

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
Work Session
Wednesday, November 30, 2005

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Wednesday, November 30, 2005, in the State College Municipal Building's Council Chambers, 243 South Allen Street, State College, PA. Mr. Daubert called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

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

Also present: Bill Welch, Mayor; Thomas J. Fontaine, II, Borough Manager; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Michael S. Groff, Finance Director; Michele Nicolas, Human Resource Director; Tim Grattan, Information Systems Director; Linda Welker, Tax Administrator; Norma Crater, Accounting Supervisor; John Marchek, Budget Officer; Amy R. Miller, Recording Secretary; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour. There were no comments from the public.

2006 Operating Budget. Budget discussions focused on the General Fund summary. Mr. Fontaine explained the 2006 program highlights which included repealing the business privilege tax and implementing the homestead exclusion. Staff would like to expand services available on the Borough's web site and update land use goals and re-write the Borough's zoning ordinance. The budget would also include establishing a redevelopment plan for the Urban Village. Neighborhood initiatives would include a semiannual breakfast with neighborhood associations including homeowners and renters.

Mr. Daubert said although funds were in the budget all items should be presented to Council before using the funds. He also felt the highlights were too vague and asked for clarification on the web site project. Mr. Fontaine explained the website improvements would include making services available to the public online such as filing permit applications, making payments of taxes and other business. Mr. Meyer agreed and said the state is moving in the same direction and felt the Borough should too. Mr. Fontaine added that online services would be an option and not required.

Mr. Daubert questioned the need for re-writing the Borough's zoning ordinance. Mr. Fontaine said the purpose is not to change the ordinance. The current ordinance has been revised so many times that it is difficult to understand; re-writing would eliminate the ambiguity.

Council asked for clarification on establishing benchmarks via the Performance Measurement Institute. Mr. Fontaine said benchmarks would be used to compare our community with similar communities in the areas of police services, financial services, recreation, etc., and would also include a citizen survey. He added the initial fee would be \$10,000 the first year and \$5,000 thereafter but would create additional work for staff. Mr. Meyer questioned the need for the service and felt Borough staff performs well and money should not be spent on performance measures. Mr. Fontaine said in comparison to data now kept, tracking trends would benefit the community in knowing the general satisfaction with Borough services. He added that this type of financial trend monitoring system would identify trends before they become a critical issue. Mr. Kern is concerned data will be collected but never used. Mr. Daubert said this item should be added to the action list for further consideration.

Speed sentry devices were next discussed. Mr. Fontaine said one additional device is budgeted for 2006. Chief King said there are different ways to track data, which has been collected since purchasing these devices. He explained baseline data is tracked without the display on, then the next week driving speed will be displayed. Display of speed changes driving behavior significantly. Chief King added the signs are not used as a source of revenue, but rather to slow traffic and track data. Mr. McCarl questioned data fatigue and recommended follow-up enforcement if needed. Chief King agreed and said enforcement should be conducted shortly after data is collected. He added the signs are sold nationally but the vendor, All Traffic Solutions, was located in Calder Way.

Mr. Fontaine then spoke on self-insuring health care costs which all regional municipalities are considering; at this time the Borough is not ready to budget these costs. Mr. Fontaine explained self-insuring health care programs can return unused money to a municipality. Ms. Nicolas said the Borough would enter a contract with a third party administrator, and that firm would process and pay claims. The benefits would be similar to those of the plan currently in place.

Mr. Fontaine said the school resource officer, the domestic violence program and the regional technology services program are already funded and the Borough will implement these programs in 2006. Currently, the Borough pays 25 percent of the school resource officer's salary because school is not in session for 3 months, during which time the officer is assigned to regular patrol. Mr. Fontaine added if grant money should be suspended, the school district would continue funding the program. He also said the regional technology programs are paid for by municipal partners.

Mr. Fontaine said in years past when Council adopted a budget, there has been a 12 percent fund reserve balance, which will continue. Unreserved funds are set aside in an emergency fund balance. Mr. Groff said unreserved funds may be needed to embark on a self-insured health care program. Mr. Fontaine added that currently some large insurance deductibles are paid through the insurance reserve fund which enables the Borough to keep costs down.

Mr. Daubert felt the issue of how the Borough should address the long term funding of capital improvements and pension costs was not a concern at this time. Mr. Fontaine said approximately \$750,000 per year is needed in the General Fund to cover capital improvement programs. Mr. Daubert also said pension costs should be discussed; but discussions can be delayed. Mr. Fontaine replied that a time in February could be set aside for pension discussions.

Urban Village Market Feasibility Study. Council received the draft of the Urban Village Market Feasibility Study on November 16 and is expected to accept the report at their meeting on December 5.

Mr. Fontaine said top priority should be to obtain the services of a national consultant by requesting proposals to provide a re-development plan. The plan could then be used for soliciting prospective investors. Mr. Daubert agreed that revitalization framework is a key issue but felt that the plan was one man's opinion. Ms. Dauler and Mr. Kern disagreed and said much research went into the report.

Mayor Welch said another top priority was to involve property owners and stake holders. Mr. Fontaine said devising a re-development plan would require input from property owners and stakeholders from the Urban Village. Mayor Welch questioned how to convince property owners to invest in the project. Mr. Fontaine said the plan must include incentives for owner-occupied housing geared primarily towards middle-income buyers as opposed to the traditional market the UV has drawn in the past.

Ms. Goreham felt an essential element is a pedestrian walkway on Railroad Avenue. Mayor Welch said the University's master plan involves further development of west campus. Mr. Daubert agreed but feared the University would take over the project. Mr. Fontaine said the University's strong national reputation may attract interest in the project.

John Simbeck, 601 W. College Avenue, felt the report provided Council vital information at a reasonable cost.

Mr. Kern asked when the project was expected to begin. Mr. Fontaine said it is his hope to begin the process by February and then move forward on a 6-8 month schedule. He also added the project was already included in the budget.

Borough/University Liaison Meeting. Mr. Daubert highlighted discussion items from the Borough/University Liaison meeting that was held on November 18. He said the status of the Smith property was still undecided. The new bus depot was discussed and the University prefers the Porter Road location. Council updated University staff on the Urban Village.

Mr. Daubert said Vicki Triponey, Vice President of Student Affairs, presented data on off-campus discipline. In the year 2000, only 67 students were referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Currently 2906 students have been referred so far this year. Chief King confirmed that 48 percent of all criminal arrests were students, and that percentage is lower than in previous years. Chief King added that students are now more concerned with repercussions from the Office of Judicial Affairs than with paying fines through the District Courts.

Mr. Fontaine added that the Borough has been working with Penn State's Information Technology department on the idea of making the downtown area wireless. Discussion also included a plan to implement a local mounted patrol to help police services in both State College and Penn State cover the manpower needed during special events.

University officials also updated Council on future building plans for the law school.

Items of Information. It was determined that Mayor Welch, Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Hahn along with their spouses and Mr. Kern and Ms. Dauler would attend the Martin Luther King, Jr. banquet in February.

The meeting recessed at 1:50 pm and reconvened at 2:05 pm for a brief discussion with Mr. Christopher Brehm, Director of Penn State's Interfraternity Council. Mr. Brehm agreed to provide

Council with a list of contacts for each fraternity. Issues discussed included the process involved in disciplinary actions, fraternity use during breaks, and renting fraternities to independent persons.

Ms. Goreham asked if fraternities bear the consequences when independent renters cause problems. Mr. Brehm said fines have been issued but there are no current policies in effect for independent renters. Mr. Fountaine will check the zoning code for any reference to independent renters.

Mr. Daubert asked if Council could be of help to the IFC. Mr. Brehm indicated he would check with Board Members and provide Council with feedback in January.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary