

Michael Freeman



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Artist's rendition of the soon to be built Fraser Center – the cornerstone of the Renaissance that will build a State College for all ages to enjoy!

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

As a resident of the Holmes-Foster neighborhood for ten years, I treasured every moment in my West Nittany Avenue home. Many of you know me as a neighbor, but I am also a community activist and am concerned with the way things are going in our town. The upcoming election this November for State College Borough Council is critical for choosing a direction of our community. The changes of the past decade in our town have been left to market forces. The market has given us redevelopment in the form of seven student high-rise buildings and no new housing for permanent residents. The market has led to the closing of several venerable establishments for permanent residents and replaced those establishments with banks, cell-phone stores, and pubs. Downtown has been tilting toward a strictly student-oriented place.

For the last two years I have represented the Borough as best I can as a Planning Commissioner, pushing to create a vibrant town for students but also for all of you. **Charles Gable serves on the Planning Commission and he shares my passion for a downtown that provides amenities for residents of all ages.** He successfully supported my cause, called Pedestrian-Oriented Zoning, that restricts how much banks and other limited-service venues can occupy streets' store fronts and thereby deaden the streetscape, particularly after 5 PM. Within a year on the Planning Commission, Charles has been elected Vice-Chair and has been instrumental in trying to increase the efficiency and pertinence of the Commission's meetings.

Charles and I have pushed all zoning issues pertaining to Fraser Center and this project can now, finally, come to fruition. This is exceptionally important because for the first time in at least a decade, State College has some developers interested in building projects *other* than student high-rises. The Fraser Center, the first of the projects to actually move into reality, will provide new cinemas and perhaps a bookstore, possibly non-profit office space, and dozens of households for permanent residents. These full-time residents are direly needed. State College Borough has been losing permanent residents each year for five years. 43% of our town's land is tax-exempt and the 57% owned by tax-payers must bear the burden of paying into the coffers. Because the Borough's land is all developed, it is critical that we re-develop, re-purpose, and re-use our spaces to promote the health of our downtown. New sources of tax revenue and new tax-paying, permanent residents will help diversify State College, financially and demographically.

The health of our downtown can be further promoted by the proposed borough Office of Sustainability. This office would oversee projects ranging from recycling to bike path installation-- but it requires a secure tax base. State College's tax base has been dwindling over the last five years, making expansion of amenities a challenge. In order to avoid alienating the developers who can bring new tax-paying residents in meaningful numbers, we **must** have a Borough Council that can facilitate, rather than hinder, the zoning and other bureaucratic tasks that allow the redevelopment proposed-- including the green-friendly boutique hotel with rooftop garden restaurant on East College Avenue.

As your Planning Commissioner, I experienced the frustration caused by the *two years* required to approve just the zoning permission for the Fraser Center. Local government can only become a better partner for business if its elected members are creative, active, progressive persons who appreciate how business and permanent residents are keys to diversifying our town. Its elected members will need to streamline the zoning for positive redevelopment. Each elected member absolutely must have a sound understanding of the financial tools available to realize these projects.

Charles Gable embodies these skills and attitudes heartily. He envisions a renaissance rather than stagnation for our town. Jeff Kern has a proven record on promoting a fiscally, culturally, and environmentally healthy downtown. John Hook voices ideas and values compatible with strengthening our town. Together, I believe they would be able to work efficiently toward goals of common good and vibrancy for residents of all ages. Together, they would seem to exemplify non-partisan teamwork so rarely seen these days. Together, they represent a way forward through bureaucratic uncertainty and inertia. I urge you to visit the websites of Charles Gable and John Hook and consider voting for all three men for Borough Council in November.

Sincerely,



Michael Freeman

P.S. – Remember to **vote on Tuesday, November 6th**. Please visit the websites of Charles Gable and John Hook to learn more about them and their plans to ***Foster the Renaissance!***

Charles R. Gable
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www.CharlesRGable.us

John Hook
President, The Hook Group
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