

MEETING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, January 28, 2016, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room 214, 2nd Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Gene Crump, Christie Dionisopoulos, Thomas Laging, Karen Nalow, Jeff Searcy and Jon Weinberg; (John Kay absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Lynn Johnson and J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Michelle Waite of UNL Chancellor's Office; and Nancy Hicks 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 meetings November 17, 2015. Motion for approval made by Crump, seconded by Nalow and carried 5-0: Crump, Dionisopoulos, Nalow, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Laging abstained; Kay absent.

UPDATE ON CENTENNIAL MALL CONSTRUCTION, DETAILS ON REFLECTION PLAZA AT R STREET

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

Johnson stated that they have been working on the interface between the north end of Centennial Mall and R Street with the Chancellor's office. The proposal is to extend the low limestone walls on the outside of the two walks, with two red brick columns on the ends of those. He noted that the first conifer tree on either side of this element would be removed. This is a gateway into campus. His understanding is this would be an opportunity to have a gateway experience. As the conifers grow, you could still view the columns. They would replace the first conifer with low shrubs to maintain the visibility. The Mayor questioned the color of the Nebraska "N". The proposal from UNL is the standard red "N". The Mayor has inquired about a bronze colored "N" and would like the views of this commission. He

reiterated that the northern most conifer would need to be eliminated and replaced with a low shrub. The low retaining wall would be in line with the columns. There would still be four conifers on either side.

Michelle Waite stated that she has worked with Johnson for months on this. They are excited to be part of this opportunity. This is the home of the capital city on one end and the University on the other end. With the historical society on the north end of the mall, this somewhat constrained us. We hope this coincides with the columns down by the union. These columns would be a focal point to the entrance and exit to the campus. She wants this commission to consider the red "N". They looked last night and the red color is quite timeless. Scarlet and cream dates back to 1892. The red "N" provides a prominent entrance and exit to our campus with a very recognizable brand. They have done extensive marketing studies and have confirmed that the red "N" has much value. Color is a powerful marking tool. When she travels, if she is wearing something with the red "N", someone always recognizes what it stands for. Consistency is important. She knows there has been some discussion on the copper "N". While she thinks it is attractive, she thinks it dilutes the brand. It contradicts and visually disconnects itself from the streetscape. The columns have met with rave reviews from the public. They would like to maintain the red "N". It ties in nicely with the campus and maintains consistency.

Laging questioned if the font of the "N" will be changed. Waite replied yes, but she believes it will be barely distinguishable. As they replace the old style, parties have offered to commit payment for the new letters on the mall. Change of all the old style letters will take time to happen. The general public doesn't know we have numerous styles of "N"s on campus.

Weinberg pointed out that the public knows they are red. The red "N" is the brand.

Searcy wondered how the font will change. Waite replied the center will come out and it will be a little longer. Zimmer added that the white middle will be replaced with all red.

Weinberg inquired what is on the other side of the columns. Waite replied nothing.

Laging questioned if the letter "N" floats from the column. Waite believes so.

Dionisopoulos questioned if there are any columns on the other side of the street. Waite replied no. The other side of the street is the Nebraska State Historical Society. She added they

are totally redoing the south side of the Union and making it into a plaza area. She believes this will fit nicely with the streetscape.

Nalow thinks having the connection to the University is important with this block, but it is also Centennial Mall and looking back to the State Capitol. She is concerned if we start to remove the conifers, that it is going to diminish the view a little to the Capitol and what the mall is all about. The ultimate goal of the mall is not lost, but she wants to make sure it works together. She hopes that losing the two conifers doesn't dilute the design of the area.

Waite stated that these trees are huge and she personally believes there is plenty of room for the four trees. She thinks one conifer on either side could be easily removed and not lose any visual presence. She believes this will not affect the view. Nalow just wonders about losing a conifer on either side. The screening to the properties on either side would be diminished a little. She questioned whether the view has to take precedence to the view to the Capitol. She wondered if there are other things that could be considered.

Dionisopoulos noted the rule of groupings. Yost said the goal is symmetry.

Laging asked why the sign says Nebraska's Centennial Mall. Isn't it implicit that it belongs to us? Johnson replied the wording decision was made a long time ago.

Dionisopoulos is a little torn on this. When you look at the view and see the "N" on either side, it is a little misleading. Our focus is the environs and the mall. She admits she is not a fan of the red, it really sticks out.

Waite commented she understands the opinions, but this is all University along here. The perception is that this is all University. Having the "N" on both sides is a discussion we have had as well. As people are coming down the mall, they need to know they are entering the University proper.

Ed Zimmer stated that he believes the overall design of the mall and the Capitol is dominant. His focus is established by the design and he believes the columns are tucked back to the side, so they don't contest the dominance of the Capitol. He believes the red "N" may be less conspicuous because red blends into this setting.

Johnson is sensitive to what Nalow is saying. This adds a brand new element we haven't used on the mall yet. Perhaps we could use Taylor junipers instead of shrubs? Nalow believes that

would help and maintain the screening. She thinks that screen is important so, once you cross into the mall, you are in the element of the mall and reflection plaza. That line is so strong that if you don't have the landscape backing it up, it would be diminished.

Weinberg has seen millions of branding elements. To tell them they can't use a red "N" makes no sense. If the first thing you notice is the red "N", then you have done nothing along Centennial Mall. He thinks it looks great.

Searcy questioned if the proposed "N" is primarily red. Waite replied the middle of the N is a brushed silver. The new red "N" will be solid red. She believes as things are replaced, the "N" will be replaced. This will be costly, so it will be done a little at a time.

Crump sees this as a linear block "N" with no serifs. Waite replied he was correct. We have other entrances around town that have columns and a red "N". She believes these are a nice pedestrian entrance to the campus.

Searcy asked if there is any possibility to have more of a brushed limestone feel to the letter instead of the brushed silver. It would be similar to the wall or the Capitol. Laging noted the center could be cut out. There could be a void in the center instead of a solid. Waite doesn't believe it would stand out.

Crump stated we are considering their request to use their logo on the wall. He believes deviating from their request would do a disservice to the University and the people walking the mall. It wouldn't be plausible in his opinion to modify it. Waite believes consistency is key.

Dionisopoulos questioned if the reason for no columns on the north side is because it technically isn't University property. Waite replied we have never explored that, to her knowledge. That is the Historical Society. It doesn't make sense to her.

ACTION:

Weinberg moved approval of the application as submitted, with the branded red N, seconded by Laging.

Crump wanted it clarified that the motion entails the "N" on the north and south side. Weinberg stated that is included in his motion.

Laging questioned how important this is to the University. Waite replied this is very important.

Nalow thinks that listening to the discussion, she personally doesn't want to consider changing the University brand. The bigger question is, whether the location of the "N" makes sense. Zimmer likes them all the way to the outer limits. R Street feels like you are at the edge of the city campus. If one put markers to either edge of the Historical Society, it bleeds into S Street. Nalow believes across the street is an opportunity to show you are entering the University precincts.

Searcy asked about the construction time line. Yost replied that the contractor has already built the reflection plaza wall. This block is primarily done, but we haven't talked about how we would construct this yet. The contractor will be on site till at least May, 2016, or maybe this is a separate contract. We plan to plant the trees this spring. All landscaping material will go in May of this year.

Laging wondered about the grade. Yost stated that the grade comes to the top of the long wall and rises just a bit higher, and then slopes down a little.

It was clarified by the commission that the motion includes the "N" on both sides, as it currently is on campus with the silver, and includes the four conifers, as noted on the landscape plan.

Motion for approval carried 4-1: Crump, Laging, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Dionisopoulos voting 'no'; Nalow abstained; Kay absent.

Searcy would like to make an informal request for UNL to look at the possibilities to have the updated "N" installed, instead of the current one. He would like to have the most updated and current logo branding. Waite will find out the timeline. The redesigned "N" is still going through the approval process.

UPDATE ON NEBRASKA SESQUICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES AND POSSIBLE CENTENNIAL MALL TIE-INS

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

Searcy stated that he began the discussion regarding upcoming events for the Nebraska Sesquicentennial, at the joint meeting in November of last year. As we look forward, he would like to bring one thing to everyone's attention. As the mall is completed, there are a few items

we need to consider and address, in coordination with those involved in the completion of the mall. He wants to make sure this commission is involved with those decisions. We have gone from the plans to the groundbreaking, and to the finalization of things. At some point we will have a grand opening. He wondered if these should be phased elements. He asked for everyone's thoughts on the topic. Perhaps there could be a grand opening of the mall revitalization?

Lynn Johnson stated that the Mayor has asked for the fountains to be turned on this spring. He doesn't think we are ready to dedicate the mall at that time. His suggestion would be for dedication preferably in September, 2016. Perhaps this is a two phase introduction. The fountains could be turned on in the spring, with a larger dedication in late summer.

J.J. Yost would guess that donors want the plaques to be installed when they have the donor dedication ceremony. That is planned for late summer. It is the intent of the Parks Dept. to turn on all water features on in mid-May, 2016.

Searcy stated that from a sesquicentennial standpoint, as we turn on the fountains and recognize donors, we talk about future plans for mall and a spectacular for the mall in 2017. Potential plans for that include many groups. The idea came from the final report on the centennial celebration. He is proud that over time, and with the support of many local and state donors, this will be done. The idea is to highlight the historical significance of Centennial Mall in the sesquicentennial. Nebraskan's loved the Centennial celebration and the grass roots element. What we heard from people after the fact was they felt like there wasn't a grand finale where everyone could come together. There were many local events, but not one final event for everyone. The idea came that perhaps we can have a final spectacular on the newly revitalized Centennial Mall. Searcy presented a visual for the celebration. This would be an event weekend in the summer of 2017. We have met preliminarily with the city's event team, which consists of many entities. We would have representatives from all over the state to come into Lincoln on an August weekend, perhaps on Friday, August 17, 2017. There could be a grand parade on Saturday down P Street and Centennial Mall. This is all subject to much more discussion, thought and energy. This is in the very early stages of consideration. The celebration could culminate with joint symphonies, a laser light show in the evening and fireworks. He wanted to show this commission some of the plans being discussed. On August 21, 2017 is also a total eclipse of the sun. Lincoln is in the path for a good viewing event. People could stay for a viewing opportunity. He is honored to be able to express some ideas that are happening for the possibilities that exist for our state with the sesquicentennial. In

2017, we will have a new president. With the inauguration, a float may be appropriate for the grand parade on Saturday.

Lynn Johnson thinks this is exciting. It is what Centennial Mall and the fountains were designed for, a gathering and celebration place.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Annual Report: Zimmer stated that he will correct a few typographical errors and then this will be the final report.
- Staff Report: Zimmer believes we are near to getting an appointment for a seventh member. John Kay asked not to be reappointed. Tom Laging has indicated a willingness to continue to serve. There has been no word from the Mayor's office yet on a reappointment.
- Searcy stated that there will be a State Capitol Rotunda news event on February 26, 2016, with some announcements at that point involving the Sesquicentennial and Centennial Mall, amongst other items.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.