

Meeting Minutes
Joint Meeting of the State College Borough Planning Commission
and Transportation Commission
July 23, 2020
Virtual Meeting

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) and the Transportation Commission (TC) met on Thursday, July 23, 2020 for a virtual Zoom meeting. Anita Genger, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission Members Present

Zoe Boniface, Chair; Scott Dutt; Jon Eich; Anita Genger, Vice-Chair; Mary Madden; and Ron Madrid

Planning Commission Members Absent

Mallory Meehan

Other's Present

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Greg Garthe, Senior Planner/Zoning Officer; John Wilson, Zoning Officer; Isabel Storey, Senior Planner; Mike Connor and Brian Bartholomew, Kimley Horn; and Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant

Zoe Boniface, Chair, joined the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Transportation Commission Members Present

Rick Gilmore; James Graef; Paul Jovanis, Vice-Chair; Hugh Mose, Chair; and Susan Venegoni

Transportation Commission Members Absent

Richard Garis and Mieke Haeck

Others Present

Patrick Ward, Parking Director

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Eich and seconded by Mr. Madrid to approve the July 8, 2020 meeting minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Chair Report

Ms. Genger, Vice-Chair, had nothing to report.

Public Hour

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

Parking Supply and Demand Study

Ms. Genger stated, in 2019, the Borough engaged Kimley-Horn to update the 2015 comprehensive downtown parking study. The study included an evaluation of current parking supply, demand, and space utilization. It also estimated future parking demand based on known and projected future development within the Borough. The report identified easily implemented strategies for meeting expected future demand, updating zoning regulations, and changing some current operational practices.

Ms. Genger also stated, at the July 6, 2020 Borough Council meeting, Michael Connor of Kimley-Horn provided an overview of the study.

Mr. Connor's overview of the study included:

- He noted, briefly: 1) Kimley Horn did a turnover duration survey of metered parking spaces for a little extra data, 2) estimated future parking demand based on known and projected future development, 3) assessed current operational practices for the Borough's parking program and identified potential improvements, and 4) developed strategies to meet expected future parking needs.
- He stated the Borough was a minority and the private sector dominated the area.
- Within the Borough study area, there were 7,392 parking spaces and only 35 percent were owned/operated by the Borough's Parking Department.
- The occupancy surveys were conducted on a typical weekday in September and the peak period occurred during the 1 PM to 3 PM survey when 76 percent of all public and private, on- and off-street spaces were occupied. In addition, the Borough's key off-street parking lots and garages were 91 percent occupied during the same period.
- An on-street meter performance survey was conducted to record occupancy, duration of stay, vehicle per space turnover rates, and the volume of vehicles (16 percent) that exceeded the 2-hour posted durations. The on-street meters achieved peak occupancy of 74 percent, average parked duration of 1.3 hours, and a vehicle per space per survey day turnover rate of 3.2.
- Over a 2-day period, Kimley-Horn conducted interviews with downtown stakeholders and Borough staff. In addition to absorbing the concerns, opinions, wishes, and ideas, Kimley-Horn attempted to offer attendees perspective and insight into parking industry perspectives and best management practices.
- Interview groups included: 1) Neighborhood Coalition, 2) College Heights and Highlands Civic Association, 3) Downtown State College Improvement District, 4) retail and restaurant shop owners, 5) Borough staff, and staff from Penn State University's Department of Parking and Transportation. He noted some comments that came out of those meetings were: 1) unfriendly Parking Enforcement, 2) volume and speed of traffic dangerous, 3) Highland Neighborhood pilot program a failure, 4) Penn State University faculty, staff and student parkers in the Borough to name a few.
- Mr. Connor stated while there were curbside space surpluses in certain areas, these spaces were generally designed to serve high-turnover, short duration of stay, transient parking activity or were located some distance from high demand areas.

Mr. Connor discussed assessment of future conditions which included:

- Kimley-Horn gathered information on known, proposed, and potential development information that included land use type, density, location, number of spaces that could be provided, and the number of existing parking spaces that could be displaced.
- He noted using the parking demand ratios and combining retail, office, hotel and residential uses, there would be a future demand of 690 spaces during the weekday, daytime, peak period of 1 PM to 3 PM.
- These same developments were programmed to include 1,106 off-street parking spaces which would create additional surplus of private parking capacity during this period.

- It was noted developers were not likely to make those spaces available to the public voluntarily. Ideally, given the value (and profit) that could be generated by these vacant spaces, the developer and their property manager would welcome the additional revenue that would be generated by sharing these spaces. Alternatively, the Borough could, for future development activity, require developers, through site plan conditions, to manage their available spaces for this purpose. Site plan conditions can be written which stipulate not only how many parking spaces were provided but how they were managed.
- Kimley Horn recommended the Borough continue to utilize single space meters for all on-street management purposes.
- Proposed flexible loading and unloading zones.
- Recommended the Borough enforce the limited times rules along the streets.
- Mr. Connor applauded the fee-in-lieu component.
- Encouraged developers to share, at a cost, those spaces they would not be utilizing.
- Look at ADA design standards and work with owners to abide by the rules.
- They recommended no changes in the rate structure be initiated at this time because there was an appropriate balance in on-street and off-street utilization and sufficient turnover in on-street activity.
- They recommended the Borough should start enforcing all posted time limit on-street to encourage turnover of these spaces.
- As opposed to permitting developments to reduce the number of spaces they provide, it was recommended the Borough mandate, through ordinances and site plan conditions, the provision of shared parking. Therefore, it was recommended the Borough discontinue the fee-in-lieu program and introduce site plan condition language that required developers to share parking capacity when that space was available.
- It was noted the Borough should continue to work with private property owners in the application of shared-use parking management strategies so that many of these under-utilized privately-owned lots/garages could be available to the public.

PC comments

- Ms. Madden stated she liked the unbundling recommendation. She also asked if Kimley Horn had any recommendations for those who parked and wanted to walk a little bit further than one block. Mr. Connor stated they did not do any walkability studies.
- Mr. Madrid stated he would like to see a parking mission statement added to the front end of the introduction. Mr. Ward stated the Borough had one. Mr. Madrid also suggested the fee-in-lieu cost be raised.
- Mr. Eich stated, from a previous meeting, a discussion regarding Pennsylvania State University (PSU) students parking in the Borough showed the cost to park on campus was 25 percent more. Mr. Connor stated the Borough was more flexible with rates. Mr. Eich was concerned with the way the Borough was using surplus and noted they would be in a serious deficit for event weekends. He also asked if Kimley Horn had discussed the Borough's on-street parking system where there were no meters. Mr. Connor stated they did not. Mr. Eich asked if Kimley Horn looked at the Downtown Master Plan and suggested they look at the southside parking on College Avenue. Mr. Connor stated they did but followed more of the 2015 study. Mr. Eich suggested adding a paragraph stating this. He suggested applying for intermodal grants for to pay for wayfinding.
- Mr. Dutt had concerns about the loading curb design and noted there should be more information regarding the curb side deliveries. He also noted, because this was important information, it should be a separate section.

TC comments

- Mr. Gilmore wanted to clarify some numbers Kimley Horn had reported. Mr. LeClear gave a brief overview of the fee-in-lieu. Mr. Gilmore wanted to know if those funds could also be used

for transit and Mr. LeClear stated transit was one area of many where they could be used. Mr. LeClear stated staff was very happy with all the recommendations of Kimley Horn.

- Mr. Jovanis asked where the demand ratios came from. Mr. Jovanis stated by breaking it down minutely it should say that in the description of the method that was used.
- Mr. Mose stated he was fascinated with storage parking. He wondered what the cost was for those spaces and how it would compare to the \$75.00 fee. He stated PSU should encourage more of this. He also asked what other communities successfully utilized this type of parking. Mr. Mose stated the Borough was interested in sustainability and were interested in how to use automobiles less.
- Ms. Venegoni asked if the Borough had an ordinance prohibiting off-street parking. Mr. LeClear stated it was prohibited in any residential district. Ms. Venegoni asked if the Borough would become a partner in leasing parking in private places, how would the fluctuation be from year to year? Mr. Connor stated not Kimley Horn was sure how the Borough would control the ebb and flow. Ms. Venegoni noted curb management was very important for bicycles and pedestrians and services like Uber and Lyft made that difficult.
- Mr. Gilmore suggested reaching out to PSU regarding their parking utilization data and ask if they would share. He also asked about the discussions with local groups and were they be surprised to know there was a parking surplus. Mr. Connor stated they were not surprised. Mr. Gilmore asked if the meter parking and off-street system parking data could be shared through an app. Mr. Bartholomew stated the off-street meters did have the capability. Mr. Gilmore asked: 1) were there any jurisdictions that looked at some transitions of on street parking that could be used by restaurants for outdoor dining, 2) had there been requests for more outdoor dining spaces. Mr. LeClear stated the Borough was in middle of traffic engineering study on Beaver and College Avenues which involved looking at removing the southern side of College Avenue parking or flipping it. The study for Allen Street would be discussed at a Council meeting on August 17, 2020.
- Mr. Graef stated none of the buildings downtown had enough spaces for their residents and transit funding should be the focus.

Public comments

- Mark Huncik, 505 East McCormick Avenue and President of the Highlands Neighborhood Association, asked if the capacity of the garages were reduced to reserve spaces for hotels, etc. Mr. Connor stated the reserved spaces in Fraser Garage were for tenants in the bottom of the garage. It was noted Beaver Garage had 26 reserved spaces for office space located beneath garage. He also stated there was a long-term agreement with the Hyatt and those spaces were not reserved. Mr. Huncik asked if those spaces were counted in the survey, Mr. Connor stated yes they were counted. Mr. Huncik asked how the number of spaces was determined where there was no line. Mr. Connor stated they used site plans and measured from section to section and divided linear length by 20 feet.
- David Stone, 529 E. Foster Avenue, stated loss of revenue during the pandemic raised a lot of questions. He noted pedestrian safety needed to be at the top of the list and suggested a fully functioning health department with sufficient revenue.

Kimley Horn's overall message was the Borough had inventory that they could utilize, parking was more than parking and eliminating the pilot fee needed to be looked at. The Borough looked at purchasing properties in downtown and the cost was prohibitive. And, finally, focus on how the Borough used this information to have quality conversations and stated this report gave direction and context.

Mr. LeClear stated an email would be sent out for a hard date for comments to come in. Staff would provide a significant amount of comments as well.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council (BC): Mr. LeClear reported Council and the Zoning Revision Advisory Committee (ZRAC) would join the Planning Commission for a joint work session at the beginning of the August 5, 2020 PC meeting. The regular PC meeting would commence at 2:00 p.m. if the Commission had any business to conduct.

Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB): Mr. Garthe reported on the following:

- Variance - Days Inn Penn State
On July 14, the ZHB granted Days Inn Penn State a variance from the 25-foot height limit of the Borough's sign ordinance. The variance would allow Days Inn to relocate an existing exterior sign to another part of the building but retain the non-conforming height of 45 feet.
- Variances - Scholar^x Hotel
On July 14, the ZHB denied Scholar^x Hotel several variances related to the height and size of a projecting sign, number of projecting signs, height and amount of accent LED strip lighting, and outdoor lighting levels.

Upcoming Land Development Plans: Mr. Garthe reported there were none at this time.

Staff Updates: Mr. LeClear had nothing to report.

Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC): Mr. Eich had nothing to report.

Upcoming Meetings

Planning Commission

- Wednesday, August 5, 2020 at Noon (joint meeting with Council and ZRAC)
- Thursday, August 20, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Transportation Commission

- Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 12:15 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 12:15 p.m.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Eich motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant