

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, February 26, 2015, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room 214, 2nd Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Kay, Tom Laging, Jeff Searcy, Cecil Steward and Jon Weinberg; (Christie Dionisopoulos and Karen Nalow absent). Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Lynn Johnson and J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Robert Ripley and Matt Hansen from the Office of the Capitol Commission; Loy Todd; and Kevin Abourezk of the Lincoln Journal Star.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Chair Jeff Searcy called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

Searcy then requested a motion approving the minutes for the regular meeting held January 22, 2015. Motion for approval made by Kay, seconded by Weinberg and carried 4-0: Kay, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Laging abstaining; Dionisopoulos and Nalow absent.

A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF S. 13TH & H STREETS, INCLUDING 639 AND 645 S. 13TH STREET AND 1236 H STREET

PUBLIC HEARING:

February 26, 2015

Members present: Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg; Dionisopoulos and Nalow absent.

Ed Zimmer stated several years back, this commission looked at the expansion of a parking lot just west of this property. He believes the application was by the Century House. The commission allowed an extension of the parking lot with appropriate screening. This commission was also grappling with tearing down a house on H Street last year. Nothing has been done on that site. There is a purchase agreement to buy the whole property. The request is to demolish the two remaining houses and create a unified parking lot with appropriate screening.

Loy Todd runs the trade association for new car and truck deals. They are not in the real estate development business. This is the exterior of our property. We've endured the unsightliness and believe this is a good opportunity for us. We want to remove the existing houses and continue the parking lot that is already there. We will get rid of the fencing that is there. Some neighbors have already approached them with an interest to park in the new lot. We see it as an improvement to the area. They have consulted heavily with a landscape architect. They want to remain a good neighbor and have a good safe place for people to utilize. They keep trying to figure out if there is a better idea. He likes the idea of fixing up older properties, but it doesn't seem feasible in this case.

Steward questioned which neighbors they expect to be interested in the parking. Todd replied that Blue Cross is interested in several spots, Century House is interested in a few, and a law firm has expressed an interest. Informally, they have requests for forty to fifty parking spots.

Steward wondered if the applicant would consider a few tree wells. He would appreciate a chance of getting more green area. Todd replied there was no competition to buy this. With our pro forma, there is no room to give up stalls. We have to get a ninety percent occupancy to have this make sense for us.

Laging noted that the site plan shows trees. Todd stated that they will save what they can. The existing trees will not be removed and landscaping will be added. Laging questioned the curb cut and access points. Todd stated the only access is the alley. The sidewalks will stay.

Zimmer stated that the guidelines address discouraging parking on the mall. They also encourage parking needs be provided on the half blocks north and south. This condition is increased with the parking structures. He believes this is consistent with the language of the guidelines. Century House might be part of the possible utilization in the conversion back to more housing.

ACTION:

Weinberg moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the two existing houses and expansion and consolidation of the parking lots with appropriate landscaping, seconded by Kay.

Ripley questioned the occupancy in the existing buildings. Todd replied they are empty as far as he knows.

Laging wondered if they have any historical value. Zimmer thinks the one on the corner could be an interesting house, but it is so isolated. This was the proposed location of the Jay Building with the helipad on top.

Motion carried 5-0: Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes; Dionisopoulos and Nalow absent.

**A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR INSCRIBED PLAQUES IN THE SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA
PATHWAY OF NEBRASKA'S CENTENNIAL MALL**

PUBLIC HEARING:

February 26, 2015

Members present: Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg; Dionisopoulos and Nalow absent.

Searcy stated that the editorial review board has been busy and provided documents on the most recent plaques.

Zimmer stated that we have continued to work through the available plaques. They are about to move into the shorter descriptions. These will be more challenging. We have tried to include a little bit of date information so there is a sense of an anchor point in time. The review board tried to provide historical information without pure booster language. He believes they have been successful as they take language from advertising departments and turn it into a description that might be more timeless.

Lynn Johnson reminded the commissioners that each section has a theme. These go into the central blocks.

J.J. Yost stated they are awaiting a final engraved sample. This is hopefully the final crack at this. We are very close and then we will truly move into production mode. He hopes to bring a photo of the sample to the next meeting.

Searcy stated that a wonderful job is being done on this. Ripley stated that the board is on the ball. He has been impressed with them.

Steward questioned how far away you need to be from the QR tags for them to be effective. Hansen would say you need to be a few inches away. There is an app you can get. Johnson added they have tried it at about two feet.

Weinberg inquired if the Tier One Foundation still exists. Johnson responded this is the last of the money from this foundation. The Foundation board chose to direct the funds to this project.

Searcy noted that the bicentennial time capsule from Centennial Mall has been safely recovered and is in an undisclosed location. That will be placed on the north end of the mall with a sesquicentennial capsule.

ACTION:

Steward moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for inscriptions as proposed for plaques in the Spirit of Nebraska Pathway of Nebraska's Centennial Mall, seconded by Laging and carried 5-0: Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes; Dionisopoulos and Nalow absent.

Johnson stated that there was a suggestion that information about the plaques be placed on the mall, perhaps a plaque that explains the program might be beneficial. In some ways it would be nice for people to know that there is an opportunity. Laging wondered where this information would be placed. Johnson thinks it could be set into the pathway. They have been trying to figure out some way to let people know this is an ongoing project. Zimmer added that the QR code could be a link for more information on every one.

Ripley offered his thanks to those that are doing the editing on these. It is time consuming. He appreciates the energy and time it takes to do it.

Searcy stated that this brings up a point to the future of this. From his perspective, we have a challenge for the long term integrity. There is so much opportunity on the mall to be able to tell these stories. This has always been a Nebraska wide project. How do we reach out across the state to those people who have had a significance on the state or their community? He knows there has been many discussions about how this could take place. He would like to open this up to discussion at a future meeting.

Johnson added that the fund raising subcommittee is having that conversation right now. The next two to three years will be the greatest opportunity. It has always been the intent to collect as many stories as possible.

Steward stated that it seems to him the challenge is having local representation make local identity of information that could be considered. He doesn't see how any group, body or individual in Lincoln can uncover the kind of information that the local people could provide.

Searcy stated that what we are seeing now is the final result of the fundraising effort. Now that the goal has been reached, we are left without a champion. We would like the commission to begin to wrestle with that. The pathway has a funding element to it with regard to all the plaques that have been underwritten. They would continue to need to be funded. Part of that funding would be a tremendous resource for the Parks Foundation.

Johnson thinks the project will go into an endowment fund to support ongoing programming. We have the same thing for Union Plaza. Maybe there does need to be a grant application, perhaps Nebraska Humanities. It is worth looking into.

The Commission encouraged investigation into this avenue.

- **Update on Nebraska History Museum and adjacent Centennial Mall (Nebr. State Historical Society and Nebr. DAS)**

Kay stated that this is project that was reviewed last August at 15th and P. This is currently under renovation. You won't see a lot of change on the outside, it is mostly interior work. The commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for signage, a new penthouse at the top and a new entrance on the east façade. The history museum Director Mike Smith, brought up a couple of things with regard to Centennial Mall. There are two existing flag poles that are too close together. They aren't able to use the standard six foot flags. The museum staff has asked that the north flag pole be moved six feet further north. The new entrance necessitates some replacement of the concrete. They would have been removing the concrete around the flag pole anyway. The Historical Society will be before this commission next month to make a formal request. The second part of their request would be a light pole. This is in front of their new entrance. It's an identity issue. They can elaborate on their staging. This is where they gather and load the kids. They want input on what can be done with the light pole. They are going to meet with city staff and do a little background work. They will give more information at the March meeting.

Steward inquired if Lincoln Electric System is involved in the talks. Yost noted these are not LES lights, they are Parks lights.

Ripley wondered if the intent is to have parking cleared for bus drop off or a curb recess. Yost replied there is a bus drop off there. Kay stated that is incorporated.

Steward has noticed lane closures for construction in this vicinity. Across the intersection is the Centennial Mall construction. He questioned if anyone is coordinating the closures. Yost replied that John Heacock from the State attends the Centennial Mall meetings. They are constantly exchanging information. Steward believes it looks like an opportunity for congestion at some point. Yost stated that the lane closures are coordinated.

Laging asked if there will be any lighting on the building. Kay replied nothing significant. There are plans for backlighting of the sign over the entrance and roof mounted signs on the penthouse roof that will light the building sign. One percent has been designated for art. The Director of the museum is leading an effort in how to best use that funding. There will be a call to artists through an RFP. This is still in preliminary talks. They want something with a lot of WOW factor. There is the potential for projected digital images on the north side of the building. Some interesting ideas are floating around.

Ripley requested that as the exterior is illuminated, light be projected downward, but not upward. He doesn't want to add to the light spillage into the atmosphere.

Searcy offered a suggestion that the entrance could be flanked with a flag pole on each side. Kay will take that back to the group for discussion.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

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