

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Council
State College Area School District Board of Directors
January 9, 2006

The State College Borough Council and State College Area School District Board of Directors met in a special joint meeting on Monday, January 9, 2006, at 6:00 p.m., in the Community Room of the Schlow Centre Region Library, 211 South Allen Street, State College, Pennsylvania. Mayor Welch presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Council Members Present: Bill Welch, Mayor
 Catherine G. Dauler, President
 Thomas E. Daubert
 Ronald Filippelli
 Elizabeth A. Goreham
 Donald M. Hahn
 Craig R. Humphrey
 Jeffrey R. Kern

School Board Members Present: Susan Werner, President
 Lou Ann Evans, Vice-President
 Robert Ascah
 Robert Hendrickson
 David Hutchinson
 Janet McCracken
 Donna Queeney
 Gowen Roper

Also present: Thomas J. Fountaine, II, Borough Manager; Patricia Best, Superintendent of Schools, Ed Poprik, Director of Physical Plant; Carl R. Hess, Director of Planning/ Community Development; Mark A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works; Stephanie Schmidt, Poole Anderson; Carolyn DuBois, L. Robert Kimball & Associates; Rich O'Donald, L. Robert Kimball & Associates; Cynthia S. Hanscom, Assistant Borough Secretary; members of the media; and other members of the public.

Mr. Welch welcomed all those present and indicated that there would be no public questions or comments accepted at this time. He invited members of the public to attend the appropriate meetings (both School Board and Council would hold individual meetings following this meeting).

Introductions were made and the purpose of the meeting was established to review the plans for the proposed renovation to the State College Area High School North building. Ms. Werner introduced Mr. Poprik to make a short presentation on the proposal. Mr. Poprik said the presentation would be brief so that questions and comments could be made.

Mr. O'Donald presented a series of slides showing the both aerial photos and proposed site plans of the existing conditions and the proposed changes. The renovation would include an expansion of the north building to the back of the school, creating another level as the building moves into the hill of Community Field. Mr. O'Donald presented a series of floor plans showing the location of the auditorium, science labs, career center, music wing, etc. He also presented elevation drawings showing three-dimensional images of how the renovations would appear. He noted the South building would be demolished and replaced with ball fields.

Mr. Welch asked if the pedestrian crossing on Westerly Parkway would be at grade. Ms. DuBois indicated it would be at grade but a different paving material to distinguish it from the surrounding area.

Mr. Welch also asked if the main driveway of the school would be signalized. Mr. Poprik explained that a traffic study would be completed to determine the best location for a traffic signal, but they were predicting that a signalized intersection would be placed at O'Bryan Lane and Westerly Parkway, which is where the majority of bus and car traffic is expected to enter the school.

Mr. Kern asked if there would also be a signalized intersection at Atherton Street. Mr. O'Donald noted that a traffic study would determine if a signalized intersection was needed.

Ms. Dauler asked how many parking lots there would be and the number of spaces in each. Ms. DuBois answered the gross number of spaces would be 1,074. The distribution would be 731 spaces on the north side of Westerly Parkway and 343 spaces on the south side. The north side would include 287 to the rear of the building, 12 spaces in the visitors' lot, 7 parking spaces in the service area behind the school. The front of the building would have 400 spaces for student parking and 25 spaces for visitors and parent drop off. The south side would have 239 spaces along the main drive and 104 in the drive around the playing fields. She noted this meets the requirements of the ordinance for required parking spaces.

Mr. Humphrey asked how the number of students projected compared to current enrollment. Mr. Poprik noted the enrollment projections are flat or slightly declining. The renovation project is planned for the same number of students but would allow for a larger capacity. He explained that the high school classroom utilization rate (number of periods a classroom is used during the day) is approaching 100 percent. For example, a history classroom is used seven out of eight periods. If student capacity remains the same, the new building would have a 75 to 80 percent utilization rate. This number is more reasonable to meet the needs of students.

Mr. Welch asked if the same size faculty and staff would be used. Mr. Poprik indicated no change in the number of teachers or staff is proposed.

Mr. Hahn asked if the Atherton Street access will be maintained. Ms. DuBois noted it would be maintained but would be considered a secondary entry point to the school.

Mr. Hahn asked the location of the parking lot where the marching band is to practice. Ms. DuBois pointed it out on the plan. Mr. Hahn asked if the fields proposed on the south side of Westerly Parkway would include lighting. Mr. Poprik noted it was not proposed as part of this project.

Mr. Daubert asked if Westerly Parkway would be expanded. Mr. Poprik replied it would not. Ms. DuBois stated it was currently three lanes with the turning lane in the center. Mr. Kern asked the number of cars that would be able to queue in the turning lane. Ms. DuBois estimated it would be three or four vehicles.

Mr. Daubert noted the back entrance at Plaza Drive was in very poor condition. He suggested this could be the opportune time to close this connection.

Mr. Welch asked how storm water impacts were being addressed. Mr. Poprik hoped this plan will correct issues with flooding at the North Building. Ms. DuBois said the engineers are in the process of studying and evaluating storm water management. The soccer field reconstructed last summer was designed as a detention basin which should allow for additional capacity to compensate for the development. Also, there was a huge basin that parallels the Parkway with the ability to surcharge into the driver education training area. The new development would actually reduce the square footage of impervious surface area by 200,000 square feet. The engineers would be considering other phases of storm water management such as swales. She noted this would not be solved with one simple solution but would be multi-faceted. Mr. Poprik added that the existing spur of the building where water is collected would be redesigned to allow for water to take its natural course and flow away from the building.

Mr. Humphrey asked if there would be substantial changes in the building between now and the time construction is started. Mr. Poprik noted this was a 30 percent plan. There will be some changes. He anticipated the footprint would remain the same with some minor adjustments to the interior. Mr. Humphrey asked when construction would begin. Mr. Poprik answered he hoped construction would begin in the spring of 2007.

Mr. Daubert asked about the bus traffic pattern and was told that buses will enter the property from O'Bryan Lane, travel up the hill to the rear of school, and park at a 45 degree angle in the bus parking area. Buses would then pull forward and exit via Logan Avenue or back out onto Westerly Parkway.

Mr. Welch asked how much of the Community Field would be left. Mr. Poprik noted that there were more than two full football fields, as shown on the plans, but it could be arranged in another configuration. The existing tennis courts would also remain.

Mr. Daubert noted Community Fields were used by other groups besides the school. He asked if the playing fields would still be available to the public. Mr. Poprik noted they would continue to utilize a facility use schedule for both school and other events in the playing fields.

Mr. Welch asked about screening next to the bus parking area. He noted this would be very close to the residential neighborhood. Ms. DuBois indicated there would be evergreens and deciduous trees. She noted that Gill Street was 10 feet above Community Fields which would help to provide some screening.

Mr. Welch asked how one would travel through the building from the third level in the back of the building to the first level in the front of the building. Mr. Poprik indicated there would be 20-foot main hallways that could be used when the building was open.

Ms. Goreham noted that Council continued to support the Welch pool and the reconstruction of the pool in its current location. She asked if the two projects would occur simultaneously. Mr. Poprik noted he had discussed this with Ron Woodhead, Director of Centre Region Parks & Recreation, to create some synergy. The renovation to the school would take 36-42 months, which could mean that both projects could be under construction at the same time.

Mr. Welch asked about the curb cut for the pool. Ms. DuBois indicated it would not change and was shown on the plan. It was noted that discussions with the Centre Region Parks & Recreation office were on-going to coordinate shared parking and a drop-off point.

Mr. Filippelli asked how many spaces were in the south side parking lot. Ms. DuBois noted there were 340. When asked about existing spaces, Mr. Poprik was not able to give the distribution but indicated there were 632 spaces across the entire campus. The proposal would add about 400 additional spaces.

Mr. Welch asked that the zoning concerns be summarized. Mr. Hess noted that the property comprises five different zoning districts. The pool area is zoned Parks, the South Building is zoned R3B Residential and Planned Commercial, the upper portion of the North Building is zoned Planned Office, and Community Fields is zoned Public Facilities. He noted there were several zoning issues that would need to be addressed to move the plan along. First, the parking lot designed for the marching band to practice is not designed to parking standards which will require a variance or a change in the Zoning Ordinance. Also, there were only two curb cuts permitted along Westerly Parkway and the plans call for three. In addition, the front elevation is 50 feet higher than what is allowed. Lastly, the Planned Commercial zone does not currently allow schools as a permitted use. Mr. Hess noted that variances would need to be obtained from the Zoning Hearing Board or amendments made to the Zoning Ordinance. The school board has not discussed their preferred approach.

Mr. Hess explained that when the school properties were rezoned from public to planned office, there was a doctrine that said that school code pre-empted zoning but would have to meet setback and height standards. Today, however, there is an appellate decision in Pennsylvania that changes that. Commonwealth court has said that, unless there is stated pre-emption, the local zoning applies.

Mr. Hess added that Irvin Avenue is an unopened street extending from Atherton Street to Gill Street. Since setbacks are measured from unopened right-of-ways, the school will need to seek a vacation or quiet title for the street.

Ms. Werner noted that she hoped to be able to continue communicating with Borough Council and planned to return when the plans were at 60 percent. Mr. Poprik noted that the School Board would be pursuing the zoning changes prior to completing the 60 percent plans.

Mr. Poprik explained the planning and construction process required through the Department of Education required hearings at different levels of the process. He expected the next hearing to be in May or June.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia S. Hanscom
Assistant Borough Secretary