

State College Borough Council
Work Session
March 19, 2004

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Friday, March 19, 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 12:05 p.m.

Present: Bill Welch, Mayor
 Thomas E. Daubert, President
 Catherine G. Dauler
 Elizabeth A. Goreham
 Craig R. Humphrey
 Janet K. Knauer
 James H. Meyer

Absent: Jeffrey R. Kern

Also present: Thomas J. Fontaine, Borough Manager, Ronald A. Davis, Assistant Borough Manager, Michele Nicolas, Director of Human Resource; Michael Groff, Finance Director; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Carl R. Hess, Director of Planning/Community Development; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Mark S. Henry, Health Officer; Linda S. Welker, Tax Administrator; Cynthia S. Hanscom, Recording Secretary; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour. There were no comments from the public.

Handbill Ordinance

Council reviewed a proposal to increase the fine for violating the Handbill ordinance. All handbill distribution is prohibited when it displays any type of commercial logo, business identification, or advertising. This prohibition is intended to limit the amount of material that can be placed in or on streets, public places, front yards, courtyards, stoops, vestibules, halls, letterboxes, vehicles, poles, posts, or trees. Mr. Henry explained the current fine of \$1 was set in 1942 when the ordinance was introduced. Staff was suggesting the fine be increased to \$50.

Mr. Meyer asked if the CDT's delivery of sales flyers that are thrown into driveways was considered a handbill. Mr. Henry replied "No." Mr. Meyer asked if a lost cat poster would be considered a handbill. Mr. Henry indicated it would technically be a violation but was not enforced. Mr. Meyer suggested it be listed as an exception.

Mr. Meyer asked how the handbill ordinance is currently being enforced. Mr. King noted that police officers usually find out who put up the flyers; the ordinance is enforced by warning the individuals and getting them to remove the posters and flyers. Mr. King noted that it would be more of a deterrent if repeat offenders were fined.

Mr. Daubert indicated this would be on Council's April 5 agenda. He asked that Council members be provided with the entire handbill ordinance so they can look at what exceptions are already listed.

Urban Village (UV) District

Mr. Hess explained, in February, the Planning Commission made recommendations to Council amending regulations governing the Urban Village (UV) district. Last fall, the proposal was to eliminate infill in the UV. The Planning Commission asked Council to defer action until a subcommittee could assess the status of the infill under the existing zoning regulations. The subcommittee made the following recommendations, which were endorsed by the Planning Commission:

1. Lift the current moratorium on infill by reinstating the former regulations.

2. Prohibit infill on Urban Village lots adjacent to the R2 district.
3. Temporarily bar construction of new rooming houses in the district. All other types of residential uses would remain as an infill option.

Ms. Goreham believed the property owners did not place infill high on their list of importance. Many felt there needed to be more incentives because of the difficulty in developing the narrow lots. Mr. Hess agreed but felt the infill was one step in promoting a connection with campus. Ms. Goreham believed property owners wanted regulations that would allow larger scale development. Mr. Hess agreed there were some that believed that a profitable building could not be built with the 3,500 square foot limit; however, with appropriate pedestrian linkages, small scale businesses would be ideal.

Mr. Welch thought infill in the UV runs counter to the wishes of the property owners. He believed it was unlikely the decaying residential structures in that neighborhood will last another 25 years. Council should be encouraging property owners to put up townhouses or structures similar in size to the existing buildings. Mr. Hess said the infill subcommittee talked about an area designated for redevelopment on a large scale (similar to the development occurring in west campus). Mr. Welch believed the infill would allow the aging structures to be retained and retard the natural evolution of the UV.

Ms. Knauer referenced a comment made in the summary of the subcommittee's report on code deficiencies that need to be corrected for rooming houses. She asked what code deficiencies were being referenced. Mr. Hess explained they were related to occupancy and new building code issues.

Ms. Knauer asked if the property owners would oppose a prohibition on infill development. Mr. Hess believed property owners want infill as an option but the market currently prohibits this type of development. Ms. Knauer said she would like to commit to long-term zoning for the UV but was not happy with the infill that had been constructed in the past and wanted to plan for something better.

Mr. Humphrey believed there should be incentives for owner-occupied housing. Although there were very few owner-occupied houses currently in the UV, he believed this area would be a good location for gentrification. Creative incentives could be used to encourage mixed uses with owner occupied housing. Ms. Dauler commented that, although she was intrigued with the idea of encouraging home ownership, the infill needed to be addressed now. She agreed with the infill subcommittee's report that infill should not be prohibited. The UV was developed to reuse the existing buildings because the scale of buildings was pleasing and should be maintained. She said she would not want to see large development and did not envision single-family homes. Mr. Meyer agreed that infill should be permitted except for properties bordering the R-2 district. Mr. Daubert agreed but Ms. Knauer did not. Ms. Goreham said she would rather see incentives in place for more aesthetically pleasing structures. Mr. Welch noted the current ordinance did not prohibit single-family homes; however, there were no signs of this use moving back into the area. Mr. Humphrey argued that there would need to be creative incentives in place to encourage gentrification.

Donna Conway, property owner in the UV district, said focusing on infill regulations will not produce needed changes; more flexible standards need to be in place. Single-family homeownership would be ludicrous. Council should focus on high density development for young couples. Mr. Daubert said he was not opposed to infill but did not believe the infill projects were attractive. Ms. Conway mentioned the less attractive developments are always the most noticeable.

Mr. Daubert said that Council should review both proposals: an ordinance to prohibit infill and an ordinance using the Planning Commission's recommendations. Council will look at this again at their April 19 meeting.

Bus Terminal

Mr. Fountaine explained he and Ms. Goreham had met with Robert Finley, Assistant Vice President of Finance and Business for Penn State University, to discuss the bus terminal/transportation center needs assessment and site location study. Penn State has agreed to fund the study using their consultant, Synergy. The next step is to establish a steering committee. Council reviewed the proposed membership list for the steering committee and saw no problems.

Mr. Daubert asked who would chair the steering committee. Ms. Knauer suggested Ms. Goreham serve as chair. Mr. Fountaine said the University would have no problem with Ms. Goreham chairing the committee; the University was hoping the Borough would provide leadership in this endeavor.

Municipal Building Art

Ms. Nicolas advised she met with Carolyn Smith and Ed Leos to discuss placement of wall art in the municipal building. First, they looked at the 32-foot College Avenue collage of photographs originally displayed in the Council Room of the old municipal building. There is no single wall in the existing building long enough to display the photographs. The proposal is to place the photos along two adjacent walls in the third floor hallway.

Mr. Welch urged staff to consider having the collage redone. Although there have been many store front changes, most of the same buildings along College Avenue are still the same. Since Ed Leos was involved in the first project over 20 years ago, he may be interested in coordinating another project. Council members agreed this should be considered.

Mr. Daubert said the large centennial quilt would fit only on one wall in the lobby because of its size; however, its intricacies would not be able to be seen. Mr. Meyer suggested having a temporary rack built for the display that could be placed in the mezzanine.

COG AGENDA

South Central Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCTS)

Council discussed a resolution proposed by the Harris Township Board of Supervisors concerning a proposed route bringing a high volume of interstate truck traffic, and resulting in safety issues and noise, air pollution and lighting concerns, through the most densely populated part of Centre County. The Board also requested the other Centre Region municipalities and the Centre Region COG adopt a similar resolution.

Mr. Welch said he was the Borough's representative on the SCCTS committee and believed it was inappropriate to take a stand now when plans are still in the working stage. The work being done is part of a 5-year process initiated by the Centre Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. Mr. Welch urged Council to let the process move forward. Mr. Daubert asked Mr. Welch to attend the COG General Forum meeting to make that statement. Ms. Knauer agreed that it may not be the right time to make such a formal statement, but would not want to wait until it is too late to have input.

ANY OTHER MATTER

Surveillance Camera Committee

Ms. Knauer informed Council a change was needed in the composition of the Downtown Camera Surveillance Committee. With the formation of the Off-Campus Student Union, she suggested there be two representatives from that group. Council agreed.

C-NET Broadcasting Problems

Mr. Daubert mentioned that C-NET was not able to broadcast the last Council meeting with sound. Ms. Dauler mentioned that she had talked with James Rossi, Director of C-NET, about the problem. Because of special provisions that had been made for the parking garage charrette, audio lines had been crossed. The problem has been corrected. She stated this was an isolated incident. Mr. Daubert suggested a staff member verify that the meeting is being aired correctly once the meeting has started.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Barbara J. Natalie
Assistant Borough Secretary