

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
April 14, 2008

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, April 14, 2008, in the State College Municipal Building Council Chambers, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Ms. Goreham called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Elizabeth A. Goreham, President of Council
Ronald Filippelli
Donald M. Hahn
Theresa D. Lafer
Silvi Lawrence
Peter Morris
James L. Rosenberger (arrived as noted)

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Thomas S. Kurtz, Assistant Borough Manager; (arrived as noted) Roger A. Dunlap, Assistant Borough Manager; Carl R. Hess, Director of Planning; Lu Hoover, Planner; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Amy J. Story, Borough Engineer; Sheila Carl, Recording Secretary; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour. There was no one from the public wishing to speak.

Open Agenda/Projects Report. Council was given an updated list of current projects and anticipated projects as well as a list of upcoming agenda items.

Musser Gap Greenway Project. ClearWater Conservancy is working with Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and Penn State University (PSU) to create a greenway from the recently acquired 423-acre Musser Gap property to Blue Course Drive. The proposed greenway would start at the new Musser Gap parking area, head east through the PennDOT right-of-way, cross State Route 45, continue through PSU property along the existing farm lane, connect to the new Whitehall Road Regional Park, and finally cross Whitehall Road where it will connect to Blue Course Drive. The proposed greenway would provide a connection for many Borough residents to Rothrock State Forest through Musser Gap.

ClearWater Conservancy staff is preparing a DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program grant on behalf of the University and will submit it to DCNR on or before April 25, 2008. ClearWater is requesting a letter of support from State College Borough. Katie Ombalski, Clearwater Conservation Biologist, attended the meeting to make the request to Council.

Ms. Ombalski explained the new project is a continuance of the 2006 purchase of the Musser Gap. She stated the Conservancy is applying for a grant that would fund 80% of the project and the Conservancy is looking for local funding partners to cover the remaining 20%. Ms. Ombalski requested a letter of support for the grant application and Council's consideration in becoming a funding partner.

Council suggested the Conservancy contact COG to ask for funding so all the municipalities can vote on funding for the project.

Council agreed to prepare a letter of support and requested the Conservancy prepare a report of the total costs and what the Borough's share would be.

Ms. Ombalski stated she would speak with COG Executive Director, James Steff, and request the COG General Forum consider the greenway as a regional project.

Report from Citizens' Advisory Committee. Shelton Alexander, Chair of the CDBG Citizens' Advisory Committee, attended the meeting to report on the activities of the Committee. Council received a written copy of the presentation.

Downtown Planning. At the February 11, 2008 Council work session, Council member Donald Hahn asked Council to revisit the zoning changes that were enacted on East College Avenue between Hiester Street and High Street in regards to height, conditional use for signature development, and parking requirements. The zoning changes Mr. Hahn was referring to were enacted by Borough Council in November 2007. The package of changes enacted were recommended by the Planning Commission following a review and discussion by the Commission of the Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan as it applied to downtown planning areas 2 and 3. Council was provided with a map of these areas.

The zoning changes:

- increased permitted building height from 45 feet to 65 feet along E. College Avenue between Hiester and Garner Streets,
- rezoned properties along E. College Avenue between Garner and Hetzel Streets from General Commercial to Commercial Incentive,
- applied the Signature Development conditional use to this new Commercial Incentive district, and
- modified the waiver provisions for upper story setbacks on Signature Development projects.

Since the zoning changes increased the development potential of the area by more than 50 EDU's they constituted a Development of Regional Impact (DRI). The DRI process was completed in September 2007 with a review of the proposed changes by the COG General Forum.

Messrs. Rosenberger and Kurtz arrived at this point in the meeting.

Staff guidance from Council members to identify what information they would like staff to provide prior to the discussion and any other issues or concerns they believe should be addressed in the review.

Council members stated they would like to review the maximum height allowed for signature development and the height incentives; parking incentives; and perhaps the addition of incentives for green buildings and burying utilities. Council also requested the review of zoning in relation to Calder Way and midblock areas.

Holmes-Foster Neighborhood North/South Bikeway. A public hearing was held on April 7, 2008. Several people spoke in opposition at the hearing. Much of the opposition was in regards to the topography of the Sparks Street, the parking needed for the church at 119 South Sparks Street, visitor parking for residents, and that the speed of traffic would increase if parking would be removed.

Council was asked to discuss the proposal and instruct staff on how it wishes this item to be prepared for action. Since the matter was presented and recommended by the Transportation Commission, Council will need to act on the recommendation. Any of the following Council actions may be taken:

- Approve the recommendation as presented by the Transportation Commission.
- Reject the recommendation as presented by the Transportation Commission.
- Return the proposal to the Transportation Commission for further consideration and refinement.

Rick Hirsch, Chair of the Transportation Commission, encouraged Council to consider having the Transportation Commission modify the proposal and consider removing parking on Sparks Street only south of Foster Avenue. Mr. Hirsch requested Council look at the South Garner Street changes and the speed data obtained since the parking has been removed. Mr. Hirsch stated having a striped bike lane may encourage slower speeds and encourage bike riding.

Council expressed concern with taking away parking in residential areas and the effect that could have on owner occupied housing.

Council questioned why a bike lane on Sparks Street is being proposed. Staff noted the proposal is outlined in the master plan and suggested maybe the master plan should be revisited to determine if the locations listed in the plan are still valid locations.

Council expressed their support of bike paths in the downtown but suggested the proposal be sent back to the Transportation Commission and the master plan be reviewed.

Traffic Calming Report. In November 2007 the Transportation Commission completed work on updating the Traffic Calming and Street Classification Policy and submitted the draft report to Council at the February 11 work session. Council was asked to address the following questions:

- Are the proposed changes in the Street Classifications acceptable?
- Are the proposed 25 mph Borough-wide speed limit restriction and designate routes (Emergency & Bike) acceptable?
- Is the Study and Approval Process acceptable?
- Are the "Toolbox" items and levels acceptable?
- Does Council wish to hold a public hearing on the proposed policy prior to adoption?
- Does Council wish to set a date for adoption?

Council was provided with copies of the traffic calming report and Powerpoint presentation.

Council agreed to have a public hearing and asked the traffic calming report be posted on the Borough website.

West End Revitalization Plan. Postponed until another meeting.

Other Items of Interest. Mr. Rosenberger reported on the State College Area School Board meeting he attended earlier in the evening. The School Board agreed to release funds for the Millbrook Marsh Fund and to prepare a letter of support for the Welch Pool grant. The School Board also agreed to participate in discussions for the planning of the Welch Pool.

Mr. Fountaine extended an invitation to Council to attend several Greek Week activities and reminded Council of the children's reading hour to be held in the Municipal Building lobby as well as the children's art exhibit.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m. to an executive session to discuss real estate matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary