

**State College Borough Council
Work Session
Monday, January 10, 2005**

The State College Borough Council met in a work session on Monday, January 10, 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 7:30 p.m.

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

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Carl R. Hess, Director of Planning; Michele Nicolas, Director of Human Resources; Thomas R. King, Chief of Police; Mark Whitfield, Public Works Director; Mike Groff, Finance Director; Mark Henry, Health Officer; Amy R. Miller, Recording Secretary; members of the media; and other interested observers.

Public Hour: There were no comments from the public.

Highland Traffic Calming Study. Ron Seybert from Trans Associates presented results from the traffic study for the Highlands Traffic Calming project, which were previously presented to the Transportation Commission. He described the project area from Beaver Avenue to Hamilton Avenue and from University Drive to Pugh Street.

Mr. Seybert reported that data was collected during 24 hour intervals for traffic volumes and vehicular speed at eight locations. Surveys were also distributed for origin-destination to determine travel patterns in the project area; these were conducted by roadside interviews at 8 locations for 6 hours each. Crash data was also obtained for the past 3 years as well as roadway characteristics. Lastly a survey was sent to property owners and tenants in the study area; overall 1800 were sent with 198 responding.

Mr. Seybert explained traffic volumes peaked throughout the day. The average maximum peak hour volumes and the vehicle speeds were also studied. In addition, cut-through traffic percentages were greater than 40 percent on Foster, Prospect and Hamilton Avenues with trip origins coming from outside the study area. Mr. Seybert defined a cut-through trip as a trip having neither an origin nor destination in the project area. If the purpose of a trip was in the survey area it was not considered a cut-through trip for the traffic study purposes.

Crash data taken from 2000-2003 indicated that numbers were highest at Prospect Avenue and Garner Street and should be evaluated. Mr. Seybert suggested that the following questions be addressed: (1) would there be a benefit from speed traffic calming, (2) would the Borough benefit from other engineering measures, and (3) would residents benefit from striped bike lanes and the removal of on-street parking.

Mr. Seybert concluded that several of the streets exceed current street classifications but not enough to meet the Traffic Calming Policy to divert traffic off of those streets. Warrants for speed mitigation were met with most vehicles traveling an average of 11 mph over the legal speed limit of 25 mph. The Transportation Commission found that further consideration of traffic calming for speed mitigation is justified and recommended that Council authorize the development of traffic calming plans for speed mitigation.

Ms. Goreham asked for clarification on the threshold for cut-through traffic mitigation. Mr. Seybert replied that the traffic counts would have to double in the study area to meet the criteria for cut-through traffic mitigation

Ms. Knauer said she was concerned with the value of the survey card because the card asked about traffic calming specifically on Prospect Avenue. She said that results from the post card survey may not be valid because residents that did not live on Prospect Avenue may not have responded to the survey.

Mike Wrackle, 221 E. Hamilton, said he did not return the survey because he is in favor of doing traffic calming in the Highlands neighborhood; not just on Prospect Avenue.

Mr. Kern thought it important to get origin and destination information because not enough is known from this study about the types of trips being made in the Highlands neighborhood.

Richard Becker, 328 E. Prospect Avenue, asked the definition of speed mitigation. Mr. Daubert answered mitigation measures necessary to reduce the speed of vehicles, which would be determined by the next phase of the project.

Ms. Dauler said one positive thing is that this is the first time staff has used the PennDot criteria. One difficulty is determining which is more crucial to study: speed or volume. She believed data shows that speed is more important than volume; therefore, Council should move forward and not waste time in discussing these things further. Mr. Dauler also said now that the results were presented by the consultant, Council should decide how to proceed.

Kate Portman, 510 E. Prospect Avenue, said according to the website data of the International Association of Traffic Engineers, when speed mitigation is done the average traffic volume only decreases about ten percent. She also said that there have been many traffic counts on Prospect and Hamilton Avenue and the traffic counts have been different with each study. She noted that in at least one study, the minimum traffic volume threshold for volume mitigation was met, but the Borough's policy was then changed to increase the threshold for mitigation.

Blair Jones, 357 E. Prospect Avenue, voiced his concern of traffic volumes and hopes that accidents are taken into consideration. Mr. Seybert said there was no criteria for accidents but the ability is there to rank the projects for priority. Mr. Kern said many thresholds have already been met for accidents and asked for details on what kind of accidents occurred. Mr. Whitfield said most accidents at Prospect Avenue and Garner Street were west bound on Prospect Avenue and site distance was the culprit.

Ms. Knauer addressed concerns with traffic shifting to Waring, McCormick and Irvin Avenues; therefore, accidents will move down to those areas as well. The new policy should be used wisely, not just used. Ms. Knauer said the Borough has paid for studies but this does not mean we have to agree with the results; data needs to be studied and used correctly.

Rebecca Wells, 511 E. Prospect Avenue, said she was concerned because, after Foster Avenue was studied, the rational was that nothing else was needed for the rest of the neighborhood.

Chris Falzone, Transportation Commission Chair, said the Transportation Commission recommended Council examine the policy as it exists now and move forward on speed mitigation. Council agreed and asked the Transportation Commission's recommendation to proceed with the speed mitigation phase of the policy be included on the agenda for the January 18 meeting.

Planning Commission's Work Plan for 2005. Mr. Fontaine reported that Council had received the Planning Commission Work Plan for 2005 at the December 20

meeting. If Council agrees with the work plan it will be added to the January 18 agenda for approval.

Ms. Dauler asked for clarification of item number nine, a plan for an historic ordinance. Mr. Hess explained that this particular item was carried over from the 2004 work plan. Ms. Dauler addressed a question to Don Hahn, member of the Planning Commission, and asked what the Commission is trying to promote with this item. Mr. Hahn responded the Commission is trying to promote historical preservation. The Historic Resources Commission has started to work on downtown preservation and the Planning Commission would like to expand this to include a local historic preservation ordinance.

Ms. Dauler said it is important for people to know that a member of the Historic Resources Commission has made it very clear that they are not interested in doing an inventory of the downtown or being involved in this project. Downtown State College residents and business owners were not interested in such a project. Mr. Kern suggested this be removed from the plan.

Mr. Daubert asked where the financing for the downtown State College housing market study will come from; Mr. Hess replied that the ad hoc committee, consisting of three Planning Commission members and three Downtown Improvement District members, is considering funding at this time. This item was not included in the 2005 budget and the committee is still looking at ways to finance the project.

Ms. Knauer stated, if the proposal to College Township to jointly develop a master development plan for the Westerly Parkway Plaza and vacant land falls through, the Borough should have a back up plan. Art Anderson, Planning Commission Chair, stated that the Westerly Parkway Plaza was one of the first items he studied 50 years ago. Mr. Kern thought the project should be pushed ahead so the Borough is ready to respond if a development plan for this site is submitted. Ms. Dauler agreed.

Mr. Fountaine asked if Council wished to consolidate item 7 (ways to facilitate owner-occupied housing in portions of Holmes-Foster, Highlands and the Urban Village neighborhoods) and item 10 (preparation of downtown housing market study). Ms. Goreham disagreed. Mr. Daubert suggested the wording on these items be made clearer.

Mr. Daubert asked that clarification of the members on each committee be presented at the next work session. Council also agreed item 9 (investigation of a neighborhood historical ordinance) be removed from the work plan.

Facility Use Policy. Mr. Fountaine reported that staff was recommending amendments to the Facility Use Policy. He stated costs for use of the facility should be updated, several points should be clarified, and the use of the facility in competition with private sector should be eliminated. Mr. Daubert suggested the word 'municipal' be changed to 'Borough'. The definitions could be clarified to mean "Borough of State College." The words 'State College' were not used correctly. Ms. Dauler agreed and stated if Borough staff is paid overtime then outside groups should pay for room use.

Mr. Meyer noted that parking is not included with facility rental and the Borough should enforce illegal parking in the rear lot. Visitors spaces need to remain available for use by ABC members.

Council agreed to implement the new facility policy.

Food Establishment License Fees. Mr. Fountaine explained food establishment license fees have not been increased since 1997 and staff proposed to raise the fees in the budget proposal for 2005. Staff is recommending adopting a four tier license fee based on seating. The impact on most licensed establishments should be minimal but the largest establishments will see their license fee double.

The proposed eating and drinking place license fees are:

- For take-out establishments - \$125.00
- For establishments with up to 100 seats - \$150.00
- For establishments with seating greater than 100 but less than 250 seats - \$175.00
- For establishments with 250 or more seats - \$200.00

Mr. Kern said the Corner Room has five or more establishments and should be charged accordingly. Mr. Henry said that he estimated the time for inspecting the Corner Room is between 3-4 hours. Mr. Henry also explained that fees should not be based on food volumes, but rather the time it takes to do the inspections. Mr. Meyer said by using seats to determine a fee equates to the size of the kitchen. If you have a smaller seating area you would have a smaller kitchen. Mr. Kern stated fees cannot be based on liquor licenses because some restaurants downtown share one liquor license. Mr. Fontaine said basing the fee on number of seats will more accurately reflect the actual cost of inspections. He noted the Borough will need to collect data on time and cost as it completes the license renewal and inspection process this year.

Mr. Meyer suggested that restaurant owners be told that each establishment be licensed separately so that if something does not pass inspection on one site then all sites would not have to be shut down. Mr. Fontaine suggests implementing the new fees now and then look at the data again next year. Council agreed to implement the new fees.

Ad hoc Tax Study Committee. During Council's review of the 2005 operating budget, there was discussion about the appropriate level and mix of taxes to fund the Borough's operations. After much discussion, Council enacted a budget that includes an increase in real estate tax, along with enactment of a new Emergency and Municipal Services Tax. Before taking action on this tax increase, Council wanted to evaluate the impact of various tax options on different groups of taxpayers. To provide this analysis, Council decided to appoint an ad hoc Committee to review the tax options, and prepare a report to Council. Council will require the ad hoc Committee to report its findings to Council no later than May 1.

Ms. Goreham stated that it was Council's responsibility to ensure the financial stability of the Borough and that Council should be the group assigned to carry out the responsibilities of the ad hoc Committee. Ms. Knauer agreed. Mr. Humphrey said he too thought it was a good idea until he looked at the complexity of the study. Ms. Knauer said the complexity of the study is all the more reason to assign this task to Council. Mr. Kern believed an ad hoc committee could work through all the technical details and then report to Council. Council would then review the impact and make a political decision on the tax issues. Mr. Meyer agreed and suggested at least three members of council serve on that committee.

As a majority of Council felt that the ad hoc committee should be separate from Council, Mr. Fontaine was instructed to prepare an agenda item for January 18 to establish the committee.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Thomas J. Fontaine, II
Borough Secretary