

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – JANUARY 11, 2010**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Gary R. McCarthy at 7:05 P.M. in room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Rev. Emmanuel Adams, New Bethel Community Church of God in Christ to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Council Member Joseph Allen to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

The 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 W. Blanchfield, Margaret C. King, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard, Gary R. McCarthy.

Absent – None

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. On “Proposed 2010-14 Consolidated Plan”.

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to speak on the Public Hearing #1 to come forward.

Jason Planck – 208 Jackson Ave, Schenectady – Regarding five years of C.D.B.G. Moneys 2010-2014. I would like to have my full comment included with the record, since last time my comments were not taken correctly last time on a Federal Fund public hearing see City of Schenectady Council meeting April 13, 2009. This document has many holes in it as regard to person with disability, nowhere does it mention about person with disability except about person with HIV Aids and is due to the C.D.B.G. writers main focus of their non-for-profit status. Barrier to housing for person with disability does nothing for mobility impairments, mental illness, development disabilities, and other types of disability. The Plan does not talk about service animals to be included. The plan has no action of working with the local P.H.A. to reduce the need of 600 vouchers needed for person with disability to help attain affordable housing. The plan has no mention of how to move person with disability from group homes, institutional, nursing homes back into the community as per the Olmstead decision of 1999 US Supreme Court. The Fair Housing Coordinator only checks

The Daily Gazette for housing discrimination is wrong. The Fair Housing Coordinator should be check all source, like the Realtor papers, Albany Times Union, Church Bulletins, other regional papers just to mention a few. There is no talk about working with the County's Fair Housing Coordinator about their goals and priorities. Jobs for person with disability has been ignored and noncompliance with Section 503 on hiring person with disability under Federal Contacts. Also, nowhere mention about an Economic Disparity Study as require under JA Croson V. City of Richmond, VA Supreme Court. No mention about M/W/DBE participation how they arrived to those numbers in some case it might reflect reverse discrimination within the system and would open up a lawsuit against the city. City Code Enforcement has not even complied with New York State Building Codes for which it has given building occupancies a least two business which now they are in noncompliance with accessibility standards for person with disability for which Federal, State, County, and local public money was used to open their business, for which person with mobility impairment can't even gain access to the building. Nothing in the plan about transportation, and sidewalks and curb cuts to help with attaining accessibility in the City. Also, Mayor's staff has not complied with the President Obama stimulus money for which no jobs were created just retains. The City has not even complied with the Title II requirement of the American with disability Act of 1990 or 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act. As with not doing a Self evaluation, notices requirement of compliance, designating a qualified disability coordinator, or adopting grievance procedures. The City's Taskforce for the Disabled has not been enforced since its disbandment in July of 2006. I was one of the persons that former Mayor Jurczynski had asked to start the task force in January 2002, and the disability community partners had given up on the current Mayor Stratton's Staff refusal to set goal and priorities to help person with disability to stay in the community of their choice and eliminate barriers witch still exist in the City of Schenectady. Also many of the goals don't meet with Specific, measurable, aligned, realistic and time-framed (S.M.A.R.T.) to help person with disabilities improve their access to services, program and activities in the City of Schenectady. Nor do they meet any type of it not accomplish then how do we back up and restart to make sure that they are accomplished that called accountability. There are many more mistake in the C.D.B.G. five year plan, but three minutes time public comment is not enough time to get everything in and also the city should be more responsible when it writes a document like this than to do a rush job of cut and pasting to make it look good. I'm available any time to help the Mayor's staff if they really want to do the job right.

Ed August – Schenectady – Once again the Consolidated Plan and the City is partnering with Community Land Trust and Habitant for Humanity and we will

provide a response to your plan and we will do it at a later date. I hope this is o.k.
Thank you.

Rev. Van Stewart, Friendship Baptist Church, 409 Union St., Schenectady – I am here for SICM, Schenectady City Ministry. I am here today on #1 to thank Dick Purga and the Mayor for allowing us to look at the 2010-2014 Plan. I think some of the changes that we were able to make are moving in the right direction, my only concern is that as we go forward that we continue to look at CDBG money and other funds that a considerable amount is targeted towards lower minority complaints. I do understand that money is necessary to make over all budgets so that City keeps on moving that we don't incur bigger tax increases, but it is also what I see is that if we do not target the areas in need, that we will have a nice piece of paper five years from now. We have to have the programs that move things happen.

Stacy Midge – Schenectady – I am one of the ministers from the First Reformed Church and a Schenectady Resident. First of all, I would like to thank those who worked on the Consolidated Plan it has a positive vision for this City, and for addressing some significant issues for our quality of life together in this Community and for setting upon a course. I think, in general set toward a safer and more vibrant Community, however, there are two points to address, first of all I would like to urge a consideration towards a more detailed plan for housing improvement relying on code enforcement and demolition, which I believe is over emphasized in the plan but relying more on development especially with federal income abstain for housing. Second, the crime rate in the City is an issue that effects the quality of life and I believe that issue receives very little treatment in this plan, so I encourage more emphasis on crime reduction and on improvement on our police force.

Rev. Michael Hogan – Schenectady – Good Evening! My thanks to the City Council for allowing me to express some ideas even though I am unable to be present in person. There is, in the City of Schenectady, not only a housing crisis but also a crime crisis. I believe these two things belong together. Crime is bred where there is little investment in one's own housing. It is not surprising that where the crime rate is high so is the owner-occupied housing low. Where neighborhoods will not or cannot take responsibility for the cleanliness of their streets and yards, crime will breed. But this is a whole neighborhood issue. Here and there particular home owners strive to keep up but the housing stock surrounding them is so poor and owners are so absent that it is a losing battle. While Green Houses are a wonderful need for the environment and plus for the City, housing needs for low and middle income people is of far more immediate

need and that is where the money needs to be spent now. The time is right for us to invest heavily in our housing stock if we are to create safe neighborhoods and increase our tax base. I would also like to take a moment to thank Mr. McCarthy for his stand not only on this issue but also on the issue of the Schenectady School District. The reputation of the District is so poor it serves as a deterrent to families with children from moving into the City. This is a killer to any plans to revitalize our City through Housing, redevelopment or crime reduction initiatives. Ultimately, without good, even superior schools, our people will not be able to compete in the regeneration of the Capital District that is now occurring. I concur with him that too many on the School Board and the Administration are responsible for this sad state and that the time for hand-wringing and excuses is over. Thank you for your attention.

Rev. Phillip N. Grigsby – Director of Schenectady Inner City Ministry and a city resident, homeowner and tax payer for now a generation and counting. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Consolidated Plan which I believe is a blueprint, or road map for the city’s policies. While long it is not just a technical document. It should say “What are the city’s strategies?” in all the areas of the plan. It should be living document. The purpose of the Plan is to chart out the spending that comes into the city for programs to primarily benefit low and moderate income people. The challenge in charting the spending is that there are too many needs and there are conflicting priorities. Once the federal government disposed of revenue sharing, it left these funds, and primarily the Community Development Block Grant, or CDBG, as under pressure to fill in the gaps in the city’s budget. Those pressures are real but there needs continual dialogue on the balance of funding which is expended by the City and funds that are contracted out to others. There is not time to present to you detailed comments on the full 75 plus page ConPlan. I plan to send you detailed material soon under separate cover. I appreciate the City’s gains this past year in public participation. A community group and the city co-hosted an input session at State Street Presbyterian Church. Attached to this is one of the summaries of that session that shows community input. There was as well for the first time a small citizen’s committee that reviewed the investor result targets. It is critical that these processes be continued and expanded. I encourage a follow up session at State Street Presbyterian to “report back.” I encourage the committee to add additional members and meet a least quarterly and certainly to review the results of the first year and make needed changes. An ongoing citizen’s committee can review the results of the activity each year, applaud when goals are reached, and make changes when goals are not reached. In addition the plan is adaptable year by year and should be as circumstances are changed or opportunities arise. At this point I want to briefly make one additional overall comment and five specific points, which even these there is likely not time for. Overall, I ask that the draft plan be

adopted soon there is still a goodly amount of updating in it that needs to be done. For example: attached is specific language on the HIV/AIDS section thanks to Sharon Carter. The “Anti-Poverty Strategy” on page 57 is only one page (it should be expanded) and alas refers, to JOBS etc which ended several years ago. The “Barriers to Affordable Housing” section starting on page 44 has analysis and solutions that in my experience do not fit our city well and at least need further discussion by those who work on affordable housing every day. I could go on but I ask you and as many as possible to read the draft plan, make specific comments, take some additional time with it to update it, improve it, and vote it later. Some specifics: First, the “Families and Youth” targets are much improved. I would ask consideration to add a “basic human needs” section to give the City the option of assisting with basic needs such as food and medicine that you did this past year. Thank you again for that addition. Second, the “Housing” Investor targets continue what I believe to be an over reliance on code enforcement as housing policy. The current CDBG budget puts \$800,000 into code enforcement. I know the officers work hard; my comments are not personal but relate to policy. As a housing policy, code enforcement is modest one. It needs to be done; but it is after the fact. It always is reactionary, in that it reacts to what is. It is very difficult to enforce with the elusive absentee owner who is usually the one cited. It is unclear what if any effect it has on homeownership. And it may be negative: because it has to be zero tolerance (it has to be fair and even handed) that it makes the stereotypical mostly good neighbor who only has peeling paint complain about the boarded up house down the street that never seems to get fixed. Adding a goal to the target is better than the previous ones – but to say 70% compliance begs the question of what compliance means because measurement in the field is complex. I believe that more could be achieved with less reliance on code enforcement and instead starting some targeted homeownership strategies. Increasing homeownership is a critical public safety issue. One way this could be done with CDBG would be, for example, a pilot with what is called in the field employer assisted housing. With the Golub Corporation moving to Nott Street, how about approaching them with a pilot program to match for down payment assistance to people who would move within walking distance? It would help parking, traffic, and Foster Avenue among others. Even a relatively small grant can make a difference as Union College discovered on Seward Place. Or Ellis could be approached. You get the idea. Third, while I like green houses, and I appreciate all the effort that has been put into them, there needs to be a better balance between resources going into green houses and dealing with abandoned/boarded up/eyesore housing. I appreciated that the Mayor, the Corporation Counsel, and others did a walk about in part of Vale. How about a pilot program to work in a small neighborhood like where we walked to focus on renewal, whether it be by acquisition, approach to developers, outreach, etc. We can’t do the whole city but we can begin a neighborhood or part at a time. Then it makes sense to focus the

street paving and any sidewalk program if possible in the area. Fourth, the “Jobs and Employment” targets are good but it is unclear how they would be met. These goals are critical but have been essentially unmet the last two years. I would recommend that the target be that the City encourages a one year feasibility study for employment/placement/retention programs such as STRIVE that have worked successfully elsewhere; and then support it if feasible. STRIVE is a best practices model from elsewhere and touted by Sen. Schumer and others and needs a change here, or some other related model. Fifth, the “Neighborhoods” continues the support for funding of police officers through CDBG. I continue to believe that “Public Service” funding should be what the person on the street believes to be public service – grants to Carver, the Arts Centers, etc. I urge the city to eliminate the target for police entirely. Again this is not a personal but a policy comment. By doing so the city avoids having to continue a separate category called “neighborhood revitalization.” In addition through the efforts of the state’s IMPACT program, Weed and Seed, and now the federal stimulus package more resources are available for paying for officers. Then I would urge the City insert a target to “hire a full time Neighborhood Liaison staff member to be the link between the city and neighborhoods on implementing the Schenectady 2020 plan, including but not limited to setting specific targets for each neighborhood each year, reporting regularly on progress of the plan’s implementation, and acting as liaison between City Hall and the neighborhoods on the implementation of the plan. Thank you again for your consideration.

Mark Townsend – Schenectady- I’m from the Vale Community Organization and I would like to say, in spite of Catherine Green’s passing that we will keep on doing the work she cared so much about. On the Consolidated Plan, I only have two comments; one is the Enterprise Community, I did not know that was still going on and my other concern is with the 70% compliance with the code. I’m hoping that people will go along with the Chairman’s idea of looking at the worst housing in the City and I congratulate you on that and I hope Code enforcement looks more at the houses. My concern is about planning, we have 2020 plan and as far as I know, no one has been hired to work on the plan. I assume that this will be another thing, thrown on Steve Strickman’s desk. Steve has a lot of work to do, the web site show 30 studies currently on your website about this City. We have a lot of studies we need staff and time put in to make sure studies don’t sit on a shelf and become reality in this City.

Seeing no other speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared this Public Hearing closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Blanchfield moved that the minutes of City Council meeting of December 14, 2009 and the Organizational meeting of January 4, 2010 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Ms. Brucker. Hearing no objections, Mr. McCarthy declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official:

From Paul Lafond a letter recommending the award of the "Chlorine Gas" to JCI Jones Chemicals, Inc. of Sarasota, Florida in the amount of \$19,162.50, the lowest bidder.

From Paul Lafond a letter recommending the award of the "Furnishing Supplies and Equipment" to Vellano Bros. of Latham, N.Y. in the amount of \$83,707.74, the lowest bidder.

From Paul Lafond a letter recommending the award of the "Purchase of Ortho Phosphate Corrosion Inhibitor" to ESC Environmental, Inc. of Glenville, N.Y. in the amount of \$75,862.50, the lowest bidder.

From Paul Lafond a letter recommending the award of the "Hydrofluosilicic Acid" to Thatcher Company of New York Salt Lake City, Utah in the amount of \$71,584.00, the lowest bidder.

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Blanchfield: I would like to address items #'s 5, 6, 7, & 8, which were just part of communication read by our Clerk. We had gone out to bid various chemical and equipment items for the Water Department to keep our water pure and clean and also to make sure our pipes do not get corroded. Those of you who come here regularly know that these are items that we address right about this

time. I'm very pleased that they had come in within budget and actually got under budget so our actual bidding had improved and some of these bidders have come from far and wide to bid on our goods that we require and has resulted in some savings. This went well for purchasing these chemicals. Thank you.

Mr. Della Sala: I simply want to remind everyone that the Martin Luther King Coalition Program, honoring Dr. King will take place on Sunday, January 17th, at the United Methodist Church, 603 State Street, the March is at 2:00 p.m., the program will be at 2:30 and at this time I would like to make a motion that a Resolution be prepared in honoring Dr. King.

Mr. McCarthy: It has been moved by Mr. Della Sala, I entertain a motion for unanimous consent to move on to the agenda as item 4A, recognizing Dr. King's contributions and to be presented at the ceremonies on Sunday, moved by Mr. Della Sala seconded by Mr. Allen. All in favor first moving it to the unanimous all signify by saying "Aye" and secondly on moving this to the consent agenda, signify by saying "Aye" and opposed. Item will appear on the consent agenda as item 4A Honoring Dr. King.

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:

Mr. Planck: Last week we had a presentation by the Mayor's staff talking about moving TIF money for redevelopment and there were some thing that needed to be addressed. One of them is that we would be borrowing money over the next twenty years against future taxes increase. There is no way that a developer can put \$200,000 homes in Hamilton Hill or Mt. Pleasant, this would only happen in priority areas. You need to look at borrowing on the future.

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 –

Resolution No. 2010-04
Resolution No. 2010-05

Adopted Unanimously
Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2010-06	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-07	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-08	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-CS-01	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-CS-02	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-CS-03	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-CS-04	Adopted Unanimously

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:

Mary McClain: I am very much opposed to the Tax Increment Financing Proposal. I am going to tell you why. Mr. Strickman gave me all the ammunition that I need and I am going to use his figures. According to Mr. Strickman Thirty deteriorated houses each assessed at the typical \$62,000.00 for a decaying structure, generate a total \$73,500.00 in taxes each year. Replacing them with 30 new houses assessed at \$200,000.00 each would generate \$237,000.00 in annual taxes. Let's change the word "houses" to people. After all, people pay the taxes. If people were living in 30 dilapidated houses each household would pay \$2,450.00 a year. Conservatively, that is what the city loses every time a policeman moves out of Schenectady. Currently, approx. 80 members of the police force live elsewhere. Eighty people not paying \$2,450.00 leaves the City with a loss of \$196,000.00 annually. If we go with the higher assessed house each household would pay \$7900.00, eighty people not paying \$7900.00 annually on high assessed houses means a net loss of \$632,000.00 every year. Add department heads, and other city workers to that 80 number and we are talking about a loss of serious money that could be used for development. Mr. Strickman uses Chicago as a model. Does Council want to emulate Chicagoans? That bunch is in jail and if they are not, it means they haven't been caught yet. The newspaper article that reported these figures mentions that Council has exhausted all avenues. Not so, get the law changed so that Metroplex is not barred from using its sales tax revenue for city homes. Residents pay the sales tax. They should get a piece of the action. As for the police, take that item out of the contract. If I were in your seat, I would have cracked that nut a long time ago.

Robert Sander, Halsy Dr.: I would like to know what the City Council is planning on doing about the high taxes in the City. My house is a small house in Woodlawn and is taxed over \$5500 per year. We have to get real and start treating people better. There is for sale signs going up allover the place. What is to happen

when the stimulus package turns out? It is hard to make a living today, the average income in this City is about \$29,000. You as a City Council have to come with something together with the Mayor have to come up with a plan.

Joy Hall: You have to stop the crime in the schools and the gangs on the streets.

Gary A. Farkas, 1177 Summer Avenue: I am from the Schenectady School Board and I am here mainly to address the comments that you made at least weeks meeting and I am here to represent the 10,000 students that were talked about. I want to talk about some of the positive things, because they believe what they see in the papers. First of all, you talk about the graduation rate; it means the number of kids that start in September of freshman and then what percentage of kids graduates four years later. If you take the number of kids from kindergarten to twelve grades our graduation rate is closer to 80% to 85%. Every year we have about 30% turnover on our schools. Let's talk about some of the "good kids" in the bacalori program the first year we only had 10 kids graduate, last year we have 30 graduates, with the diploma a student starts college as a second year student. This saves them money and time. These are all fine kids. In other parts of the High School, we have the fine arts, which is nationally recognized, we have the CISCO Program which is run so well that the people who run it are asked by other schools to teach them how to organized theirs every summer. Our teachers are some of the best in the area; we just got nine more board certified teacher. Our board meetings are open to the public and the budget is open for discussion. If you would like to talk to a board member, I am available anytime. I would appreciate that our students be treated with respect and not be treated like that again.

Barbara Katz – Downtown Schenectady: People are not shoveling their sidewalks and I have to walk in the road. The City has to do something about this.

Sharon Brown – Mt. Pleasant: I am a renter; I have read in the papers that there is a discussion to shift the higher taxes on non-owner occupied property to help make more properties owner occupied. I chose to rent and I work every day to pay my rent.

Vince Riggi – 2138 Campbell Ave: It has come to my attention that there is an awful problem with the tax bills that went out, we will forget about the garbage fee that has been messed up, but people that went to small claims and were granted relief, well it is not on the tax bill. I don't know how this could happen, it is as wrong as wrong could be. I have to say that it goes back to the way the

whole process was handled to begin with, there was utter contempt for the tax payer right from the beginning of this whole process, from going to the Helenic Center, making people wait in lines, if they did not get relief there, they went to small claims. In small claims the city has an attorney present. So the hearings are not informal, so the people that go to small claims and win and get relief, there tax bill and the assessed value stays the same. Not what the Hearing Officer said it was, so many people who win through small claims pay taxes through Escrow. These people have no idea that there assessment was not traduced. The taxpayers has to get a hold of his mortgage company, the tax bill goes directly to them. The mortgage companies are not happy about this at all, because they have to do another review of the Escrow accounts. So who made this mistake? I hear the blame is going to the people that printed the bills. Well, they only printed the information that was given to them. I know the re-assessment data on the web-site is still the old figurers. So what is going on here? Is Mr. Mastro on this, he is the only one who knows how this system works. So, what happened Mr. Mastro? This is terrible, this is affecting 200 or 300 and that's just a guess. What about the tax levy, what does that put our tax rate at. Is our tax rate correct? I don't think so. O.K., My question is how can this happen? I believe Mr. Mastro should be dealt with. This man should be called on the carpet by the Mayor, this is terrible.

Frederick Lee – 706 Stanley Street: I am President of Schenectady United Neighborhoods and Schenectady Neighborhood Watch. I'm here on a relatively happy subject. Schenectady Neighborhood Watch is going to offer a Logo Contest, throughout the City. For further information you will find my contact information on the City web-site and it is also on the Police Department web-site, so if there is any resident of the City of Schenectady would to join in on this contest. We are offering a \$50 gift certificate to a downtown restaurant or a downtown retail store, to help stimulate some business down there. Hope that the word spreads because it is your neighborhood watch. Another thing I would like to mention is that we lost one of our SUN Delegates, Catherine Green who was part of SUN when I came to this City. She contributed greatly to the City of Schenectady and she will be missed.

Catherine Canavan – 1172 Rugby Rd: Last week it was reported about increasing crime rate effect the Schenectady Schools graduation rate as a mother of high school student. I find this comment disturbing, as parent liaison for Schenectady School District. I work to foster parent involvement and to expand the District's mentoring and volunteer program and in Schenectady we have 26 parent organizations who work to create a welcoming school and support student and provide parents with resources. When Mr. McCarthy comments appeared in the newspaper a parent actually called me and asked who Gary McCarthy is?

Does he have kids in our school? Does he volunteer? If you believe that students are the blame for Schenectady ills, then I have a solution, January is National Mentoring Month. Mentoring students has been called on of the most effective prevention, interventions for risk children. So I am here to invite the Mayor and Council and City Hall Employees to step up and help our risk children.

Mr. McCarthy: I have served as a mentor at the high school and I think it is a great program. If anyone has the time they really should consider that.

Thomas Reifenheiser - Argyle, New York: I come to you today on a property at 23 Hawk Street. I was advised by Steve Strikhman, according to his understanding the building has been converted sometime during the 50's from a three family house into a 12-unit apartment building, which is currently today. He stated that if I was able to furnish proof that the building had always been a 12- unit apartment that I could continue to operate it as such. In fact, I did furnish the proof, I went to the City archive and there I found a 1930 directory which listed 12 apartments in the building. I have not heard back from Mr. Strichman, he says he is in contact with the City lawyer, but I have not heard from either of them. In short I would like to be a business partner with the City of Schenectady. I would like to develop this property and potentially others. I have been a property developer and landlord for the past 7 years during which time some were in the main street areas. In short I would like to renovate and operate 23 Hawk Street the way it was originally used.

Ginger & George LaFremere, 25 Hawk Street: We have lived at 25 Hawk Street for 25 years, the building at 23 Hawk Street has been vacant for at least 10 years for except a few days about four summers ago that a couple moved in without a stove and the boiler pooped out. They cooked on hibachis on the front porch for a few days and then moved out. We are asking that this building not be allowed to operate in this resident neighborhood. This type of dwelling draws the dregs of the City, the building being operated more like a motel than a residence with drug dealer, prostitutes with using the tiny apartment for their customers. Usually the only thing they would move in would be a dirty mattress and a garbage bag full of cloths. No rugs are laid down, no curtains are hung. The sound in the building echo and you can hear everything and I mean everything. Every human sound you can imagine times twelve. Now I'm going to say some ugly things here but they have to be said. We endured a wet-brain alcoholic, who would lean out his window to vomit, a step-father who was jailed for abusing his girlfriend's baby sexually with a hot curling iron, a single teen mother who verbally and physically abused her child, prostitutes and their customers, the all-night parties, fights, stranger coming and going all night looking for the dope store and thinking our house is the spot. We can go on and on. For the better part

of 25 years my husband has shoveled the sidewalks and moved the garbage from lawn without any compensation. We have struggled to keep our little neighborhood stabilized with many of the homes owner occupied but if undesirable activity moves in good people move out.

Tony Buonome – Bellevue: Last week in the paper, on the Editorial Paper, there was a comment on the heating of City Hall. I went down to turn in my STAR papers and it was very hot in this office. If these offices are that hot, the heat should be cut back.

Pat Zollinger- Schenectady: I didn't congratulate Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Blanchard and Mr. Blanchfield on their new term of office and also with the beginning of your new terms, the New York State Retirement System has new regulations that effect elected officials that took office after August 12, 2009, so that only effects the three newly elected Council people. Also, I would like to congratulate Mr. McCarthy on being President of the Council and to note you have taken on some really ambitions goals for this year with respect to the schools and the landlords. It may be a little bit out of the scope of the Council but I do wish you success. The only other issue I have is, I received on my tax bill with what was referred to as an administrative fee, added on this is a citation for a minor violation, like over grown grass or garbage cans left out, which people may or may not receive since it is subjectively applied. This fee was attached to my tax bill, I normally do not get my tax bill, it goes to the bank, this sort of thing affects every tax payer, and because it may be added to your tax bill and you would not even know it. What this administrative fee, when it is attached to your property tax bill does it deprive me of my Constitutional Rights, the right to due process, the right to challenge the actualization, the right to face the accusers and the right to offer a defense. Mr. McCarthy you have a law enforcement background and I urge you to look into this procedure on the Administrative Fees.

Harry Brand – 2108 Van Rensselaer Dr.: I sure hope that 2010 will be a wake-up call for all elected officials from our Federal Government to our State and to our City here especially. I don't care how you got elected or how much you have in your campaign fund; it is time for the people in this City to get involved how you spend our money. Over time need to be cut out. Mr. McCarthy, I hope some of the things you propose become fruitful.

Sarah Michener – Eric Boulevard: I'm here to speak about the State Environmental Quality Review, the Negative Declaration which is a notice of determination of Non-significance for the project number PIN 1757.46, you approved this on the 9th of November 2009, the City of Schenectady as lead agency has determined that the proposed action described, will not have a

significant environmental impact and a draft impact statement will not be prepared. First, let me mention a most recent article on the Trust Co. building, and the underground gas tanks and soil ground water were contamination with cancer causing chemical in excess of New York State standards. I'm asking the Council to invalidate the Negative Impact Statement and revisit the issue.

Bill Drake – Union Street: I just want to make a note that 839 Eastern Avenue has a big spray painted number on it on the door. My kids go to Schenectady schools that's the main reason I stay in the City. The things that the school provides for the students and how the student excels over there are quite admirable. I was disheartened by the comments of Mr. McCarty, that was made about the students and the school board and I was surprised that Mr. Della Sala didn't jump in because he tells us how great the relationship is between the school and the City. The main thing I have to say is as a leader you have to take the high road.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Mr. Allen: There is a few things I have some concern about, one of them is that the lady was hit a killed on Broadway, she was a very active person, did a lot of work at the VFW up on 5th Street and involved in a lot of activities. I think some of the problem is people are walking in the road or speeding. I think speeding is a big problem, something has to be done.

Ms. Margaret King: Two people tonight mentioned the loss of Catherine Green. I just wanted to comment on that also. She was just such a wonderful human being and contributed so much to the City and particularly to the activities in the Vale neighborhood and I'm going to miss her. I think we all miss the very positive way she approached the City issues and her real concern for the City Of Schenectady.

Ms. Blanchard: I was surprised and disappointed to read that the City was canceling its Winter Carnival, this has been a tremendously successful event over the last three years and it's the sort of quality of life event that I believe good cities should organize. In addition, the lake is not being plowed for skating, because we don't have a vehicle light enough to say on top of the ice. Is there a chance that maybe Union College has a vehicle that is light enough? They like to do favors of us otherwise; maybe the County has a vehicle that we could borrow. Mr. President and Mr. Allen, could we discuss the matter of the Winter Carnival and plowing the rink at the next committee meeting?

Mr. Blanchfield: I would like to echo my colleague comments about Catherine Green. She was a contributor to our community and with her quiet way she had such a tremendous impact on not just her neighborhood, but the City as a whole. She had a wonderful graceful manner and she will be missed terribly. There are some issues that come up on housing and the schools. I just want to make very clear that no one on the floor and least of all Mr. McCarthy is blaming the students in this district for any of the difficulties in the school district has had. The problems of housing and our schools are largely caused by poverty and the concentration of poverty in a City like Schenectady. That stems largely from the failure of some of our surrounding communities. It's their failure to share some of the responsibilities and costs of housing people of modest means and also to share the costs of educating children who, due to poverty, have very little parental support. You can't just fix the problem of poverty by just giving someone a house they cannot take care of and you can't fix poverty by offering someone high school courses, when no one is around their home to make sure they show up for class. I think the criticism that was made was really one of the leadership at the top. I really don't want to put words into Mr. McCarthy's mouth, but we do have the minutes of the last meeting available if anyone would like to see what he actually did say and hardly criticism of our student and many are very accomplished and have done a wonderful job. There are some leadership issues that need to be addressed and we can not hide from that.

Mayor Brian Stratton: Just a couple of comments, look forward to Commissioner Olsen being able to explain our budget cuts, which unfortunately took out the Winter Carnival. To address that issue and it was part of the reduction; we were making as we were going through the budget and making every effort to challenge our department heads to reduce their budgets, but Mr. Olsen will address that. Mr. Riggi, I'm not aware of the tax bill situation with respect to those people who challenged the tax bills in small claims court and did receive mandated relief, so I will look into that. I was aware of the senior exemption the garbage bill an error. I certainly join my colleagues on the City Council in mourning the passing of Catherine Green. I was in Albany last week for the Governor's State of State speech; it was remarkable in its brevity and its absence of any new initiatives really. There were a couple and one is the neighborhood stabilization program, which won't benefit us immediately, but will be targeted toward the five largest cities in the state. To provide money for housing stabilization for demolition, to do some of the things discussed tonight on rehabilitation housing. There was also the Excelsior Jobs Program which was proposed to take the place of the Empire Zone Program, which we benefited from tremendously but the good news on the Excelsior Program it targets industry that are already emerging in Green jobs energy efficiency, the things that GE is doing so those are exciting initiatives, but not much in the way of money an as you

know we had \$1.2 million withheld from our State aid payment that we received on December 15th and we have not received that money yet. In addition to that the Governor is scheduled to unveil his budget on January 19th, 2010 and we have every expectation that his proposal will have a permanent reduction in our State Aid from 2% to 10%, the higher number more likely. So, if those cases are to be believed and hold true then there is a \$2.4 million short fall and if you remember we used \$4.6 million money out of our fund balance to achieve our "0%" tax hike in 2010. The fund balance is going away fast.

President Mr. McCarthy: In the next Council Meeting I would like to get a little organization in the sign-up process for Public Hearing and Privilege of the Floor on Agenda items and on City Business. It is hard to keep track of up here and so we will have separate signup sheets for each event so it will be organized better compiled by the Clerks Office. Tony Buonome, regarding hot air in this building, this Council has done its best to generate hot air and we will try to work it out with the Mayor to level it out so that our room doesn't get too hot. On the School Board, I welcome the discussion, welcome the debate, we have our problems. We are not perfect in City Hall, we map out changes and we should not be afraid of comments and discussion and if you don't do some of those things, things don't change and you don't make things better.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

**BY EILEEN M. VERSACI
CITY CLERK**