

Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Transportation Commission
January 14, 2020

The State College Borough Transportation Commission (TC) met on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, in Room 304 of the Municipal Building at 243 South Allen Street. Deb Hoag, Director of Public Works, called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

Members Present

Richard Garis; Rick Gilmore; Mieke Haeck; Hugh Mose and Susan Venegoni

Members Absent

Paul Jovanis and William Roll

Others Present

Deborah Hoag, Director of Public Works; Lt. Barrett Smith, State College Police; Rob DeMayo, Penn State University; P. Rick Ward, Director of Parking; Scott Fitzgerald, Parking Operations Supervisor; Alan Sam, Environmental Coordinator/Arborist; Jasmine Fields, AmeriCorps; Eric Bernier, CATA Public Relations Manager; Stacy Hall, Administrative Assistant and interested Borough residents.

Organization of the 2020-21 Transportation Commission

Ms. Hoag read a letter of resignation received from William Roll due to relocating to Pittsburgh. She will forward the letter on to Borough Council.

Ms. Hoag stated with the term expiration of the prior Chair and appointment of new members, the TC needed to reorganize with a Chair and Vice-Chair. She asked for nominations for Chair. Ms. Haeck nominated Mr. Mose, and this was seconded by Mr. Gilmore. There were no more nominations. Mr. Mose accepted the nomination, and all were in favor. Mr. Mose stated he was honored to be elected as Chair of the TC and his first order of business was to accept nominations for the Vice-Chair. Mr. Garis nominated Mr. Jovanis. Mr. Jovanis was not in attendance at the meeting but sent an e-mail to Ms. Haeck stating his wish to be nominated as Vice-Chair and he was willing to serve. There were no other nominations, and all were in favor of Mr. Jovanis being Vice-Chair.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Mose made a motion to approve the December 10, 2019 minutes as written and Mr. Garis seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

Public Hour – Hearing of Citizens

No one wished to speak during public hour.

Discussion Items

Parking on Marylyn Avenue Near Foxdale Village

Ms. Hoag explained a resident spoke to Borough Council regarding line-of-sight issues when pulling out of Foxdale Village onto Marylyn Avenue, and following a meeting with Borough staff and representatives from Foxdale Village, it was determined parking regulations in the area needed to be changed to accommodate the valid concern of the resident. She noted the change would require the Commission to make a recommendation to Borough Council to amend the Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance, and action was

tabled at last month's meeting to ensure all questions could be answered prior to action by someone with full knowledge on the topic.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommended the Commission take formal action in the form of a recommendation to Borough Council.

Mr. Ward reviewed the issue brought up by the Foxdale resident in detail with the TC members and stated he would answer any question they had.

TC Questions and Comments:

- Mr. Mose pointed out, at the last meeting, two different options were discussed. One was to simply shift parking from the south side of the street to the north side and the other was the suggestion to remove parking from between the two main driveways. Mr. Ward noted after reviewing both options, staff recommended parking be moved to the north side of the street. Mr. Mose commented that Marylyn Avenue buses only went eastbound and by moving parking to the north side of the street it was an enhancement to bus travel. Mr. Garis and Ms. Venegoni agreed.
- Ms. Venegoni asked Mr. Ward if the problem would be moved to the other side of the street. Mr. Ward stated it would not.
- Mr. Garis asked if parking was allowed at the Marriot. Mr. Ward noted public parking was not allowed at the Marriot on a regular basis but pointed out a new surface lot in the area acquired by Foxdale was available for parking.

Mr. Gilmore moved Council adopt the staff recommendation to move parking across to the North side of Marylyn Avenue. Mr. Garis seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Report on Year 1 of the Highlands Parking Pilot Program

Ms. Hoag informed the TC members that Borough staff was reporting on the first year of the Highlands Parking Pilot Program and included information on the program's implementation, the successes and challenges associated with the permitting system, the regulations of the pilot, vehicle counts for football weekends for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 season, parking on lawns, the availability of parking downtown on Penn State football weekends, costs and revenues from year 1 of the pilot and pedestrian and crash data. She added staff would provide the report along with any TC comments to Borough Council at a future meeting.

Mr. Ward gave a detailed presentation outlining the background, implementation, permitting software, data collection and comparison, as well as staff resource hours used during the first year of the two-year Highlands Parking Pilot Program. He discussed the statistics, costs, and revenues related to the Program as well as issues that came up during the year which he thought could be mitigated during the second year. Mr. Ward added the Parking Department staff had been doing an admirable job of keeping up with extra tasks but stated in year two he would recommend some additional part-time positions to help keep up. Following his presentation, he gave TC members an opportunity to ask questions.

TC's Questions and Comments:

- Mr. Mose asked about the 3,866 total vehicles parked in the Highlands Neighborhood during 2019. He asked if that was the total number of both permitted and nonpermitted vehicles. Mr. Ward answered it was with roughly 230 permits issued.
- Mr. Mose thanked Mr. Ward for an incredibly complete report and then asked for public input.

Public Input:

- David Stone, 539 East Foster Avenue, and a member of the Highlands Civic Association (HCA), thought it was important to start motivating people into not relying so much on cars. He noted staff was informing parkers about alternatives to street parking as it had made a huge difference

on Foster Avenue. He noted at the last HCA meeting residents had a symbolic issue thinking they should not pay a fee and there should be an adjustment in the second year of the pilot to provide residents relief from paying the fees. Mr. Stone asked if each resident could get one football permit associated with their car and/or give them the minimal cost for the annual permit. He noted another objection was Thanksgiving weekend being included even though football weekends had the biggest impact. He thought the Program was well worth continuing but needed some modifications because the purpose was to empower residents to take responsibility and have access to their own streets. He remarked about homeland security issues and pointed out the need to know what was going on with parked cars and never being too careful in that regard. He concluded by stating the Program meshed with the street camera program brought into the Highlands.

- Mark Huncik, 505 East McCormick Avenue, and President of the Highland's Civic Association pointed out the initiation of the request was to empower the residents to enhance the safety, security and value of the neighborhood. He noted there was more high-rise development in the downtown with limited parking availability with those buildings, in addition to short-term rentals especially during football weekends. He stated at one time there were no parking restrictions, overnight parking restrictions were lifted, and it was a free for all. He was hopeful the Parking Program had an effect.

He noted he thought the lawn parking was more of a zoning issue rather than a parking issue and noted there was not enough of a penalty for non-compliance to effect the change. He explained people were willing to pay the \$25 fine versus paying to park.

Mr. Huncik also thought the list of event weekends were not all actual event weekends. He noted some of them were holiday weekends when residents would like to have family and friends come to visit and should not be listed as an event weekend. He stated he realized events are experienced differently depending on which neighborhood you reside in and he struggled with wondering if the program was robust enough to take into consideration all the differences.

He agreed with Mr. Stone that the residents of the neighborhood were feeling penalized by the program rather than empowered.

Although he did not agree with lawn parking, it was apparent people parking in lawns were most likely associated in some way with the resident of the home in whose lawn they were parking and it was different when strangers park in front of your home for the entire weekend. He asked if the fines collected were from football weekends or were they from other weekends.

He noted other thoughts residents had moving forward, the program should be adjusted because residents should be able to buy annual permits and be automatically enrolled which would give them the ability to park in front of their house on any weekend. He stated residents thought there should be a way to simplify the program and, therefore, simplify the duties of the staff and their resources.

He reported one resident asked about each household receiving one free parking permit to use during event weekends and associate the permit with a license plate and also have the ability to buy additional permits at the fee of \$10 each, but pointed out it did not alleviate the issue of people who would park without a permit and pay the fine. He noted they thought there should be a higher fee for nonresidents to purchase permits.

He added the residents thought event weekends should only be football weekends and not include holidays.

Mr. Huncik stated his observations were there was not a lot of participation from the residents and with over 9,000 residents in the Highlands there were only 126 participants. His other observation was the Borough did not have enough staff to administer a good program. He

wondered about the reluctance to look at only football weekends because even Arts Fest had not caused the parking issues football weekends had caused.

He noted residents were having problems navigating the Park Mobile Program. He summarized by saying there had been some education during the first year which could make a difference in year two, but he suspected there would not be much more participation without any changes. He stated his other concern was people who were going to park when and where they wanted and simply pay the \$25 fine. He understood there was a Parking Demand Study set to be done in February 2020, and he hoped it would consider all parking in both the neighborhoods and the downtown.

Mr. Huncik asked Mr. Ward regarding the discrepancy between the fine and the parking fee, if there was a way to raise the fine. Mr. Ward noted the fine needed to be raised for the entire year and not only event weekends and added the fines were set by ordinance.

Additional TC Comments:

- Ms. Venegoni asked Mr. Ward if he was confident in his counts and he answered he was. Ms. Venegoni pointed out there was corresponding data from Penn State University and asked if he had the information. Mr. Ward stated he received a report from them and there was parking available on campus. Ms. Venegoni asked if the TC could look at those numbers. Mr. DeMayo stated he would pull those numbers together. Ms. Venegoni noted she was an advocate of no overnight parking and asked if there was any corresponding police call data to go along with the same time period. Mr. Ward answered it would be difficult to tie the amount of crime to the parking. He added he could try to get some statistics from the Police Department. Ms. Venegoni stated she requested F8 data from the Borough which was the first 8 weeks of the Fall semester which were compared year to year. She stated she received the data from 2019 and compared it to the football schedule and was struck by the increases in the crimes the police were dealing with. She would like Council to know the Borough was dealing with a much larger issue.
- Mr. Mose noted it seemed he was getting a sense from the HCA and staff there was room for improvement between years one and two of the Program. He thought the Borough should continue with year two and not terminate the program at the half-way point. Mr. Ward noted he was sure more people would sign up for year two and that information would be needed to decide. Mr. Mose asked if the same parameters would be kept if changes would be made? Mr. Ward stated his presentation was an informational report, but the TC could recommend changes to Borough Council.
- Mr. Garis asked Mr. Huncik if there was less trash and noise than before the Program was implemented. Mr. Huncik stated, yes there was a positive reaction in that sense and there was also less late-night noise. Mr. Garis asked Mr. Huncik if he thought the residents wanted to continue the program. He answered it was split. Mr. Stone added accommodations should be made for the residents and still stay the course with year two of the Program.
- Ms. Venegoni noted she thought the pilot was going well and the data collected was of value and would assist with decision making in the future.
- Mr. Garis explained when one neighborhood limited parking, the problem would move to other neighborhoods. Mr. Mose agreed and believed parking solutions needed to be found as the area grew.
- Mr. Gilmore stated in year two he would like attention to be given to incremental costs. Mr. Mose stated there would be two themes, one of cost and the other the number of weekends involved. He asked if Council could cut the event weekends down to only football weekends and make the permits at no cost to residents.

Mr. Mose asked the members if there was anything they would like to recommend to Borough Council. Mr. Garis made a motion to let Council know the TC was generally pleased with the data collected and looking forward to seeing the second-year data with modifications. Mr. Garis seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Senate Bill 607

Ms. Hoag reported at the December meeting, Lt. Barrett Smith provided Senate Bill 607 which discussed the use of radar for vehicle speed enforcement by law enforcement other than the Pennsylvania State Police.

Lt. Smith stated the Police Department asked the TC to review it and consider the merits of it. The Bill needed the support of municipalities to let local legislators know the importance of it. He requested the TC take to Council a request that they send a letter in support of the Bill to local legislature.

Ms. Venegoni made a motion for the TC convey to Borough Council their support of Senate Bill 607 for local municipalities to have the use of radar. Mr. Gilmore seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Green Light - Go 2020 Grant Application

Ms. Hoag noted the Borough was preparing to submit a grant application for the initial phase of multi-modal signal network upgrades, and the first phase of traffic signal improvements was to update and improve communication and detection at 22 signals in a busy network of multi-modal users. She added the existing system was installed in the mid-1990's and did not function as designed due to construction and redevelopment which had also increased and concentrated the population of pedestrians and bicyclists. She pointed out the 22 signals were along portions of the four main corridors in the Borough – Atherton Street, and Beaver, College, and Park Avenues. She informed the members this would prepare the infrastructure to improve safety and allow the system to be responsive, especially during special events, in the next phases of traffic signal network upgrades. She concluded by stating this was included for informational purposes only as the Borough would be seeking other grant opportunities to support these multi-phase projects for signal upgrades.

TC's Comments:

- Mr. Mose stated he thought it was an exciting project and wished the Borough well.

2020 Conflict of Interest Policy

Ms. Hoag stated the 2020 Conflict of Interest Policy, along with a memorandum from Mr. LeClear, explaining the purpose of the policy were attached for review. She added it was something done annually at the first meeting of each calendar year.

Liaison Reports

MPO/CRPA/COG Transportation - No report given.

Centre Area Transportation Authority – Eric Bernier reported the CATA-Go Project kicked off on January 11th along with the Microtransit Pilot Program which would last for six or seven months. He stated it was intended to show if the level of subsidy CATA was applying could be used to meet more demands in the Bellefonte/Pleasant Gap areas. He noted there would be a formal ribbon cutting on January 28th. Mr. Bernier gave an update on the CATA Fare study stating a consultant was looking at the MPO planner to set fares and contract rates to come up with a road map for moving forward. He noted the consultants' work would wrap up later in the Spring of 2020 and the CATA Board would consider changes that would be discussed in a public format.

Penn State Transportation - Mr. DeMayo reported the Bikeshare vendor would be chosen in the Fall of 2020. He noted the West End construction had begun. Ms. Venegoni asked about bicycles that were not left in docking stations. Mr. DeMayo answered people who do not park bicycles back in the racks would receive a financial penalty. He was going to check for statistics on those penalties. He noted the Zagster Program was 80 to 90 percent funded by PSU.

PennDOT – No report given.

Borough Planning Commission – No report given.

Borough Engineering – No report given.

Environmental Coordinator - Mr. Sam reported Ms. Fields was working on details for the Bicycle Ambassador Program which included developing a budget.

Parking Office – Information from the Parking Office was covered earlier in the meeting.

State College Police – No report given.

Upcoming Meeting Date

Mr. Mose announced the next meeting would be held Tuesday, February 11, 2020 at 12:15 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Mose adjourned the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy E. Hall
Administrative Assistant