

State College Borough Council  
Work Session  
October 1, 2004

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Friday, October 1, 2004 in the Council Room (Room 304) of the State College Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street, State College, Pennsylvania. Mr. Daubert called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Present: Thomas E. Daubert  
Elizabeth A. Goreham  
Craig R. Humphrey  
Jeffrey R. Kern  
Janet K. Knauer  
James H. Meyer

Absent: Catherine G. Dauler

Also present: Thomas J. Fontaine, Borough Manager; Ronald A. Davis, Assistant Borough Manager; Michele Nicolas, Director of Human Resources; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Timothy Grattan, Director of Information Systems; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Amy J. Story, Borough Engineer; Joanne Lopinsky, Assistant Zoning Officer; Cynthia S. Hanscom, Recording Secretary; members of the media and other interested observers.

**PUBLIC HOUR:** There were no comments made by the public.

**Choral Society to Display Art in the Municipal Building**

Ms. Nicolas indicated she received a request from the State College Choral Society to use the Municipal Building mezzanine to display art on *Voices of the Holocaust*. Janet Haner, General Manager for the State College Choral Society, indicated that the art exhibit was part of a full-length choral work. She would like to place the exhibit for one month starting on October 30 and ending on December 1, 2004.

Mr. Daubert asked that Ms. Nicolas and Mr. Fontaine be permitted to review the artwork before it is displayed to ensure that it would not cause consternation to the community. Ms. Haner said she saw no problem with that and added that there would be a jury to determine if the artwork was appropriate. She believed the jury standards would be more stringent. Mr. Meyer noted that there is always someone that will find something objectionable, which does not necessarily mean it is not appropriate.

**Centre Region Parks & Recreation Authority**

Dan Linzell, Council's representative to the Centre Region Parks & Recreation Authority, was present to discuss past, present and future plans of the Authority. He noted the 2004 Summer Program Report was included in Council's agenda. The report summarized the programs that have been offered, highlighted specific programs that were offered this past summer, and discussed future plans.

Mr. Linzell noted that Sports Illustrated acknowledged the Centre Region Parks & Recreation (CRPR) in their recognition of State College as a sports town. This recognition was given to one town in each state, and State College received this for the State of Pennsylvania. He distributed a copy of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of Sports Illustrated noting this achievement for the Centre Region.

In his presentation, Mr. Linzell highlighted the continued growth within Parks and Recreation, including the expansion of the senior center and acquisition of park land in Oak Hall. He also noted that there were additional programs offered and the continued dynamic relationships with other entities, such as the fly fishing camp. Plans for the future included looking at existing facilities, such as the pools, and completion of feasibility studies.

Mr. Daubert noted the traditional focus of parks and recreation has been programs with instruction and that programs not go outside the Centre Region. He asked if that was still the case. Mr. Linzell replied the programs provided are for the people who are funding the programs; he did not feel that other people should be brought in from other communities.

Mr. Daubert commented that residents have been complaining that private organizations, such as the Centre Soccer Association, are directing the use of the fields. Mr. Linzell did not believe private groups were driving the events. Groups, such as the Centre Soccer Association, have grown and, with their growth, there are fewer children interested in the CRPR soccer program. He did not see it as a problem that other groups were offering events. Costs for programs through the CRPR are usually kept lower to fill the niche that may not be available through private organizations.

Mr. Daubert noted the trend of CRPR has been to push decision making at the regional level rather than capital decisions at the local municipal level. Mr. Linzell disagreed. The regional park inventory is trying to make more decisions on the need for parks on a regional level.

Mr. Daubert commented the Borough has put a large amount of money in the Borough's parks. Now the Borough is being asked to put help fund regional parks. Mr. Linzell said the needs of local municipalities are not being ignored. Each township has specific needs the CRPR is trying to handle. If you think about the demographics, the CRPR feels that the region is merging into one group. There is a regional need for large parks that include fields. Mr. Meyer noted that the region is building playing fields. The Borough has some fields in Orchard and Sunset Park, but it was nothing compared to that in the outlying areas. The children of Borough residents need to use those fields; that is the reason the Borough is helping to finance the parks. He noted that Ferguson Township is highly committed to parks and spent over \$1 million on parks in the last five years. Mr. Kern agreed the community is growing into a regional entity and there are no borders when it comes to parks; however, funding problems could create problematic issues for the Borough.

Mr. Kern commented on the Centre Soccer Association and how it is viewed as a highly competitive organization that does not allow all the kids to play. Parents and Council want programs where all children can play. Mr. Linzell agreed. The soccer program offered through the CRPR does allow all children to get involved. Ron Woodhead, director of CRPR, agreed that the philosophy of the CRPC has always been that every child plays. However, with the growth of Centre Soccer Association, it is difficult to get enough kids to form a league. The perception that the Association has "taken over the parks" is not the reality. Outside organizations can use the parks only after the CRPC program needs have been met.

Mr. Goreham noted that Mr. Linzell's role for the Borough was very important. She predicted there would be a period of tension as issues surrounding the Welch Pool are resolved.

#### Ad Hoc Park Committee

Mr. Fontaine noted that, in July, COG charged the ad hoc Regional Park Committee with continuing discussions to determine the regional development, future ownership, and the consideration, if any, of a new program to allow for regional development to occur. Ms. Goreham, member of the committee, noted the overall goal is to regionalize the Borough's involvement with CRPR. One of the issues is how to allocate shares. Ms. Goreham noted that she made a suggestion to the committee that credit be given to those municipalities that had already incurred expenses; however, the concept was not viewed favorably by the rest of the committee. Another suggestion was that the host municipality that would benefit the most should receive the initial share (purchase the land through a grant and assume some portion of the capitalization). Mr. Daubert asked how that was different from what is being done now. Ms. Goreham noted that each municipality assumed the full capital expense.

Mr. Meyer suggested the COG Finance Committee be directed to come up with a funding formula. Ms. Goreham felt the goal of this committee was to come up with a formula.

Mr. Kern believed the ad hoc committee should come up with a recommendation to merge the park system; the merger would mean that one entity owns all the parks and that each municipality would sell their parks to the new entity, which would be responsible for running them. The other extreme is what is occurring now with a collection of municipalities that have agreed to work together but do not actually have regional financing.

Ms. Goreham said the general consensus of the ad hoc committee was that the new entity should not govern the smaller parks. There was agreement among the committee members that pools should be included in the regional proposal.

Mr. Meyer noted that there could be different formulas for funding pool costs and park costs. There are also passive parks, such as Holmes-Foster, rather than active, such as Orchard Park. Mr. Kern agreed stating that parks that include ball fields could be considered regional parks, and other parks could remain with each municipality.

Mr. Daubert noted that if the parks are developed regionally, other organizations should not be permitted to use them without paying a fee. Mr. Woodhead said currently there is no charge for use of the fields by outside organizations.

Mr. Fontaine noted there seemed to be a consensus among Council members to look at a 2-tiered system of regional and local parks.

Ms. Goreham indicated a memo from Jack Jenkins from College Township listed suggested discussion items for the ad hoc committee. One of those suggestions included a recommendation on the reorganization of the Centre Regional Recreation Authority to include elected officials from each participating municipality with appointed officers, especially a treasurer. Ms. Goreham noted another suggestion incorporated a rotating schedule for participating municipalities to submit grant request to governmental agencies for the purchase and development of parks and recreation areas. Since the development of regional parks benefits the entire population, a rotating schedule, on a 4, 5 or 6 year cycle, would make grant applications more attractive and eliminate competitiveness in the Centre Region. Council seemed to be in concurrence with both issues.

#### Capital Improvement Program

Council began their review of the 2005-2009 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Mr. Fontaine noted the CIP was in a familiar format with modified introductory material. One change is that the First Time Homebuyer Program was moved to the operating budget rather than capital expenditures; costs for that program may be higher and there may be pressure to fund at a higher level.

Council began their review with the Streets section. Mr. Fontaine asked that West Park Avenue not be discussed since a presentation will be made to Council on October 29.

The first project discussed was residential street lighting. Ms. Goreham suggested a cost benefit analysis be done to determine if it was feasible to take over street lights. Mr. Whitfield hoped to be able to that after seeing how the lights on Garner Street are handled, which should be in place by the end of October.

Next, Council discussed the Central Business District (CBD) improvements. Ms. Knauer believed that more money should be moved from this project to traffic mitigation. Currently there is only enough money in traffic mitigation to do a study. Mr. Kern suggested prior authority be used for pedestrian nodes.

Ms. Knauer asked about lighting crosswalks that are not signalized. Mr. Whitfield indicated these have been successful and the cost is only about one-third of the cost for a

traffic signal. Mr. Kern noted that a lighted crosswalk could be perceived by the pedestrian as having the right-of-way when the driver's perception is that they do not need to stop.

Next discussed were bike facility improvements. Mr. Daubert disagreed that a downtown/campus connection should eliminate parking on the north side of College Avenue to establish a bus/bike lane. Mr. Kern agreed. All agreed it should be deleted.

Council discussed neighborhood traffic mitigation projects. Mr. Daubert asked why another Highlands traffic study was proposed. Mr. Whitfield explained there were a number of traffic counts conducted over the years but never an origin/destination study. Council discussed the purpose of the study, which is to determine the number of cut-through trips in the Highlands, particularly on Prospect Avenue. Mr. Fontaine noted the Borough budgeted little money for traffic mitigation because there was little known about what mitigation measures are needed. The long-range goal is to begin identifying funding streams to use for traffic mitigation.

The next section to be discussed was the CBD street light extension/replacement project. Ms. Goreham noted that Ferguson Township has an application for grant money to be used for street lights in Pine Grove Mills. She asked if the same funding source was available for the Borough. Ms. Story replied that the Borough submitted an application for a Transportation Enhancement Grant but it was denied.

Mr. Meyer asked if future Community Development Block Grant money could be used to pay back a loan to install lights now. Mr. Kern indicated the risk would be that CDBG funding would be lost. Ms. Hoover did not know but said she would get an answer for Council.

Council then discussed traffic signal improvements. Mr. Whitfield explained the countdown pedestrian signals are included in this project request and have been approved by PennDOT. Mr. Daubert asked if the signals would include audio countdowns. Mr. Whitfield replied that they would not; the signal would countdown from 10 – 9 – 8 – 7, etc. Mr. Kern stated that pedestrian violations are not enforced in the Borough; if not enforced, he could not see spending the money on the signals. Mr. Whitfield explained the countdown signals have been well received in most cities. Ms. Knauer agreed with Mr. Kern. Mr. Fontaine indicated the pedestrian walk indicator would remain; the countdown would not start until there were 10 seconds left before the light changed. Mr. Kern believed the countdown would give pedestrians a sense of false safety. Mr. Whitfield recommended Council not dismiss the proposal. He suggested one intersection be equipped with the signal to determine pedestrian reaction. Mr. Daubert believed a test run was reasonable but asked that Council be informed of the proposed location.

Council discussed diverter improvements at North Burrowes Street and Thomas Street/Mitchell Avenue. Mr. Daubert commented that he would rather not do this project but leave the flower pots. Mr. Whitfield noted that the curb needed to be extended and something would need to be done with the pavement; the flower pots were only a temporary measure. Council suggested "round-up" be used to get rid of the grass growing through the pavement, or simply let the grass grow through.

Council discussed the Beaver/Fraser intersection realignment. Mr. Fontaine explained the project costs do not include design cost. Staff was working with Trans Associate to put together an alignment that would work. Four suggestions will be presented to the Transportation Commission. At the October 11 work session, Council will see the realignment plans. This project would not be done until the Beaver Avenue site is redeveloped.

Mr. Kern noted that the proposal for the Beaver Avenue extension is estimated to cost \$600,000, which would require more work than at the Beaver/Fraser realignment, but the cost for the realignment was projected over \$700,000. Mr. Fontaine said the Beaver/Fraser realignment would include the demolition of the medical arts building.

Mr. Meyer questioned whether bond payments should come out of capital improvements. Mr. Davis said the garage is a new project, which shows an annual payment of \$40,000; in the future, the bond payment will come out of the general fund.

Mr. Daubert asked if the Home Town Streets grant would be paid to the Borough at the beginning of the initial stage of the project. Mr. Fontaine answered the payment timing would depend on when the project takes place. Ms. Goreham thought the grant would be more than \$206,000. Mr. Whitfield explained a portion of the grant would be used for placement of street lights on Beaver Avenue and Fraser Street.

Next, Council reviewed the Central Business District signal retimings project. Mr. Daubert asked that the description include a more efficient flow of pedestrian as well as vehicle traffic. Ms. Story believed that, overall, the intersections will run more efficiently.

Mr. Daubert opposed the way the Beaver Avenue/Locust Lane improvements were written. He did not believe this road should be closed. It would be better to leave the road open and restrict through traffic; vehicles could be forced to make a right-hand turn on to Beaver Avenue. He added that, even though on-street parking spaces were removed along Beaver Avenue near this intersection for visibility, vehicles are still parking there. It created a dangerous situation for vehicles traveling directly across Beaver Avenue. Ms. Story said that traffic warrants had not been met to restrict turning movements at this intersection. Mr. Meyer suggested staff look into this further. In the meantime, the project should be removed.

Mr. Daubert suggested the west Park Avenue reconstruction project be removed. Mr. Fontaine argued that residents were told that Council would reconsider the proposal at their October 29 meeting. Ms. Knauer agreed that Council should wait, but believed the general consensus was to remove the project.

Ms. Knauer asked if the \$10,000 budgeted for Urban Village improvements should be moved to traffic mitigation. Mr. Daubert said the funds should remain in this project. He did not believe that \$10,000 would be enough to make a difference in the traffic mitigation project. Ms. Knauer asked why sidewalks were listed as an improvement. Council asked that this project be brought back for review.

Council asked that the street project not included in this review (listed on Page 6 of the plan) be discussed at their next meeting.

#### Overlay District 7 and 8

Mr. Fontaine noted that a list of suggestions and examples discussed by Council at their meeting of September 20 was included with the agenda. He asked Council to determine what, if any, of these need to be considered by the Planning Commission when reviewing alternatives to the proposed overlay district.

Council members discussed ways to ensure that units stay owner-occupied or adult housing rather than student housing. It was noted that the concept from the downtown plan was to encourage owner-occupied professional housing downtown.

Mr. Kern believed the Commission should broaden their study to determine how this overlay would fit with the entire downtown. Mr. Kern said the overlay is not a limitation and the Commission should come up with what they believe should be placed in the sub districts. Ms. Goreham agreed and asked that the Commission look at the overlay as something long term. Just because the ordinance would not be used in the first year or two does not mean that it does not have worth.

Council members discussed the floor area ratio and the need for a higher number for owner-occupied housing because permanent residents would need more space. Ms. Goreham noted it would be interesting to know the existing floor area ratios at 333 South Allen Street. Mr. Fontaine noted that he would get that information to Council.

## **Council's October 4, 2004 Agenda**

### East Highlands Traffic Calming Study

Council discussed the award of a professional services contract for the east Highlands traffic calming study to determine what information is already available and determine what percentage of traffic is cut-through. Mr. Whitfield indicated, from a 1995 license plate survey, 90 percent of the traffic is being generated within the Borough. Ms. Knauer asked if residents on Prospect Avenue wanted the traffic generated within the Borough to be mitigated. Mr. Whitfield replied, "Yes." Mr. Meyer noted that Prospect Avenue is part of a grid system and residents need to realize that they do not live on a cul-de-sac.

Council members discussed the data currently available and what has been collected. Mr. Whitfield explained the survey to be conducted would be an origin/destination study. The data collection phase was expected to cost \$3,300.

Ms. Goreham noted that, if Council believes Borough-wide traffic is not cut-through, spending money on the survey would be unwarranted. Other Council members agreed.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Daubert distributed a copy of a letter sent to the PLCM Board of Directors on the 105<sup>th</sup> annual conference that included a financial report of expenditures for the conference.

Ms. Knauer reported the Chief's Advisory Committee met and designed a survey to students about their knowledge and response to the cameras. The Committee will be meeting again in October to review the results and make a recommendation to Council.

Mr. Fontaine informed Council that, because of construction at the State Theatre, ten private spaces off of Calder Alley would be no longer available for monthly rentals. He offered 10 spaces in the Pugh Street garage, at cost, to those who will be displaced during the construction stage.

Mr. Fontaine also said that Penn Towers' parking garage was closed because of structural issues. Penn Towers has been scrambling for parking spaces around town for those displaced and approached the Borough for 24 spaces on a monthly basis. Since the Borough has an excess in the Pugh Street garage, the Borough has agreed to sell 24 permits until the garage is fixed.

Mr. Fontaine said he would be meeting with the legislature on the occupational privilege tax on October 4. The goal of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities was to lobby their proposal on the floor right after the election and before the end of the year.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Barbara J. Natalie  
Assistant Borough Secretary