Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
Work Session
Friday, December 2, 2011
Noon

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Friday, December 2, 2011, in the State College Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. The meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m. by Mr. Hahn.

Present: Elizabeth A. Goreham, Mayor
Tom Daubert
Donald Hahn
Theresa Lafer
Peter Morris
James Rosenberger

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Carl R. Hess, Planning Director; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Norma J. Crater, Accounting Supervisor; Roger A. Dunlap, Assistant Borough Manager; Lu Hoover, Planner/CDBG; Charles DeBow, Parking Manager; Brendan McNally, UPUA Representative; Angel Hernandez, Information Systems Director; Michael S. Groff, Finance Director; Courtney Hayden, Grants & Communications Coordinator; Kate Delano, Chairman of the Transportation Commission; Adam Smeltz from State College.com and Debbie Lang, Recording Secretary.

Public Hour – There was no one present to discuss items that were not on the agenda.

ABC Report – Kate Delano, Transportation Commission Chairman, was present to discuss the Commission's 2012 Work Plan. She stated since her last report, the Commission had a new member added, Paul Rito. She noted Mr. Rito is the President of the Bicycle Coalition and will assist the Commission with their goals regarding bicycle safety. She reported safety is the number one priority of the Commission. She discussed the Top 5 accident intersections the Commission reviewed in 2011. The Commission suggested safety improvements to these intersections and she noted many of the improvements have been implemented. Other improvements will either be completed in the 2012 budget or by PennDOT. Ms. Delano also reported, with the recent pedestrian accident at College and Pugh, the Commission requested a report from the Police Department on pedestrian accidents in the Borough. The report received showed no pattern to the accidents and the Commission determined the only thing they can do is to continue the on-going education.

Ms. Delano also discussed the Fraser Street improvement project and noted the widening of the sidewalks, reduction of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts, ADA compliant ramps and retiming of the signals will all increase the safety in this area of town.

Ms. Delano also reported the Commission has worked on parking ordinance changes and noted this item has been placed on hold until a permanent director of the Downtown Improvement District is hired. She discussed the traffic issues the Commission also studied. The Highlands neighborhood will be the focus of the traffic study in 2012. The Commission reviewed the proposed Retreat project and made recommendations on this project. She also noted the various bicycle issues handled by the Commission in 2011.

Council thanked Ms. Delano for her very concise report. They noted the Commission had a very busy and successful year and felt they were moving in the right direction. A Councilman noted other communities paint their bike lanes in a solid green and suggested the Commission might look into this option for our bike lanes. Another Councilman stated she felt bicyclist are not using hand signals and are traveling in the evenings without lights. She suggested better education on this matter. Another Councilman stated many operators of vehicles are traveling too fast and overly aggressive and they

should also be educated. Mr. McNally, the UPUA Student Representative, stated he had no questions of Ms. Delano but felt education of pedestrians and motorists is a key component of these two groups functioning together on our streets and stated the student government would be happy to help in any way they could.

A Councilman questioned item #5 on the 2012 work plan and he stated closing of this street would not pass in the near future and he also questioned item #6 and wondered what this project was about. Ms. Delano stated item #5 was added back to the Commission's work plan at the request of Council. In response to questions from the Commission, she stated this item is only on a periodic basis and not permanently. With regard to item #6, Ms. Delano stated with the removal of the large elms on this street, this street has become very harsh. There is no plan to narrow this street or make it a one-way street. Council again thanked Ms. Delano for the excellent report.

Council reviewed and discussed the matrix of questions, thus far, on the 2012 operating budgets previously reviewed. A Councilman stated she has concerns about the time it takes to move projects along. She stated we need to have some way to keep people updated and projects moving along. She also noted she has received comments from the public on these issues. The Manager stated staff does provide project updates on a regular basis. The Councilman stated that most of the complaints she is hearing is that residents don't see changes in the neighborhoods even after properties are cited. She felt staff needed to complete better follow-up on these issues.

Another Councilman stated he felt changes in the budget text should be readable in the budget by the public. He felt we should tell the whole story. The Manager stated if Council gives staff feedback as to what they would like to see in the budget, staff will see that it gets changed. He also questioned the land area plan and noted Council rejected this item at least three times before. He stated the Planning Department shouldn't spend time on this issue and that it wasn't worth the department spending valuable time on this. Staff stated this is not a major focus of ours and we will clarify our response on this.

Following these discussions, Mr. Hahn noted there were some interesting points brought up that may need further development. He asked Council members to send written comments, via e-mail, to staff for future follow-up. The Manager stated staff would welcome any additional feedback.

2012 Operating Budget. Council continued to discuss the 2012 Operating Budget.

Bellaire Court – Mr. Hess stated this budget is pretty straightforward. The biggest issue faced is keeping the building fully occupied. He discussed generation of funds to keep this program operational. He discussed the rents paid by the residents and Section 8 vouchers to assist these residents. He noted the Borough has submitted a request for an increase in the Section 8 vouchers. He discussed maintenance of the building, grants received to upgrade appliances, etc.

A Councilman stated she thought this was a worthy cause, but she expressed that she's had concern with the Borough running this charity for some time now. She felt this project cuts into the everyday work of staff. She stated the program has been in the read and she questioned the age of the building. She suggested perhaps having a professional management company run this operation would be more efficient. She thought we should think of an alternative to the Borough running this operation.

Another Councilman questioned how many units were in this complex and agreed perhaps we should look at other options for the operation of this complex. Staff noted this is a mission question and the needs will be reevaluated again in 2012. He noted the cost allocation has been efficient and this is not affordable housing, but very low income housing and it would take some time to transition out of it.

Another Councilman stated he felt this is a matter of priority. He felt this was a very important social service of the Borough. He did not feel we should put this as a low priority and he wished we had more of this type of service. He did not feel a private company would do a better service than the Borough is providing.

A Councilman stated she agreed that the Borough can carry this program through this economic recession. This is an important mission we have to provide safe housing for everyone. We have done that and done it well and this item should be at the top of the list, not the bottom.

A Councilman asked where the monies come from and why CDBG funds used aren't. Staff explained use of CDBG monies. He noted we may possibly be able to use HOME funds. He stated he can't image a private company wanting to take over the handling of this project. He felt we are using it the best way we possibly can.

Redevelopment Authority – Mr. Hess discussed this budget. He noted we now have a 2-year lease on the Verizon building; at some point we will need to do a TIF for the Fraser Center; the Elm Street program has recently had a name change and some program changes and staff will be watching this program and will apply when they can for grants. He noted the Authority is also looking into partnerships. This budget is pretty much the same as last year. Mr. Hess explained the THF/Kemmerer Road debt.

A Councilman questioned the $37,000 line item and asked if this was a pass-through in this budget or if it was replacing the subsidy we are providing to the Kemmerer Road project. Mr. Hess explained this would depend on how you define subsidy.

Another Councilman stated she is leery of the mission of this Authority. He expressed concern that this Authority had the possibility of using demolition in areas where people didn't want to sell their properties. She also questioned adequate places of employment and stated she thought this was a DID mission. Mr. Hess responded that this mission statement is directly out of the state act. Staff also discussed imminent domain and noted this process is a red herring with the Redevelopment Authority. They discussed the overlap of the RDA and DID noting the RDA covers a broader scope as it covers the entire community as a whole whereas the DID covers just the downtown.

Council also questioned line 460 on page 180 noting there are no employees of this Authority and staff noted this is an item for staff development.

A Councilman questioned what the words "add (use) revenue and noted this means different things in different budgets. Staff explained we have a fund balance and we typically use reserve for the fund balance. Staff stated we can expand and define this better if Council so wished.

Another Councilman stated she wanted to thank the Authority and felt they were do a lot with very little.

CDBG & Home – The Manager noted we are still working through the federal budget with CDBG and HOME funding. This funding is part of our over-all budget. He noted this is the first time this budget has been included in our operating budget. He stated this budget is part of our consolidated plan and that plan will be amended when the federal budget is passed.

Council questioned account 460-492 and why it was increased $15,000. Staff responded this was for employees and that this amount is actually less in 2012 from $110,000 to $100,000.

Another Councilman questioned the start-up line item and staff noted this was from the sale of the Fraser Street property. Those present also discussed funds that were not spent due to timeliness goals not being met. There were expenditures that came in after the October 31 deadline and staff will be working through this issue.

Sanitary Sewer – Mr. Whitfield stated this is a standard budget. We are proposing 25 cents per thousand gallons increase amounts to approximately $9.00/1000 gallons. The reason for this is that treatment costs continue to rise. He noted the PSU treatment plant is taking less sewage and we have not had a contract with them since 1998. He noted the treatment costs are now almost equal at both plants. He noted the line improvement is the other issue. He discussed a project which we are proposing to partnership with the Water Authority on in 2012 – the West College Avenue project. He discussed an agreement we have with UAJA for treatment of township properties entering our sewer system.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Whitfield stated the rate increase over the past year was for four quarters. He noted there was no rate increase last year. He explained this budget carrying a fund balance.

A Councilman asked why on page 173, the account of 724 goes up to $300,000 and wondered if this was for new construction. Mr. Whitfield stated this amount is to do sewer line rehabilitation. He explained this work is done when a street is going to be reconstructed. This is done so that if we resurface a street, a year later we do not need to come back and dig up the new street to do sewer line repair or replacement.

The Manager discussed the sewer impact fees and tapping fees. Mr. Whitfield noted if the proposed Retreat and the Unico site are developed, substantial tapping fee will be collected from both of these projects.

A Councilman asked about line item 364-100 and asked if this includes these projects. Mr. Whitfield responded we cannot count on them. Staff noted the funds would go into the fund balance and be carried forward year after year.

Public Works – Mr. Whitfield stated this budget is status quo. He noted administrative staff costs have been allocated across other cost center budgets and there is no line item for interns in this budget. Fuels and lubricants are included in the Highway Aid budget. He noted fewer funds have been budgeted for plant materials. Some additional funding has been added for consultant services because of the Fraser Street area construction. Software and licenses were previously in the IT budget but are now added for Public Works license renewals. Equipment rentals were reduced due to $15,000 taken out of the budget for contract tree pruning. He also noted this does not correspond with the text on the opposite page of the budget. Capital projects under $25,000 have also been moved into the General Fund.

In response to a question from a Councilman regarding the increase in the overtime amount, Mr. Whitfield stated this amount is budgeted on an average and depends on the weather/special events, etc. This Councilman also stated the line item 373 makes no sense at all. Mr. Whitfield explained staff is looking handling this from an internal standpoint rather than through consultants. The plan is to move a current employee into this position and have another member of staff move into the open foreman position this move would create. There will be no other staff increase due to this move.

A Councilman asked staff to say something about repairs. He stated, on line item 710, he would like to see numbers in there. He felt the Council and the public needs to know what these things are in the budget and the verbiage in the text should discuss this. Staff stated verbiage can be added.

Items of Information

Mr. Fountaine noted a change to the agenda for the meeting on Monday night. He stated the NID assessment proposal did not meet the 60% requirement for the plan amendment to proceed. Therefore, it will not be necessary for Council to take action. He stated he and the solicitor are to review this item in the next few days and depending upon these discussions, there may just be a blue sheet with the agenda packet.

Adjournment

Since there were no further items to come before the Council, Mr. Rosenberger moved, and Ms. Lawrence seconded a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Debbie Lang, Recording Secretary