

**MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE SCHENECTADY
CITY COUNCIL – JANUARY 4, 2010**

City Clerk Eileen M. Versaci called the Organizational Meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Ms. Versaci called upon Rev. Paul Panos, St. George Greek Orthodox Church, to deliver the Invocation.

Ms. Versaci then called upon the Marine Corps League, Electric City Detachment, for the Presentation of Colors. Councilmember Margaret King then led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICES TO NEW
COUNCILMEMBERS:**

1. The Oath of Office was administered to the Hon. Barbara Blanchard by the Hon. Judge Vincent Versaci. Holding the Bible for Ms. Blanchard was her husband, Arthur.
2. The Oath of Office was administered to the Hon. Mark W. Blanchfield by the Hon. John Woodward, County Clerk. Holding the Bible for Mr. Blanchfield was his wife, Beatrice.
3. The Oath of Office was administered to the Hon. Gary R. McCarthy by the Hon. Christine Clark. Holding the Bible for Mr. McCarthy was his wife, Caroline.

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

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

Absent – None

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, City Clerk Eileen Versaci and Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden.

INTRODUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution No. 2010-01

Adopted Unanimously

Ms. Brucker offered the name of Gary R. McCarthy for Council President. The Clerk called the roll for the election of Gary R. McCarthy for Council President:

Mr. Allen voted in the Affirmative; Ms. Brucker voted in the Affirmative; Mr. Blanchfield voted in the Affirmative; Ms. King voted in the Affirmative; Mr. Della Sala voted in the Affirmative; Ms. Blanchard voted in the Affirmative.

The City Clerk declared Mr. Gary R. McCarthy as Council President and turned the meeting over to him.

Resolution No. 2010-02

Adopted Unanimously

Ms. Blanchard offered a resolution calling for the designation of a City Clerk and offered the name of Eileen M. Versaci.

Mr. McCarthy called the roll for the designation of Eileen M. Versaci for City Clerk: Mr. Allen voted in the Affirmative; Ms. Brucker voted in the Affirmative; Mr. Blanchfield voted in the Affirmative; Ms. King voted in the Affirmative; Mr. Della Sala voted in the Affirmative; Ms. Blanchard voted in the Affirmative; Mr. McCarthy voted in the Affirmative.

Mr. McCarthy declared Ms. Versaci as City Clerk and the Hon. Vincent Versaci administered the Oath of Office to Ms. Versaci. The Bible was held by the granddaughters, Caroline and Rosemarie. Her speech is as follows:

I want to thank the City Council for the confidence they have shown in me by appointing me to this important position. It has been a pleasure working with citizens of Schenectady over the past 12 years, first as Deputy Clerk and now as City Clerk. I pledge to serve the City with the zeal and conscientiousness that I have in the past. I want to thank my co-workers in the City Clerk's Office for their diligence and support, especially these past few months and many thanks to my Deputy Clerk Chuck Thorne. A special thanks to my family Vince and Tina and my beautiful Grandchildren. Very special thanks to my husband Ro for his help. Also, many thanks to my friends for their patience and kindness. Again, I thank you the City Council.

Resolution No. 2010-03

Adopted Unanimously

Ms. King offered a resolution designating the "Daily Gazette" as the City's official newspaper.

**NEW YEARS – “Welcoming Address”
From Mayor Brian U. Stratton**

Mr. President, and congratulations to you, the City Clerk welcome to Rev. Panos, Judge Versaci, Judge Clark, County Clerk John Woodward, the new Sheriff Dagostino and I think our District Attorney is here with us, family, friends and Councilmembers. I didn't realize that I was going to be called upon to make an address but luckily I have a two hour speech in my folder here, so if all of you would make yourselves comfortable. This is a great occasion and we do this every two years as we create a new organization but really it is an opportunity for us to reflect upon the progress that we have made. Most of us working together these past six years really look to the future and 2010 promises to be a tremendously challenging year, but hopefully an exciting and a rewarding one as well. I will have more to say when I prepare to give my State of the City, in the coming weeks so President McCarthy, I look forward to working with you and I congratulate you and I believe we have an opportunity to really do some great things. I congratulate Mark and Barbara on their outstanding victories on their re-election and you and your families and on your swearing in, and all my friends on the council, thank you and God Bless, and God Speed.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Councilmember Barbara Blanchard to deliver her speech. It is as follows:

It is an honor to stand before you again after serving as city councilmember for the past four years. I want to thank my running mates, Mark and Gary, and everyone else who helped in the election. These last 4 years have been filled with changes. We have a different governor now and a different president, yet we're in a major recession. In our current fiscal situation it is essential that our initiatives for the next few years be creative rather than costly. It is possible to accomplish a lot without spending a lot of money. Let me give you some examples. I will start with Vale Cemetery, which has been in the news this week. Vale was once a black hole in our city that people were afraid to venture into. It has been turned around because of the volunteer work of Barbara and Bernie McEvoy, Kathy Delain and others. It has reclaimed its role as a city landmark that we can all be proud of. Another success is the protection of the Woodlawn Preserve, a beautiful and unique natural area, by the city. It was threatened by development as recently as four years ago, but is now well on its way to being permanently protected by a new management plan thanks to the efforts of the late John Van deLoo and the many volunteers in Friends of Woodlawn Preserve. The highly regarded John Sayles School of Fine Arts at the high school was established after Ellen Senesi formed a brain trust of local residents to plan it out and make sure it was

implemented. Children from outside of the city even pay tuition so they can be in this program. Schenectady Greenmarket was started on a shoestring budget by a group of clever, inventive and dedicated people. It is the place to go on Sundays. It draws customers from the city and way beyond the city. Some of the customers haven't been downtown in years, since Carl's was open. And from its inception it's been an important economic generator. The Council's Energy Advisory Board is a fine example of great payoffs achieved at no expense for city government. This board is made up of forward-thinking volunteers who have worked diligently to analyze where our energy dollars are spent, and have proposed ways to reduce them. They have already saved the city significant money that would have been spent on consulting fees and energy costs. Our downtown has experienced a tremendous revitalization. This was important to do. We still need to attract more small businesses downtown and make sure that we keep the ones we have. But it is time to address the neighborhoods. We have to do it creatively, because there's not much money around. But since we're the City Council, we can pass legislation to address some neighborhood issues. We can enlist the help of neighborhood leaders. We can call on our state representatives for legislative assistance. We can call on our city staff, many of whom have the ability to create something out of nothing. We can use our bully pulpit to create a buzz about our goals. None of this will be easy, but it wasn't that long ago that George Robertson declared that Schenectady would never have a viable downtown again, and some people believed him. Luckily the people in this room didn't. I look forward to serving you for another term. I am most grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Councilmember Mark W. Blanchfield to deliver his speech. It is as follows:

There are a number of people here whom I would like to thank and recognize for their contribution to what will be my third term on the Schenectady City Council. First of all I would like to thank my wife, Bea, who has always been patient and supportive of all my endeavors. She has rearranged her life in so many ways to accommodate both our careers and our family's diverse interests, and I can always count on her to level with me when I need it and pat me on the back when no one else has. I would also like to thank my children, James and Anna, who have grown up in and around local government and have, to their credit, absorbed some of the methods of our most astute activists. After a persistent letter writing campaign, and by finding advocates among my colleagues in government (especially Mrs. Brucker), it appears that in 2010 the issue of getting a dog may finally find its way onto the committee agenda – though I have asked for a roll call vote on the matter. I want to thank my campaign finance team and close friends, Dave and Gloria Cabaniss, for all their help over the years. I would also like to thank City Democratic chair Dick Naylor, who has worked so tirelessly to

get us elected and has more than done his part to make sure this community has a choice of leaders that are up to its many challenges. I am informed that I will continue as Chairman of the Finance Committee again, and I would like to thank my colleagues, and particularly President McCarthy, for their continued faith in me as we enter a very difficult time for Schenectady. Mark Twain once said if the end of the world comes, he wanted to be in Cincinnati, because everything happens there 2 years later than everywhere else. While the lag time may be shorter, municipalities all over the country are looking at a very bleak 2010 that may be as bad or worse than what has already hit so many families and businesses. We are all going to have to work together closely in the coming months as we make some very difficult decisions, but I can't think of a group that I would rather work with than this one. Thank you again and I look forward to another four years of working with all of you here on the floor of the council, Council President McCarthy, and Mayor Stratton.

Mr. McCarthy delivered his speech. It is as follow:

Thank you Judge Clark. I do appreciate your taking the time to be here tonight to administer my oath of office. I'd like to thank my colleagues for the opportunity to serve as President of this council again. I'd also like to express sincere thanks to my family, friends and voters of our city for their support in November. I'd like to thank my wife Caroline, whose enthusiasm and support I deeply appreciate and has not gone unnoticed by some of the political leadership. This past May when I was making the final decision to seek re-election I was talking to Tom Bellick, an old friend and a Democratic Neighborhood Leader...I ask for his support. I'll always remember Tom's words... Gary there'll be a McCarthy on the ticket this year I'm just not sure it will be you. Many thanks to my mother who just celebrated her 88th birthday two days ago. Special thanks to my brother Gregory who has provided invaluable support and advice to me and other candidates over the years. He likes these races where I'm unopposed. He doesn't have to do the calculation to see what the maximum donation a family member can make. Credit must also go to the strong and steadfast support of County Democratic Committee Chair Brian Quail, City Chair Richard Naylor and the City Democratic Neighborhood Leaders, my campaign manager David Fronk, Carl Erikson my committee Treasurer, our great staff in the City Clerks Office, Clerk Eileen Versaci, Deputy Chuck Thorne, Mayor Brian Stratton and the professional staff he has assembled. There are many good and great things happening in our community. Over the last five years we have seen the rebirth of our downtown. Our community investment in Proctor's Theater has created the premier regional arts and entertainment venue. Business leaders such as Angelo Mazzone, the Mallozzi Family, Neil Golub and the Golub Corporation, David Buicko & the

Galesi Corporation and most importantly GE have joined with many others who now see Schenectady as the place to do business. Something that many said would not or could not happen. This has taken time, money, people & government working together and most important putting the right people in the right place. Downtown Schenectady is a model of urban revitalization for other communities to look at and try to emulate. I know, as do the other leaders in this room and our community that to continue this re-birth we must expand our efforts into our neighborhoods. This will require time, money, people & government working together and most importantly... putting the right people in the right place. We all know that owner occupied housing is the key to stabilizing and revitalizing our neighborhoods. We must be able to attract young middle class families to buy homes and live in our neighborhoods. But we must be fully aware and deal with the reality that when buying a home buyers view services at the city and county level as secondary considerations. Their first consideration is the school district. Today, I do not consider the Schenectady City School District a full partner in the revitalization of our community. We grapple with high school graduation rates that are unacceptable, problem designations of our schools that overshadow the good programs and opportunities, and no discussion of educational excellence which was the label the district carried a few decades ago. Putting the right people in the right place is key to making the Schenectady City School District the full partner it should be in the re-birth of our neighborhoods. We as a city must support current community efforts to put the right people in the right positions within the Schenectady City School District. This May there must be a loud and clear message that things will change with the leadership of the district. The new leadership must be ready to assume the role as full partner in attracting families to our neighborhoods to complement our economic development efforts. We, as city leaders must define and implement a plan of action to allow the goals and objectives in our 2020 plan to become a reality. In two weeks this council will consider a plan that will shift some of the property tax burden off owner occupied one and two family homes, we must look to create financial incentives to deal with high property taxes. We will identify 200 problem properties and actively track the city's efforts to implement corrective actions. We will look to put in place measurable performance standards for city services (this includes but is not limited to the Police Department). There are many challenges we will need to deal with this year. Many may be imposed on us by our friends at the state level. We must look for ways to do things better, we need to deliver services cheaper and draw on and effectively utilize our residents and employees skills & talents to their fullest. Mr. Mayor, my fellow council members I look forward to working with you to continue to make Schenectady a great place to live and work.

BENEDICTION:

Mr. McCarthy then called upon Father Paul Panos, St. George Greek Orthodox Church, to deliver the Benediction.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the Organizational Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY EILEEN M. VERSACI
CITY CLERK**