

# The community and its police: *should priorities be re-ordered?*

Police. The word affects people—either positively or negatively. Children are told the policeman on the corner is a helpful friend. As the children grow up they sometimes decide differently—that is, if a "corner cop" can even be found today.

State College's Police Department is currently undergoing a change in leadership. Chief Herbert Straley has tendered his resignation, effective yesterday. The reasons behind the move remain hidden under a cloak of secrecy.

Straley submitted to Borough Council a 19-page report explaining his motives for quitting. Council has chosen not to release the report to the public.

Speculation concerning the resignation, therefore, is everywhere. "Straley was a hard-nosed cop who hated hippies and longhairs" is one end of the speculation spectrum.

Or perhaps it was a personality conflict between Straley and his boss, Borough Manager Carl Fairbanks, to whom Mayor Chauncey Lang has chosen to delegate police authority.

Or perhaps Straley refused to accept budgetary limitations imposed upon the police department by Council. We might never know for sure.

Whatever the reasons for losing the borough's old chief, there is certain to be a divergence of opinion about who to hire as the new one.

And people not only have different opinions about what the police chief should be, they differ on what a police department should be. The Daily Collegian asked local candidates how they would attempt to reorganize, if at all, police affairs.

Should police priorities be re-ordered or more carefully looked into?

## MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Jo Hays (Democrat):

The sudden resignation of the police chief seems to me to be evidence that priorities should be more carefully looked into. If mayor, I would give this phase very high priority, especially during the first six to 10 months in office.

Lawrence Perez (Republican):

Police priorities should be reviewed continuously, and should be adjusted to handle current situations. Police priorities should be flexible.

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ingrid Holtzman (Democrat):

In the search for a police chief, which seems to come at a very good time, citizens have been invited to list their priorities. If there is a need for reordering (and possibly for the budgetary changes that would have to go along) it should become evident at this time. Cooperation on a regional basis and with the University must be explored.

John Glatz (Republican):

Without a significant change in society's goals, I do not believe a major change in

police priorities is required. I am hopeful the University security will work even more closely together in the future to meet the needs of State College citizens.

James McClure (Democrat):

"I don't have any great feeling that there is any priority system that should be changed around. I have no quarrel with the police trying to stop drug traffic. I regard marijuana with suspicion and anxiety although I am fairly well persuaded that it is not as harmful as other drugs. I don't know where in a hierarchy of priorities I would put enforcement of drug laws."

Henry Yeagley (Republican):

As a member of the Public Safety Committee I have supported the building of a law enforcement agency responsive to the needs of a University community. We have emphasized professionalization and reorganization to more effectively provide these services. The Public Safety Committee is continually examining statistics and carefully reviewing the overall functioning of the Police Department, so that priorities can be adjusted, if appropriate, but in a responsible and orderly manner.

Dean Phillips (Democrat):

Police priorities should be carefully examined and possibly re-ordered. The police are an agency created to serve and protect people. The only authority they have is delegated to them by the people. The police are a law enforcement agency but they cannot apprehend all law

breakers. This means that someone must make a decision about which crimes are the greatest threat to the community. Police have a great deal of discretion in the way they uphold the law. For instance, a department may be more concerned with upholding the parking regulations than they are with apprehending individuals involved in assault cases.

We should establish channels to hear the views of students, women, blacks and other minority groups and others who have little influence or rapport with the police. A police advisory board would be a mechanism for citizen input.

The key law enforcement question in State College is the selection of the new police to be clearly established. One important criteria will be the attitudes that the individual must have to deal with cosmopolitan population mix of State College. Representatives of various interest groups should have a chance to meet with candidates for police chief and their reactions should be made known to the selection committee.

It is important for the community to feel that its police department is a friendly agency and not a threatening or oppressive one.

Harold Zipser (Republican):

I cannot say at this point whether police priorities should be re-ordered. However, I categorically believe that they should continuously be looked into, evaluated and never should a police state be allowed to exist.

# Government responsiveness — *is there enough?*

Some local candidates have been expressing the sentiment lately that less of the borough's business should be carried on "behind closed doors."

Work sessions, closed to the public, are sometimes a practical necessity for such groups as the State College Borough Council. Some people are arguing, however, that the practice has been carried too far.

Here is what the candidates say.

Should there be more openness in local government?

## MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Jo Hays (Democrat):

Yes.  
Lawrence Perez (Republican):

Local government as administered under the Borough Code must be, and is, open to the public. All matters of policy whether they be considered by an authority, board, commission or council must involve, first, a public hearing and then a public meeting before ordinances are enacted. Also, the meetings of all authorities, boards, commissions and council must be advertised in the public news media in sufficient time to enable interested citizens to attend.

The minutes of all public meetings are available to the public and the news media covers all meetings and publishes an account of the items considered.

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ingrid Holtzman (Democrat):

One of my main concerns for many years has been that there should be citizen input and participation in local government. We have seen a marked increase in this area recently—which is all to the good. Having sat on a borough board (Appearance and Design Review) for the past three and a half years, I have learned the value of hearing citizen opinion, but I have also become convinced that our boards and commissions need some time to freely talk and reflect on different policies in order to accomplish the work for which they are responsible.

John Glatz (Republican):

I favor open meetings whenever possible. We presently have laws which concern open meetings and these will be expanded by the state legislature. I would expect to comply with the expanded law in these matters.

James McClure (Democrat):

Yes.

Henry Yeagley (Republican):

As a principle, I believe in openness in government. I think local government is very open now. All council meetings are open and include a "citizens hour" on each agenda. Council encourages the input and participation of citizens and groups. There are, of course, some matters which must be discussed in executive sessions; for example, personnel and legal matters, which should not be totally aired in public. However, no decisions are made in executive sessions and news media representatives are permitted to remain at these sessions.

Dean Phillips (Democrat):

A number of important decisions are made during closed work sessions or executive sessions of local government agencies. Often open meetings are merely "rubber stamp" meetings. Often this gives the illusion that everyone on council, for instance, is in agreement. It is my opinion that conflict should be aired publicly. It isn't bad to have honest disagreement on issues or ideas.

I believe that council should publish their agenda prior to each meeting. This will give everyone a chance to know what is going to be discussed in council. Furthermore, council should take more responsibility for keeping the public

informed. Perhaps much of the by-pass hassle could have been avoided if the entire community had been more aware of government and PennDOT activities.

There should be an open agenda meeting of council once each month in addition to the regular meeting of council. Individuals could be encouraged to bring up questions, complaints and new business that might get cursory treatment at the regular meeting of council. It would be a time to think about both little questions and broad problem areas without the urgency that surrounds the current regular meetings of council.

Public hearings should be held in larger facilities. It is a self fulfilling prophecy to hold public meetings in the municipal building. At best only 80-100 concerned citizens can attend comfortably. Well publicized public hearings in more convenient quarters may encourage participation.

Harold Zipser (Republican):

I have been of the opinion that there has been openness in our local government. The meetings of the Borough Council are open to the public. There is a hearing of citizens at every meeting of the Council. All meetings of the authorities, boards and commissions are open to the public. It is the responsibility as well as the right of all people to keep themselves well-informed.