

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
January 21, 2009

The State College Borough Council met in a Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, January 12, 2009, in the Schlow Centre Region Library, Community Room, 221 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Mayor Welch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

Mr. Welch said the format of the meeting would be for Council members to listen to items from the public.

Daniel Rowland, 230 South Gill Street, asked what kinds of plans were in place to attract and keep families in the Borough rather than turning the neighborhoods into a rental environment. Council indicated it was a high priority for Council to develop ways for creating more ways for developing work force housing in the downtown and the neighborhoods. There were currently three programs in place to assist low and moderate income families to buy homes in the Borough. Council continues to look for ways to build or make houses available to families.

Robert Seibel, 510 East Fairmount Avenue, questioned the acceptable level of mix for student versus non-student in the population. It was noted that the current level was about 70 percent student with lower percentages in the neighborhoods. Some members of Council indicated that, although development was needed to increase the tax base, protecting the neighborhoods was of the highest priority for Council.

Thomas Campney, 750 Holmes Street, commented on the fairness of the sidewalk maintenance program. He noted that some property owners have more liability than others if they have corner lots or wider lots. It was noted that in the state of Pennsylvania, it is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the sidewalks. There were less expensive alternatives noted compared to the cost of replacing the entire sidewalk block.

Robert Hunter, 714 McKee Street, asked about an abandoned house that continues to deteriorate in his neighborhood. Council responded that, unless the house becomes a threat to public safety or is a health issue, there was little that could be done.

A representative from Off-Campus Student Union (OCSU) commented that living standards for owner-occupied homes were not as strict as those for rental housing. He suggested the same standards apply. Council noted that the general philosophy was that those who are renting need additional protection. Also, there was already some concern that the Borough was over regulated. It was mentioned that there was a program, established by University Park Undergraduate Association, for tenant/landlord mediation to resolve issues, which was open to both students and non-students.

One gentleman commented that the Borough needed to preserve their shopping areas, in particular, the Westerly Parkway Shopping Center, which was basically a neighborhood center. He also commented that, if the goal was to increase the tax base, high rise development should be permitted to occur in the West End. The gentleman also questioned why more could not be done in taxation alternatives to increase revenues. It was explained by Council that the state laws limit the municipality's ability to tax.

Luke Pierce, president of the Interfraternity Council (IFC), said he was concerned about the relations between students and the community. He was looking for ways to increase the ties between the student

body and the neighborhood residents. Council members noted that relations have improved through efforts with community and citizen groups, such as the Lion Walk 08. Council recommended the fraternities meet with neighbors and connect with the neighborhood associations.

Windsor Cousins, 234 East Hamilton Avenue, suggested students form a help group for aging citizens like him. It was noted that many students volunteer with the Community Help Center and residents could contact them for assistance. Residents were also reminded that students provide other important services to the community. One example was the 40 volunteer firemen with Alpha Fire Company.

Patrick Gordon, OCSU President, agreed that bringing the community together was important. He noted that many of the students causing problems in the community were not affiliated with the student organizations. There were many groups that were making efforts to work with students to control problems.

Mr. Welch thanked all those for coming and indicated that Council hoped to have this public forum again in the future.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary