

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – FEBRUARY 8<sup>TH</sup>, 2010**

The meeting was called to order by Council President Gary R. McCarthy at 7:15 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy asked the Chamber to pause for a moment of silence.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Ms. Brucker 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 Denise K. Brucker, Mark W. Blanchfield, Margaret C. King, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard and Gary R. McCarthy

Absent – Joseph L. Allen

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

**MAYOR STRATTON’S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**2010 State of the City Address**

Thank you Mr. President.

City Council Members, Reverend Clergy, and fellow citizens of Schenectady.

I appreciate this opportunity to report to you on the State of our City.

From time to time since becoming Mayor, I have come before you to speak to the condition, accomplishments and challenges ahead for Schenectady. Because of the magnitude of the financial challenges before us, both this current fiscal year and in the year to come, tonight I would like to use this forum to speak to you and to our citizens almost exclusively about those challenges. While it has often been my practice, and that of previous mayors, to use this time to propose new programs and initiatives for our city, the reality is that there is little if any new funding available to begin or to support such *efforts* no matter how great our need may be. As I presented during the Council’s Committee Meeting Session last week, we already face marginal financial challenges just six weeks into 2010, but far more formidable economic obstacles will come next year. For that reason, it is important that we begin to work together now to address them. I believe that we can live within our current \$78.05 million adopted budget. Some adjustments will be required to make up for the projected reduction of \$236,000 in State aid proposed by the Governor. We are already taking steps to address the 2010 shortfall. Effective immediately, I have instructed our Department Heads and Administrative leaders to institute the following changes with respect to the 2010 Budget to offset the potential loss of State

Aid and to achieve additional savings going forward. With the exception of Public Safety, we will freeze new hiring on at least six previously approved and budgeted positions, and carefully examine any unplanned or unbudgeted employment needs between now and the end of the year. The projected savings with that adjustment is \$260,000

- We will freeze all budgeted, but non-emergency Equipment Purchases in our budget, saving an estimated \$100,000
- We will reduce Travel, Training and Conference expenditures by \$50,000
- And, with the exception of Police and Fire, we will reduce and strictly limit our approval for non-emergency Overtime or Comp Time for employees, to save \$200,000

Although those savings alone can more than offset our projected 2010 shortfall, it is only part of the problem we need to act now to correct. According to the five-year budget projections submitted to and approved by the State Division of the Budget and the Comptroller, in order to maintain the current level of city services now provided, and to do so without a property tax increase, we will need to make adjustments totaling \$12.8 million. Revenues are expected to decline significantly next year - or be \$8.1 million less. At the same time, expenditures are forecast to rise by \$4.7 million next year. Continued reductions in our State Aid, significantly less available Fund Balance to apply to a new budget, a lower return on our Tax Lien sales, and other factors in the financial marketplace all contribute to an expectation for lower revenues in 2011.

So, in addition to the budget corrections we must put in place for the current year, what can we plan to do now to increase revenues and cut costs for 2011? We believe there are real opportunities to increase revenues through the following means: First, we need to continue our fight to restore Schenectady's level of State Aid to a more equitable and fair proportion. Even with the 2 to 8 percent reductions sustained by most cities in the Governor's proposed budget, Schenectady still lags behind cities of similar or even smaller size. Our \$11.6 million annual share is smaller than Troy's \$12.7 million, less than Niagara Falls annual \$18.3 million payment, and below the \$16.7 million the City of Utica now receives from the State each year. We can also work to recover more of the nearly \$4 million in remaining delinquent property taxes in the city. We estimate that working with a collection firm, or even stepping up our own efforts, we could recoup \$500,000 to increase our cash flow. By carefully examining and restructuring the more than 100 individual fees currently charged in the city, not including any proposed increase to the Garbage Fee, our revenues can be boosted by \$200,000.

These fees, which help to defray the cost of government services, include building permits, curb cuts, parking fees, rental certificates, and many others. They have not been adjusted in many years and have not kept pace with the cost of the services they support. Our Fire Department is now examining the practicality and feasibility of billing insurance companies for more of the nearly 9,000 emergency medical assistance calls made by our Fire Paramedics each year. We believe that by doing so there may be as much as \$500,000 in new revenue available. That would be far beyond the roughly \$200,000 we currently collect by billing for basic life support services. And there is more potential opportunity to consider: With nearly 30 percent of the city's property tax base classified as tax-exempt, we must continue to seek out the authority to bill those not for profit organizations that consume significant parts of our city services for reimbursement. Seeking legislative home-rule authority to bill for emergency services provided to our not-for-profits would be consistent with efforts undertaken by the New York State Conference of Mayors in the past but never achieved on a statewide scale. We already

know the frequency and cost of emergency response calls to the Union College campus, and to a lesser degree, those services provided to the Ellis Hospital campuses. These organizations are great partners with the city, undeniable assets, and significant contributors to our economy. Yet, they are also consumers of city services. Without approved PILOT payment agreements in place, gaining the authority to bill for those services provided would at least allow a chance for us to remain financially whole. Examining this is part of what we must do to explore each and every opportunity to address the financial challenge before us. We can also act to significantly reduce our projected expenditures for 2011 by doing the following:

- We will begin meeting with our employee unions to seek their cooperation in securing a new, single provider Employee Health Insurance Plan that gives employees and their dependents enhanced services and lower cost to the City. It would literally be a win-win scenario. We believe that a revised, single-provider health insurance plan could reduce our city insurance costs by \$500,000.
- We also will immediately put into place a Worker Safety Program targeted at creating a safer workplace and reducing our Workers Compensation costs by \$200,000. With more than \$1.6 million expended per year on our employee workers comp claims, and thousands of hours in lost productivity, we must do more to curb these costs by improving workplace safety.
- One of the most effective ways we can reduce the cost of government while maintaining services is through staff attrition and turnover. While we should always diligently assess the need to replace employees as they leave city service, those who are hired come onto the payroll in their place are often done so at a lower rate and without the additional compensatory benefits of their predecessors.
- Therefore, a comprehensive Early Retirement Incentive Program must be part of our strategy going forward. We believe there are real opportunities especially within the Police and Fire Departments, where as many as 16 of our senior police officers and other city employees could be eligible and willing to retire under an incentive program. We can rebuild our workforce while rebuilding our financial stability. The long-standing requirement that the City of Schenectady each year be required to make both the City School District and Schenectady County whole for that portion of the city's uncollected property taxes is a huge financial drain, and it puts Schenectady in a somewhat unique and unfair position compared to other local governments. In 2009, our total make-good payments to both the Schenectady City School District and Schenectady County totaled \$4 million – most of that to the School District. It is an obligation that is not borne at all by the City of Albany, and only partially by the City of Troy. In Albany, the county collects all property taxes and makes the city and school district whole for uncollectible. We can change our County obligation through Charter revision. However, the school tax reimbursement obligation issue will need to be modified through State Legislation and home rule. We will ask our representatives in Albany to seek home rule legislation to make these changes happen. In short, each taxing district – City, School or County – should be individually responsible for collecting property taxes and ultimately for their respective portion of delinquencies. By doing so, perhaps greater spending accountability and discipline can be brought to School spending, which accounts for more than half of our Schenectady property taxes. But that's not all. We must also seek systemic ways to bring real change to the way our local government services through consolidation and cooperation. We know the ways in which we have already moved effectively in that direction. The consolidation of our vehicle maintenance, the sharing of our Salt Shed with the County and others, the fueling of City School District vehicles at our city gas pump, Centralized Dispatch among our county's public safety operations. We must continue to

explore additional opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government through consolidation of service and intermunicipal cooperation. As you know, we will soon get underway with a comprehensive study of our improving our police operations. A \$50,000 high-priority government efficiency grant from the Department of State will allow us to study opportunities to reduce costs within our department and through consolidation of services among departments, and even the potential for the complete consolidation of whole municipal departments in the county into a single Police / Public Safety unit. We must not prematurely dismiss the potential or opportunity to realize practical solutions to our daily policing challenges and annual costs – and the opportunity to provide tax payers – not only within the City but also among other parts of Schenectady County, with real savings and improved public safety services for all taxpayers. We will begin by moving forward with the study to be conducted by Columbia University based upon researchers’ original outline submitted to us during the summer. Whether the results of that study show that there are benefits to be gained by fine-tuning our own operations internally, or combining one or more of our services with another neighboring municipality – whole or in part – we know not now. Whatever it shows will ultimately be the impetus for guiding us forward. Similarly, we will soon apply for a second \$50,000 High-Priority Government Efficiency Grant from the State Department to examine the potential of cost savings and service improvements by combining the city’s and county’s snow-plowing and other public works operations. Just as we have learned the benefit sharing maintenance services with the county six years ago, we will go further. Our new \$23 million City Public Works Garage will come online later this year, opening up the opportunity to provide more efficient and effective delivery of street maintenance, waste collection, sewer repair, salting, plowing and fueling.

This state of the art facility in short order will begin to pay returns in saved energy and the establishment of a safer work place for our employees. And it opens up new opportunities to save through shared services. Under the direction of Commissioner Olsen, our City Public Works operation will also partner with Schenectady County to work from the new Bureau of Service to rebuild, paint and repair selected vehicles from within the county’s public works fleet. Our new garage will offer the room and modern amenities needed to perform that work quickly, efficiently and safely. President Obama’s recently proposed Federal Budget for 2010-2011, and the \$150 Billion Jobs Bill now being considered by Congress, offer the only tangible hope for the kind of additional significant spending Schenectady needs to address the daunting needs of improving our neighborhoods. Street and infrastructure reconstruction, demolition of blighted abandoned housing and commercial properties, improvements to parks and the creation of more green space, and catalyst projects to spark new economic growth are all possible if funding proposed through the Jobs Bill and the President’s Budget are approved. A few weeks ago, I joined about 230 other mayors from around the country to meet with the President, Vice President and nine of his Cabinet Secretaries in Washington D.C. during the U.S. Conference of Mayors annual Winter Meeting. The President and his Administration listened to the near unanimous cry of mayors nationally that the first Stimulus Spending Plan from last year had not gone far enough to create new jobs in their communities or to reinvest in any significant way in the aging infrastructure of their cities. As we joined him inside the White House, the President promised a “continued, sustained and relentless effort to create good jobs.” Some of that promise is backed up by components of the President’s proposed Budget, including a proposed increase in CDBG spending and other dollars to improve neighborhoods with new housing, investments in public

housing and new investments in energy. But the President's budget does not and can not go far enough in and of itself. Congress must complete work on the proposed \$150 Billion Jobs Bill – or “Second Stimulus” Spending Plan – along with an additional \$50 Billion in infrastructure spending proposed by the President. Those funds must be channeled directly to cities directly to train our unemployed to rebuild and repair our neighborhoods. My call in Washington was for something like a second WPA program, which in the 1930s put people back to work and built much of the original infrastructure in Schenectady neighborhoods, parks and city streets. We still see that “WPA” stamp in the concrete sidewalks and structures in our neighborhoods and parks. I believe that same kind of effort, coupled with the significant additional spending that is proposed in the Presidents Budget, if done properly, could provide the jobs and investment needed to save our neighborhoods and economic recovery. The future of Schenectady remains bright. Just last week, we dedicated General Electric's new \$45 Million Renewable Energy Headquarters where 650 new hired engineers are working to market and oversee GE's wind power fleet of more than 13,500 wind turbines in the U.S. and Canada. And before long, we will be back at the GE-Schenectady campus to mark the opening of GE's new Hybrid Battery Manufacturing Facility. These state-of-the-art, future-focused Green Industries could have been located by GE anywhere in the world, but they were brought here to Schenectady due to our dramatic change in doing business. That can-do, cooperative spirit will keep us going into the future and pay larger dividends down the road. And so we begin. We begin to work now to stem the economic tide and need to do more with less, and really to plan for the dramatic economic challenges of 2011. Despite the enormity of that challenge, I do believe that the citizens of this city are up to supporting us in that the task. They have showed incredible resilience and ability in times of past challenge. Working together, we can do it again. Thank you for your time and for this opportunity, and thank you for working with me.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. Proposal to amend, and as amended renew and continue the franchise agreement with Time Warner Cable.

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wish to speak on the Public Hearing #1 to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

**Jason Planck** – Schenectady, NY – On previous Public Hearings on Time Warner Cable, when they first took over, we addressed several issues from the “Disabled Community”. We needed a listening devise installed into the Committee Meetings, we have accomplished that. The second piece is for the hearing impaired. We need the “enclosed captioning” done for the taping, and this is an agreement under the Disabilities Act. I'm glad Time Warner has increased its allocation by \$20,000 per year. I'm hoping that the extra \$20,000 will be for the “Enclosed Captioning”; this would help the City Clerk also, because the meetings would be transcribed for the Clerk, all she would have to do is download into her processor and it would take less than thirty seconds. All you need is a stenographic reporting. It would improve the efficiencies.

**John Fenimore** – 10 Cliff Top Dr, Loudonville, NY – I am here to tell of the many failed attempts to have community announcements displayed for the Capital District Association of Rental Property Owners, a not for profit organization that seeks good realizations with tenants, to efficiently maintain properties for the benefit of the community at large. We abide by our code of ethics; we opposed detrimental legislation and support beneficial Legislation and operate to benefit our members. On January 22, 2010, CDAPPO submitted an announcement for its February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 meeting and the announcement is not currently displayed. There are ten announcements displayed that are from the dates of January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 6<sup>th</sup>, all out of date, there are nine announcements from February 7<sup>th</sup> to February 16<sup>th</sup>, currently there are no announcements from February 12<sup>th</sup> to February 15<sup>th</sup> and CDAPPO's announcement is not displayed. The situation was reported to Time Warner's Public Access Line; however they have not responded. This situation has occurred many times in the past. We request Time Warner adopt a higher standard for the community service announcement.

**Gregg Millett** – 738 Bobby Court, Niskayuna – I'm a long time supporter of Public Access, as it existed at SACC, and I will definitely support it at Proctors. I have been Treasurer there, Building Manager and Board Member. Currently, I'm a Producer and my show is "Visions of China and I'm part of Ann Parillo's technical team for doing the "Schenectady today Show". I feel I'm a little late but it is an open hearing. I will tell you my feelings anyway. The franchise got passed to Proctor's; nobody can deny that is a great institution in Schenectady. I think you made a mistake. SACC was and still is a great program and it should not been dissolved and is a great institution in Schenectady. Since some people went way out on a limb and bought that building, I later joined them. I came into the fold with Carla Paige. She was the one that brought me in. I worked with hundreds of people over the years to get that building up to where it is now. It is a beautiful building. I can congratulate the current board on the facade; it just put the icing on the cake. I think you made a mistake taking public access out of it. SACC is fundamentally a democrat institution. It is tough to manage but is critical to democracy. I do want to reexamine the decision to move SACC to Proctors.

Seeing no speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the Public Hearing #1 closed.

2. Amend 2010 Capital Budget in Association with City of Schenectady to Department of Water and Wastewater's Pollution Control Plants "Solids Treatment Upgrades and Cogeneration Project".

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #2 to come forward. Seeing no speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared Public Hearing #2 closed.

3. Proposed Local Law amending Chapter 224 of the Administrative Code of the City of Schenectady to regulate door-to-door solicitation and establish a “Do Not Call” list within the City of Schenectady.

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #3 to come forward. The following speaker rose to be heard and his remarks are summarized.

**Chuck Thorne** – 1831 Eastern Parkway, Schenectady, NY – Based on periodic reviews of ordinances and citizen complaints, the Office of the Clerk has recommended the following changes to the ordinance regulating door-to-door sales in Schenectady:

- Raising fees to be more in line with surrounding communities  
Current – We charge \$20 per company for 42 days, no matter how many solicitors are on the street. New – Company charge will increase to \$250 per company and \$15 for each additional solicitor and the license period will equal the calendar year. Not for profits will be charged \$25.
- To better protect residents from unwelcome solicitation we are instituting a “Do not Solicit” list that will be distributed to each company when they are issued a license. The concept is fashioned after the national “Do Not Call” list for telemarketers. Companies who violate the list will be subject to loss of license and a fine. Residents will be able to sign up in the Clerk’s office. We will also be reaching out to neighborhood, senior and other community groups.
- Change the hours solicitors are allowed to call, so residents do not have to open their doors to strangers. Current – 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. New – 10 a.m. to sunset.
- Replace references to “Office of Consumer Protection” with “City Clerk”.

Seeing no speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the Public Hearing #3 closed.

4. Proposed new Golf rates for 2010 at Schenectady Municipal Golf Course.

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #4 to come forward. The following speaker rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized.

**Jason Planck** – Schenectady, NY – In 2007 when this program began we asked that the Disabled be included in 2008 and 2009. We asked and we are asking for 2010 to have persons with disability be included and be on the senior citizen rate.

P.D Voohis – Schenectady, NY – I came to support what the community wants for an increase in Golf rates. Thank you.

Seeing no speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared Public Hearing #4 closed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Ms. Brucker moved that the minutes of the Meeting of January 25, 2010 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Ms. King. Hearing no objection, Mr. McCarthy declared the minutes approved as submitted.

**COMMUNICATION:**

**Official –**

From the Office of the Mayor a list of Appointments. (dist. 2/8/2010)

**General –**

Four (4) letters of thanks from the following Veteran Organizations for the rental checks from the City of Schenectady:

American Legion Post 1002

Veterans of World War II, Korea & Vietnam

American Veterans of Schenectady Post 35

Gold Star Mother Chapter #7

**Petitions – None**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

None

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)**

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to address the City Council on any matter of the City Business to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

**Gary Farkas**, 1177 Summer Ave. – I am a member of the School Board and we are all in this together. The fact that you guys make us whole doesn't mean that when I vote for a budget, I say that the City is going to pay me for all this at the end of the year. That's not part of the factor, and I don't appreciate it being said that way. None of us do it that way. We do what we feel is best for the School. We are in the process of doing the budget for next year. We have no control over the assessments, so if you are saying that people might not be paying their taxes because they are upset, it might be because of the assessment, not what the schools are doing. We are in this together; we need to work together, that was what our change was at the beginning of the year. When you took office, I would appreciate it if you would do that and come and see us and table this motion for tonight and let's talk about it. It doesn't have to be done next week. Thank you.

**P.D. Voorhis**, Schenectady – the school situation is quite enlightening. I was not aware that this transpired. This is good to know.

Seeing no speaker 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 –**

Local Law No. 01-2010	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2010-01	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-16	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-17	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-18	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-19	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-20	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-21	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-22	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-23	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-24	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-25	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-26	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:

**Jean Hughes** – 1134 Glenwood Blvd. – For the past 25 years, I have lived at 1134 Glenwood Boulevard. My husband Steve and I received a Historic Preservation Society Award in 2007, the same year that Mayor Stratton got one for his supervision of the Rotunda Work in this building. Last July 9<sup>th</sup>, we purchased a beautiful Schenectady style original configuration two family house, directly across the street from us, at 1143/1145 Glenwood Boulevard; we didn't buy it because we wanted to be landlords. We didn't buy to make a huge profit. We bought it because we grew very weary of the criminals, the former criminals that the slumlords rented to. We got tired of watching domestic squabbles on the street at 5:30 in the morning. We got tired of the uncut grass and the unshoveled snow. We inherited a deadbeat tenant from the "slumlord" and it took us until October 28<sup>th</sup> to get rid of him. We have not collected a penny in rent since we took over this property. The keys we were given by that "slum lord" were useless because the tenant had the locks changed. We couldn't rent the upstairs because the downstairs person was just HORRIBLE. Within two weeks, National Grid had to shut his power off for non-payment, so he stole power from the upstairs apartment where we were working. We had to shut that off. Then immediately, he decided to use code enforcement as a bludgeon against us, which he did quite successfully. Needless to say, all manner of damage was done and the situation became very ugly. The police were called several times to no avail. All they could say was "it's his home until you get an eviction". We spent three months watching him destroy our property, now it seems Mr. McCarthy is trying to bludgeon me further with an increase in the tax rate. We spent an awful lot of money getting that property and we have spent a lot of money bringing it up to our standard and we continue to do that. We are the kind of absentee landlord that this city needs. We live across the street, we care about the street, and we live there. In three years my spouse and I will be able to retire. If the City Council insists on penalizing me with a tax rate or a special levy, if the police have to come to the house, you may lose a resident. We may take out pension and go where there is no State Income Tax, No Sales Tax and the property taxes are lower. Thank you.

**Steven Hughes** – 1134 Glenwood Boulevard – When we moved here twenty-five years ago from New Hampshire, we had a choice of any city in the Capital District. We chose Schenectady. We fell in love with this Town; we have a lot of pride in our neighborhood. We think that shows in the way our property looks. It is a telltale sign that your neighborhood is in decline when there is an enormous amount of police calls. We had an opportunity to purchase the property my wife just spoke about and the reason we did was to help save our neighborhood. Once

again, with the tenant we had, there were countless police calls to the point of embarrassment. It was a harassment technique of our previous tenant. What I'll be saying, Mr. McCarthy is we know you are constructing a database and you want some hard numbers on Police activity. What I want to say to you is that there are no more police calls anymore. It's over, it's done, and we fixed the problem. Ok, so when you look back at your database, think again, please keep in mind that the problem has been fixed.

**Barbara Katz** – Downtown Schenectady – I brought this up before. We need stores downtown to buy food, clothing and things like that and we don't need any more restaurants downtown especially if they charge too much.

**Richard E. Squillace** – 1593 Randolph Road, Schenectady – Since you have chosen not to respond to my e-mail of 1/29/10, I will read it publicly and have it put in the minutes of this City Council meeting. By the way, I know you received it because I did receive a failure notice when it was sent. Your police department is out of control. I'm not talking about the vast majority who serve in harms way every day. I'm talking about the few bad cops that we have been paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to stay home, after 30 days, because of "contractual obligation". The city school district plays the song every year. We both know that some Mayor, years ago, gave away the store with this lucrative contract, and we citizens have been paying the bill since then. And don't tell me you are currently negotiating a new contract where you have to give in order to take back. You will later claim (to satisfy taxpayers) that your team made monumental efforts to gain concession. Eventually one side or the other will call in an arbitrator who will award the police and COLA and we will be left with the same old lucrative contract. What you need is a NEW CONTRACT. We both know that you can hire a high-priced labor attorney to break that contract. It will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in the future. Harry S. Truman had a little sign on his desk "The buck stops here." As far as I'm concerned, as CEO of the City, the buck stops right on your desk. Concerning Lt. Hamilton, according to a recent Gazette article, he is officially listed as unavailable for work every day. In fact, a new lieutenant has been hired to perform his duties. So, on those 2 or 3 days when he does put in an appearance, why don't you tell him you have no work for him and send him home? After all, the other lieutenant is doing all his work. By the way, we pay him over \$90,000 to write grievances against the City. How much money (time) does it cost the City to respond to these grievances?

**Jason Plack** – City of Schenectady – This is the season when the city goes out for R.F.P's for construction contracts, professional services and so forth. We still do not have an Affirmative Action Plan for the City and we do not have an affirmative action plan for persons with disabilities. We have no requirement for Section 503 for Affirmative Action for hiring person with disabilities. We have

been asking for these procedures. This contract has not been fulfilled and we have been asking since 2007. Thank you.

**Marva Issacs** – 304 Duane Ave, Schenectady – Mayor Brian Stratton and City Council Members: I am here tonight to talk about the poor treatment of people in low income neighborhoods by Code Enforcement. There are two employees in that department that treat people with a great deal of disrespect. That is Keith Lamp and Elisa Wickham. When they come to the community they talk down to people and actually yell and threaten. They have made demands of people but do not put it in writing on official letterhead. Also, it appears that certain neighborhoods are targeted for intense code enforcement while others are allowed to have violations that go unnoticed. For example, I was given a warning because the numbers on my house were too small and threatened with fine if I did not get larger numbers. Last week there was an article in the paper about a person who lives on Sumner Avenue, has a position with the school board whose house has many code violations. Even though she was given two warnings, Code enforcement, has not taken anymore action in the last 6-8 months. Recently, a business in our community was asked to show certain documents and given one day to do it. In a week's time, Code Enforcement visited that business three times. Also, when a person goes to Code Enforcement to file a complaint, they are not allowed to have a copy. I don't understand why a certain group of taxpayers are treated worst than others or how employees of the City are allowed to make up their own rules. I am asking that these matters be addressed.

**Joy Hall** – Huron Court, Schenectady – We have a big problem with people walking in the road and another thing, people park big trucks at corners and you can't see around them.

**Vince Riggi** – 2138 Campbell Ave., Schenectady – A couple of neighborhood issue came to my attention. Williams Street, Mr. Mayor if you could have someone take a look at it, there is a problem. A lot of the neighbors would like opposite side street parking especially by the school. The other issue is the former Ann's Pizzeria which was Tony's Market after that and had a major fire this fall, it doesn't look good. Something has to happen with that property. I don't know where it's at; the tarp is off the roof and has been off for quite awhile. There is a gapping whole in the roof, I'm sure that structure is not too good and there are business owners there that are not to happy. I know it's not downtown, it's Broadway, but that's our business district, it doesn't look good. And, also, there is a burned out house on Broadway hill and what are you going to do about that? These people are concerned, I don't blame them. That's their livelihood and these issues should be addressed. I liked what the Mayor had to say tonight, there is no way around it. There are some tough times ahead. We shouldn't be making anyone whole from uncollected taxes, especially the school district. Are they collecting taxes on a separate bill? They are not paying the City anymore. There is nothing wrong with them putting a lien on a house themselves, if there is a

problem. I like the idea to let the County collect the taxes and make the City whole, that's a great idea. If you can do that with charter revisions, terrific, do it, that's the way to go. We have to deal with our own issues here, and we have many issues.

**Harry Brand** – 2108 Van Rensselaer Dr – I have been waiting for this State of City Address and there wasn't much in there to impress me. I heard a lot of people clap, and they may have been satisfied. I would like to know what General Electric and Mr. Golub have offered the City in hiring people from our city to work in these places. Our city doesn't hire city residents. You give General Electric a tax break and Mr. Golub a tax break, but, you don't give the taxpayers in the city a break.

**Stan Ducharme** – 115 Maple Avenue – I am a property owner in the City of Schenectady. After trying to steal more of our money by taxing landlords more than residential and commercial property owners because of police and fire calls to rental property, the Assembly and Senate said they are not going to co-operate with, how much money are we going to waste on that, trying to fight that? I wondered if you are going to raise the taxes on all the Municipal House Authority properties in the City. How many Police and Fire calls go to the Municipal Housing Authority? Probably a majority of them, I would imagine. If you do, the whole County will be paying higher taxes. One big problem is Schenectady is the Welfare Capital of New York State. That is why welfare is 70 to 80 percent of the County budget. How can we continue to reward people that are perfectly capable to work and keep them on welfare? To me it is a joke. The working people are sick and tired of paying for everything and everyone. We simply cannot tolerate it anymore. That is why I believe that we are seeing the tide change in this country, like in Massachusetts and other states. When it is your turn to be re-elected, I hope this trend continues. We need people that think like we do, not people that have been on the public payroll most of their careers in one way or another. You look at the people that come here like they are wasting your time. I'm convinced that you sat in a room and tried to figure out ways to steal more of our money by charging more fees. You are not raising taxes, you're just raising fees. By the way, this Stimulus money is our children's and grandchildren's money. This money is being borrowed from China and it is not free money.

**Mary McClaine** – Schenectady – What's Good about Schenectady? – A curious situation occurred at the last council meeting. A teacher suggested to a former student that she do something he had never done and that is to attend a city council meeting and address the Council members. The old adage, do as I say not as I do, holds true here. The student came and spoke favorably about the city and her comments were good. Personally, I do not think there is anything wrong with the City. It's the model citizens who run the place that have the problem. I'll give some examples in a couple of seconds. I took the time to read the full text of the speaker's statement and the statements she solicited from others. The people

wrote that they love their parents, teachers and neighbors. They never mentioned that they like the City's representation. The writers also emphasized the importance of the little things such as sidewalks. Sidewalks allow them to walk to the store for a cup of coffee, see the neighbors, visit the park and teach their children to walk. I wonder how many people know that the City was aware that sidewalks were not included in the stimulus money, when the City agreed to accept the funds for the Van Vranken project. The writers also made a point to emphasize the importance of SICM for the city. It is certainly one of my favorite charities. Yet, when the good reverends come to speak to council on behalf of the least fortunate amongst us, the Council president cuts them off after three minutes. What a misguided sense of democracy! Before I finish, I want to say something about Mr. Mayor, don't even go there. For the past year, the city paid salaries to four policemen who have not worked. And then there is the issue of the PBA President. In the past, I have seen him with papers in hand on back to back days, coming out of the Board of Election Office. Does that office have anything to do with union work? This body receives what union members receive? Change the contract, hurt yourselves. That's a conflict of interest. There are ways to avoid tax increases. Mr. Mayor you and council figure it out.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

**Mr. Blanchfield** – I just want to address some of the things that some of the speakers brought up this evening. In respect to the issue of the school district and working towards the county and schools to collect their own uncollected taxes, I don't look at this as a failure of communication or failure of us to work together; it is a matter of fundamental fairness, to go out and take care of their taxes and take care of it on their own. I would like to point out that this Council in the past has addressed the issue of fact that the City has to bear the expense, the trouble and the consequents of collecting the school districts taxes. When I first came on the Council, that's about eight years ago, members of the finance committee approached the school district the nearly \$150,000 expense involved in collecting the school taxes. We tried to work it out in some way, maybe we'll split it, and some way for the school district to absorb some of the cost, essentially the door was slammed in our face. Mr. Paolino and the Mayor approached the matter again the School District regarding collecting their own taxes and low and behold they were able to work out a situation where they could be reimbursed by BOCES. Now some of the expense is absorbed by the school district itself and in turn is billed back to the State of New York resulting in a saving for all our tax payers. Just over the City line, all the towns enjoy the fact that they are made whole by the County. The first of the year, their tax bills are paid to them by the county. I do want to thank Jean and Steve Hughes for coming in and telling about the property across the street from them. I want to encourage people like the Hughes to come in to give us a better perspective on what we are trying to accomplish with this legislation.

**Mr. Della Sala** – Most people are aware that Steven Colbert brought a little celebrity to the City of Schenectady. I would like to ask the Mayor and City Council to join with the Chamber of Commerce in inviting Mr. Colbert to come to Schenectady and produce one of his shows at Proctor's Theater and take him on a tour and give him the key to the City and show him what Schenectady is all about. Let's try to give him hands on experience for our City. I would like to see an invitation mailed down to him. Thank you.

**Ms. Blanchard** – I would also like to speak about Mr. & Mrs. Hughes in a slightly different vein. I was responsible for giving them an award, they fully deserved it and they are truly heroes to there neighborhood for what they did and I have several neighbors in my area near Union College who have done the same thing. I have mentioned at our Committee Meetings that people that own houses for rental property on their street or in their immediate neighborhood, maybe they could be exempt from any increase taxes because they truly have different motive, which is improving their neighborhood, so are struggling with it and I appreciate anyone who comes down and comments. We all have e-mails and you can comment by using our e-mails, it is at the first letter of our first name and our last name @Schenectadyny.gov. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

**Mayor Brian Stratton** – Just to mention first. Mr. Colbert, I did reach out and try to make a phone call to the show and also the press operation of the comedy channel. I don't have a direct for Mr. Colbert, so if we could find one, I certainly would extent an invitation to come here. I know Union College and the student body was very interest in having him come here to speak and I think we could show him many reasons to not only take a helicopter up here but also a train and see Schenectady for himself. I know there is a gentleman that works at the Schenectady Museum who is traveling to New York City tomorrow to see the show and bringing a basket of items from Schenectady.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY EILEEN M. VERSACI  
CITY CLERK**