

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL JUNE 28, 2010**

The Council President, Gary R. McCarthy called the Meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Reverend William Levering of the First Reformed Church, 8 N. Church Street, Schenectady to deliver the invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Pat Zollinger to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Present – Council members Joseph L. Allen, Denise K. Brucker, Carl Erikson, Gary R. McCarthy, Thomas Della Sala, Barbara Blanchard and Margaret C. King.
Absent – None

Also Present – Mayor Brian U. Stratton, Deputy Clerk Charles W. Thorne and Acting Corporation Counsel Al Goldberg.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Tabled until next meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments (dist 6/28/10).

From the Department of Water and Waste, a letter recommending accepting the bid of Layne Christensen of Schoharie, New York for “Service and Repair of Well No. 9.” Bid Amount \$70,655.

From the Department of Water and Waste, a letter recommending approval for an extension of Niskayuna Sewer District #1 to provide sanitary sewer service for Cabernet Estates, a subdivision located on Aqueduct Road and Ravine Road.

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Gary McCarthy: Updated everyone regarding the revised summer schedule for Council Meetings. While there are marginal savings for building maintenance the council will be reviewing properties on the “200 Neglected Properties” list. The houses will be divided among Council and efforts will be made to make a schedule available for media, the Mayor, neighborhood associations and residents.

Mr. McCarthy also wanted to clear up the misinformation regarding the recording of Council and Committee meetings. Meetings will continue to be recorded and broadcast, responsibility has been changed to Open Stage Media in an effort to improve the quality of broadcasts.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward.

Jason Planck – Criticized the Economic Disparity Study process as being flawed and questioned whether or not Item number two, on the legislative agenda the paving schedule is requiring employment of a diversified workforce and Schenectady residents.

P.D. Voris - Criticized Little Italy as a disaster. Praised the Union Inn as the most successful restaurant in Schenectady and stated that Ms. Fordham should be the owner and developer of the Seminary and Barrett St. project. She concluded her remarks by saying she was planning to watch it.

Harry Brand – Criticized the Council’s summer schedule and the work ethic of the Council and the Mayor.

Reverend Phil Grigsby, SICM – Spoke in support of the Council’s revised summer meeting schedule and the planned housing inspections. He suggested posting the list of properties to the City’s website. He also spoke in favor of a Violence Task Force, citing Albany’s success with their program.

Mary McClaine – Several weeks ago, during a committee meeting session Mr. McCarthy brought up the idea that Council members should personally inspect 200 neglected city properties. At the time, there was no mention that the inspections would take the place of two City Council meetings. According to resolution # 8 on tonight’s agenda, Council wants to eliminate one council meeting in July and one in August in order to inspect buildings for tow months rather than publicly listen to constituents concerns. No doubt, the change has surfaced at this time in order to accommodate the new Council member. Less time on City business means more time with the new baby. Two jobs doesn’t leave much wiggle room for a new father and once again the electorate is being treated like patsies. Whether or not the meeting change comes about, I am requesting

three things from City Council 1. A list of the 200 neglected properties earmarked for inspection., 2. The names of the Council Members who will be in each group and their assignments., 3. And the times and dates when the inspections will take place. I plan to be there. My intention is to compare Council’s conclusions with my own observations. Lastly, I will not dignify this resolution with a “for or against position.” The Council President is out of control. With enough slack he will self-destruct. Please note: the clock read 2 minutes and 48 seconds when I started my comments.

Seeing no more 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 –

Mr. Della Sala moved the items be adopted, seconded by Ms. Blanchard.

Ordinance No. 2010 – 11	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2010 – 12	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 111	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 112	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 113	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 114	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 115	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 117	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 118	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 119	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 120	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 121	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – 122	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010 – CS – 12	Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2010 – 123

Mr. Allen objected to the resolution based on the possibility of enacting eminent domain to obtain the properties on Seminary Place and Barrett Street.

Adopted by the following vote AYES: Blanchfield, Brucker, Della Sala, King, McCarthy – Total 5. NO: Allen, Blanchard Total 2.

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:

Barbara Katz – Complained about litter in downtown and the condition of streets.

Marva Isaacs – Stated she attended a community meeting regarding the placement of a prisoner re-entry program – Firetree, Inc. She objected to the facility being put in Hamilton Hill, saying there were already too many resident programs in the neighborhood.

Jason Planck – Suggested, when examining properties, Council members look at surrounding conditions, e.g. boarded up homes and curb cuts. He also complained about the lack of effective policies regarding affirmative action or persons with disabilities. He stated the City's Affirmative Action officer is only a part-time position.

Mark Townsend – Complained about the lack of communication regarding the swimming pool openings. The pools did not open on published dates. He is also opposed to Firetree and feels the proposed open market would better serve the community.

P.D. Voris – Complimented the hiring of lifeguards over park attendants for summer jobs and cited an article that encouraged people to subscribe to and read daily newspapers.

Harry Brand – Criticized city employee contracts and said city employees should park in the city parking lot, not in front of City Hall. He suggested Council time would be better spent inspecting city properties versus city houses.

Pat Zollinger – Criticized the increase in school taxes and objected to Government by appointment. She is concerned with the status of live Council broadcasts since the current recording crew has been fired. She will tape meetings and post to website, www.schenectadyinformer.com. She also announced her candidacy for City Council.

Fred Lee, Schenectady Neighborhood Watch – Spoke about the Child and Adult Find program. He explained how Neighborhood Watch works with the Schenectady Police, when someone is reported missing. He also suggested safeguards people can take before someone goes lost or missing to aid in finding the missing person. He encouraged anyone interested to join Neighborhood Watch.

Vickie Hurewitz, Board President BNI – Spoke out against Firetree, Inc. locating on State Street. They tried locating in Albany, Colonie and Rotterdam but were denied due to zoning restrictions. She asked why Schenectady zoning is so lax they can come in with no problem. It is a huge project, \$7 million over five years. BNI tries to sell homes in Hamilton Hill and Firetree will not help with the

perception of the neighborhood. BNI has been active in trying to place a market in the building Firetree is trying to occupy.

Marion Porterfield, Site Coordinator, Weed & Seed – Announced work on the Community Pride Project. The project is in its third year. Businesses will hang signs and litter bags will be distributed to raise community awareness and encourage neighborhood pride. She also spoke against the siting of Firetree, citing the city has reached a saturation level of residential programs and suggested a moratorium be placed on this type of development.

Victoria Cooper – Stated she purchased her house in Hamilton Hill, a few years ago, because the neighborhood seemed to be improving. It needs new businesses not residential programs. She is strongly opposed to the Firetree program locating in the neighborhood.

Rev Phil Grigsby, SICM – Commended Chief Chaires and Commissioner Bennett for their efforts to improve the Schenectady Police Department. He suggested that regular updates to be given at the Public Safety Committee Meetings to offset the negative reports in the newspaper. He also stated while he supports prisoner re-entry programs, the site on State Street is the wrong location. He also felt Firetree officials were unresponsive at the community meeting.

Mary McClaine – First things first: I am not a public figure; I am a constituent who is dissatisfied by the way she is being represented. If I was sitting in one of those seats, I would not vote the way Council Members vote. For example: at the last Council Meeting Ms. King said, “Mr. Erikson is infinitely qualified to serve on City Council. Given her past record, how much credence can one place on her comment? She voted for Mr. McCarthy for Council President. Mr. McCarthy does not know parliamentary procedure. He is a perfect example of what I said two weeks ago. If a person does not have the necessary information needed to do the work he does not qualify. He does not qualify. Ms. King also voted to appoint Ms. Brucker to fill Barbara Strangefeld’s vacant seat. Last week, Ms. Brucker left the Committee Meeting to go into the hallway and play with a puppy. Ms. King helped select Mr. Della Sala for a Council seat. Mr. Della Sala invited Superintendent Ely as his guest to speak in this chamber. The City wants his guest out of Schenectady. What is the relationship between these two men? What did Mr. Della Sala know about the rain of terror at the high school and when did he know it? From the time he won a Council seat I have observed Mr. Della Sala and made mental notes. For Mr. Erickson, I will analyze and record his words and actions. Anyone can win without opposition. Mr. McCarthy is here by default and so is Mr. Erikson. The new father got a free ride.

Rev. Van Stuart, SICM – Spoke out regarding the violence that has already occurred this summer and the need to change the climate with job programs. He criticized the Department of Development for not attending meetings to place an Open Market in the old Mohawk Office Products building.

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

Miscellaneous Business of the Council

Mr. Della Sala: Stated he and Mr. Allen attend the Firetree community meeting and no one spoke in favor of siting the building on State Street. He stated representatives from Firetree were not prepared to answer questions that were posed to them. Council members and the Mayor were not aware of the program until Marion Porterfield informed them of the community meeting. Mr. Della Sala would support a citywide moratorium on all residential programs.

Mr. Allen: Speaking on the Firetree meeting, he stated Firetree's mind is already made-up. He criticized the zoning regulations that allow them to come into Schenectady. The city is already oversaturated with residential programs. He questioned why the pools are not open, stating school is out and the pools should be open. He also expressed deep concern over the recent violence especially the shooting of an 11-year-old boy. Mr. Allen related lack of employment to violence emphasizing the need for more jobs.

Ms. Blanchard: Thanked all who spoke, explaining this is what Privilege of the Floor is meant for – people who are concerned about issues and speaking their minds. She agreed with Harry Brand, that City employees should not be parking in metered spots and requested the Mayor to look into the matter. She also reminded everyone to report neglected homes.

Ms. Brucker: Thanked all who spoke regarding Firetree. She supports a moratorium but beyond that she asked, "Who is funding the program?" They need to be contacted. We also need to contact Albany and Rotterdam to find out what zoning regulations blocked Firetree in those communities. She announced 250 summer jobs at SCCC, an increase from 125 in 2009; however countywide jobs are down from last year.

Mayor Brian Stratton: Stated that employees who park in spaces in front of City Hall are employees who have been issued placards and who go in and out during the day. The placards are reviewed regularly. Firetree is not endorsed or sought by the City. He has reached out to Congressman Tonko and encourages all neighborhood associations, Council members and residents to continue to be vocal in their opposition to the facility. They need to look into the loophole that allows them to come into Schenectady. He also stated that pools are opening as they were planned to.

Mr. McCarthy: Stated Ms. Brucker brought up some good points on violence. People need to assume more responsibility for illegal activities in their neighborhood, calling police. He issued a challenge to residents to report illegal activities. He agreed with Rev. Grigsby's suggestion regarding posting the "Neglected Properties" list to the city website. He stated, there is much disinformation regarding the taping of Council and Committee Meetings. Meetings will continue to be broadcast live and also be posted to the Open Stage Media website and are available as web casts. In the future crawlers will be added to broadcasts announcing city news and events. Plans are in place to use the government access channel for educating residents on

programs such as water conservation and trash recycling. Many of these improvements will be implemented within the next 60 to 90 days.

Mr. McCarthy also stated that a concentration of Firetree type programs have a negative impact on neighborhoods and encouraged work with clergy and neighborhood groups.

Recess:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, at 8:44 p.m. Mr. McCarthy adjourned the meeting.

A true record

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