

**Meeting Minutes  
State College Borough Planning Commission  
September 19, 2019**

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) met on Thursday, September 19, 2019 at the Municipal Building, 243 South Allen Street. Zoe Boniface, Chair, called the meeting to order at Noon.

**Members Present**

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

**Members Absent**

Ron Madrid

**Others Present**

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Greg Garthe, Senior Planner/Zoning Officer; John Wilson, Zoning Officer; Isabel Storey, Planner; Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant; Sharon Myers, owner of the cat café; and Tom Schrack, Ms. Myers' attorney

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Mr. Dutt and seconded by Ms. Madden to approve the September 4, 2019 meeting minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor.

**Chair Report**

Zoe Boniface, Chair, shared an update on the North Atherton Street work which would finish up Spring 2020 and for further information to please contact [PennDOT.gov/northatherton](http://PennDOT.gov/northatherton).

**Public Hour**

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

**Community Planning**

Request for Zoning Text Amendment to allow Cat Cafes in the Urban Village Zoning District

Mr. LeClear stated the Planning Department received a request for a zoning text amendment from Ms. Myers, who wished to operate a cat café in a commercial property located at 616 West College Avenue in the Urban Village (UV) zoning district. The property was owned by Westside Village I, LLC and would be tentatively leased by Ms. Myers for the cat café operation.

Mr. Schrack, Ms. Myers attorney, gave a brief synopsis of why she was requesting the zoning text amendment.

The nature of the business may require the overnight boarding of cats, which was not currently permitted in the UV zoning district. Therefore, a zoning text amendment was requested. The proposed amendment would include a definition of a “cat café” along with additional parameters such as vaccination requirements.

Mr. LeClear also noted Borough Council received the request at their September 9, 2019 meeting and referred it to the Planning Commission for a recommendation.

Ms. Myers’ presentation included:

- The business would be a typical café where food and beverages were served, but in addition, fully vetted adoptable cats would be present in the café to socialize and interact with customers.
- The café would not be directly affiliated with an animal rescue operation, but café staff would work with such agencies to facilitate the adoption of cats by interested patrons while on the premises.
- Ms. Myers stated a cat café was a place where customers could de-stress with adoptable cats from a local rescue.
- Guests could bring food/drinks prepared off-site into the cat area from a totally separate grab-n-go area.
- There would be separate entrances for food and cat lounge areas.
- Anticipating no more than 10 cats on premise at one time.
- Community activities could be hosted.
- The history of cat cafes began in Taiwan in 1998. There were approximately 105 Cat Cafes in North America as of 2017. She noted the closest to State College was The Scratching Post Café in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.
- Ms. Myers noted public reaction was overwhelmingly positive. StateCollege.com had 295 comments, and *Centre Daily Times* had 61 comments. She noted there were people who wanted to help at the café. She noted most of the negative comments reflected a lack of knowledge about the food and drink sales being separate from the cat lounge area.
- It was noted Council was concerned student pet adoptions could increase the stray population.

Mr. LeClear stated because the property would be in the UV zoning district, overnight pet boarding was not permitted, thus the request for the amendment.

#### PC’s comments

- Ms. Genger asked if other types of animal boarding would be permitted uses if this amendment went through. Mr. Schrack stated they tried to narrow the language to strictly cat cafes.
- Mr. Kalin suggested having a limitation of how many cats per square feet. He suggested the Borough’s health department be brought into the discussion.
- Mr. Eich suggested a recommendation to the amendment to ensure the cats were spayed and had their shots.
- Mr. Kalin asked if it could be required that the cats come from local rescues.

- Ms. Madden suggested not to duplicate items that were already regulated to keep the amendment from becoming overly complex.

Mr. LeClear stated he would take the PC's comments and incorporate them in the letter.

## **Official Reports and Correspondence**

Borough Council (BC): Mr. LeClear reported Council had been discussing the Neighborhood Sustainability Program, and the RDA had a healthy discussion at their meeting yesterday related to this program.

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

### Variance - 235 Ridge Avenue

On August 13, 2019, the ZHB heard a request for a variance from Ch. XIX, Section 603.a: "Height, Dwellings not to exceed 25 feet, 2 stories." The property owners wished to remodel the attic of their two-story home to create more living space. The property was located in the R-2 zoning district. The ZHB granted the variance at their meeting on September 10, 2019.

### Special Exception - 129 South Sparks Street

On August 27, 2019, the ZHB heard a request for a special exception to allow expansion of an existing office use into an additional floor of the structure. Per Ch. XIX, Section 965: Mixed Use District of the zoning ordinance, the ZHB was authorized to grant special exceptions in the mixed-use area of the R-3H district. A decision was expected at the September 24, 2019 ZHB meeting.

### Variance - 230 South Gill Street

On September 10, 2019, the ZHB heard a request for a variance concerning encroachment into a side yard setback. The applicants proposed to construct a side porch on a very narrow lot. The property was located in the R-2 zoning district. A decision was expected at the September 24, 2019 ZHB meeting.

Upcoming Land Development Plans: Mr. Garthe reported on the following:

Preliminary Plan - 430 West Irvin Avenue and the Pennsylvania State University's (PSU) James Building to be reviewed at the October 2, 2019 meeting.

Staff Updates: Mr. LeClear stated staff was working with PSU to ask for a presentation regarding the College of Engineering's Master Plan. Neil Sullivan, University Planner, would present to Council at their November 18, 2019 meeting.

Mr. LeClear also stated Amy Kerner, Borough Engineer's, last day was tomorrow. He noted her position had been advertised and staff was working hard to make sure the pending land development plans be approved in a timely manner.

Mr. LeClear also discussed the fraternity zoning cases for 329 East Prospect Avenue and 425 Locust Lane that lost their recognition and stated staff was hoping to hear a decision by the end of the year.

Mr. Eich asked about the zoning ordinance rewrite. Mr. LeClear stated Ms. Safko and Ms. Storey were working on the inclusionary housing (IH) ordinance comparing it to some of those ordinances around the country. He noted the sign ordinance would come later.

Mr. Kalin asked when PC would first see the ordinance along with a term sheet of items, and how far along would it be so that major policy decisions would not be without the PC seeing it.

Mr. LeClear stated the original draft would take awhile because it would go the Zoning Revision Advisory Committee (ZRAC) first, then to the PC, and then on to Council. He stated there would be some new classifications.

Ms. Boniface, Chair, clarified the zoning revision discussion for the public in attendance.

Mr. Eich stated he would be interested in having an opportunity to see the ordinance from beginning to end. Mr. LeClear stated he would discuss this with the Chair of ZRAC.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Wednesday, October 2, 2019 at Noon  
Thursday, October 17, 2019 at 7 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Eich adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads  
Administrative Assistant