation this year - when we don't have any flexibility, we end up having to pay a premium price - when we have to deal with some problems that bad landlords have left us to deal with.

Mr. Maurizio said – I want to thank Mr. McCarthy for making that request of the administration – 203 Front Street has been a problem and I understand that the neighbors want us to deal with this and I do point out that some of these properties are not in the city's control. Some of these properties are in litigation and are dealing with insurance companies and almost everyone of them have to be treated differently. I want to comment very briefly on a comment that Mr. Hotaling mentioned about filling the vacancy on the Council; in fact, there is no vacancy at this time. We do know that, unfortunately, Mrs. Strangfeld will be leaving us, but, she has been here doing her job helping us to put together the budget at the very time when we need her the most. We are following State Election Law to the “TEE” – the State Election Law determines when a vacancy must be filled by a vote and when it must be filled by appointment. When Mrs. Strangfeld resigns, I hope she hangs in there for another year and a half, but when she does resign, we will have to follow the State Election Law.

Mr. Allen spoke on a couple of issues. I am glad that Jason Planck reminds us all the time about our responsibility on the parks that have to be handicap accessible in regard to the bathrooms, parking spaces. I know that we had discussed this before, probably in the Spring and there was money available and I am concerned why this is not being done. We will have to address this in the near future and if the money is there – as Jason mentioned that winter is just around the corner and this is the time to get these things done. I am also

very concerned about Scott Riggi's comments about the shootings, hopefully, this neighbor wasn't shooting at anybody. The fact that he was shooting a gun in the city, we need to find out who this person is – why this problem is not being addressed and if it is being addressed and maybe this man needs some psychological help.

Mr. Strangfeld said – I would just like to thank my fellow Councilmembers for passing the Resolution – “Act for Education Month”; the kids are going back to school and this is an important time to consider that. As you know, that Courts have found that the formula for State Aid is apparently erectable as it applies to New York City and several people are pushing to have that formula Statewide and it is the Cities that will benefit from the additional State Aid. I would also like to thank Mrs. Delain, as well as Vale Cemetery and the Friends of Vale for having this first Civil War Commemoration Day. It is a great event for our city and it adds to the vitality of the development of our city.

Mayor Stratton said – Relative to the property list that Councilmember McCarthy brought up and I will certainly do that for you and will have to list as soon as possible. I will try to provide you with the status of all the problem properties in the city. The question came up on Labor Contracts, the Carpenter's Contract; let me tell you that there are only 2 carpenters working for the city – they basically will parallel the contracts that were settled earlier this year with two of our larger Unions, AFSCME and CSEA – the contracts are effective from 2005 to 2009. They did report the benefits that have changed in the paper. The Firemen's Contract expires the end of 2005 and we are currently in negotiations with them; the Police contract will expire at the end of 2006 and we enter into negotiations with them. Relative to the comments made about the pools, all the funding for the pools will be discussed as part of the budget process. There has not been any statement as to the opening or the non-opening of any of the city's pools which will begin next month.

Mr. Blanchfield said – I just have a couple of points to bring up – just to expand on what Mrs. Blanchard brought up on the Community Pride Awards. I think that re-categorizing the name of the Senior Citizen Awards to the Second Career Awards most probably brought to fore of what the main criteria by which the Senior Citizens awarded or judged on, - people that continued to give to the community, not withstanding that the retired from their original career. It was not intentionally done to change anything or from our point of view.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. Blanchfield declared the meeting adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

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