

State College Borough Council
Work Session
July 12, 2004

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, July 12, 2004, in the State College Municipal Building's Council Chambers, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Mr. Daubert called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Present: Thomas E. Daubert , President
 Catherine G. Dauler
 Elizabeth A. Goreham
 Craig R. Humphrey
 Jeffrey R. Kern
 James H. Meyer

Absent: Janet K. Knauer

Also present: Thomas J. Fontaine, Borough Manager; Ronald A. Davis, Assistant Borough Manager; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Carl Hess, Director of Planning; Herman Slaybaugh, Zoning Officer; Joanne Lopinsky, Assistant Zoning Officer; Michael S. Groff, Finance Director; Amy J. Story, Borough Engineer; Amy R. Miller, Recording Secretary; Edward C. Holmes, Facilities Coordinator; members of the media and other interested observers.

Public Hour. Robert Rightmyer, 785 Walnut Spring Lane, requested an update on storm water drainage. Mr. Fontaine replied that the Walnut Springs Park wetland project is scheduled to be discussed at the next regular meeting.

Sign Violation Issues in the Business District. Teresa Sparacino, Executive Director, Downtown State College, asked Council for an extension of four to five months to suspend enforcement of the Sign Ordinance and look into rewriting the ordinance. Some of the violations were for signs that had been present in storefronts for 10-15 years and she asked why businesses are now receiving notices. Ms. Lopinsky replied the reason some of the businesses received warnings was because they have five or more signs in their storefront. Sign enforcement is not a new item. Mr. Kern asked why SPATS have not changed their signs in 10 years and just recently received a violation. Ms. Lopinsky responded there has been recent enforcement because staff had time to check on these storefronts. Some establishments have as many as 29 permanent signs. Staff not only concentrated on sign ordinance but other enforcement as well. Ms. Lopinsky also stated another reason for the sign enforcement is because of a recent complaint about temporary signs in storefronts. This complainant told Ms. Lopinsky he makes a conscious effort to abide by the ordinance and wondered why other business owners no not follow suit.

Ms. Sparacino said the ordinance was written in 1975, and it is time to review it. Businesses have products in their storefronts that look worse than signs, but they are not issued violations. She said the Downtown Improvement District would like the ordinance reviewed as it relates to the commercial district.

Ms. Dauler asked how many businesses had been given violation letters. Ms. Lopinsky replied that roughly 13 had been given notices; most notices were for temporary signs. Temporary signs cannot take up more than 20 percent of a storefront's window space.

Mr. Kern stated that the House of Kashmir, 130 Calder Alley, does not use signs but the window is covered with T-shirts. This individual is using the T-shirts as advertising. If Council prohibits all signs, people can still use products in their windows.

Ms. Dauler reminded Council that not long ago they decided the Borough needed to work on ordinance enforcement on a full-time basis. This is a part of the ordinance enforcement.

Mr. Daubert stated the question is to suspend some of these rules or enforce them. Council agreed to vote on this issue at the next Council meeting.

Proposal to Secure Eight Parking Spaces in the Beaver Avenue Garage. Mr. Brad Karch, Kissinger, Bigital and Brower Realtors, told Council he will be developing the Balfurd site at Atherton Street and Beaver Avenue. The property will be developed for 60-70 student housing units. He asked if Council would reserve eight parking spaces in the new Beaver Parking Garage. In order to accommodate the eight spaces on site, construction would have to be down an additional level which would be costly. Mr. Fountaine said if Council wished to pursue this request, Terry Williams should be consulted. This request is something new for the Borough and should be studied carefully. Council agreed to put this item on the next agenda.

Review 80 Percent Drawings of the Beaver Avenue Parking Garage. Mr. Fountaine stated that Council asked to see the new drawings. The Planning Commission's comments will be heard at Council's next meeting.

Mr. Holmes distributed a revised project schedule and budget. Mr. Daubert said the sketches show the elevator shaft has been removed from the top of the building and felt it was a good decision. Mr. Holmes stated the garage now includes a new elevator that does not require a machine room. It will not change the cost estimate of the building. He also said the height of the building will be somewhat reduced and Council agreed this revised design is a great improvement in appearance. Mr. Holmes explained that there are two elevators in the northeast corner as well as one near the stairwell at the south end on Fraser Street and one hydraulic elevator in the business space of the building.

Mr. Daubert questioned the aluminum on the side of the building and asked if the design team offered an alternative. Mr. Holmes spoke with Tim Haahs about the aluminum who said it would oxidize over time. He also said the storefronts will also be constructed using an anodized aluminum treated with a clear coating that will maintain its appearance over a longer period of time. If galvanized steel is used, it would deteriorate more quickly than aluminum. This same material is used on the State College municipal building for the framing around its windows.

Delores Taricani, 919 Greenbrier Drive, expressed concern about the grade of the sidewalk on the Fraser side of the garage. Mr. Holmes said the grade will be kept the same that it is now. Mr. Kern said when the Borough redesigns Fraser Street it will minimize the grade of the street and, hopefully, solve the problem.

Mr. Daubert asked if the architect could provide Council with drawings that will better show the grade of the sidewalk and plaza. Mr. Fountaine said he will make certain Council has access to these plans after the Fraser Street realignment.

Examine a Recommendation to Incorporate a 3-Second Pedestrian Lead Interval on Signals Along Beaver and College Avenues. Mr. Fountaine stated on July 6th, the Transportation Commission recommended that Council request PaDOT permit signal timing changes on Beaver Avenue (Burrowes to Garner) and College Avenue (from Pugh to Fraser). The change recommended is to incorporate a 3-second pedestrian lead interval. The Commission also recommended that Trans Associates continue to work with PaDOT to implement alternative signal timings at College/Burrowes and College/Garner that would incorporate a modified 3-second lead interval.

Ron Seybert and Aaron Fayish (Trans-Associates) were present to explain the Transportation Commission's recommendations. Mr. Seybert indicated copies of the presentation were distributed to Council this evening. Mr. Fayish reviewed the scope of the study. The study included 22 core signaled intersections in the downtown area where they collected data for six hours per intersection and counting cars for 24 hours. In addition, travel time and vehicle queuing was studied on each arterial for one hour in each peak period. The traffic signal optimization process overview included studying existing traffic conditions, checking clearance intervals for signals including yellow and walk and flashing do-not-walk signals, as well as setting new traffic signal settings for comparison to existing settings. Mr. Fayish also explained that leading pedestrian intervals (LPI) should be implemented to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles. Leading pedestrian intervals would give pedestrians a head-start crossing a street before giving motorists a green light. Special seasonal timing plans

would be beneficial for heavy pedestrian volume times such as football and other special event weekends. A traffic response system could adjust to increased fluctuation in traffic automatically. Mr. Fayish continued with potential problems of LPI implementation and said LPI does not work at locations where lead-left turn phasing exists (a green arrow) and could lead to pedestrian confusion. LPIs could also cause delays because the cycle length would be increased.

Ms. Story thought the benefit should be for both pedestrians and vehicles and this should not be ignored. By implementing LPI optimization, the walk/do-not-walk messages rotate more frequently. At this time, she said walk indication lights are about six seconds in duration and people are afraid to cross.

Mr. Fountaine said there are two important items to address. They are full optimization on the 22 intersections and LPI on 10 of the signals. Council agreed to vote on this item at the next meeting.

Proposal to Establish a Bike Lane on Garner Street and Relocate Commuter Parking.

Mr. Fountaine stated that on May 18, the Transportation Commission voted unanimously to support the painting of bike lanes on Garner Street from Beaver Avenue to Easterly Parkway with the stipulation that, before Council considers it, staff survey the residents along Garner Street regarding the matter. A postcard was sent to the 35 residents along Garner Street and, to date, staff received the following responses: 11 in favor of the bike lane and 10 opposed. Six of the responses cited loss of parking as the reason for opposition. Parking on Garner Street would have to be removed in order to establish a 5-foot bike lane on each side of the Street. Existing parking is as follows: (1) West Side, *No Parking Anytime* from Beaver to Easterly Parkway; (2) East Side, approximately 13 *commuter spaces* exist between Holly Alley and Fairmount Avenue; (3) East Side, approximately 46 *residential spaces* exist between Fairmount Avenue and Hamilton Avenue and between Irvin Avenue and Easterly Parkway. Commuter parking could be located on Fairmount Avenue, Locust to Hetzel. The cost to paint the lanes is estimated at \$600.00.

Mr. Meyer said a bike lane might encourage cars to travel faster when bikes are not using the lanes and he did not feel Garner Street warrants a bike lane. Ms. Dauler felt the bike lanes were important even though parking would be taken away. Mr. Daubert said, if Council agreed to the bike lane, it would take away some of the commuter parking, which might suggest we do not encourage visitors/guests. Chris Falzone, Chair of the Transportation Commission and a resident who bikes on Garner Street, stated his concerns are the inconsistencies along Garner Street with some areas allowing parking and some areas where no parking is permitted.

Mr. Daubert wondered if bicycle traffic could be accommodated at different times. Mr. Fountaine responded that staff does not recommend this because of traffic complications and liability issues. A sign that states "Share the Road" is best. Council agreed to vote on the bike path at the next meeting but Mr. Daubert asked staff to provide a map showing parking hours listed for the cross streets.

The Discussion for a Proposal to Establish an East-West Bicycle Corridor on Foster Avenue was moved to Monday night's Council meeting without discussion.

Item of Information. Mr. Daubert asked for suggestions from Council with regard to the Arts Festival. He especially wanted to prohibit dogs at future festivals.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Barbara J. Natalie, Borough Secretary