

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL APRIL 12, 2010**

The Council President Gary McCarthy called the Meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Reverend Father Paul Panos, St. George Greek Orthodox Church, 107 Clinton Street, Schenectady, New York to deliver the invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Reverend Phil Grigsby to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deputy City Clerk called the roll and the following members of the City Council answered to be present:

Present – Councilmembers Joseph L. Allen, Denise K. Brucker, Mark E. Blanchfield, Gary R. McCarthy, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard and Margaret C. King.

Absent – None

Also present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy Clerk Charles W. Thorne and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden.

At this point of the meeting Mr. McCarthy asked asked, if there were no objections he would like to take Agenda Items #15 out of order.

Resolution No. 2010-54

Ms. King called upon Don Rittner to come inside the rail to accept a resolution congratulating him and his committee for their efforts in holding the First Annual Art Attack in the City of Schenectady.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: A Resolution to adopt a fee schedule for the use of the Central Park Ball Fields and for other events within the City Parks:

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to be heard to come forward. Seeing none, he declared the Public Hearing closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Blanchfield moved the minutes of the City Council Meeting of March 22 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. Ms. King seconded it. Hearing no objections, Mr. McCarthy declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official:

From the Office of the Mayor, a list of Appointments. (dist 4/12/10)

From Ismat Alam, a letter recommending the acceptance of the bids of Agrium Advanced Technologies, John Deere Landscapes, Harrells Custom Fertilizers Worldwide, and Matrix Solutions four lowest bidders, in the total amount of \$50,853.85, for fertilizer, pesticides and turf supplies for the golf course.

General:

From the New Independent Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association, an invitation to “Meet the School Board Candidates Night” to be held at Petta’s Restaurant on Thursday, April 22 at 7 p.m.

Petitions:

A petition, signed by 137 residents, against installation of a dock at Riverside Park in the Stockade area of Schenectady

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Health and Recreation – Mr. Allen reported that Municipal Golf Course pro, Brian Damon, has planned course improvements for the 2010 season. Hole numbers 4, 11 and 17 bunkers will be improved by May and tee restorations will be complete on two tees by June. Clearing of brush and other improvements are planned. The goal is to establish Schenectady’s course as the best municipal course in the area.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

Jason Planck – Commented on items number 6 and 7, which call for Public Hearings on the Adoption of a Plan for the Northwest Schenectady Urban Renewal area and on condemnation of a vacant lot on Barrett Street and four vacant lots on Seminary Place. He stated townhouses and condominiums are neither affordable nor accessible. He noted vacancy rates in Hamilton Hill and Mont Pleasant are high and we need to stabilize the neighborhoods. He also stated item number 8, a MOU for the property assemblage and sale and the Development of Little Italy Housing cannot be enacted until items 6 and 7 are resolved. He thanked the Council for moving the CDBG Public Hearing to a Council night.

Rev. Phil Grigsby – Also thanked the Council for moving the CDBG Public Hearing to a Council night. He stated it is too important to leave on an unrecognized night.

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

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

Consent Agenda –

Ordinance No. 2010 – 05	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2010 – 06	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 56	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 57	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 58	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 59	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 60	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 61	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 62	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 64	Adopted Unanimous
Resolution No. 2010 – 65	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 66	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – CS-07	Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2010 – 63

Ms. King – Disclosed that she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Downtown Improvement District. She stated the grant will help develop properties such as the former St. John the Baptist Church, which was recently purchased by the Schenectady Light Opera. She noted that Main Street Grants are specifically limited to downtown development and not neighborhoods.

Barbara Blanchard – agrees with Mr. Allen on neighbor hood needs and requested that City Staff search for more grants that are available.

Mr. McCarthy – Understands Mr. Allen’s frustration with the lack of resources available for the neighborhoods and the requests that go unanswered at the State and Federal levels.

Adopted by the following vote AYES: Blanchard, Blanchfield, Brucker, Della Sala, King, McCarthy – Total 6. NO: Allen Total 1.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

Mr. McCarthy 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:

Brett Lauren-Kennedy, Stockade resident – Noted a pamphlet has stated the Onrust will be docked in 2010, he feels that shows, “Someone has made up their mind.” He said there is talk about expanded parking and loss of the tennis courts he voiced concerns about a lifeguard on duty. Quoted resolution and asked Council to vote no on the dock.

Connie Colangelo, Stockade Resident – asked how the Onrust is advertising and fundraising based on being docked in Schenectady if no decision has been made. Also, heard about the possibility of paving from Ingersoll Avenue to the Union College docks. We have been told raw sewerage is sometimes released into the river at the point the dock is planned. That would damage the boats and the Onrust.

David Giacalone – Today, I have created a web blog named "Preserve Our Stockade Trees." You can find it online at <http://stockadetrees.wordpress.com/>. The website is in reaction to an urgent situation: Stockade residents were informed less than two weeks ago, that the City of Schenectady's engineering department is planning to remove all large trees located between the sidewalk and curb on Washington Avenue between Union St. and the River, as part of a project to repave the street and repair the sidewalks. The project is slated to be completed this summer, with the Department sending out requests for bids on the job within the next week. The trees would come down whether they were healthy or not, and despite the condition of the adjoining sidewalk, as all sidewalks would be taken up and replaced regardless of their condition. As I wrote in the weblogs's first posting today: Short of fire-bombing or similar criminal or terrorist acts, nothing more drastic could be done to alter the beauty and ambiance of any so in a historic district that neighborhood than taking down its shade trees. To do so in an historic district that has special protection against any change in the appearance of its streetscape, seems especially inappropriate and irresponsible. My hope is that the City will, instead, consider all alternatives and make every reasonable effort to preserve every healthy tree. Many municipalities around the nation and world, who cherish their mature urban shade trees (and know their positive effects on property values and the environment), already have tree-preservation policies and laws. I urge you to take a look at the website, which contains many photographs of the endangered trees, along with shots of an important stretch of sidewalk that should probably be left in place in order to save the adjacent trees. Discussion and suggestions are also included. The weblog was constructed very quickly today, and is slated to have more content soon, with continued coverage of the issues and related news. The Stockade deserves better treatment than this looming urban deforestation -- not just for its residents, but for all current and future Schenectadians, and other supporters of historic preservation.

Barbara Katz, Downtown Schenectady – Complained about litter problems through the City. Some areas are so bad the sidewalks are impassable.

Donna Lagone, Stockade resident – spoke in opposition to the dock. Pointed out one end of the dock will be near the children's playground. Voiced concerns that children will be drawn to the water. She is concerned about security. Drugs are a

problem in Schenectady and the city is on a pipeline from New York City. She favors a dock, but not where it is being proposed.

Melissa Lagone – Is concerned about parking problems, a dock will draw huge trucks and boats and add to the parking problems. Loud noise and music will continue all night.

Vince Riggi, 2138 Campbell Avenue, – Congratulated Mr. Allen for his stand on neighborhoods. He stated the neighborhoods are in trouble. There are basketball games in the middle of the street. He is against installation of water meters. The controversy has been going on since 1890. The Mayor's father ran for office opposing water meters.

Mary Ann Ruscitto – Stated, docks in Riverside Park are a slap in the face to residents of East Front Street. People should vote out this administration come Election Day.

Joy Hall, Downtown - Complained about people not following traffic laws.

Harry Brand, Van Rensselaer Drive – asked how the Foster Avenue garage could have been built without clear title to all of the property. He also complained about City employees bringing cars home.

Jason Planck – Stated, April is Fair Housing Month and Schenectady doesn't have an affordable and accessible housing program. The 2020 Plan didn't address the problem. He also stated that Schenectady was last in jobs for persons with disabilities. The City needs to look at jobs.

Mary McClaine – at the last Council Meeting, several Council members stood in this chamber and thanked the Stockaders for their input regarding the dock issue and they praised the Stockaders for their comportment. One member went so far as to say that the council doesn't always get civil discourse when people disagree. Permit me to point out what constituents get. First: did Council notice how many times the chair stopped the speakers when three minutes were up? Council is more interested in the time factor than the substance of the comments. The chair could not do what he does if his colleagues did not concur with him. Mr. Blanchfield initiated the arbitrary three-minute rule, continued by Ms. King who zealously enforced it and now the current Council President is taking the issue to another level. If a person is not into the Chamber before the meeting starts, the sign up sheet is removed from the table and the person isn't given the opportunity to speak. That's what constituents get from Council. Another example: This city paid Ms. Brucker for 17 months while she pursued a Master's Degree. About three months ago, a City attorney attended a committee meeting in which Ms. Brucker was the chair. He asked to give input to an issue that was being discussed. She said, "I'll give you three minutes. That's what constituents get from Council. Then there is the issue of reversing the Committee Meeting agenda. About a month ago, people waited in the hallway for 90 minutes while Council was holed up in Room 110 for an Executive Session. As people filed out I asked them why the Executive Session was first instead of last, the reply was, "It was Council's call." That is what constituents get from Council. You reap what you

sow in this world. And the past couple of years Council's sowing has been the poorest that I have ever seen it during my 31 years of engagement in the City. Which brings me to my final point. Asking Schenectady's aging population to pay for every drop of water usage via a water meter is devious. Water meters have nothing to do with conservation and everything to do with money. If Council wants more money, crack the union contracts.

Martha Isaacs, Hamilton Hill – Spoke against cutting Weed and Seed from the Consolidated Plan. Hamilton Hill needs Weed and Seed. Nothing is being done for Hamilton Hill.

Rev. Phil Grigsby – Reminded everyone that the Crop Walk will be held on Sunday, May 2 and a Ziti Dinner will be held on Friday, May 7 at the Christ Church to benefit Project SKIP's efforts to build a new playground in Jerry Burrell Park. Rev. Grigsby also was shocked by what was left out of the Consolidated Plan. Weed and Seed is a value to the Police Department and the City.

Stacey Kennedy – Stated Riverside Park is a small intimate park, not a marina. It should be conserved not altered. A dock is potential for disaster; direct access to the water in a secluded spot is absurd. Parking is inadequate.

Gary Hayes, Stockade – Stated the Stockade is a quiet neighborhood, a dock would be a disaster. The dock would cause accidents with boat trailers.

Paul Gonsowski, Stockade – Stated 19 more signatures were added to the petition against the dock installation. He was concerned with security during regular and after hours, also concerned about liability in the playground.

Tony Buonome – Voiced concerns about bicyclists breaking motor vehicle laws. Stated cyclists should be ticketed, too.

Walter Simpkins – Stated Weed and Seed is important to community, it brings collaboration and is integral to 2020 Plan. Something needs to be done to hold on to programs that the community has faith in. He asked the Council to reconsider the importance of the Weed and Seed Program.

Marion Porterfield – Site Coordinator, Schenectady Weed and Seed #528

I. Introduction

In June 2004, a section of the City of Schenectady encompassing the Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhoods was selected as an official Weed and Seed site (#528). This designation formed the basis of the Schenectady Weed and Seed Program (SWSP). In March 2005, the SWSP hired a full-time coordinator (Marion Porterfield) following an advertised search and an extensive panel interview process. Since being hired, the coordinator has led the SWSP in its efforts to fulfill its mission of helping those who need it most by focusing on alleviating the ills associated with crime, drugs, and other criminal activity and replacing such activity with positive growth in the Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhoods.

Following the mandates of this federally-created program, the SWSP utilizes a two-pronged strategy to accomplish its goals. The first involves "weeding" out

violent offenders via intensive law enforcement and prosecution efforts; while the second strategy involves "seeding" the aforementioned neighborhoods with prevention, intervention, treatment, and revitalization services.

Weed and Seed is a strategy rather than a grant program—which aims to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in targeted, high-crime neighborhoods.

There are four subcommittees, Law Enforcement, Community Policing, Prevention, Intervention and Treatment and Neighborhood Restoration. Each subcommittee address specific areas of the strategy.

Weed and Seed is governed by a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is currently chaired by the Chief of Police Mark Chaires, previous chairpersons include Deputy Director of Probation, Joseph Mancini, and former Chief of Police Michael Geraci. and consists of approximately 18 members/stakeholders including residents of the designated area, top City and County law enforcement officials, a US Attorney representative, DEA, faith based community representatives, not for profit service providers, education leaders from the Schenectady City School District, City and County employees, and other local organizations.

The Schenectady Weed and Seed Site Coordinator is dedicated full time to working on implementing the strategy. The Weed and Seed office is in the Charlie Mills Neighborhood Network Center located in the business center at the corner of Albany and Steuben Streets.

II. Schenectady's Weed and Seed Program - a Collaborative Effort

The Schenectady Weed and Seed Program (SWSP) has been successful to date due to a collaborative effort between the United States Department of Justice, the State of New York, Schenectady County, City of Schenectady, as well as several local non-profit agencies. This mutual cooperation is evidenced by the diverse group that comprises the SWSP's Steering Committee, which meets monthly to discuss strategy, concerns, and/or positive changes happening within the SWSP federally-designated site. In addition to serving on the Steering Committee, many of the members also serve on one of the four designated subcommittees, which also meet on a monthly basis. The present subcommittees, and their respective chairs, include:

- Law Enforcement - Chief Mark R Chaires, Schenectady Police Department
- Community Policing - Judy Sogoian, Deputy Director of Schenectady County Probation;
- Prevention, Intervention and Treatment - Laura Combs, Capital Region BOCES;
- Neighborhood Restoration - Acting Chair Marva Isaacs, Community Resident.

Other entities that are or have been an integral part of the SWSP process include City and County government as well as many local citizen groups and neighborhood associations That are listed below:

Vale Community Organization;
Hamilton Hill Clergy;

Youth for Christ;
 Rainbow Youth Services;
 Schenectady Neighborhood Watch;
 Youth Advocate Program;
 Community Accountability Board;
 Father Time;
 Comprehensive Plan Action Group;
 Brothers of St. Paul;
 Social Justice Committee;
 Mt. Pleasant Action Coalition; and,
 Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association (original);
 Internal Revenue Service;
 Better Neighborhoods. Inc (BNI);
 Schenectady Community Action Program (SCAP);
 City of Schenectady;
 Schenectady County;
 Schenectady Police Department;
 District Attorney's Office;
 Operation IMPACT;
 Better Life Empowerment
 Department of Social Services;
 Boys and Girls Club (Safe Haven);
 Hometown Health Services;
 United Way of Northeastern New York;
 New York National Guard;
 Carver Community Center;
 Hamilton Hill & Vale Planning Group;

- Hamilton Hill Drop In Arts Center (Safe Haven)
- Schenectady County Sheriff's Department;
- State Street Presbyterian Church.
- Community Empowerment Partnership
- United States Census Bureau

An example of SWSP's successful collaboration is evident by other agencies desiring to visit Schenectady and look at its WSP model. For example, in March 2006, Weed and Seed representatives from Binghamton, New York, were welcomed to Schenectady in order to learn about SWSP's subcommittee and committee organizational structure, as well as its efforts to date. As a result of this visit, Binghamton was able to successfully establish its four subcommittees.

III. "Weeding" Component

In its efforts to fulfill the first prong of its two-pronged strategy, the SWSP is an active member of Schenectady's Operation IMPACT (Integrated Municipal Police Anti Crime Teams) Partnership. (Operation IMPACT is a NYS DCJS initiative aimed at reducing crime in designated cities within the State). Towards this end, the SWSP site coordinator attends and participates in the monthly IMPACT presentations and provides an instrumental role in keeping the Schenectady Police Department (SPD) informed of any crime-related concerns in the designated site

area (Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhoods). Additionally, the IMPACT consortium serves as the law enforcement subcommittee of Weed and Seed and the Steering Committee of Weed and Seed hears monthly reports from the SPD Chief of Police, who is the Chair of the Steering Committee.

Additionally, law enforcement and prosecutors have, and will continue in upcoming years, coordinate with SWSP to meet each other's mutual goals of decreasing crime in the aforesaid area through the use of the following methods:

- **Intelligence Gathering:** Weed and Seed is utilized as a means of gathering intelligence from the Hamilton Hill/Vale neighborhood. Citizens may be reluctant to call the police or approach the police or other members of the IMPACT consortium on the street. Weed and Seed is and continues to be used as a vehicle for the transmission of intelligence to the SPD.
- **Joint Problem-Solving:** The Community Policing Sub-Committee of Weed and Seed acts as a conduit of information from community residents to the SPD regarding crime problems. In addition, the District Attorney's "Open Door" Initiative (ODI) that operated in 2008 - 2009 provided a safe and confidential forum for Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhood residents to meet with representatives of the District Attorney's office and Weed and Seed to discuss matters relating to crime. Files are opened, actions are taken or requested and replies are communicated. An instrumental partner which has led to this extremely successful endeavor is the SWSP. The program operated out of the Weed and Seed offices and was widely promoted and vocally supported by SWSP's coordinator.

Further, through grant monies obtained through Weed and Seed, the assistant district attorney in charge of ODI, was able to hire a law clerk to assist in this initiative with the support of the coordinator. The SWSP Law Clerk has addressed problems ranging from abandoned buildings to drug activity and prostitution. Grant funds will be paying for this position again, which is critical to successfully addressing residents' concerns in the Weed and Seed designated area.

- **Bridging the Gap between Law Enforcement and the Community:** Working with the IMPACT Partnership, SWSP, through its coordinator, will also continue to foster a mutual understanding and respect between the residents and law enforcement community by raising the level of citizen and community partnership in crime prevention and intervention activities to solve gun violence and drug-related problems in the Hamilton Hill/Vale neighborhoods and enhance the level of community security,
- **Participating in the District Attorney's Public Surveillance Camera Project (PSCP):** The Schenectady County District Attorney oversees the PSCP. This project has been greatly expanded over the past five years. With the support of the SWSP coordinator, SWSP monies (\$14,450) were used assist in the purchase and installation of cameras within the site area in 2006/2007. Data captured as of that 2007 by the camera has been used to solve 4-5 crimes and led to 30-40 arrests and has provided evidence that was useful in prosecuting cases in court. Court costs were saved when video was used to aid in the prosecution of cases.
- **Supporting SPD's Integration of Crime Mapping to More Efficiently Deploy Law Enforcement Personnel in the SWSP site:** A GIS Crime Mapping

System is being used and has helped law enforcement determine the areas and time of day that additional police coverage is needed. SWSP, as well as others, has supported the use of this technology, thus allowing increased patrols in the SWSP site area. Other "weeding" initiatives include assisting the Schenectady County Probation Department in its truancy sweeps which have taken place in the site area. Also, as will be discussed below, a number of community walks have taken place, resulting in six properties being boarded up by the City of Schenectady's Code Enforcement Office. Finally, SWSP's coordinator has also participated in landlord training provided by Community Land Trust to talk to landlords about the eviction program for suspected drug activity.

IV. "Seeding" Component

In its efforts to fulfill the second prong of its two-pronged strategy, the SWSP has sponsored, organized and/or hosted several positive events aimed at meeting its goals for the community, including:

« Creating "Safe Havens": These havens are intended to provide a safe and secure environment for residents to enjoy arts, fitness, recreation and other activities in the site area: SWSP's first designated "safe haven" is located in the Hamilton Hill Arts Center and has been operational since May 2006. This haven provides Hip Hop Instruction, Visual Arts and works in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to provide other activities. Averages of 15 - 20 students attend classes on a regular basis. Or second "safe haven," was opened in 2009.

Organizing Community Walkabouts: The SWSP began organizing community walkabouts in 2005. In 2006, 4 neighborhoods walkabouts took place. A contingency of residents, local, county and state law enforcement officials, including the Chief of Police, the Mayor, District Attorney, Fire Chief and code enforcement walked through the Weed and Seed Site listening to residents and business owners' concerns. The SWSP office completed surveys; distributed Weed and Seed materials; and, invited residents to become active participants. The input received through these efforts helped in the development of initiatives which directly addressed the concerns raised by residents and business owners. It has also proven to be an excellent source of information generated from residents who are unable or unwilling to attend formal meetings. SWSP will continue to do these Walks in the future which, among other benefits, serve as a public forum against violence in community. Residents and inner-city clergy have worked with law enforcement in participating in community marches and vigils to address the drug use and violence. These have continued through 2009.

Organizing Community Forums/Workshops: SWSP has held several community forums to generate resident involvement, establish a block leader program, and educate residents on fire safety and lead poisoning. Likewise, it has helped to recruit households willing to have the County come in and perform safety inspections. These initiatives allowed eligible residents to receive items that improved the safety of their homes including smoke detectors, dust free pillow cases, and carbon monoxide detectors through the Schenectady County Department of Health "Home Safe Program." Another successful event held was a forum comprised of a 17-member panel whose purpose was to discuss ways to end a cycle of neglect, abuse and violence that has led to high levels of

incarceration and low achievement for too many young African American males. The local group consisted of 10 individuals, mostly African American males, ranging in ages from 16 to upper fifties. The purpose of convening the group was to discuss the local effects of this particular phenomenon and what steps could be taken to create positive change in our community. In 2008 and 2009 the National Crime Prevention Council was here to train in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques which have been used to increase safety and security around buildings in the community.

Organizing a Juvenile Justice Conference: The conference, which was attended by over 85 individuals in June 2006, was held to discuss current and emerging issues within the juvenile justice system and how to develop new approaches to working with juvenile offenders. The guest speaker was Diana Wavra, a nationally recognized trainer and practitioner in juvenile justice and youth services. There was also a panel of local professionals that included the District Attorney, Deputy Director of Probation, and police detective in charge of Youth Aid Division, Executive Director of Youth Advocate Program, school psychologist and family court judge. The basic outcome of this forum was that more emphasis needs to be put on prevention, and opportunities for positive activities should be introduced to youth at an early age.

Partnering with the (Craig Street) Boys and Girls Club on the ShiART Moves Program: The objective of this program is to help members resist involvement with tobacco, alcohol, other drugs and early sexual activity. The goal is that 10 youth will complete at least 10 sessions of SMART Moves and demonstrate at least a 30% increase in knowledge on pre and post tests. From January 2006 through May 2006, 12 members participated and a 56% improvement was shown based on pre- post tests. From September 2006 through December 2006, 11 members participated and showed a 69% improvement in knowledge of these important subjects.

Assisting with the creation of a Community Accountability Board: In 2006, Schenectady Weed and Seed collaborated with Law, Order and Justice Center to create the Community Accountability Board. The purpose of the Community Accountability Board (CAB) is to provide an alternative way of dealing with individuals who commit certain non-violent, quality of life offenses with a focus on healing the damage suffered by victims, while working toward reweaving the fabric of the community. The Board is made up of people who either live or work in community that has been affected by the criminal offense. At least 65% of the Board members are residents. The CAB hears the case and collectively determines the appropriate penalty along with input from the offender. To date the Community Accountability Board has 20 referrals, heard 16 cases, and 8 cases have been successfully completed.

Other "seeding" initiatives by the SWSP include:

- Organizing over 10 neighborhood cleanups do date.
- Being involved with Schenectady's Promise and participating in National Youth Service Day for the past three years.

- Supporting the Summer Youth Cooperative, which provides work skills development and workplace training for youth, by providing funding to ensure youth from the Weed and Seed site are able to participate.

® Participating in the Health Fair held by Hometown Health Center, the local health clinic, as well as continuing to have information regarding Child Health Plus and Family Health available at the SWSP's office. Other SWSP health-related initiatives involve participating in a Healthfest in 2005, 2006. This opportunity was used to have a face to face talk with neighbors about the benefits of being a Weed and Seed community and how they could get involved. This involvement will continue in 2007.

- Schenectady Weed and Seed is partnered with the CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Coalition and is promoting use of VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) to reduce use of paid tax preparers. Weed and Seed has participated in VITA Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program since 2006. In 2007 we established our own VITA site and processed over 140 tax returns which brought back \$119,408 to low income families at absolutely no cost to them. We also used this opportunity to provide information on Schenectady Weed and Seed and solicit resident participation. A grant of \$2000 was received to support this program and continuing financial literacy for the community. In 2009 Weed and Seed opened it permanent VITA location which continues to provide free income tax preparation and also financial literacy assistance.

In collaboration with the original Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association a grant for \$7863 was obtained to conduct workshops on financial fitness to which we added a unique twist of providing matching funds to establish Individual Development Account (IDA) for debt reduction or starting a savings account. The Money Smart curriculum will be used to deliver this program. SWSP has been joined in this initiative by Key Bank and SEFCU (State Employees Federal Credit Union).

Being involved with the Juvenile Crime Advisory Board which coordinates efforts between the City, County and community members, service providers and stakeholders to develop a framework for understanding and addressing juvenile crime and delinquency in the City of Schenectady. The framework includes the concept of risk and protective factors to understand what promotes and guards against delinquent behavior in juveniles and for helping design successful program for youth.

The SWSP coordinator and a few subcommittee members visiting churches within the site area to share information about Weed and Seed and solicit community support.

Organizing a fundraiser with three neighborhood youths groups (Jerry Burrell Summer Basketball Program, Rainbow Youth Services, and Thomas Sports Group) and Habitat for Humanity to benefit the organizations that participated. A team of local individuals was put together to play the visiting semi pro team. Over 100 people attended the event which was an evening of great family fun.

In 2006 and 2007, SWSP worked with the Mayor's office, Fire Department and Police Department to help organize recruitment of minority candidates. SWSP

published materials and held public recruitment forums within the site area. As a result of these efforts, there has been an increase in the overall number of individuals who have taken the civil service test with slight increases in the number of minority applicants.

Acting as a sponsoring partner in National Night out in 2006 and plans to be actively involved in the 2007 program as well.

Continuing to work closely with Schenectady Neighborhood Watch participants and the Mt. Pleasant Action Coalition (an adjoining community) in various endeavors throughout the year (e.g., neighborhood walkabouts).

Creation of two subcommittees to address the Youth Leadership Council and Personal Contracts with Families- both strategies in the PIT document. The Youth Leadership Council Subcommittee met and has made several decisions regarding the structure of the new Youth Council the age limits for the group are 13-21 with the focus of the group being safety and helping youth in the neighborhood feel safer as they navigate through the community. The decision to have a Youth Council Advisory Committee was also made to help support the individuals running the program.

- Working with the Habitat for Humanity in an effort to recruit other organizations and residents for a neighborhood cleanup (September 2006). An additional success as a direct result of our efforts was the construction of a new pavilion in Jerry Burrell Park that was built by the County and which replaced an aging structure that was in complete disrepair.
- Assisting the Center for Juvenile Justice in assisting families through Functional Family Therapy providing treatment wherever the problem occurred whether in the home, school or community. To date, 40 families have been assisted since the Center's official recognition.
- Assisting with the Hamilton Hill Arts Center Culturefest, which is a community gathering featuring various musicians, both professional and local talent. Each Culturefest draws 100-150 residents. (In 2005, Culturefest was in danger of cancellation due to the Executive Director's serious family situation. SWSP took the lead, recruited residents and supporters and maintained an event schedule.)
- Plans to be linked to the Schenectady Police Department website by the end of the summer so that residents will have another method to contact the SWSP office and view upcoming events. Plans are also under way for a bi-monthly SWSP local television program. Not only will this give information about Schenectady Weed and Seed it will also provide an opportunity for up to six young people to learn how to produce a television show.
- Plans to sponsor a Youth Job Shadow Day in early fall and match up youth with individuals in City and County government, law enforcement, and public safety personnel.

Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment:

« The Manifest of Services, a directory of services, organizations and agencies that meets the needs identified as needed by the neighborhood has been reproduced by the Prevention, Intervention and Treatment subcommittee in a

create more user friendly format and to be able to have a wider distribution. It will be ready for distribution in February 2008.

- A leadership group was begun in collaboration with Carver Community Center that covers topics such as Etiquette, civic responsibility, good decision making, Etc. Funding for was leveraged through a faith based organization. The goal is to have this group become part of the Youth Council and get more collaboration among youth serving agencies.
- During the last quarter we have worked with the Schenectady City School District and New York National Guard to implement "Stay on Track". This is a description of the program and its target audience. "The training program, called Stay on Track 101, is delivered by The National Center for Prevention and Research Solutions (NCPRS), the developers of Stay on Track, the three and a half day training includes the following topics: an intimate knowledge of the curriculum, understanding the future direction of DDR, implementation strategies, a history of the program, training other implementers, youth protection, and more. Upon completion of Stay on Track 101, Guard personnel have the tools they need to take this exciting, innovative program to their stat for many successful implementations.
- The Stay on Track Curriculum has been designed to reduce future substance abuse by middle school students. Special emphasis was given to alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, inhalant, club drugs, and prescription drug use, due to there prominence among middle school students. Stay on Track materials are designed to reach students ages 5-14. The materials being used in the National Guard program are for use in Middle School environment, with grades 6-8. In the first quarter of 2008 this program will be delivered in Mt. Pleasant Middle School where a large percentage of children from Weed and Seed site attend. A community resident who sits on the Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Subcommittee will service as liaison between the School District, National Guard and Weed and Seed.
- Movie nights and several other family activities were sponsored this quarter. Most events were held in Jerry Burrell Park, predominately known for drug use and which the community is working at reclaiming by holding numerous activities throughout the summer.
- Weed and Seed actively participated in Culturefest during July and August. These events are sponsored by one of our Safe Havens and draw up to 150 people to the neighborhood park. Various music and dance groups perform for the free event. Neighborhood Restoration
- There has been significant Economic Development in this community for quite some time. Currently, a feasibility study is being done by the City to build the Hamilton Hill Plaza within the Weed and Seed site. This is a proposed one block area of retail business owners and offices. The group has scheduled meetings with business owners and residents to get input on this project.
- A group has formed to push forward the neighborhood Comprehensive Plan. This is part of a larger plan for the entire city. We focus on different parts of the plan, the goal is work with the City to make sure that the final plans reflects the needs and requests of the neighborhood and they are implemented. This group

consists of business owners, residents, agencies and organizations representatives that have at a five year plan of what agree to work together collaboratively for the good of the neighborhood.

Currently, this group identifying abandoned, rundown and vacant properties that may be used in a project to refurbish housing stock in the Weed and Seed site.

- The Neighborhood Block Leadership Program RFP has been completed and after the winning bidder has been chosen the program will be implemented. We anticipate this initiative will significantly increase the number of residents involved.
- Weed and Seed has joined the local cable access channel and produced a weekly show to increase the visibility of Weed and Seed and provide information on the events and initiatives taking place in the site.
- A neighborhood block party was held in August 2007 providing an opportunity for the community to do a park clean up, learn more about Weed and Seed and become actively involved. Successful block parties were also held in 2008 and 2009.
- The nine Community Bulletin boards were completed through collaboration with Youthbuild, a program that teaches construction skills to at risk youth. The local program is run through Northeast Parent and Child Society. The cost of this project exceeded the amount allocated in the grant, therefore the balance and the labor was donated by NEPC. Boards will be put up when Spring thaw begins.
- Schenectady Weed and Seed applied and was selected by the Department of Justice's Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) as one of ten sites to receive Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training and technical assistance. Training will be provided by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC). This training took place in November 2008 and August 2009.

V. Areas of Concern

No organization, whether it is public or private, is without setbacks or concerns that must be addressed in order for the organization to move forward in a positive direction. In SWSP's case, a major challenge to the Weed and Seed strategy has been getting resident involved with the process for change. This topic has been analyzed, strategized and debated at many meetings. In looking at the reasons for the lack of resident participation, there are three main reasons that consistently surface.

- Individuals have a concern for the community and would like to be involved but trying to maintain employment and family commitments consumes the majority of their time and leaves little time for volunteer activities.
- The concept of the "resident driven" Weed and Seed strategy is new and differs from the "government run programs" which has created a sense of entitlement and dependency upon others to fix the problems.
- There is a prevailing sense of hopelessness that nothing will change, which must be overcome.

Our approach to this challenge is being consistent in seeding efforts, such as community cleanups, community walks, activities and forums. Due to these

efforts, within the last year, there has been a steady increase in resident involvement. There are several residents who are consistently involved either in the neighborhood association, in one of the citizens groups that work with Weed and Seed or on one of the subcommittees. We have found that residents are most interested in working on projects and tend to avoid meetings that do not produce outcomes. Within the last couple of weeks local residents assumed leadership of Weed and Seed Community Day, which was a day of enjoyment and activities for children with a focus on the dangers of substance abuse, value of self worth and the reward of community participation. .

Another area of concern involves the recent actions on behalf of a few former members of the Weed and Seed steering committee, which is well-documented. In reviewing the issues raised in the most objective fashion, it appears that much of the criticism is displaced and/or without merit. Nevertheless, Weed and Seed recognizes that no agency is without fault and welcomes all constructive criticism which can help it achieve its overall agenda.

VI. Conclusion

SWSP continues to work diligently at fulfilling its goals and objectives as set forth above. In addition, SWSP take ideas and suggestions from residents and stakeholders to sponsor or support events that are in line with its overall strategy to improve the quality of life in the Schenectady Weed and Seed community. The success of the strategy is measured by reduction in crime, adequate housing for residents, increased job opportunities more informed and empowered residents. We evaluate the Weed and Seed strategy based on our ability to achieve stated goals and meet established benchmarks during the 5 years of Original Recognition and develop a sustainability plan working toward improving the quality of life in the community. CDBG funding is used to support the salary, fringes benefits and incidentals costs for the Weed and Seed Site Coordinator. We celebrate our successes, take criticism as an opportunity to look at areas where there is need for improvement and realize that positive change is possible and our goals are achievable. For as was stated by Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Cynthia Van Alstyne – Stated she is a new resident of Schenectady and chose to live in the Stockade for the quiet. A dock will change neighborhood. Parking is already horrible.

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

Miscellaneous Business of the Council

Mr. Della Sala – Stated “Good News,” This week Schenectady organizations received \$85,000 in grants from the Strategic Alliance for Health: Boys & Girl Club for a playground, Northside Little League, Roots and Wisdom, Schenectady ARC, SICM for lunch program, Martin Luther King Magnet School, and SKIP Program for Jerry Burrelle Park.

Ms. Blanchard – Thanked everyone who spoke. She assured everyone the proposal is for a dock, not a boat launch and nothing has been decided. Also, Washington Ave. paving project needs more meetings before anything is done. Regarding water meters, Ms. Blanchard displayed a graph indicating the pumping station uses 7 million KWH a year. The next largest power usage is the Street lights, which us 3 million KWH a year. Power usage needs to decrease.

Joe Allen – Stated he had concerns about the misinformation. He stated nothing has been decided about the docks and the tennis courts are not going to be paved over. Information regarding considering implementation of water meters, is incorrect.

Ms. King – stated her concern about the brochure on the Onrust and reiterated no decision has been made.

Mr. Blanchfield – Reiterated, no decision has been made regarding the dock and there will be an open meeting on April 22, 2010 at the First Reform Church. He assured the public that if they needed to speak about a city concern for more than three minutes, he is available at 370-3153. He expressed his condolences to the people of Poland for the loss of their President and other members of the government.

The Mayor – Stated water meters were suggested by the Energy Advisory Board, which is a group of private citizens. No study has been made by the City and he has not expressed support. Neighborhoods needs are grave, but a Main Street Grant can't be reprogrammed for neighborhoods. Neighborhoods need massive investment, on the level of WPA in the 1930s. If neighborhood money isn't available we shouldn't pas up money for downtown. The Mayor stated that today he terminated John Lewis as a Police Officer, not City employees. Police officers should be held to a higher standard and we will do that in Schenectady.

Mr. McCarthy – Reminded everyone of the April 22, meeting concerning the dock. He stated that the Council is not looking to imposes anything on a neighborhood and he encouraged further discussion. The electricity used to deliver water is significant and reduction could save taxpayers money.

Adjournment:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

A true record

**By Charles W. Thorne
Deputy City Clerk**