

**State College Borough Council  
Work Session  
February 14, 2005**

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, February 14, 2005 in the Council Chamber of the State College Municipal Building, 243 S. Allen Street, State College, Pennsylvania. Council President Daubert called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Members present: Bill Welch, Mayor  
Thomas E. Daubert, President  
Catherine G. Dauler  
Elizabeth A. Goreham  
Craig R. Humphrey  
Jeffrey R. Kern  
Janet K. Knauer

Member absent: James H. Meyer

Also present were Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Michele Nicolas, Director of Human Resources and Recording Secretary; Carl Hess, Director of Planning and Community Development; Michael S. Groff, Finance Director; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Amy J. Story, Borough Engineer; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; members of the media; and other interested observers.

**Public Hour.** President Daubert opened the meeting by announcing the public hour, but no one addressed Council.

**Urban Village Consultant.** The first item of business was to meet with Chris Brower, Senior Associate at Economics Research Associates (ERA), the consultants engaged to conduct the Urban Village market feasibility study. Planning Director Carl Hess introduced Mr. Brower, who had arrived in State College that afternoon to begin fieldwork on the study. Mr. Brower thanked Council for the opportunity to conduct the study, and said he looked forward to conducting interviews with all the stakeholders to begin the project. He added that the interviews would be critical in gaining an understanding about what makes the area unique.

Mr. Kern told Mr. Brower that ERA had been awarded the contract for the study in spite of the firm's higher cost because Council believed the firm would be more creative in its approach. Mr. Kern expressed Council's frustration regarding the lack of variety in housing developments within the Borough, limited mostly to student housing, while other, more interesting options were available for older adults right outside the Borough limits. He cited the Village at Penn State as an example. Mr. Brower commented that many older people are attracted to "walkable" places to live, and thought that areas immediately surrounding the Borough's downtown would fit that bill.

Ms. Knauer added that Council had certainly heard enough about the market for student housing, and hoped that ERA's approach would offer alternatives instead of more of the same. Mr. Brower said he had already noticed some unusual and interesting business enterprises in the downtown: Abercrombie and Fitch and Eddie Bauer, for example. He said these are stores normally found in suburban malls.

Ms Goreham welcomed Mr. Brower to State College, and repeated Council's desire for more imaginative proposals than Council had received in the past.

**West Campus Commuter Parking.** Gordon Turow, Director of Campus Planning and Design for the Pennsylvania State University, addressed Council to review the University's proposal to develop commuter parking at the west end of campus, near Corl Street. Mr. Turow told Council that he was accompanied at the meeting by other University representatives, including Steve Watson, Teresa Davis, and Dan Sieminski. Mr. Turow said the proposal had been presented earlier to the Ferguson Township Planning Commission, the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors, the State College Borough Transportation Commission, and to the University's Board of Trustees.

Mr. Turow's slide presentation included a description of the University's intermodal transportation plans first introduced in 2002. Since that time, he reported, the University had made significant progress toward making the central campus more pedestrian friendly, in part by constructing parking facilities away from the campus center. He noted

the new parking deck expansion at Eisenhower Auditorium, more surface parking at Beaver Stadium and the Bryce Jordan Center, expansion of the Nittany Parking Deck near the Nittany Lion Inn, and the new East Parking Deck on Park Avenue. He also showed slides of several newly constructed bus pull-offs to improve the flow of traffic on campus, and more slides of areas closed to traffic such as the new Shortlidge Mall and the HUB Plaza. He reminded Council that development plans for campus west of Atherton Street included access to academic buildings via Atherton Street, White Course Drive and Campus Drive, but the University had promised no connection to those areas from the Borough's existing neighborhoods. Instead, only the new housing constructed further west on campus could be accessed through neighborhood streets. The University now proposed to construct a new commuter parking facility at the west end of the new housing complex. The construction of Phase I anticipated one level, but Phase II would add two more levels to the proposed parking deck. A total of 639 spaces would be added upon completion. Because of the deck design instead of surface parking, only half as much surface would be covered by impervious material.

In response to a question from Mr. Daubert, Teresa Davis said commuters would use transit buses to get to central campus from the parking facility, and the connection along White Course Drive would be designated for transit only, controlled by gates with only bus drivers able to raise and lower the gates. Neighborhood streets in the Borough would see no increase in traffic because of this limited access. Transit buses would both enter and exit the commuter parking area using White Course Drive. She added the green area shown on the map for Railroad Avenue was not designated for transit use. It was shown in green simply to indicate that it was not open to vehicular traffic.

Ms. Dauler asked about pedestrians, and Ms Davis assured her that the plans include lots of paths to encourage bike-riding and walking.

Ms. Knauer said she thought the pedestrian areas in the campus core are a wonderful improvement, and complimented the University in its efforts to reduce traffic congestion in the middle of campus. She suggested the University invest further in public transit instead of building more parking facilities. Ms. Davis said the University needed to provide parking for employees who do not live near transit routes, but had already reduced demand by offering transit incentives to University employees.

Mr. Kern asked about storm water management in the Corl Street area. He wondered if the surface water runoff control project could be combined with the construction of the proposed parking facility. Mr. Turow said the storm water project required further study. The location was "right, prudent and responsible" for the commuter parking project, and did not reduce the University's commitment to confront issues of surface water runoff.

In response to a question by Mr. Hess, Mr. Turow said the time frame for completion of the new commuter parking facility was 2007.

**Pedestrian Node and Beaver Avenue Chicanes.** The Transportation Commission, pursuant to a report and recommendation by the Borough Engineer, recommended construction of a pedestrian node at the southwest corner of Fraser Street and College Avenue, along with a continuation and minor modification of the chicanes on Beaver Avenue. The chicanes had been approved for a trial period of one year, and Penn DOT's approval was needed for permanent installation. The Engineer's report indicated the chicanes had been effective, but because of the loading zone in front of the new parking garage on Beaver Avenue, should begin at Fraser Street instead of Burrowes Street as originally installed. A map of the changes had been included for Council in its agenda information.

Mr. Daubert and Ms. Dauler were concerned about the lack of visibility of the travel lanes, especially in bad weather. Since the lanes were painted on the surface, snow and icy conditions can make the lane markings difficult to see. Statistics indicated, however, that the area had experienced fewer crashes after the chicanes were installed, so there was no evidence that drivers struggled with the new traffic pattern. Ms. Story described the efforts to sign the lanes adequately with pop-up reflectors in addition to the pavement markings, but admitted the difficulty in keeping the markings visible during winter weather.

In response to a question about the \$100,000 cost estimate, Ms. Story explained that the cost was to install the chicanes using concrete barriers instead of the present signs. Ms. Goreham commented that before making any changes in concrete, the Council should wait until after the reconfiguration of the intersection at Fraser Street and Beaver

Avenue. Ms. Story clarified that the Borough needed to request PennDOT approval of the pedestrian node and continuation of the chicanes; the request was not necessarily that they be constructed in concrete. Chris Falzone, Chairman of the Transportation Commission and present in the audience, told Council that the Commission had recommended against installing the concrete, but they like the chicanes.

**Intercity Bus Facility.** At its February 4 meeting, Council had received a report from Synergy Real Estate Corporation, a consulting firm hired by the University to assist in evaluating sites for an intercity bus facility. Council's reaction to the report needed to be articulated prior to the next meeting with the consultant on February 22.

Mr. Fontaine briefly reviewed the history of the project. The University had announced its intent to move the bus station from its current location in the old railroad station on Atherton Street to make way for development of that area of campus. Originally, the University had proposed to construct a stand-alone bus station near Innovation Park. In response to concerns expressed by the Borough, however, the University agreed to employ Synergy to explore other options. A committee, chaired by Ms. Goreham, had been organized to provide community input. Several sites had been evaluated using criteria developed by the committee, including an element encouraging downtown economic development. Sites were consequently rated in accordance with their income producing ability, based on that economic development aspect. Mr. Fontaine reminded Council that a stand-alone bus station, outside of the downtown, could still be developed by the University, but that was not the basis for the evaluation of the sites identified by the committee working with Synergy.

There followed considerable discussion as to whether the economic development aspect of the project was practical, necessary or desirable. If that element were abandoned, then a west campus location might be identified and pursued. Mr. Kern suggested that the University consider a bus station as part of the new commuter parking facility.

Funding alternatives were also discussed. Ms. Goreham was concerned about using federal transportation funding sources in conjunction with a project that included construction of parking. She opposed any project that would potentially reduce CATA's ridership. She added that the Highlands neighborhood representatives were opposed to the location proposed at the corner of Garner Street and Beaver Avenue.

Mr. Humphrey asked if moving the building that houses the current bus station had been considered. Although Mayor Welch said no interest had been expressed in moving the building, Mr. Kern suggested that it could be moved to the parking lot owned by the Borough on Sparks Street, only a block or two away.

**Travel Policy for Elected Officials.** Mr. Daubert distributed a copy of an excerpt from Council's manual regarding travel expenses, as well as a report on municipal membership and conference expenditures from 1995 through 2004. Mr. Daubert observed that Council members were attending more training conferences out of town, and he thought a reminder about budget limitations and eligible expenses was appropriate. He said questions on the travel policy should be directed to him or to the Manager.

Both Ms. Knauer and Ms. Dauler commented on the importance of Council members' ability to attend sessions sponsored by the National League of Cities and the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities. Networking opportunities offered during such conferences were very worthwhile, as were the educational sessions, and meetings with state and federal legislators to share local elected officials' viewpoints had been productive in the past.

Several members of Council planned to attend a National League of Cities legislative conference in March. Meeting times with legislators were to be scheduled by the Manager, and Council would be kept informed.

**Any Other Matters.** Mr. Kern expressed his concern about an item he had read in the minutes of the January meeting of the Historic Resources Commission. He said Planning Commission member Donald Hahn had asked the Historic Resources Commission to resurrect a controversial historic preservation ordinance. Mr. Kern reminded Council that Mr. Hahn had approached Council about such an ordinance during Council's discussion of the Planning Commission's work plan for 2005, and Council had at that time instructed the Planning Commission to delete the item from its work plan. Mr. Kern felt that Council's direction had been clear. Ms. Dauler said she too

was concerned about Mr. Hahn's request to the Historic Resources Commission. Ms. Knauer suggested that the Council President write a letter to Mr. Hahn and to the Historic Resources Commission, reiterating Council's position that an ordinance proposal should not be pursued at this time. Ms. Dauler, in her role as liaison to the Historic Resources Commission, asked for an opportunity to speak with the Commission before correspondence is drafted.

Ms. Knauer asked about an item she had read in the weekly Manager's Information Memo (MIM) on the development of bids for equipment for the new parking garage. Mr. Fontaine explained staff had learned that full coordination of all parking equipment, including meters, garage entry and exit controls, and parking revenue software, may not be technically feasible yet, given the state of the art of equipment available. No single manufacturer makes both garage equipment and parking meters, for example. So staff continued to work with the project architect to draft a request for proposals so that vendors could offer flexible alternatives to meet the system's needs. He said the bids were anticipated for Council action in April.

Mayor Welch announced that nearly a dozen Council "wannabes" had attended an information session held immediately prior to the work session. Several Council members and the Mayor met with the potential candidates, answering questions and encouraging their interest in running for office.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Thomas J. Fontaine, II  
Borough Secretary