

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – JANUARY 10, 2011**

That meeting was called to order by Council President Gary R. McCarthy at 7:00 P.M. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Rev. Emanuel Adams to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Hon. Vincent W. Versaci, Surrogate Judge to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this point in the meeting Mr. McCarthy asked if there were no objections he would like to call upon Judge Vincent W. Versaci to swear in Carl E. Erikson to the City Council.

**Carl Erikson** - Thank you, Judge Versaci for swearing me in today. I'd like to thank my friend Dick Naylor and all my supporters who helped me with the campaign. Thank you for all the time and advice along the way, most importantly to my wife Justine, son Carl and my entire family. I thank you for listening, supporting and all the help that you've provided. Schenectady has its fair share of problems, not unlike other cities across the country, but we are all very lucky as residents. We have a rich history. Great things have happened here. Schenectady is world renowned. People know where Schenectady is and the part we've played in making a better world. Schenectady has been a true player in the global economy. We've proven we have the ability to lead the world. I'd like to take a moment to talk about Risk v. Reward – When we look back in history, the true greats in this world took risks, they risked failure, at times they risked criticism, and they risked financial loss. Sometimes they failed, but only to try again, and again until eventually they were successful. If we want to make this city better, and solve some of the nagging long time problems, we cannot take a conservative approach. I don't believe this soft approach will work. If we want to make this city GREAT, we need to take some BOLD risks. WE NEED TO ACCEPT THE RISK OF FAILURE IF WE HOPE TO BANK IN THE GLORY OF SUCCESS. I feel what is needed in Schenectady to solve these nagging issues are grand gestures. We need to try NEW things. When people say “no that won't work”, or “we can't do that”, or “that's a stupid ideas”, that should anger us, (it angers me) and drive us to prove them wrong. Because it will work, if we put our minds to it, think it through and develop the right smart strategy. It can work! Anything can happen. If people want lower taxes, if the people want safer neighborhood, if the people want refreshed communities, we need to give it to them and we all need to accept the level risk associate with trying to make those changes happen. And if we fail, we will regroup and try again. WITHOUT RISK, THERE IS NO SUCCESS. So I will ask the people of Schenectady, to take some risk, and my fellow council members and the Mayor, to join mw to take some risk. This is our “DARE to BE GREAT MOMENT”. Let's not back down and take the

conservative road. Let's prove them wrong. Let's make it happen. As an elected councilman, I have committed to work to my best ability to think of creative ideas, develop smart strategies and working hard to take the risk necessary to make this city better. I look forward to working with everybody to take those steps, sometimes outside our comfort zone, towards making a difference in Schenectady. Thank you.

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

Present – Council members Joseph L. Allen, Carl E. Erikson, Margaret C. King, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard and Gary R. McCarthy.

Absent – Denise K. Brucker

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

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **1. For Housing and Community Development Needs as Part of the 2011 Consolidated Plan's Citizen Participation Process.**

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to speak on Public Hearing #1 to come forward (7:20 pm). The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

**Karen Grilbey**, 26 Eagle Street – Would like to have the City and County work together to obtain grants to train people for jobs. She went to ONE-STOP that a friend of hers recommended. She called and got an appointment that week. I filed all the paper work that was required and was told that the Committee would review it let me know if it was acceptable. After this a member of the staff telephoned me to tell me to find a less expensive school and was quite nasty to me. I had to fight for my rights and if I didn't know how to keep going I would have been turned down. These programs have to be looked at closely and there is a great need for them. When people lose their jobs their self esteem is very low and need these grants to get back on their feet. Thank you.

**Jason Planck**, 208 Jackson Avenue – Please make sure that the Mayor's staff doesn't shorten my comments and others citizen who have participated in process as they have done in the past. Also, three minute is not enough time to have citizen participation as require under Federal Law to issue the C.D.B.G. grants to underserved population. Also, to have this public hearing on the same day as the REP goes out for C.D.B.G. grants violates the Federal Law that requires Citizen participation to be had before issuing the RFP, when the Mayor's own staff have

provide information to the City Council that there is time for a extinctions without losing any time to get the grant to HUD on time. Five year plan had many mistakes in it and needs to be revised. Also, with the 2011 City's Budget, many significant and major changes have been made to it without any Citizen participation under Federal Law requires a Citizen Participation. No comments and no justification have been made by the Mayor's Staff and have not been provided to the public of these changes and why. So things that need to addressed; The roles of the affirmative action office in regard to jobs and complying with the Federal and State Civil Rights Laws need a complete accountability of that job. Not just checking off a checklist of doing something in realty actually doing nothing. Fair Housing in the City needs to be address in where the City is still without a plan to address both accessibly and affordability of an aging housing stock. City has to address the needs of Person with Disability across the spectrum of needs in the Community and help us to remain independent without relying of Government and Community benefits. City has to work with the County to address elderly care in the City and provide a plan of how they can still stay and remain independent and living at home. City needs to develop polices and procedures in the process of the issuing the C.D.B.G. programs and grants for compliance with accountable under Federal Law. I final comments: the City needs to do a better job of managing the C.D.B.G. programs and ensuring the underserved City's population is being served which is not the case currently.

**Mark Townsend**, 315 Sullivan Street - stated that he would summarize what is wrong with Schenectady. Go to the Rexford Bridge in the morning and then back at night and see all the cars coming in the morning and all the cars leaving at night. When they leave here they are spending our money in other places besides Schenectady. We need our money back.

**Judy Zuchero** - I am program director for the Office of Disability Services, which is located in Room 3 in this building. I am an employee of the Center for Independence and I am promoting independence for people with disabilities. We are very grateful for the funds made available to us though CDBG in the past, 2011 begins our fifth year of working out of City Hall. With this and other Federal Grants we have expanded our services here in City and we hope to continue to do so.

**Marion Porterfield** - I am Site Coordinator for Schenectady Weed and Seed. As we reviewed the CDBG Budget we were looking at the Economic Development Loan Fund and we would like to know how to access it? We have some small businesses that would like to work together and cooperatively. What we need to know is now, do we access this and who do we need to talk to about this type of loan. We would like more money to go into the neighborhoods. Thank you.

**Patricia Zollinger**, City of Schenectady - I would like to remind this Council and the taxpayers of the City of Schenectady that more than 90% of the 3 and half million dollars of CDBG Funding went toward salaries and benefits and that

includes various departments in City Government. And it paid for the salary and benefits for particular non-profits that claims to be improving the City. What people fail to realize is that our Federal Government is lazy in keeping our tax dollars handled wisely. I believe some of the money was used to improve our infrastructure in our neighborhoods. Instead of securing the salary and benefits in City Hall take a risk and give the money to the neighborhood for jobs and sidewalks and things to make residents to feel proud to live here.

**Vickie Hurewitz**, 986 Albany Street - stated that she did not see anything in the CDBG Budget that changes the amendments to the Code and therefore the City is not in compliance.

**Daniel Butterworth**, 615 Nott Street - I am employed by the Schenectady Inner City Ministry and Program Manager of the Damien Center, a drop-in center to provide social and emotional support to members of the HIV Community. I am here tonight to thank you for your past support and here to continue. In spite of great medical advances in the medical field concerning HIV, it is still a concern to our community. We at the center are committed to providing the needed social support that is lacking the lives of people with HIV Aids. These people come to the Center for a hot meal, message therapy and to socialize. This program also gives housing support. We have served over 2500 meals in the 2009 and 2010 funding years and have extended our program to five days a week. The funds from the CDBG Fund are important for the continuation of our program. Thank you.

**Rev. Phil Grigsby**, Director of Schenectady Inner City Ministry, Albany Street - Thank you for your support, our partnership with the City is very important. I appreciate the hearing being tonight, at the open City Council Meeting. But I do believe these public hearings should be in the fall and I do recommend the cycle be changed. This hearing should be held after the evaluation process, so we can shape the goals for the following year. So I do encourage you to alter the cycle. I would like the funding to be put toward a broader housing strategy, which I have spoken to you before. This would include outreach to potential buyers, especially where we could turn renters into owners. Counseling to get people qualified, Technical Assistance for home ownership in keeping with Mr. Erikson speech, we have to take risks. Thank you.

**Laguanya Haggray** - Being a minority resident of Schenectady I have been looking for ways to better myself. I have been looking to opening a business, but had no place to start. I am very disturbed to know that this information is not easily available. The Schenectady City Development Department has loans to help people to better themselves. It would be to the advantage of the City if the Economic Development Department placed ads around the City in places where people are looking for a job, a school or checking out a book. My hope is that these funds would be openly advertised to the people of Schenectady. Thank you.

**Donna Phillips**, 1210 Garner Avenue, Schenectady, NY – I'm Donna Phillips, resident of the city and an elder at State Street Presbyterian Church in the Vale neighborhood. I speak to add my voice to others concerned about the \$800,000 Code Enforcement line proposed to remain the same in the 2010/2011 Community Development Block Grant budget. I, too, have read the Gazette stories about proposed reductions in staffing levels in the Department of Code Enforcement and shift from zero tolerance enforcement that generated some 10,000 citations to a more targeted effort aimed at vigorously addressing serious health and safety issues. These are welcome changes, now that most of us have replaced our too-small house numbers to something that emergency crews can read easily from the street. Should these changes in staffing and procedures be realized, it seems that operating costs from CDBG funds for Code Enforcement could be reduced or reallocated. As citizens of the city, we would appreciate knowing how this \$800,000 will be invested, and we urge that available funds be made available to assist low-income owner occupants to make necessary repairs to meet city code. For those of us with money, a citation is usually a minor nuisance. Those with limited resources need an efficient way to apply for financial help and assist them to make needed repairs.

**David Coplán** - I am here to promote a new program. This program was started when I was director of Jobs ETC, it is a Community Directory. I have been working for two years, I have been working as a volunteer with Union College Training Center, this is for information on services in the City of Schenectady, this would be for profession staff and students in the schools. All this has been put together with many volunteers and my self. This is a very simple idea that can be achieved in a very cost effective way. This helps people in a lot of ways like housing, jobs even addictions that need medical services. Now we have two directories that link people to all the services that exist. There are over 250 programs that serve the jobless, the hungry, homeless and the ignored. What I am looking for is some assistance in the current year to continue our work. Thank you.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. McCarthy declared Public Hearing #1 closed at 8:00 P.M.

## **2. For the Abandonment of Seminary Place.**

**Steve Strichman**, Zoning Officer - Mr. Strichman stated that this is part of the Little Italy Project, and Seminary Place is a street that has not been used in 30 years there will be no City infrastructure under that street except an abandoned pipe. The City will abandon this area and turn it over to Urban Renewal and it will become part of the Project.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. McCarthy declared Public Hearing #2 closed at 8:03 P.M.

**3. For the Abandonment of St. Mary's Lane.**

**Steve Strichman**, Zoning Officer - stated that he is for the abandonment of a portion of St. Mary's Lane. We were approached by sources that own a Nursing Home on Altamont Avenue that many of you know as Hallmark Nursing Home, it runs into the parking lot of the Nursing Home, or is used as a cut through by the neighbors. The Planning Commission had a Public Hearing and many of the neighbors were present and were in favor of this plan.

Seeing no other speakers, Mr. McCarthy declared Public Hearing #3 closed at 8:05 P.M.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Councilmember King moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. It was seconded by Mr. Della Sala. Hearing no objections, Mr. McCarthy declared the minute's approval submitted.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**OFFICIAL:**

From the Office of the Mayor, list of Appointments. (dist. 1/10/11)

**GENERAL:**

Bellevue Preservation Inc., will hold its monthly community meeting Thursday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, at 7 pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church Hall, 1911 Fairview Avenue. Speakers will be members of the Alliance Party Steering Committee. Bellevue Preservation will also discuss its plans for 2011. The public is invited to this informative meeting.

**PETITIONS:**

None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Mr. Della Sala** - Two items that came out of the Finance Committee, that have to do with the Erie Blvd. Project. Authorizing the Extra Work for Clough Harbour and the implementation and funding in the first instance 100% for the federal aid and State "Marchiselli" Program-aid costs. Thank you Mr. President.

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

Mr. McCarty invited all who wished to address the City Council on any item of the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized.

**Jason Planck**, Schenectady, NY - First of all I would like to thank Mike Seber and the Mayor's staff for the addition of fines for the Disability Parking Ordinance. Two weeks ago the Mayor and the Council passed an amendment to the budget for the fire fighters not to get pay raises for the next two years, but after that it will be equal to 8% and you may have to raise taxes 15%. You have a lot of money to pay back and where are you going to get this money.

**Robert Sanders**, Halsey Drive - I have spoke to many of you in the last couple of days on what I am here to talk about is how you are taxing the home owner. The firefighters and the cops are out of control and this has got to stop. Most of you know where I live and I pay \$6,200 on that house and this house is nothing special. You have to start thinking about next year's budget now. I think you have to start thinking outside the box and Mr. Erickson says start thinking outside the box. When taxes go up people move out and the more people move out the more taxes go up. Thank you.

**Pat Zollinger**, Schenectady, N.Y. - On legislative items - No. 1 amending chapter 236, every year the Council seems to be obsessed with Taxi Cabs. There were attempts in 2004, 2006, 2008, and now in 2011 to regulate Taxi Cabs. It has not worked in the past and it is questionable if it can be enforced now. The cops don't enforce the laws as it is. In addition, to the fact that our Mayor does not obey our residency law. Now number 5, Erie Blvd., Mr. Allen very eloquently stated his concerns for his neighborhood and that his colleagues didn't seem to care, well they don't. Personally I think we have put enough into downtown. Metroplex has been good for business and for anyone that has money it has not been good for the citizens of this City.

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, ORDIANCES & RESOLUTIONS:**

**Consent Agenda –**

Ordinance No. 2011-01	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2011-02	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2011-03	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-01	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-02	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-03	Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2011-04	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-05	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-06	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-07	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-08	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-09	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-10	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2011-11	Adopted Unanimously

### **PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (CITY BUSINESS)**

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:

**Jason Planck**, Schenectady, NY - I am talking about the PILOT Programs and the need for accountability and how these developers are paying hardly no property taxes, getting all the benefits and providing no jobs and no Economic benefit for the City. This must be looked into. These developers are making 15% to 20% on an investment that is required by law that it should only be 5%, then they apply to become a PILOT program and get a property tax exemption and a mortgage tax exemption.

**Rev Alfred Tompkins**, 4 Chester Street - I am here today for my concern about the Billboards that have been placed around Schenectady, referring to "I am Gay and this is where I stay". I am very disturbed by these billboards, for the fact that the information that is given out on these billboards, well it is not enough. I did read an article concerning those billboards, targeting the African American Community, because that is the largest minority that HIV Aids is happening. I was disturbed by that and I am very bothered by the message that these billboards send and I would like to see them removed.

**Pamela Spicer**, 210 Fifth Street, Scotia, NY - I am the owner and operator of a Day Care Center in Scotia and I travel in the City of Schenectady often. I do not approve of the way the message is handle and the billboard message is not clear. As a care giver, I do not like children exposed to this type of advertisement. Thank you.

**Harry Brand**, 2108 Van Rensselaer Dr - I first want to compliment some of the City Employees. I called in a water main break on Sunday around 4:00 pm and they were there by 5:00 pm and they were working in this windy, cold weather. And I would like to give them a lot of credit for their quick response. I also want to bring up something I told you about a couple of months ago about the removal of two pine trees on a city employee's property. I understand that this is a right-of-way; the City does not own it. I want to know why we are taking trees down 40 feet off the City line. This was no charge to the city employee, there were seven

vehicles and seven employees and I think this employee should be charged \$5,000 for this service.

**Michael Sargalis** – Good evening, my name is Michael Sargalis, I live in Schenectady, NY. I am presently a student at ITT-Tech in Albany, NY learning Visual Communications. I called in advance to see if I could do an Audio-Visual or a Power Point presentation with my skills and I was told, “No,” by the City Clerk. My presentation would cover all; state, federal, and local, since they overlap one another. I hope that you can understand my message and can look into them at your convenience, pass them on or give me a forum to address them to. I understand that President Obama may be visiting New York State again only this time General Electric in Electric City. His focus here tomorrow is on energy. My focus is on energy and resources available too. One in being fuel for energy. I saw highwaymen cutting down many of the trees along the thruway that had fallen down from the snow. They were cut down and then ground down into sawdust and left at the sight they were taken down from. Granted the trees needed to come down, but the use of the wood that could have been burned was wasted. The natural resources around us being squandered, the schools making us repeat ourselves, and using our people to help figure things out to make it better, I believe America can do better with what we got. I want to see us create more goods and services for the state, our nation, the world, and not downsize it to somebody else. Who are we working for? Thank you.

**Joy Hall**, Schenectady, NY - One thing you need to do is have all the cars move from one side of the street to the other so that the plows can get though the streets. There are people walking in the road because the side walks are cleaned up. This has got to stop.

**Pat Zollinger**, Schenectady, NY - In an article in today’s Gazette, Mayor Stratton is quoted in saying “we need to have a level of open government”. Ms. Zollinger does not feel the present administration is open and fair to the taxpayers and have been taken the taxpayers for a ride. The City Council should have the District Attorney look into the actions of the Mayor.

**Matt Rich**, Schenectady, NY - This Country was founded on a Constitution and we all have the power and right to be here. You have the power, but we come here to tell you that we do not like your policies. Keep raising taxes and more people will leave and no is coming in. This Country was built on small businesses and all the taxes and insurance and small business can not survive.

**Sandy Manfield**, 957 Maple Avenue, Schenectady, NY - I live and work in Schenectady and I was at my bank, Key Bank, on Eastern Parkway, when a fire broke out across the street, in December of 2010. I have nothing but praise for our police and fire departments on how hard they were working in the face of great danger. What concerns me is what happened a few weeks later when the building was being demolished and a deceased man was found and I believe this

discovery was a source of sadness to all. Several years ago I came to City Hall to find out the policy for searching buildings before they are demolished and I was assured that the buildings were thoroughly searched. Thank you.

**Mary McClaine**, Schenectady, NY - We all know that Americans enjoy freedom of speech. I want to say a few words about what happened in this Council Chambers on December 13th. This is not the forum for citizens to make comments against his fellow Americans, like the Reverend from the First Reformed Church did on that day. His comments raised the issue of civility. I believe that people that speak at this podium are sincere and stand up for the things they believe in and they don't hide. Some of us watch as Councilmembers raise their hands and took the oath of office, it was meaningless because not long after 5 Councilmembers took the vote to hire a worker who did not live in Schenectady. No one that works in the Law Department lives outside the city, it is the law. Would the Reverend prefer the lack of legality over the lack of civility in this government? Another point, they sit on the City Council because they were appointment because the community is disenfranchised. They were put into seats rather than have primary elections, without the gerrymandering of the political process would the Rev. prefer over the lack of civility because that is what you have in our government. Furthermore, working in tandem with Chief Farstad was reprehensible, if the press had not revealed the plan this community would have paid dearly for an individual's improper pension. If the Reverend supports this kind of government over the lack of civility, civility won't change it only deliberate actions will prevail. One last thought, I am going to let you in on a little secret, I have worked behind the scenes to bring a PILOT to the city, from Union College after Roger Hull's announcement, I think I need it.

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

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

**Mr. Allen** - I am concerned about these billboards. I have not paid any attention to them, but they are there and obviously they are something that has to be handled somehow. Do they have to come to us in the City to put billboards up; if they don't maybe we need to come up with some kind of legislation to make it happen. I don't care if you are Gay, Straight or whatever. I don't think it is necessary to advertise for them. I am concerned about it.

**Mr. Mayor** - First of all congratulations to Councilmember Erickson and I look forward to taking risks with you. The City of Schenectady joined in an official observation by President Obama to mark a moment of silence for the victims of Saturday's shooting tragedy in Tucson, AZ. City hall employees voluntarily joined in for a moment of silence at 11:00 a.m. in the Rotunda of City Hall. I believe it was highly appropriate and fitting that the President postponed his trip to Schenectady tomorrow to allow the nation to put its attention where it should

be right now, which is a prayer for Congresswomen Gifford's, the six individuals that were shot and killed and the 14 that were wounded. There have been no fewer than three calls from the White House, I have been assured and reassured that this is in fact a delay to his trip not an outright cancellation and that he still intends to come to Schenectady General Electric. Thank you

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

**A TRUE RECORD**

**BY EILLEN M. VERSACI  
CITY CLERK**