

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
Work Session
May 12, 2008

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, May 12, 2008, in the State College Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Ms. Goreham called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

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

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Thomas S. Kurtz, Assistant Borough Manager for Community Services; Carl R. Hess, Planning Director; Roger Dunlap, Assistant Borough Manager for Budget and Administration; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Amy R. Miller, Recording Secretary; Mark Whitfield, Public Works Director; Beth Johnston, Human Resources Director; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour. There were no comments from the public.

Report from Centre County Solid Waste Authority. Ted W. Onufrak, Executive Director of the Authority, reported to Council on the current activities of the Authority. He said that soaring gas prices are affecting collection costs which may lead to a rate increase in 2009. Curbside collections have tripled over the past 20 years and last year's revenue for recycling was \$1.3 million. He added that the Borough's representative on the Solid Waste Authority Board, Richard Stehouwer, has been a very active member.

Joanne Shafer, Authority Deputy Director and Recycling Coordinator, said the Authority has begun permanent electronic recycling during regular business hours and hazardous waste collection will now occur every year rather than every other year. She added that recycling in the Borough is at 41%. Another new recycling effort, in conjunction with DEP, is the recycling of compact fluorescent light bulbs. In addition, plastic bottles #1-7 are now recyclable and the Authority has added recycling for business collections of plastic film and wrappings and hope to include more businesses in the near future. Ms. Shafer noted that, because food organics are not yet recycled in the Centre Region, recycling numbers are low compared to some larger cities that do recycle food waste.

Report from Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) Hugh Mose, Manager of CATA, presented Council with an update of CATA's recent activities. He said the most significant project underway is the replacement of 2 of 3 natural gas compressors. Mr. Mose noted that the natural gas buses have been in use for the past 12 years and the compressors are in need of replacement, a \$1.4 million project. CATA is working with the Pennsylvania Transportation Institute at Penn State on a hydrogen bus project, which will be concluded at the end of the year.

Mr. Mose explained that the Centre Regional Planning Agency and the Centre County Transportation Office are looking into how to combine the CATA and county transportation programs to eliminate duplication of services and improve efficiency. In addition, CATA is participating in a bus fleet restoration project: four buses were rebuilt last year; five will be rebuilt this summer and CATA will acquire 10 new buses.

Mr. Mose stated that ridership is up given the rising costs of gasoline. He added that Penn State van pool usage has grown to 8 vans and there is additional interest in the service if CATA is able to obtain other vans.

Mr. Mose noted that natural gas costs have not increased as fuel oil has and CATA pay about \$1.50 per equivalent gallon for natural gas.

Council questioned if service to the outlying areas, such as Philipsburg and Clearfield, has been given more thought. Mr. Mose said at this time CATA cannot consider adding outlying service. However, he said he is hoping for additional federal funding to aid in this type of program, although PennDOT has suggested using the federal funds to buy van pool vans. Mr. Mose added that the private sector bus company has pursued daily service from Altoona to State College but costs indicate the service was not cost-effective.

Council had no comments on CATA's proposed 2008-09 budget.

Report from Transportation Commission. Mark Whitfield provided Council with an overview of the Commission's recent activities, on behalf of Transportation Commission Chair, Rick Hirsch, who was unable to attend this evening's work session.

Mr. Whitfield said the Commission proposed changes in the Ordinance regarding bike parking and requests Council's feedback. He said a number of bikes are abandoned and there is a need to remove these bikes to make room for additional bicycle parking. In addition the abandoned bikes are a hindrance for store owners when they are left in front of their stores. The proposed change would limit bicycle parking to 72 hours.

Council asked what happens to bikes that have been confiscated. Mr. Whitfield replied that the Police Department removes the bikes and then the bikes are held for owners to claim them. Bicycles that are not claimed are auctioned for sale after 6 months.

Some Council members suggested the Transportation Commission reconsider the length of time bikes are allowed to stay chained to racks because 72 hours may not be ample time to collect a bike. Council also said the policy should be stated clearly on each bicycle rack.

Council discussed the public hearing held on the Traffic Calming Policy at the May 5 meeting.

Mr. Fountaine reported that staff would review intersection statistics to identify areas that present safety issues, including line of sight problems, speeding and stopping problems. Chief King said the report could be done in about 30 days.

Council agreed the traffic calming policy is ready for action at a regular meeting.

Report on Withdrawal from Property Maintenance Program Council received the report titled "CRCA Withdrawal: A Framework for Cooperation" at the meeting of May 5. Mr. Kurtz recommended repealing Ordinance 1891 and continuing to work with COG for rental housing inspections as outlined in the report.

Some Council members expressed concern with the line of reporting stated in the report and felt Council should be directly involved in the line of reporting. Mr. Kurtz said that the Home Rule Charter states that the Council is responsible for policy and a clear administrative chain of command needs to be maintained. Mr. Fountaine added that when there are differences in policy issues, those issues are brought to Council.

Mr. Steff said he is pleased that the Borough may stay with the COG code program.

Mr. Fontaine stated that the Borough's line of reporting with CRCA differs from the townships' in that the Borough has two full time ordinance enforcement officers that work closely with the Code Staff. If a matter presents itself that needs Council's attention, the matter goes to Council.

Council discussed changing the line of reporting to say that those matters that cannot be resolved by Staff should be directed to Council or to say that matters resolved by the manager should be reported to Council.

Council agreed to continue this discussion at another meeting.

Library Board Membership. The Library Board membership is established in the Schlow Centre Region Library Joint Articles of Agreement. Ferguson Township has suggested it will rejoin the Library Board if the agreement is amended to require a unanimous vote of the participating municipalities to approve the library budget. This would give Ferguson Township two permanent members on the Library Board.

Council agreed they are not in favor of unanimous votes for COG agency budgets. Council also suggested that Ferguson Township might receive a rotating membership for a 3 year period.

West End Zoning. Mr. Fontaine reported that Ferguson Township was invited to participate in the analysis for the West End Certified Redevelopment Area, but the Township declined.

Council agreed their comments up to this point should be forwarded to the Planning Commission. Council then invited comments from the property owners in attendance to address Council.

John Simbeck, business owner at 601 W. College Avenue, said that a lot of time and effort has been put in to the West End plan and it should move forward. He expressed concern about the loss of Houts and that now there is nowhere in the West End to buy necessities for daily life. Mr. Simbeck added that small improvements would be a good start. Sidewalk improvements, eye-catching waste receptacles and attractive lighting would encourage the property owners to improve their own properties.

Ginny Chuba, property owner in the West End, said she would like to see the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) go away and that she is not comfortable with the direction that the West End plan is going. She added that she would like to remodel her properties without worrying about condemnation of property and eminent domain.

Council members noted the RDA was formed to work with property owners and help them toward redevelopment.

Mr. Fontaine said the RDA would present a report to Council at the next work session.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned to an executive session to discuss personnel matters at 10:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary