

Centre Documenters

Meeting: State College Borough Council
Township: College
Documenter names: Mo Almo & Mackenzie Bruns
Date: April 1, 2024
Start Time: 7:01 p.m.
End Time: 7:58 p.m.

Notes

Call to Order

Moment of Silence & Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Ezra Nanes, Mayor
Evan Myers, Council President
Gopal Balachandran, Council Member
Matt Herndon, Council Member
Kevin Kassab, Council Member
Nalini Krishnankutty, Council Member
Divine Lipscomb, Council Member (on Zoom)
Josh Portney, Council Member
Tom Fountaine, Borough Manager

Virtual Meeting Procedure Overview

Special Business

- A. Although it wasn't listed on the agenda, Council President Evan Myers said the council needs to celebrate Indigenous people and acknowledge their ownership of the land. He said he will introduce this resolution at the meeting on April 15, and it will be ready for voting by May 6.
- B. Resolution honoring Craig Avedesian
 - a. The council approved the resolution to honor Avedesian's contributions to the community by renaming Kelly Alley, the street adjacent to the former Saint's Café that Avedesian owned, as Craig's Way.

Public Hour

- Timothy Benally, a graduate of Penn State, spoke on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Student Association and his community. He said he was disappointed that

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the council tabled the land acknowledgement resolution.

- Auroranne Corinne Delgadillo, a student at Penn State, said she was also disappointed that the land acknowledgement discussion didn't happen because she thinks Indigenous people need to feel recognized and at home in State College, not just on campus.

Consent Items

- A. Appoint Tony Sapia to the Centre Region Planning Commission with a term ending Dec. 31, 2024.
- B. Approve the five-year agreement with Ascent Data for the disaster recovery option for virtual servers in the amount of \$114,000.
- C. Award a three-year contract to Metzler Forest Products of Reedsville, Pennsylvania, in an amount not to exceed \$90,000 for Compost Facility Grinding Services of organic materials.
- D. Reappointment of Thomas E. Daubert as the borough historian with a term ending Dec. 31, 2025.
- E. Approve the closure of various roads for the 2024 Penn State home football game schedule as follows: April 13, Sept. 7, 21, 28, Oct. 5, and Nov. 2, 9, and 30, 2024.
- F. Approve of the use of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza for the April 4 Commemoration honoring the life of Dr. Martin Luther King on the date of his assassination from 6-8 p.m.
- G. Approve regular meeting minutes from March 4, 2024, and March 18, 2024.

The council agreed to approve the consent items except for item B because Josh Portney said he wanted clarification, and members agreed.

After discussion about how the agreement with Ascent Data will provide better security for virtual servers during large-scale disasters, the council approved item B.

General Policy and Administration

- A. Community Choice Aggregation Project (CCA)
 - a. The Community Choice Aggregation project enables local governments to aggregate their electricity load to purchase or develop power on behalf of the residents, businesses, and municipal accounts within their service territory. This would help attain energy and environmental goals presented in the Feb. 12 and March 18 meetings.
 - b. The council decided to approve an MOU, which is a non-binding agreement for the borough that will allow the project to move forward and become a legal possibility for State College
- B. No Mow May
 - *A note from your Documenter — Did you know?* According to [StateCollege.com](https://www.statecollege.com), No Mow May was first introduced to State College voluntarily

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in 2022.

- No Mow May is a sustainability and conservation initiative being considered for May 2024. Jasmine Fields, the Sustainability Program Officer, gave a presentation via Zoom on No Mow May with its benefits and tips for participation.
- This initiative pushes forward pollinator-friendly practices and encourages property owners to establish no-mow zones and pollinator resting areas by mowing their lawns less throughout May.
- Council member Kevin Kassab inquired if the council thought of increasing the height of the grass from 6 inches to 8 or 10 inches, especially since in his research, he found that other cities require up to 10 inches.
 - Fields said she is looking at recommendations for this type of change.
- *A note from your Documenter — Did you know?* According to [StateCollege.com](https://www.statecollege.com), the State College borough's current codes require grass to be no more than 6 inches high.
- Council President Evan Myers asked if there are any downsides to mowing less.
 - Fields answered that their focus switched to educating people, not only telling people to not mow their lawns. She mentioned the Seed Swap that will take place from 5-7 p.m. on April 9 at 3 Dots Downtown.
 - Tom Fontaine said it's difficult to know for sure, but from previous surveys, they received some negative feedback from people complaining about their neighbors who didn't cut their grass and the difficulty of mowing after a month of not doing so. However, the majority was positive feedback.
- Council member Nalini Krishnankutty asked if they knew how many people participated last time.
 - Fontaine said last time they did not have registration, but this year they will keep track of participants.
- Council member Gopal Balachandran said he had heard that some residents fear the possibility of their high grass attracting snakes and other animals.
 - Fields responded that she had not heard of snakes, but she would follow up.
- A State College resident said he supports no-mow zones and hopes that this practice continues indefinitely.
- Delgadillo said she thinks requiring registration will discourage a lot of people from participating in No Mow May.
- The council agreed to approve the motion for No Mow May.

Equity and Inclusion – No Business

Parking – No Business

Planning and Zoning – No Business

Public Safety — No Business

Public Works — No Business

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Regional Issues — No Business

Official Reports and Correspondence

A. Mayor's Report

- a. Nanes wished everyone a Happy Easter and said he will celebrate Passover on April 22 and the Ramadan Iftar with the Islamic Society of Central Pennsylvania on April 3.

A note from your Documenter — Did you know? According to Islamic-relief.org.uk, Iftar is the name of the first meal eaten to break fasting after sunset during Ramadan.

A note from your Documenter — Did you know? According to Britannica, Passover is a Jewish holiday celebrating the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt, which takes place for about one week in either March or April.

The mayor reminded the public of the following:

- April 4 will be "Take Back the Night," which is a walk to support those affected by domestic violence and is organized by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. This day also commemorates Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, and there will be an event honoring his life at the MLK Plaza in State College.
- April 22 is Earth Day, but the event will be on April 20.
- April 11-17 is Black Maternal Health Week, and all of April is National Arab American Heritage Month.

B. President's Report

- Meyers went over important dates.
- April 8 is the last day to register for the primary.
- April 12 is the last day to request a mail-in ballot.
- April 23 is the primary election day.
 - o He clarified that they did not table the resolution for Indigenous people, but they scheduled it for the next council meeting on April 15.
- March 28 was the final joining with the State College Planning Commission. The borough council provided feedback to the planning department on the new zoning code for consideration. Once the consultants respond with their recommendations, there will be more opportunities for the public to comment on the zoning code. This has been a decades-long process.

C. Staff/Committee Reports

- a. Fontaine said the Sustainable Communities Collaborative will host its campus and community sustainability expo from 5-7 p.m. on April 25 in the Municipal Building.

D. Student Representative Reports

- SCASD – Nubah Nusaibah said State College Area High School will host a mini-THON to raise money for pediatric cancer from 8 p.m. on April 5 until 8 a.m. on

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- April 6. She also mentioned that Cathi Fuhrman was awarded the Intellectual Freedom Award. She is a school librarian at State College Area High School.
- UPUA – No representative present.
 - GPSA – No representative present.

Adjournment

Summary/Takeaways from your Documenter

- The State College Borough Council decided to move the conversation about acknowledging the history of Indigenous people and their ownership of the land to the next meeting on April 15.
- No Mow May will occur this year with an additional focus on educating people about its significance for pollinator conservation.

Follow-up Questions

- Will there be a change to the State College borough codes for the required height of grass?

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