

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
Public Meeting
May 12, 2005
12:00 p.m.

The State College Borough Council held a public meeting on Thursday, May 12, 2005 in the State College Council Room, 243 South Fraser Street, State College, Pennsylvania. Mr. Slaybaugh called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Present: Thomas E. Daubert, Council President
Elizabeth A. Goreham
Craig R. Humphrey
Jeffrey R. Kern

Also present: Herman L. Slaybaugh, Zoning Officer/Planner; Joanne Lopinsky, Zoning Enforcement Officer; Cynthia Hanscom, Recording Secretary; and other interested members of the public.

Mr. Slaybaugh made introductions and showed presentation on the Commercial Incentive District. He explained the purpose of meeting is to provide information on the proposed district, take comments and answer questions.

Arthur Beward asked how the floor area ratio (FAR) is used to determine the density. Mr. Slaybaugh explained the FAR number, such as 2.0, is multiplied by the area of the lot to determine the maximum amount of area that can be used for a specific purpose.

Mr. Beward indicated there was a report completed in the 1990s to analyze the downtown and it was recommended that two different business districts should not be established. Mr. Slaybaugh indicated the Kellerco study of 1990 recommended the commercial district not be expanded beyond West College Avenue because it would weaken the downtown by creating two distinctive districts.

Ronald Filippelli asked if a bonus could be received for both height and reduction in parking. Mr. Slaybaugh indicated both bonuses could be awarded but more than one type of incentive would be required. For example, if a building is green certified and parking is underground, the developer could receive a bonus in FAR and a reduction in parking.

Mr. Beward remembered a proposal to further restrict height in the downtown; he asked if that ordinance had ever been enacted. Mr. Slaybaugh said the proposal to restrict height had never been passed. The current restriction is 45 feet in the 100 blocks of East and West College Avenue with rest of the commercial district restricted to 65 feet in height.

Mr. Beward noted business owners in the Urban Village (area west of Atherton Street along West College Avenue) have indicated they do not get student traffic. He asked if students as consumers were being considered when developing this district. Mr. Slaybaugh said this ordinance will not restrict the development of student housing. Many developers will look at these properties in regards to how much student housing can be built and if it could be economically viable. The increase in FAR would be available for student housing.

Mr. Beward commented that limiting building height along College Avenue restricts a grand opportunity. For example, along Central Park in New York City, high-rise apartment buildings line the park so that the view from the upper level apartments is a green expanse. It would be nice if owner-occupied housing could be built along College Avenue that could view the green stretch of campus. He noted the sunrise and sunset would not be a bother because College Avenue runs east and west.

Mr. Kern asked why there was no parking bonus for office use. Mr. Slaybaugh indicated there is an incentive for first floor retail. Offices with residential uses above was not seen as a desirable use.

Mr. Humphrey noted there would be three high-rise apartment buildings constructed by the time this ordinance could be approved. He wondered if this ordinance would really have any effect on redevelopment. Mr. Slaybaugh noted there were many factors that could affect changes and redevelopment for the community. The University will continue to increase their enrollment numbers which will impact the needs of the community. Social factors and a drop in the interest rates could also impact development.

Ms. Goreham noted that the Borough creates positive cash flow; therefore, Council should be increasing incentives for businesses. Mr. Slaybaugh said he believed this ordinance would do that. The markets for student housing and office space can change. If there is a growing need for student housing, the language in the proposed ordinance will allow student residential development. Certain standards, such as underground parking and green certification would allow a developer for an increase in FAR for student housing. He cautioned that if this is not what council wants it should be changed. Ms. Goreham did not believe that more student housing was needed. Council needed to get serious about turning things around in the downtown. Because of the social situation in the town, there were too many students roaming around in a drunken state. Mr. Daubert noted that encouraging residential owner-occupied

housing in the downtown needed to begin with changing the retail industry. Upscale clothing and shoe stores were needed.

There being no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary