

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL – MARCH 8, 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 of New Bethel Community Church of God in Christ to deliver the Invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called on Councilmember Allen to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

Absent – None

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

At this point in the meeting Mr. McCarthy asked if there were no objections, he would like to take Agenda Item #10 out order. There were no objections.

Resolution No. 2010-36

Adopted Unanimously

Mrs. Brucker called upon three of the Step Dancers, Shannon Gavin, Charlotte Hayden, and Amy Walsh to perform for us. Mr. Blanchfield invited his brothers and sisters of the JFK Division I, Hibernians to come and join us inside the rail to accept a resolution celebrating St. Patrick’s Day in the City of Schenectady. The members thanked the City Council for the resolution.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Blanchfield moved that the minutes of the City Council meeting of February 22, 2010 be approved as submitted by the Deputy City Clerk. It was seconded by Ms. King. Hearing no objection, Mr. McCarthy declared the minutes approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Official:

From the Mayor a list of appointments (dated 3/8/10)

From Paul LaFond, Deputy Director of Water and Wastewater, a letter recommending adoption of the City of Schenectady's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy.

From Eileen Versaci, Schenectady City Clerk, 2009 Annual Report.

General:

None

Petitions:

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Blanchfield reviewed two Finance items on the Agenda. Item #5 which is a resolution that reviews our regular contract to provide employee assistance program to our employees, for people that have various difficulties and allows them to get help in a way that is confidential. It is a very cost effective service; it costs us about \$10,500 for the entire workforce. Also, Item #6 which is the last piece of the puzzle in regard to our sales tax liens, at least for 2009. This is a sale of approximately \$885,000.00 in tax liens to American Tax Funding. These 2009 tax liens are not connected to prior tax liens. These are liens on new properties. This does bring up the issue of how we will be dealing with tax liens in the future. I will speak to the Law Department and the Finance Department about coming up with some ideas about how we want to handle this issue going into 2011, 2012, it makes some strain on our revenues due to the threat of our state aid. It was certainly disappointing that our State Representative were not receptive to the notion that the School District could collect its own uncollected taxes.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (LEGISLATIVE ITEMS)

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

Katherine Delain – Schenectady: I want to address Item #9. There has been far too much attention paid to the rapid transit project. People think if we make the Route 5 Bus faster that's going to improve Bus Transportation that is not the case. CDTA is planning major and drastic route changes. They have promised public meetings and have gone back on every promise. I think anyone who takes the bus should be furious with CDTA and any City Official that agree that it is going to improve transportation just to make the Route 5 bus move faster.

Joy Hall – Schenectady - Holes in the street: Something has to be done before someone gets hurt.

Pat Zollinger – Schenectady – I want to discuss the entire agenda. The reason why is for anyone to come here and speak on any of these items, they have to have information, and one of the things I’m looking for is historically wise, was in the committee meeting. The website has the minutes to the Council Meeting on within a reasonable amount of time, but there are no minutes or no history that I can find for the Committee’s meeting. I think that minutes should be done and put on the website. You have a “consent agenda”, then you take input from the floor on this agenda and the only way to change that agenda, is that someone decides that they didn’t want to go along, they have to make a motion to do all that. I believe the City should eliminate the Consent Agenda completely.

Rev. Phil Grigsby – 930 Albany Street, Schenectady: Number one, I appreciate the recognition given to the Hibernians earlier this evening. Secondly, I want to say a word about the soda tax. This is not a sweetened beverage. This is an idea whose time has come for several reasons. The beverages with added sugar are a primary cause of obesity and a tax will be helpful. It is shown that people only change their behavior by increasing the price.

Rev. Van Stuart – 930 Albany Street, Schenectady: I’m here to ask for support tax, but I’m also asking for support for the Safe Art Program, which I have been running for the past year, I’m happy to say we are expanding. I wonder why the good lord made me the Director of the Parks Program when I’m short and over weight. Well to help these children. I’m going to lose 40 lbs by the end of August. Anyone wants to get in the sweepstakes, please do. It is part of our March Madness.

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

INTROUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS:

Consent Agenda –

Ordinance No. 2010-03	Adopted Unanimously
Ordinance No. 2010-04	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-36	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-37	Adopted Unanimously

Resolution No. 2010-38	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-39	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-40	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-41	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-42	Adopted Unanimously
Resolution No. 2010-43	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:

Barbara Katz – The streets downtown are in very bad condition. Sidewalks need to be done over.

Katherine Delain – As you know, because of Economic conditions the Office of State Parks and Historic Preservation is closing several historic sites, some in our area. We have a beautiful historic site right in the heart of our city and it is Vale Park and as you know I have worked for years to protect Vale Park and Cemetery, because of its historic significant. Now there is a plan for a bike, hike path to go through the park. I'm very strongly opposed to this. This is going to impact all the historic burials that are at Vale. What really amazes me is that the County is very secretive about the City's participation. I had to bring up that Vale Park Cemetery is on State and National Registers of Historic Lands. We did this for a reason, to protect it from just this kind of development that is going on. I hope you are going to think long and hard about this and remember Vale is on the State and National Register for Historic Parks and deserves our protection.

Jason Planck – New York State Funding Grants which Cornell and Syracuse University did research on which basically said that 70 of percent persons with disabilities are unemployed in the State of New York. Research found that 25.3% working age disability live in poverty, compared to 9.6% without disability. Schenectady has the highest rate for unemployment for person with disabilities. It ranks 6th in the State that is a disgrace, and we are dead last in hiring.

Miles Latimer – 24 Lawnwood Avenue: McTap is a Minority Technical Assistant Program and I want to thank you for your support. McTap has owned a building at 1880 Albany Street since 2005, but still has not had the renovation completed. Funding levels are supported, part time hours, but we need full time money, and only one in Upstate New York has a full time staff assisting

minorities with construction and the business end. This empty building is draining funds from McTap. Enterprise money that is promised to the program is very slow in coming; two years we have been waiting. The money is to help rehab the building to move into a resource community center for Hamilton Hill and Vale. Why is the money taking so long? Can the City help us? We need to get this building open for minorities.

William Smith – 2400 Albany St: I'm here to reiterate and support Mr. Latimer.

Gary Farkas – 1177 Lumner Ave: We have had a couple of graduates lately in the news. John Napier, he was one of the bobsled pilots on the bobsled team. Also, another graduate is going to be on the women's football team that is going to be playing up at the field up at the high school. This week the play "The Diary of Ann Frank" is at the High School. I encourage everyone to come out for this play. Next Wednesday night, the Board starts our budget process in the City. We will be meeting at the Mt. Pleasant Auditorium every Wednesday night until the election. Finally, I want to talk about "Family Night Out". This is a big event that we are working on in the district. It is on March 23, 2010. What we have done is we have gone through the schools making sure there will be no tests the next day, no rehearsals and no sport practices, just an old fashion "Family Night". Thank you.

Harry Brand – 2108 Van Rensselaer Dr: I know all of you take an oath that you are going to serve this City proudly. I would like to see it happen by getting our old laws instituted and enforced. The one I would like to see first is for all City employees have to live in the City. We are paying taxes here for what, for everybody to live any place they want and our tax money is going out of the City. They don't have to shop here, they don't have to pay school taxes here, and they don't have to pay City taxes. We are paying their salaries. I think it should be if a new hire lives outside the City, they have to move into the City within a year. If they don't they get a penalty. If its two years, then they are done, with the elected officials two terms limit is all we need. We need some laws enforced. We have more people walking in the road then on the sidewalks. You are not looking after us.

Vince Riggi - 2138 Campbell Ave: I'm concerned about the Privilege of the Floor, how it is bring run. This is something that is very dear to my heart. I have been coming down here for many years and I'll get back to the sign in sheets. What if someone comes into this meeting late and they want to speak? I'm sitting there and I haven't signed in and someone says something I don't agree with or I want to rebut. How do I do it? We could do that before, but now we are not able to do that. I'm concerned about that and I want an answer on how are we gong to deal with it or are we just going to cut if off. When I spoke privately with Mr. McCarthy, you said people have to get here at 7:00. Well some people can't and then we have meetings at 6:00 in the summer time. I'm very concerned about this. How are we to speak if there is no sign in sheet? We are shut out. You know what

happened to the school board. We want transparency here, but we don't have it. This is very disturbing to me, as you can tell and this is not being run like it should be run. I want to see a change.

Pat Zollinger – Schenectady: About this new regime that was elected this past November. I hope it would make everything better, but what it has done is make everything more closed and this is what I would call Mr. McCarthyism Schenectady style. Just like the tier tax for rental property. This is to discourage landlords. There is always going to be need for rental property, there's always going to be someone looking for long term or short term. There is also going to be a need for a landlord and in respect to that, unless you want everybody in section eight houses. What the City does is threaten the businesses and being a landlord is a business but is a little different. People come here and ask for your support and the City Council has posted laws supporting project. I would like to leave you with one last thought, and that is with respect to the Apprenticeship Program, where has that gone.

Tony Buonome – Bellevue: First of all people come up here tonight and don't state where they live. If they live out in Clifton Park or out in Rotterdam, why are they asking the City? I think we should address it. On the recycling thing in the paper this morning, I'm having a hard time with that. Who is going to monitor this stuff? Last year we had branches out on Helderburg Avenue and it was three months before they were picked up. I called three or four times before it got done. The alley off Hugh Street where I live, there is garbage in the back yard and they say that when the paper gets wet, it's no good. I see them throwing the paper in the truck on rainy days and the paper gets rained on, maybe we are losing on that, I don't know. Another thing, Thursday's paper-Proctor is buying the Bank on State Street. Now that is coming off the Tax's rolls. That's a half million dollars assessment. Mr. Gillion said he had other offers', but, he wanted Proctor's to have it. I stand up here and talk about the "Cold War Veteran" how they need a tax break. But, it's OK to lose a half million dollar piece of property.

Joe Riley – 134 Elmer Avenue: I have been a resident of the area for fifteen years and getting jobs here's not possible. I pay taxes here and I would like to work here. McTap got me started in the construction business.

James Milks – 20 Land Avenue: I would like to see some support in finishing up the building for McTap.

Seeing no speakers to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the City Business closed.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Mr. Allen: I would like to remind people that for years, years and years the McTap Program has been active trying to get minority employed and someone

mentioned the Apprentice Program which the County and the City passed. Anyone getting a contract over \$200,000.00 had to have an Apprentice Program. I don't know if the apprentice program is going on or not. The problem with the McTap Program is they were promised Enterprise money to Rehab their building and they haven't received yet. If they have it, hasn't been enough to finish the building. They are probably 60% or 70% complete. They need about \$70,000.00 to get that going. The sad part is we are wasting money by paying rent at 955 State Street, while we have a building of our own that is not complete. The other issue is the outrageous insurance on the building because it is empty. The Insurance charges you five or ten time more than what it should be. We got promises, promises and nobody delivers. They blame everything on New York. Enterprise Annuity is down. In New York? We have sent them papers and papers on what we've done and the Enterprise Committee doesn't come through. We need jobs in the City because we get money from HUD. Minorities can't get job in the community after living here and paying taxes.

Ms. Blanchard: I would like to say that I think Mr. Allen is right and we need more Affirmative Action in our City. Bet you didn't know that next week is "Fix a Leak Week". That means you should look at your house and see if you have any leaks because an average American Home can waste more than ten gallons of water every year. Through running water, dripping faucets and other household things, there is one trillion gallons of water leaking from U.S. homes each year. Saturday and Sunday, March 20th and 21st is the Schenectady Art Attack. One thousand artists invade Schenectady and they will be displaying their work all over town. City Hall is where you should start your tour. We will have brochures. This chamber will be open for recitals and poetry reading. The Art Show will run be between 11:00 to 6:00, on Saturday and 12:00 to 5:00 on the 21st of March. It is truly a weekend to visit downtown. I hope you all will come down to see some of these artists. I also want to say that the Vale Bike Path will be reviewed by the Historic Commission. They have the responsibilities of reviewing all designated Historic Sites. Changes are being proposed and they need to approve those changes. They do make changes if they don't like it which we know when we tried to put railing on the front steps of City Hall. I got my census form today. Please fill it out and mail it in. It is very important.

Mr. Della Sala: I just wanted to thank Mr. Farkas for making us aware of "Family Night on March 23rd" and to let him know that I'll be asking the Mayor for a Proclamation declaring that day Family Night Officially. I think it is a very good idea.

Mr. Blanchfield: Perhaps we can fold St. Patrick Day Celebrations into the raging party for National Fix-a-Leak Week and the two be celebrated together. In regard to Vale Park initiative, there is a lot of review that has to be done before that goes into place. I want people to know that. But, I think the sentiment to get more people into Vale Park to appreciate the historic sites that are in there; to appreciate the trails is very important and should be kept in mind that we should

encourage more people in Vale Park and Cemetery, not fewer. It is disappointing to me. The times I have been running near the Revolutionary Burial Site that people have dumped construction debris within feet of those graves and tucked away in a certain part when they can go undetected. When you have a City Councilmen like me jogging at 7:30 in the A.M. you know you don't have enough people in that park to appreciate it. I should say that Mr. Olsen and his staff are extremely responsive when I call about these things and tried to track down these people. I think we should keep in mind anything that brings more people to Vale Park to appreciate the surroundings there. On the sugar tax issue, what is not mentioned is the fact the bones are fractured easier because children are drinking soda instead of milk for bone growth. Also, on March 27, 2010, Local 28 of the Firefighter Union is a run for your life which is a 5k race, kid fun run and a three person relay, which will be happening in Central Park. It begins at 9:30 a.m. Registration and early registration is \$20.00 and after March 17th it is \$25.00 and there is a tee shirt.

Ms. Brucker: In our discussion tonight on jobs for minority, I wanted to point out good news. Last year when we had the recruitment for correction officer's exam, I think there were about 100 people that took the test this year. They have exceeded the number of 200. I was just talking to Ms. Cajuste, if we had any number on whether we had any women, how many minorities have signed up to take the test. We believe it is over 60, but not everyone fills in the portion on race, etc. After the test, we will bring you better numbers. I want to commend one of the dispatchers. Last week, I was at one of the restaurants downtown and my car was parked on Union Street and someone hit it. I was not aware something had happened. In the interim they had called my house, it was okay, and it was a tiny minor bump. I also thank the women who stopped and called the Police to let them know, many people wouldn't. Just wanted to thank dispatch, they are the unsung heroes.

Mayor Stratton: On Item #7, you adopted the "Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy" a fulfillment of our obligation for Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant which were part of the American recovery and Reinvestment Act. We received about \$600,000 in Energy Conservation Block Grant funding in the program. I was in Washington with about thirty other Mayor's a couple of weeks ago. We continued our effort to include a regular funding stream not just a one time funding stream through the AARA, so that every year we could get continual funding so that we could continue the funding to do Energy Conservation Block Grant Projects. Also, in the Wall Street Journal there was an article entitled "Nostalgia for New Deal Job Plan". Mayors say they could put thousands to work on inter structure projects as was done in the 1930s. I join in with other Mayors and proposed as I have done in the past. What we need is another WPA. We need the same kind of infusion that would come directly to Cities in this new round of funding that is being considered in the Senate to bring real money directly to the Cities.

ADJOURNMENT:

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD

**EILEN M. VERSACI
DEPUTY CITY CLERK**