

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
Work Session
December 4, 2012

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Tuesday, December 4, 2012, in the State College Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Mayor Goreham called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Donald M. Hahn, President of Council
Thomas E. Daubert
Catherine G. Dauler
Ronald L. Filippelli
Sarah Klinetob
Peter Morris
James Rosenberger
Elizabeth A. Goreham, Mayor

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, Borough Manager; Debra A. Lang, Staff Assistant; Roger Dunlap, Assistant Borough Manager; Carl R. Hess, Planning Director; Norma Crater, Manager of Financial Services; Charles DeBow, Parking Manager; Courtney Hayden; Grants & Communications Coordinator; Beth Johnston, Director of Human Resources; Angel Hernandez, Information Systems Director; Kevin Kassab, Supervisor of Inspections; Ernest Dabiero, Risk Manager/Purchasing Agent; Kathy Simin, Assistant Manager of Financial Services; Linda Welker, Manager of Tax Services; members of the media and interested citizens.

There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hour – Hearing of Citizens

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

2013 Operating Budget

Mr. Fountaine asked Council if anyone had any concerns regarding the matrix that was distributed last evening and if anything was missed. There were no comments from Council regarding the matrix.

Administration

Mr. Fountaine stated the text from last year's budget was carried forward to this budget and revisions will be given to Council on the text. He noted there are no significant changes to the budget from last year. There is an increase in this budget of just under 5%. He stated personnel and employee benefits constitute 70% of the budget. He stated since the budget was prepared, the Mayor has presented a request for staff in the Administration budget. He stated, in the past, the existing Administrative staff personnel have handled staff support for the Mayor. He noted with the vacant staff assistant position for over one year and the transition to the ERP, staff support has been limited. He discussed the job redesign and job shifts. Staff will be moving forward in the near future to fill the vacant staff assistant position. He stated staff has considered various options in the department. They considered two part-time positions and 1 full-time position but felt it would probably be full-time positions. He stated if Council wishes, they could provide the Mayor with an assistant. Staff would recommend this assistant would be a part-time position for 20 hours a week at a salary of \$17,000. This position would be an administrative staff position and would also work for administration and would report directly to him or Sharon Ergler.

Mr. Filippelli asked about the \$536,000 increase from \$445,000. Mr. Fountaine stated that was due to the position that was open for over a year.

Mr. Daubert asked if this extra twenty-hour position was above the second staff assistant. Mr. Fontaine responded that would be in addition to the staff position that needs to be filled. Mr. Daubert stated the staff assistant position has not been filled for over a year. Mr. Fontaine noted temporary help has filled the position for a substantial part of that time. Mr. Daubert stated he could not believe the position hasn't been filled. He stated Council could not expect the current staff to be expected to continue to do everything Council asks of them. He also noted line item 101 carried forward. Mr. Fontaine stated this would be corrected. Mr. Daubert stated a second intern is not needed. A staff assistant is needed more.

Mr. Rosenberger questioned line item 536 and if it was a new employee. Mr. Fontaine stated it is not a new employee. The interns were moved from full-time. Mr. Rosenberger stated this is 12% over last year and wondered if that was for benefits. Mr. Fontaine responded it was for pension costs not included previously and for the interns. Mr. Rosenberger noted the expenses are only up 1% which is a lean projection.

Mr. Morris stated he was in favor of a dedicated staff assistant for the Mayor. He stated it would make her work easier. He stated the Mayor is the face of the Borough and there were not many towns this size that did not have staff support for the Mayor.

Mr. Filippelli stated he agrees with Mr. Morris. Mr. Fontaine stated the charter does not allow employees for elected officials.

Mayor Goreham stated she felt this position would be a benefit to the Borough. She stated she loves being the Mayor but she is not a very organized person and having a dedicated assistant to help her with how her office responds to requests, etc. would be helpful.

Mr. Hahn stated he appreciated the attempts of the administrative staff, especially with the demanding new Council President. He felt it was important to have a fully staffed office and that they are ready to respond to unexpected events. He also noted he felt the role in state and national organizations is increasingly important. He felt Council needed interaction with them and he would like to request the line item for conferences, etc. be "beefed up". He stated he also endorses the additional support for the Mayor. Mr. Fontaine stated if Council wishes to do this, they could add it to the budget before adoption. Mr. Hahn asked that staff put together contingencies and options for this position. Mr. Fontaine stated staff recommends a position of 20 hours a week at a salary of \$17,000 to assist the Mayor. Mayor Goreham explained she would need someone to assist with answering e-mails, scheduling appointments, etc. Mr. Daubert stated he was also in favor of this assistance for the Mayor.

Mr. Filippelli asked why we need more money for conferences, etc. Council now does not use all the money that is put in the budget. Mr. Dabiero provided Council with a breakdown on the line item from 2008 to the present year. Council and staff discussed the policy change on this matter that was enacted in 2007. Mr. Hahn commended Council members who limited their travel demands but suggested the newer members of Council may wish to take part on policy and steering committees and he would encourage them to participate on these committees.

Finance

Ms. Crater discussed the staffing changes and reorganization in this department. She stated new to the Finance budget is the Grants Coordinator position. She noted previously grants were done in the Police Department and that position has not been filled since that person retired. She stated this budget is up \$100,000 next year. Part of that amount is for course work, etc. for the Assistant Manager of Financial Services to obtain her CPA degree and part of the amount is for attendance at the MUNIS Conference. She also noted line item 402-760, Office Furniture, covers office space for the Grants Coordinator and two additional office spaces.

Tax Collection

Ms. Welker noted her title has also changed and this budget includes a new position of Assistant Manager of Tax Services. She stated the department hopes to fill this position by the end of the year.

She also explained the need for data entry staff with the formation of the Centre Tax Agency. She briefly discussed the installment payment plan offered by the State College Area School District.

Mr. Filippelli questioned the decrease in postage and Ms. Welker responded that was because we did not have to complete the 4th quarter mailing.

In response to a question from Mr. Rosenberger, Ms. Welker stated all costs are allocated to all users of the system.

Mr. Daubert noted account 313 for EIT increases by 33%. Ms. Welker explained this is because in 2012 we only collected three-quarters of the taxes.

Mayor Goreham asked if there were any fees for using the installment plan. Ms. Welker stated collection of a fee was not included in the plan.

State College Borough Tax Office Enterprise Fund

Ms. Welker explained this new program. She noted it is exciting and challenging. She stated we have held open houses on this program and have been proactive with employers.

Mr. Rosenberger stated this is the first year for Act 32 and asked Ms. Welker her opinion on the Act. Ms. Welker stated she has been collecting taxes since 1973 and she feels the Act has a solid basis for saving costs. She stated, overall, the Act has been well received. She felt it was a good piece of legislation that needs just a little tweaking.

Information Technology

Mr. Hernandez explained this budget. He noted this budget is 3.8% of the total Operating Budget. He stated the biggest reason for the budget increase is for staffing.

Mr. Daubert stated he would like to see an executive summary of the Plante Moran study. Mr. Daubert also questioned the line item for the phone system. He stated this phone system was just upgraded not long ago. Mr. Fontaine stated the phone hardware is fine; however, the software needs to be updated.

Mr. Rosenberger stated this budget has an overall increase of 20% and wondered what the primary benefit of this increase is. Mr. Hernandez responded it is for personnel. He noted the behind the scenes work is not getting done. He stated the IT Department currently covers and monitors 40 servers just in the Borough. Mr. Rosenberger asked what percent of the ERP is online. Mr. Hernandez stated all of the ERP is online; however, as we proceed, the various modules need to be added. Mr. Hernandez stated we need people to support the ERP now. Mr. Fontaine stated this, and much of next year, we will need staff resources to support the ERP. Mr. Rosenberger asked how the department measures their own productivity with the support provided to others through the RTC. Mr. Hernandez explained.

Mayor Goreham questioned the software license and maintenance and the \$200,000 or 26% from the RTC. She also questioned the surveillance camera from three to one. Mr. Hernandez explained these cost to Mayor Goreham.

Mr. Hahn questioned the personnel increase for Borough services. Mr. Dunlap stated the RTC is not paying enough for services and services should be reduced if they are not paying for them.

Mr. Rosenberger asked if the regular partners were all the municipalities in the Centre Region and how long our agreements are for. Mr. Hernandez responded the partners are College, Patton and Ferguson Townships. He stated staff is working on the timeframe for agreements, but anything less than three years is not feasible. Mr. Fontaine noted the Borough has been subsidizing these services for several years.

Mr. Filippelli asked if it would be more costly for them to provide this service for themselves. Mr. Dunlap stated they are paying less than the going rate. He noted they are paying \$56.00 this year and the going

rate is \$80.00. Mr. Filippelli asked if a loss of partners would mean a 20% reduction. Mr. Hernandez responded that would depend on which were not provided services. He also noted though, that staff would then be able to do more here.

Regional Programs

Mr. Fontaine noted this budget is usually discussed at a General Forum meeting. Council is being asked to consider programs and relationships and whether to continue to participate. Mr. Fontaine stated Council should consider withdrawing from the Regional Planning and Code Administration programs. He stated we contribute \$50,000 and this is a duplication of our own staff. He felt it was time to have another serious look at this issue.

Mr. Fontaine discussed the Code Administration program. The previous discussions revolved around just withdrawing from certain aspects of the Code program. Now, we are suggesting withdrawing from the entire Code program. He noted there may be some Article of Agreement issues. He noted there is some degree of build up for us to administer the programs but currently, there is a tremendous amount of redundancy. He discussed the duplication and redundancy with permits and noted this creates challenges for people who want to do something. He stated looking at giving a one-year notice to withdraw from these programs would increase customer service efficiency. He stated 2012 would be the appropriate time to withdraw on January 1, 2014. The Property Maintenance Code for existing structures and fire codes in the Borough would remain in place. The cost would be the same or less due to the redundancy loss. The Borough would contract with a third party agency with regard to new construction.

Mr. Filippelli stated he has concerns about regional cooperation and the implications if we go beyond our bottom line in the Borough. He stated this is a big part of the existing structures program. He wondered if the benefit to us is great enough. He has trouble seeing the financial benefit and feels he needs more information from staff on this before he could make a decision. He asked if the Borough running this program would pay for itself through the permitting. Mr. Fontaine stated it would. He stated 85% of our costs would be recovered and it would be a self-sustaining operation. It would provide one-stop shopping for customers. This would be the biggest benefit. We would also have a database with all the information on a property in one single file.

Mr. Fontaine stated the Regional Planning decision is a cost driven decision. With the Code Administration decision is would be a case of us doing a better, more efficient job. Mr. Filippelli asked if we have been getting complaints. Mr. Fontaine responded that we have.

Mr. Daubert stated he is not concerned with the property part. He stated it is important that we have consistent, accurate enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code and Fire Protection Code. He did not feel the records being in one place was important. He felt the service we give people was important. He stated we should talk about the Regional Planning issue at another time. He thought there might be state requirements involved in this decision. Mr. Fontaine stated that information could be provided fairly easily. Mr. Hess stated staff has a draft memo on this matter that they are working on and staff could probably provide more detail on that by next Monday.

Mr. Rosenberger stated we had this same discussion on the existing structures code five years ago and he would like more information on the redundancy. He stated he would also welcome more discussion on the records and database subject. Mr. Fontaine stated State College Borough owns the license and software. He explained the two systems communicating. Mr. Dunlap stated whether we have one system or two, he is all for cooperation and currently we have two systems. Mr. Fontaine stated the recommendation and consideration of this is not based on the software. There are other issues with this agency that has driven this. The timing has something to do with the software, but the time to discuss this is now.

Mr. Morris stated the relationship with COG and the timing is unfortunate but the Borough objection is very rational.

Mr. Fontaine stated to summarize, the vast majority of programs are very good, excellent programs. Limited number we started questioning value.

Mr. Hahn stated he does not object to a way to improve providing service and being more cost effective. He stated this matter was a fiasco the last time it was discussed and he voted for withdrawal. He stated, at this time, he does not endorse this. He stated as the representative on the Public Safety Committee, he has seen no list of grievances to discuss with the Code Administration. He would like numbers and complaints that he can discuss with the Public Safety Committee. He felt dropping the notice and deciding later is not the way we would want to be treated and we shouldn't treat COG that way. He stated once the information is presented and discussed, Council could make a decision on this matter.

Ms. Dauler stated a number of years ago, at the end of 2007, this discussion was held. In 2008, it was discussed with COG. She stated she never knew the outcome but apparently, the Borough made the decision to continue. She wondered how that decision was made. Mr. Fontaine stated that information could be provided. He stated the decision was made at the end of the year, but it was only for the existing structures program. A consultant reviewed the Code Agency. He stated it was important that we don't provide notice if we aren't serious about withdrawing.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Fontaine stated this budget is status quo. He noted an additional line item has been included for the Spring Creek Watershed grant to cover the Greenway Grant.

Mr. Daubert questioned the line item for First Night of \$20,000. He stated First Night has doubled their price to go to events and that he would like an explanation of this increase. Mr. Fontaine stated we could ask Mr. Bryant to come to a meeting to explain this.

Mr. Filippelli asked about the two-part grant for the Discovery Project. Mr. Fontaine stated that item is in the CIP.

Adjournment

There being no further items to come before Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. to an Executive Session.

Debra Lang, Staff Assistant