

State College Borough Council
Work Session
February 27, 2004

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, February 27, 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 12:04 p.m.

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

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, 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; Amy J. Story, Borough Engineer; Timothy Grattan, Director of Information Systems; Edward C. Holmes, Parking and Facilities Coordinator; Alan W. Sam, Arborist; Linda S. Welker, Tax Administrator; Norma J. Crater, Finance Supervisor; Cynthia S. Hanscom, Recording Secretary; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour. There were no comments from the public.

Tot Lot for Central Parklet

Daniel Jones, Landscape Architect, presented plans for the tot lot for Central Parklet. He explained the State College Rotary Clubs would be raising funds to build an enhanced tot lot in Central Parklet by providing a children's water feature, small benches, a climbing wall, a maze, etc.

Mr. Humphrey asked the predicted time line for the project. Mr. Whitfield replied construction would start in the spring of 2005 and completed in June.

Because of its proximity to the University, Mr. Kern suggested there may be older children using the equipment. He asked if it would be sturdy enough to support an adult. Mr. Jones replied that the equipment would be as strong as the existing park furniture.

Council discussed the park equipment and how children enjoy some sense of risk when jumping from one piece of equipment to another. Mr. Whitfield indicated the play equipment was targeted for 2 to 6 year olds. Mr. Sam noted the climbing wall in Holmes Foster Park is very popular.

Ms. Goreham said it was a wonderful gift from the Rotary Clubs and hoped Council would be able to do something to express their gratitude. Mr. Whitfield stated the Rotarians will be installing a plaque indicating the playground equipment was a gift in recognition of the Rotary's centennial celebration.

Mr. Fountaine said the design would be on Council's March 1 agenda for approval.

Pedestrian Walkway

Mr. Jones also presented plans for the 234-236 South Allen Street parking lot and walkway. The proposal is to redesign the parking area and provide a walkway connecting the municipal building and Central Parklet. A revised plan was submitted in November and will require a replot of the land. The adjacent property would incorporate the same parking and design standards to create a uniform look. The concept is to bring public space across the street from the municipal building and extend it through to Central

Parklet. The parking area would accommodate 31 spaces with no walls or steps from the street.

Mr. Humphrey asked if the parking lot could be seen from the street. Mr. Jones said there would be a hedge row along Allen Street, but the lot would still be visible.

Mr. Kern asked about extending the sidewalk across Allen Street and how much on-street parking would be lost. Mr. Meyer noted that Council had discussed doing that at one point but decided against it. One reason was because it would create a mid-block pedestrian crossing. Ms. Story noted a mid-block crosswalk is permitted with proper signage. Mr. Meyer felt the walkway could be wider. Mr. Jones explained it was currently six feet wide, which is the standard width. Making the sidewalk wider would eliminate green space.

Mr. Fontaine said the request for approval of the walkway/parking lot would be on Council's March 1 meeting agenda.

Off-Campus Student Union

Christopher Babic, Executive Vice President of the Off-Campus Student Union (OCSU) explained the organization was created to represent the interest of Penn State students living off campus and provide an outlet for students who have questions or concerns about the State College community. The union would have an affiliation with Penn State but would not be part of the Undergraduate Student Government. Paul Cronin, President of the OCSU, indicated the union would address student concerns in housing, transportation, safety, and the local business community. He noted he would be working with the Borough, Downtown Improvement District, and the Penn State Student Affairs office.

Council members agreed the organization was needed. In some cases landlords were knowledgeable about State laws for renters, but the students were not. It was also suggested that the group may need to find office space off campus. Mr. Cronin indicated he was hoping to eventually work with the surrounding townships because of the large number of student housing developments in them.

Mr. Hess announced that, as part of the Borough's responsibilities regarding fair housing compliance, Planning Department staff would be holding three training sessions in April on local codes, fair housing laws, and lease and tenant rights. This might be something the officers of the OCSU would be interested in attending.

Storm Water Ordinance Amendments

Ms. Story, as part of the state's notification requirements for the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Phase II permit for Municipal Separate Sewer Systems, reviewed storm water run-off issues in the community. In addition, she said revisions were needed to the Borough's storm water ordinance to include prohibitions on discharges, stricter requirements regarding erosion and sedimentation controls plans, additional requirements for post-construction operation, and maintenance of best management practices (BMPs). Ms. Story explained BMPs are methods that function as a means to both recharge the water into the ground as well as help to filter it before it hits the groundwater table. Mr. Fontaine indicated the ordinance would be on Council's March 1 agenda for approval.

Ferguson Township Rezoning

Mr. Fontaine explained a request from Ferguson Township was received asking Council to provide comments on a proposal by Penn State to rezone 26.3 acres of land, owned by the University, in Ferguson Township. The property is located south of Whitehall Road at its intersection with Blue Course Drive. Penn State is asking that the land be rezoned from Rural Agriculture to R-4 (residential).

Mr. Fontaine noted that planning staff has provided an assessment of the area and he agreed with the findings -- that there is no pressing need for this rezoning even though there is no vacant R-4 land in Ferguson Township. The Planning Commission agreed that it is premature to proceed because of unknown impact issues as a result of the rezoning. Mr. Kern added that the maximum build-out of the land could put serious pressure on the Borough streets and utility systems. In addition, the plan would expand the existing growth boundaries.

Mr. Daubert felt that a statement should be made in Council's response to require the developer of the land to install a light at the Whitehall Road/Blue Course Drive intersection. Mr. Fontaine disagreed because the rezoning did not mean that the land would be developed right away.

Mr. Whitfield noted that the property was outside the sewer service area and the only sewer system near the property is the Borough's system. This development was not considered when the original plan was developed; therefore, a capacity study would be required for any development proposal. Mr. Meyer asked if the Borough would be required to let them connect to the sewer system. Mr. Hess indicated that a connection would require an amendment to the Act 537 standards, which would require a capacity study.

Mr. Kern asked about the maximum number of units that could be built if R-4 rezoning was approved. Mr. Hess answered that more than 250 units could be built, adding 1,800 vehicle trips per day.

Council agreed a recommendation should be made to Ferguson Township to reject the rezoning based on storm water concerns, traffic issues, and sprawl. It was suggested a copy of staff's analysis be included in the communication to Ferguson Township.

Summary Financial Report on the Borough's 2003 Fiscal Year

Mr. Groff presented a series of slides on a financial report for the Borough's 2003 fiscal year. The charts presented revenues and expenditures for 2003 and the projected amounts for 2004. The slides also showed trends in tax revenue and expenditures over the last 10 years.

Mr. Groff indicated he would be returning to Council with a quarterly report having similar information. Mr. Daubert noted that in the future he would like to see comparisons by quarter.

Mr. Kern asked that this be placed on the March 19 work session for further discussion. Mr. Daubert also suggested Council consider what they would like to see in the financial quarterly report.

Council then adjourned to an executive session at 2:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Barbara J. Natalie
Assistant Borough Secretary