

**MINUTES OF THE REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE  
SCHENECTADY CITY COUNCIL May 10, 2010**

The Council President Gary McCarthy called the Meeting to order at 7:22 p.m. in Room 209, City Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Reverend Emmanuel Adams, of New Bethel Community Church of God in Christ, 1053 Strong Street to deliver the invocation.

Mr. McCarthy called upon Joseph Fava 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 – Councilmembers Joseph L. Allen, Denise K. Brucker, Mark E. Blanchfield, 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 Corporation Counsel L. John Van Norden.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:** A Resolution to propose an Ordinance Repealing Chapter 94 of the City Code of the City of Schenectady.

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to be heard to come forward. Seeing none, he declared the Public Hearing closed.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Ms. Brucker moved the minutes of the City Council Meeting of April 26 be approved as submitted by the City Clerk. Ms. King seconded it. Hearing no objections, Mr. McCarthy declared the minutes approved as submitted.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Official:**

None

**General:**

None

**Petitions:**

A petition containing 222 signatures, requesting changes to the Consolidated Plan:

1. Give greater priority to funding for youth employment and activities.
2. Restore funding to continue the Weed and Seed program.
3. Reduce funding by \$800,000 for Code Enforcement to provide for 1 and 2.

A petition containing 87 signatures, requesting changes to the Consolidated Plan:

1. Restore funding to continue the Weed and Seed program.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Claims** – Concerning agenda item number 15, authorizing the settlement of the claim of the estate of Wesley Pollock, Mr. Blanchfield stated the matter was settled for \$5,000 in 2004, but the litigant is now deceased and the matter needed to be approved by Surrogate Court. It was not done by the estate's attorneys, but it is taken care of now and we are approving the City's end of the claim.

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

Mr. McCarthy invited all who wished to address the Legislative Agenda to come forward. The following speakers rose to be heard and their remarks are summarized:

**Jason Planck, City Resident** – Criticized the Council's handling of the consolidated plan. The task force for the disabled has not been in existence since 2006. He stated that monitoring only one newspaper, the Daily Gazette, for discrimination violations is ridiculous. He also stated that an economic disparity study has not been done to support the report's claims. The report cites Weed & Seed program objectives over the next five years, but the funding is being eliminated. Testimony from several individuals' are missing in the comments section of the plan and he strongly objected to his 1½ pages of comments being reduced to a statement of “perceived holes in the Consolidated Plan.” He accused the Mayor's staff of falsifying the record and said the plan is not ready to go tonight.

**Rev. Phil Grigsby, SICM** – Spoke on the Consolidated Plan and urged the Council to amend the plan to restore funding to Weed & Seed. He was surprised to see the whole plan in front of the Council, Ed August and several housing people made suggestions and none are in the plan nor have been responded to. He urged the Council to suspend the meeting and return in a day or two and review and incorporate changes in the plan. Rejected comments and reasons for rejections are not attached. He is concerned the City is not in compliance.

**Ralph Boyd, Schenectady** – was appalled at the level of knowledge the Council has of Weed & Seed. He submitted a petition with 75 names of people concerned with Weed & Seed's loss of funding. Weed & Seed is governed by strategies to

achieve goals set by the steering committee. Since implementation of Weed & Seed there has been a reduction in crime and drug trafficking. Weed and Seed received money for neighborhood cameras and established “Drug-Free Zones.”

**Desmond Rossi, Program Director, Bethesda House** – Urged the Council to continue to support the work Bethesda House does. More and more people are in need of the services they provide. He requested the Council match the allocation from last year. The people they serve cannot afford the cut.

**Vickie Harenitz** – Stated Weed & Seed's programs are important and vital to continue. She also said, although Community Market is not being funded it is continuing. They are seeking funding through Senator Gillibrand's office. They plan to identify a site on State Street, possibly the old flea market that burned. The plan – a collaboration with BNI, Weed & Seed, SICM, Concern for the Hungry, Habitat of Humanity, and Capital District Community Loan Fund – is to create an affordable Farmers Market and a Lunch Bazaar. Also, Fair Start does training around food service industries, helping low-income folks get started as caterers and opening restaurants.

**Marsha Mortimer** – stated that Schenectady County's poverty rate is 10.8 percent and the City's is 20.8 percent; 54 percent of those people are women and children. CDBG guidelines state, grantees must give priorities to programs that benefit low and moderate-income persons. Also, to programs that carry out activities that aid in prevention and elimination of slum and blight. Schenectady gets these funds because of Vale and Hamilton Hill neighborhoods. CDBG may not be used for activities that do not meet the broad national objectives. She urged the Council, when voting, to think about equity and funding Weed & Seed.

**Beverly Perryman** – Stated they are very stressed in Hamilton Hill. Five years ago, when it was established, they needed Weed & Seed and they need it now. She advocated on behalf of the youth and urged the Council to restore Weed & Seed Funding.

**Rev. Van Stuart, SICM** – cited highlights from the report below:

2010- 2014 City of Schenectady Consolidated Plan Advisory Committee  
Summary Report

Background: During the last quarter of 2009, Richard Purga, Acting Director of the City's Department of Development invited individuals to sit on an advisory panel to review the 2010 2014 Consolidated Plan along with other members of the Development Department. The individuals outside of City Hall who were involved regularly included Deb Baumes, Deborah Schirnpf, John Mootoveren, and Rev. Van Stuart; Fred Lee was invited but did not attend the meetings.

The Committee were given documents that reviewed the past two years performance versus goals (what the City submits to HUD as the CAPER). Based on this information, we rewrote the objectives (targets) to what we felt were more

reasonable levels and in some cases recommended redirecting funds and priorities.

In addition, there was a neighborhood/community meeting held at the State Street Presbyterian Church during the time convened by the Hamilton Hill and Vale Comprehensive Planning Group. This gathering of approximately 75 people provided input to the Consolidated Plan process.

Categories used below did not differ from the previous Plan and the committee's recommendations are summarized below the categories. The previous investor targets are indicated or if the same. Any target areas listed are for the proposed 2010-14 plan.

The Committee did not issue a formal report, this report is a compilation of notes taken by Rev. Van Stuart in consultation with Ms. Baumes and Ms. Schimpf. It is an effort to summarize the results and reflect fairly the areas of discussion and recommendation. Additional perspectives are welcome. In the future, the City is encouraged to produce a more formal report for use by the Department of Development Mayor, City Council, and the public.

#### FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Outcome sought: Every person in Schenectady's CDBG target neighborhoods has access to comprehensive educational, recreational, health and social programs, and uses these programs as needed to grow and thrive, (same)

Investor Result Targets:

- 500 homeless individuals having secured a place to live (100 persons per year)

(previous: Decrease by 100f or 20 per year)

- \* 10 capital repairs and/or new construction projects that improve facilities utilized by community-based service providers (2 projects per year)

(previous: 15 repairs and 3 per year).

« Neighborhood-based activities for 500 youth provided through investments in programming, equipment and/or capital needs (100 youth per year).

(previous: increase resident youth participation in neighborhood-based youth activities by 80 per year)

« 500 youth prevented from becoming involved in gang violence or substance abuse, and/or prevented from becoming victims of bullying, suicide, and other youth violence (100 youth per year).

(previous: at minimum 700 students will be prevented from becoming substance abusers per year)

(previous, omitted: increase by 500 the number of older adults who live independently longer (100 per year).)

## HOUSING

Outcome sought: The City will have a viable housing supply adequate to the needs of the population, with homes that are safe, attractive and maintainable, (previous: attractive and readily maintainable)

Investor Result Targets:

- 50 units of single family owner-occupied housing that meet Housing Quality Standards by 2014 (10 units per year)

(previous: 60 per year, 300 total)

- Code enforcement inspections conducted on a minimum of 5000 units with a compliance rate of 70% (1000 units per year inspected)

(previous: reduction of substantially substandard housing units by increased code enforcement inspections (and demolition if needed). Code enforcement

inspections will be conducted at a minimum of 10,000 inspections per year, in low

and moderate income neighborhoods.)

250 persons will become eligible for homeownership and/or prevent foreclosure on their homes (50 persons per year) (new)

50 units of newly constructed energy efficient affordable housing (10 units per year) (new)

A feasibility study on the creation of a rental rehabilitation program (new)

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Outcome sought: All streets, curbs and sidewalks will be continuously in good condition. All water, sanitary and storm sewer systems will be continuously in good working order, (same)

Investor Result Targets:

2.5 miles of streets will be paved, including repair to missing and defective curbs and sidewalks, in low and moderate income areas of the City (.5 miles per year) (same)

A feasibility study of the creation of a residential/commercial sidewalk program (new)

Sidewalks installed at 20 sites in coordination with rehabilitation and new construction efforts (5 sites per year) (new)

## JOBS & EMPLOYMENT

Outcome sought: Anyone who is able to work is employed or engaged in other productive activity. All job seekers, who require it, will have access to adequate job training, transportation, daycare (sick, well, elder) and job preparation training. All who are working have jobs consistent with their abilities and have opportunities for long-term employment and workplace advancement, (same)

Investor Result Targets:

- 20 jobs with professional growth opportunities for low and moderate income residents created through public (CDBG)/private investment partnerships with local businesses (5 per year @ 1 FTE per 35K CDBG investment)

(previous: for every \$35K of program resources invested, one full time equivalent permanent job with professional growth opportunities will be created for low and moderate income households.)

- Job retention for at least 6 months for 250 low and moderate income individuals who live in the City at jobs that have opportunities for long term employment and/or workplace advancement (50 per year)

(previous: investments made will result in the placement and retention for at least 3 months of 75 low and moderate income households who live in the city at jobs with opportunities for long term employment and/or workplace advancement per year.)

- Transportation to interviews and/or employment for 250 low to moderate income individuals to enable acquisition and retention of jobs (50 per year)

(previous: increased investment made to programs supporting an employment related transportation system that serves 100 low to moderate income people (500 by 2009).

Implementer Target Areas:

- Job readiness, training, placement and retention programs
  - » Employment opportunities that provide growth and potential for advancement and are consistent with the abilities of perspective employees

Employment programs for low to moderate-income youth

Employers that make specific efforts to attract, train and keep low and moderate-income

City/neighborhood residents employed

« Transportation programs that provide or subsidize consistent, easily accessible transportation for jobs that are not on regular bus routes, or that take place at times when public transportation is not available. NEIGHBORHOODS

Outcome sought: Schenectady will become a community in which all of its neighborhoods are safe, secure, pleasant, clean, and provide economic opportunity and stability for their residents, (same)

investor Result Targets:

- 100 new homeowners in the City (20 per year) (same)
- « 7 community officers on patrol in CDBG target neighborhoods (7 each year) (previous: decrease in the current crime rate by 5% by the year 2009)
- « 5 successful "Weed and Seed" initiatives involving public safety, housing, economic development, and public service programs (1 per year) (previous: five successful Weed and Seed initiatives involving public safety with supporting housing, economic development, infrastructure and public service programs are in place, funding one initiative per year through 2009).

Implementer Target Areas:

- Programs and services that reduce and/or mitigate barriers to new and continued homeownership
  - » Neighborhood and local small business development
- Redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilized properties
- « Community policing and/or support programs
- Increased security street lighting
  - « Demolition and/or clean up of foreclosed, abandoned properties
  - « Development of revitalization plans for neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial areas, and the targeting of resources to address deficiencies or fund improvements

2010-2014 Consolidated Plan Advisory Committee Summary Report Concerns and Budget Analysis for 2010 - 11

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS APPLICATIONS RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED 2010 BUDGET

### SUMMARY

While the committee spent considerable time reviewing the progress on prior objectives and making recommendations for future ones, the Investor Result

Targets are only the first step. The next step is to consider how these targets are reflected in any funding recommendations. In summary, the committee had significant concerns about funding allocations in all the areas:

Families and Youth: funding for youth should be a much higher priority.

Housing: much more is needed for demolition and less for code enforcement. The Committee felt that while the Green Housing initiative is important, the City needs a more balanced housing strategy.

Infrastructure: there is growing concern about curbs and sidewalks that are unaddressed

Jobs and employment: since much funding seems to be recycled, there appears few if any ways for any employment targets to be reached; initiatives to do such are not proposed.

Neighborhoods: while the liaison position is included, Weed and Seed is omitted as well as any neighborhood based economic development activities.

Miscellaneous: some serious concerns about greater diversity in all areas.

#### MORE DETAILED COMMENTS FAMILIES AND YOUTH

In lieu of recent homicides and suicides in our neighborhoods, the Consolidated Plan Advisory Committee made this category the highest priority, calling for aiding youth and families by focusing on reinforcing parenting skills, addressing mental health and self-esteem, and prevention of youth violence. However, only one program (Carver Community Center) was funded for less than \$17,000 with these goals in mind. Other programs such as the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, and the YWCA received money for summer programming and outdoor recreation. CDBG funds the core part of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center. However, all these amounts have been at the same level for many years, which essentially means a cut in funding. Crumbling family structures are preclusive to destabilizing neighborhoods.  $\$17,000/\$2.7 \text{ million} =$  a very small priority in the current budget.

#### HOUSING

With many of the areas targeted in the Consolidated Plan, boasting greater than 20% of abandoned and unoccupied houses, the community members of the Advisory Committee felt that the greatest impact rather than code enforcement would be demolition of these properties. The record of code enforcement visits versus the number of houses that had actually been repaired or rehabilitated was a ratio of 21,000 to 3. Therefore, it seemed more practical to spend less than the \$800,000 for code enforcement salaries and more money on demolition and/or financial assistance to low income homeowners unable to pay for their repair costs.

In addition to the Restore Program run by the Community Land Trust of Schenectady, a new initiative in the 2010 -11 budget, focused primarily on green housing rehabilitation and does not create a cohesive housing policy that serves

low and moderate income families with affordable housing and taxes commiserate with their salaries.

For the most part, CDBG funds are placed in programs where money is essentially loaned to poor residents. However, a much greater percentage of the money is used to pay salaries for many city workers whose jobs may or may not directly affect the quality of the lives of those in poverty (low or moderate income households).

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Essentially, one 0.5 mile project, a paving of Duane Avenue between Backus and McClyman was included in the budget. There is a need to find funding to repair curbs and sidewalks where many young mothers drive their baby carriages with great difficulty. There appears to be no progress yet on a plan for sidewalk repair.

## JOBS & EMPLOYMENT

While jobs and employment are part of the foundation of a vibrant neighborhood, not much is included in the Consolidated Plan for 2010-11. It is ironic that the 2009 consolidated plan includes a carryover (reprogramming) of \$123,000 from last year's Economic Development Fund (EOF). The main facet of the EOF and the Schenectady Local Development Corporation (SLDC) a loan to those persons in poverty for which the money was sent to the community in the first place.

When new programs such as the Community Market or feasibility study for a Project STRIVE are offered as new jobs and employment opportunities as well as new economic development, funding has been refused.

Very little consideration has been given to employment of those between 18 and 25. Work skills and training are sorely needed along with clearly identified employment paths. If these individuals are resurrected, new life can be infused into Schenectady.

## NEIGHBORHOODS

Ironically, The Consolidated Plan calls for continued and involvement in the Weed and Seed (W&S) Program to promote public safety, housing, economic development, and public service programs. However, because of the condition (lack of matching) federal funds, the 2010 budget proposal eliminates funding for the position of the program coordinator. The community is at a critical crossroad and needs just as much "seeding" as it does "weeding." The program was never designed to be funded solely by the federal government. At some point, most W&S programs are sustained by local government and/or other grants. The community members of the consolidated plan advisory committee support the continuation of funding for the Weed and Seed Coordinator.

## KEY INITIATIVES THAT NEED FOCUS

Neighborhood and local small business development: Although the SLDC and the EOF are listed in the consolidated plan budget, the mere fact that \$123,000 is

being recovered from last year, something is amiss with these programs that they are not being utilized. Primarily, they offer loans from which many low and moderate income individuals shy away

Redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilized properties: Again, the SLDC and the EOF and play pivotal roles in assisting small businesses moving into rehabilitated vacant and/or underutilized properties. However there should be some direct grant money in the CDBG budget to seed small businesses and help create job opportunities.

Demolition and/or clean up of foreclosed, abandoned properties: If CDBG money cannot be used (or is unavailable to be used) for demolition of dilapidated houses than other sources of funding must be found or this objective should be removed from the Consolidated Plan. If demolition costs average between \$20-30,000 per house, to raze 5 to 10 houses per year, \$100-300,000 would have to be identified in the budget. If city employees such as the code enforcement officers or the development department professionals were paid out other revenue streams, quite possibly more blighted property could be cleaned up is

Development of revitalization plans for neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial areas, and the targeting of resources to address deficiencies or fund improvements: the

budget finally recommended a city employee dedicated to revitalizing neighborhoods by at least a part time person as liaison between the city and neighborhoods to implement the Schenectady 2020 plan. Members of the community should be involved in hiring someone for this position; both in design of the job description and interviews.

Miscellaneous: There is a need for diversity in hiring; from street construction to the departments in City Hall. The consolidated plan speaks of preparing low and moderate income people for a full spectrum of jobs; not just in construction work!. Therefore, there must be capacity building investments in human capital in the neighborhoods. More funding is needed to hire capable individuals for training and sustained interaction with neighborhood residents. As stated earlier, a large percentage of CDBG dollars pay for salaries of professional city employees. In some cases for example, residents interacting with members of the Development Department is critical. It is becoming increasingly difficult to see development progress in some of the neighborhoods.

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

## **INTRODUCTION OF AND ACTION UPON LOCAL LAWS, ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:**

**Consent Agenda –**

|                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Resolution No. 2010 – 80 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 81 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 82 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 83 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 84 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 85 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 86 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 87 | Adopted Unanimous   |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 88 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 89 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 90 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 91 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 92 | Adopted Unanimously |
| Resolution No. 2010 – 93 | Adopted Unanimously |

**Resolution No. 2010 – 94**

Moved by Ms. Blanchard and seconded by Ms. Brucker.

Ms Blanchard objected to points of the Consolidated Plan, asking if it was possible to amend the Strategic Plan, after passage.

Mr. Purga responded by recommending passing both , but said it is possible to amend the Strategic Plan later.

Mr. Allen expressed concern about a petition signed by 222 people concerned about the plan and felt a “yes-vote” would ignore the petition. He would only vote yes, if he were assured the plan would be revised otherwise he will vote not.

Ms. King said, she supported Weed & Seed and they have said, if programing money were to be found they would revisit the funding. She asked the Mayor to us the City's grant-writing resources to aid Weed & Seed.

Adopted by the following vote AYES: Blanchfield, Brucker, Della Sala, King, McCarthy – Total 6. NO: Allen, Blanchard Total 1.

**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, Schenectady:** Stated there should be more of a variety of businesses downtown and an affordable movie theater.

**Jason Planck:** Stated that Council fraudulently passed the Consolidated Plan and accused staff of lying to Councilman Della Sala regarding whether or not the Consolidated Plan had come out of Committee. He said, the Five-Year Plan dictates how the money is spent and Council has put the entire grant at risk. He will go to New York City and file against it. Schenectady County is dead last in providing jobs for persons with disabilities. The falsification of the document is wrong.

**Vince Riggi, Campbell Ave.:** Apologized to Councilman Della Sala regarding water meters. He said Mr. Della Sala said, "The public should fund water meters." and that was not accurate. What happened tonight is embarrassing, maybe Council should meet more often. Money should go to the neighborhoods. There are problems with BAR, it should have been corrected within the last year. Most people are over-assessed. Lastly, he urged people to vote against the school budget.

**Mary McClaine:** I want to talk about three items tonight. First, regarding the three minute rule. This is where it's at! The microphone. People fought for it! Died for it. Shed blood for it: not the telephone. Mr. Blanchfield's position that citizens can contact him by phone to talk about city business rather than appear in this chamber is not embraced by his colleague Mr. Della Sala. Mr. Della Sala had a cordial conversation with a former student and then suggested that she bring her message to this microphone. Say what you will! In this Chamber Americans have limited speech. Regarding the PBA contract. There is nothing in the new contract that will help to alleviate the citizen's tax burden. It's all about how much more can't the union bleed the taxpayers. Just on item such as eliminating the seniority system would save the city thousands of dollars because people with the lowest salaries would get the overtime rather than individuals who earn the highest pay. Furthermore, who ever heard of decreased medical insurance payments. In the normal course of doing business prices go up not down. Surveys indicate baby boomers are going to live to be 100 years old. In the new contract most PBA members will enjoy a lifetime of free medical insurance at taxpayers' expense. Thirty years from now, people will be saying about this new PBA contract what people are saying today about the last 30 year perks. "They gave away the store now the chickens have come home to roost." What is most troubling about the process is that pro-union people are negotiating with pro-union individuals. Therefore like minds – think alike. If a union negotiator is a recipient of a union perk, it isn't likely he would propose taking the same perk away for another union brother. Consequently, taxpayers come up short. Lastly, about a year and a half ago, I wrote a letter to the mayor and council members received copies. The letter was an appeal under the Americans with Disabilities Act to put a system in place so that those of us who are hearing impaired can hear what is being said in the chamber and committee room. The head sets and ear phones are not working parts

are missing, too much static is in the system. I am asking one more time. Give us something that works.

**Rocky Palma:** Stated, that about a year ago a woman was shot at Eastern Avenue Grocery store, a building owned by his family; a month ago, someone was shot at another building owned by his family. He fears murder and violence have become the norm in Schenectady. He stated, taxes are going higher and the city is getting worse. He doesn't have any questions, but concerns and would like to speak to someone on the Council.

**Gerald Plante:** Gave a recap of the Graffiti Summit held at Proctors Theater. He thanked Barbara Blanchard and Denise Brucker for attending. He also thanked Philip Morris for the \$1,000 donation from Proctors to help purchase clean-up supplies. He showed several pictures of graffiti within a four-block area of City Hall. He has received permission from Amtrak to clean-up their bridges. Tony Iadeiccio (sp?) will oversee young artists to paint over bridges on Green and Front Streets. Mr. Plante will be riding with Albany DGS personnel who clean-up graffiti in Albany to see how they operate.

**Karen Mallia, Washington Ave.:** Spoke on the reassessment. Her assessment went from \$110,000 to \$272,000. Her next-door neighbor is assessed at \$139,900, although there is less than 2-square-foot difference in floorspace. Last year she went through the grievance process and was denied. The board claimed she provided insufficient information. She hired an attorney to go to small claims court. Her assessment was lowered to \$220,000, still \$90,000 higher than her neighbor. She stated the assessments are clearly unfair and asked Council and the Mayor to appoint an independent investigation of the City Assessors Office and the city-wide assessment. She is not the only one, there are hundreds of unfair assessments

**Joseph Fava, N. Ferry St.:** stated he represents a man who has spent \$5.5 million in downtown Schenectady and has purchased buildings that were in total disrepair and restored them to a great level of living for many. All were reassessed on purchase price. He says, assessments on properties equal in value vary from 50 to 63 percent. The assessments are out-of-whack. The investor market in real estate is dead. The unfair assessments have killed the investor market in this town. He cited a three-unit building in the Stockade where taxes were \$500 per apartment. The assessments are driving down the market value of real estate. Last year, the average investment sale price in Schenectady was \$77,000. He showed a photo of near mirror-image homes located next-door to one another. One was assessed at \$321,700 and the other \$148,300; same size lots and rooms. He said, "We need an independent board to look at assessments.

**Franga DeCrescento, N. Church St.:** Stated she is the owner of the home depicted in the photo Joe Fava displayed. She works in the real estate industry. The assessments have gone up and the increases can't be pushed to the rental market. Property values are dropping with the higher assessments and taxes.

**John Samatulski, 17 N. Front St.:** Spoke on problems with the city-wide assessment. He stated the grievance process is broken. It is designed to wear-down the taxpayers. After being denied a reduction, taxpayers must spend more money to hire a lawyer to go to small claims court where the City spends money to defend the case. On comparably valued properties on Erie Boulevard, assessments vary \$40 to \$50 per square foot. The assessor should come forward and explain the process.

**Anneke Bull:** Spoke on behalf of SACC TV. She stated SACC has been dissolved. The Daily Gazette stated Open Stage Media will take public access to a higher level, which is true if they are talking about a digital world, but the level of access that SACC provided was the envy of the Capital District. She gathered 50 signatures on a petition from people at the Green Market, who didn't watch SACC, but agreed it provided a valued service to Schenectady. The Council created a commission for oversight of public access, she suggested that SACC appointed to monitor and facilitate production of programs of relevance to Schenectady viewers.

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**

**Mark Blanchfield:** Stated that tonight is probably his last entrance on the floor as Councilman. He thanked the Mayor for working together and compared Mr. McCarthy's style to a cross between Tip O'Neill and comedian, Steven Wright. He invited his family to the rail. He thanked all and said he enjoyed his time on the Council and calling the moment bittersweet.

**Peggy King:** Thanked Mr. Blanchfield for his leadership and support. She valued his input on the budget process when she was Council President.

**Denise Brucker:** Said she will miss Mr. Blanchfield, but happy he is moving on to new endeavors. She stated it was a great pleasure serving with him.

**Joe Allen:** Thanked Mr. Blanchfield for support of Council, especially with financial and budget issues. He wished him, "Good luck."

**Tom Della Sala:** Stated he wouldn't be on the Council if not for Mr. Blanchfield. He was the first to contribute to his campaign and to bring him door-to-door. He wished him luck and also said his knowledge of the budget will be missed.

**Barbara Blanchard:** Wished Mr. Blanchfield the best and fondly recalled being running mates twice. She announced a Bird Walk, at Woodlawn Preserve on May 16 at 7 a.m. And also, City Hall will be open for Art Night on May 21. Two musicians will be performing.

**The Mayor** – Referred to a statement made earlier in the day regarding former Police Officer Greg Hafensteiner. He said it was his intention to follow the recommendation of the hearing officer and fire Mr. Hafensteiner, but Mr.

Hafensteiner submitted his resignation over the weekend. The resignation is insulation against potential appeals. The resignation ends a 2 ½-year process and costs, but is another step toward full and final and lasting reform in the Schenectady Police Department. He thanked the majority of officers who are committed to excellence.

**Mr. McCarthy** –.Congratulated Mr. Blanchfield in the event the Mayor chose to announce something, but assured him it won't be the last time on the council floor. He will be invited back, at least one more time.

**Adjournment:**

Seeing no further business to come before the City Council, Mr. McCarthy declared the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

**A true record**

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