

## MEETING NOTES

**NAME OF GROUP:** NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, September 22, 2016, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room 214, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Mary Campbell, Gene Crump, Karen Nalow, Jeff Searcy and Jon Weinberg; (Christie Dionisopoulos and John Sinclair absent).

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Robert Ripley and Matt Hansen from the Office of the Capitol Commission; Liz Shea-McCoy, Rhonda Seacrest, Patrick Keough and Mike Zeleny.

**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 August 25, 2016. Motion for approval made by Weinberg, seconded by Campbell and carried 5-0: Campbell, Crump, Nalow, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Dionisopoulos and Sinclair absent.

### **A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR AN INSCRIPTION FOR SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA PATHWAY, CENTENNIAL MALL, IN THE CAPITOL ENVIRONS DISTRICT**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

**September 22, 2016**

Members present: Campbell, Crump, Nalow, Searcy and Weinberg; Dionisopoulos and Sinclair absent.

Ed Zimmer stated that he has been working on the Crump family inscription with Gene Crump. He will be back with the specific language as they are still working on the details.

Campbell would like to know more about the plaque. Crump stated this is for a granite plaque on Centennial Mall. It is limited to a title plus three lines of text. They need to work on the language.

**CONVERSATION WITH LIZ SHEA-McCOY REGARDING “NEBRASKA BY HEART” ART PROJECT:**

Searcy thanked Liz Shea-McCoy for her efforts with the upcoming Nebraska Sesquicentennial. Liz Shea-McCoy introduced Patrick Keogh. He is the manufacture of the six foot fiberglass hearts. She also introduced Mike Zeleny from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. She provided a picture of the proposed hearts. The base was created by Patrick Keogh. The base is in the shape of Nebraska. She feels this ties in the state of Nebraska, as well as the feeling of the heartland. Her proposal was to have 93 hearts sponsored for \$3,000.00 dollars each, in order for the artist to take their vision from idea to art. When this was initially brought forward, her goal was to bring national attention to Nebraska and the State Capitol Building. Her initial vision was seeing the 93 hearts from the State Capitol all the way to the University. She knows that Centennial Mall is precious. She thinks there was a little confusion about the bases. The bases of the light bulb sculptures were 1,200 pound cement bases. These will be smooth fiberglass. They won't damage the cement. Her vision is to see a parade of these on either side of Centennial Mall. Our sesquicentennial celebration is huge and means a lot to all of us. We put out a statewide call to Nebraska artists and had 224 proposals submitted. She is excited about this project. She feels it celebrates the creativity of our state.

Searcy wasn't aware the base was part of the proposal. Shea-McCoy replied that yes, it will be part of it. The artist will work with Patrick Keogh on the base.

Patrick Keogh stated that he has already talked with a couple dozen artists on details that need to be changed with the base. It is the same idea, just a different shape. We don't want to have any add-ons to the base. He developed this around nine years ago. Some sculptural lighthouses were developed in Maine. They didn't want a concrete base either. There is a shape that goes on the ground and it is filled with sandbags. The sculpture sits over the top and it is pinned to the tray. The artist receives one piece and decorates the heart and the base.

Crump questioned if the base is attached to the ground. Keogh replied no. It is held in place by the base and the weight.

Campbell inquired how long these pieces would be displayed. Shea-McCoy replied they would be on display from May 1, 2017 through September, 2017, with an auction in early October, 2017.

Campbell wondered about the turf underneath the sculpture. J.J. Yost stated that the turf underneath the sculpture would not survive. Nalow added that the load would not be good for the turf either. Keogh agreed that the grass would not survive. He added that they haven't had a problem with these on concrete, as far as the weight load stability. Shea-McCoy stated that they would be willing to replace the sod afterward. Sponsorship funds are part of this effort. We can request that sod replacement be included in sponsorship.

Zimmer sees a note that says "on or near Centennial Mall". If the objective is to place these on Centennial Mall, he would like clarification on where these will be located. Shea-McCoy would like to place them on Centennial Mall. She has also received indication from Barb Bartel at the Community Foundation and from the Historical Society as well, that they are willing to place a heart at their location. Lincoln Children's Museum was excited with the prospect of having one as well. She is not locked in to just on Centennial Mall. She was hoping that this commission would be willing to approve some on Centennial Mall, with the upcoming celebration next year.

Searcy believes he saw a press release that stated many of these would be on UNL East Campus. Shea-McCoy stated that a door opened to have some on the city campus. The University of Nebraska supported the project. Lynn Johnson with Parks and Recreation and The Public Art Committee offered four locations for the light bulb sculptures. They also offered four locations for these hearts, but in different quadrants of the city. She would like to have them close to the heart of the city. She understands the rule about not having them on Capitol grounds. She would like to have spots that circle the Capitol to make for a really exciting display. People love public art projects. She feels they are important because they are community builders, family builders and for state and national recognition.

Ripley had the good fortune to be a juror for this competition. The director of Sheldon Art Gallery was a juror. It was incredible to see the art, great fun and great PR for our celebration. It is a very strong project. We are down to 160 submissions now and will cull the list to 93. They will be on display in Lincoln from May, 2017 through September, 2017. They will be auctioned off at the end and go to where they are purchased. Shea-McCoy added that we would like to have one in front of every courthouse in Nebraska. That would be the dream. Ripley understands that this is a display of artwork before the auction. Shea-McCoy stated this will be a five month temporary display. The bases for the light bulb sculptures were around 1,500 pounds and we didn't have one problem with those. Keogh added that the bases for those were about two foot square.

Searcy would like Zimmer to refresh him on the guidelines regarding temporary art on Centennial Mall and the city's position. Zimmer stated this is city property, public managed and maintained by Parks and Recreation. He and Stacey Groshong-Hageman are currently working on refinement of the guidelines. The existing guidelines were all approved by this commission. The old guidelines spoke to a mall that hadn't been built yet. The art components talk about permanent art. He doesn't think there is a desire in the guidelines to have the mall as a location for temporary displays. Smaller works of art might occur inside in niche locations, not installed around the center. There is no intention addressed in the guidelines of Centennial Mall or other malls being temporary display spaces. There is designed into Centennial Mall, a sculptural niche on the P St. to Q St. block, where there is a discussion of a monumental bronze.

Ripley believes that Centennial Mall was to celebrate state and national recognition. Zimmer doesn't believe any licenses have been applied for yet for temporary display on city property or permanent art displays.

Ripley questioned the total weight of a sculpture. He estimates around 600 to 700 pounds of any given piece, with ballast. Keogh believes the number is probably closer to 500 pounds. Ripley stated that for general purposes based on the size, that equates to about 40 pounds per square foot. He doesn't believe that is an excessive load. If it were positioned on concrete, there is no issue that he can think of. The issue seems to be if they are located on turf.

Crump inquired if they had thought about other access points around the mall. Shea-McCoy wants to tie in the Capitol with the University. Most of these are going to be directed toward the Capitol, downtown and toward the University. She is hoping to have some in the Haymarket as well. She would like as many as possible on Centennial Mall.

Campbell is intrigued with the idea of the statewide view of this. One in front of each courthouse is a great idea. Shea-McCoy stated that the logistics are very involved. She would like them all together for a dramatic exhibition. The artist gets one third of the money. This is an auction for these charities.

Nalow appreciates the connection and she also understands the commission statement for no temporary art on the mall. She wonders if there is a way to work around this with some on the mall. There are also state and federal buildings. She wondered if there are ways of achieving the goal without having to compromise the commission intent. Shea-McCoy misunderstood. She thought there was nothing written regarding temporary pieces. Zimmer believes the guidelines and precedent address that the desire has been for Centennial Mall to be a piece in itself, and that it is the connection between the Capitol and the mall. What he can determine, it is not the intention of Centennial Mall to be the display space for temporary projects. The City is the owner and he believes the City has said they don't see that as well. This idea is not up for action by the commission. The owner and proposal do not have an agreement.

Searcy agreed that has been the precedent and the tone regarding temporary display pieces on Centennial Mall. At the same time, it does not diminish any personal enthusiasm he has for the project. He thinks the issue here is the placement of the project. He doesn't know what the answer is. He knows this is a big challenge to have the right formula. He knows the concept is to have them closer together. The archway in Kearney is the heartland of Nebraska. He would hold that out for an interesting possibility and believes it would be received well. It is also more centrally located. At the same time, he understands the desire to have the University connection. He wonders if there are alternatives. The issue with Centennial Mall is that it is a sensitive issue to get to this point for a grand opening. There is also the significance of Nebraska's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood. He understands the challenge of placement, but believes this is an exciting project.

Ripley questioned if the desire is to have all 93 of them displayed together for purposes of auction. Shea-McCoy replied yes. Searcy wondered if the auction will also be online. Shea-McCoy replied they haven't gotten that far. Mike Zeleny stated that there was not an online

auction for the last art project. There was an online opportunity for some pictures. He guesses that by next year, it will be more possible for people to engage online.

Searcy asked if the cutout on the base is where the artist is recognized. Shea-McCoy replied yes. It will contain the artist's name, the patron and the name of the piece on a plaque.

Shea-McCoy gets the feeling the answer would be no to this idea. Is this open for discussion? Zimmer stated that the City's offer is for display pieces in four quadrants of the city. Shea-McCoy was disappointed in the four quadrants that were offered. The Capitol and University are state establishments. She was hoping this was a state project. Zimmer is hearing about possible locations for art on the East Campus as well.

Ripley has had a conversation with Lynn Johnson regarding Woods Park. Someone previously expressed a vision that the orange banners in Central Park were very impressive. With the number of pieces that we are talking about, perhaps a similar serpentine display in Woods Park could be very impressive. That was a concept expressed and he thinks it adds weight that you want a lot of these pieces together. It would have some impact. Searcy asked if the City has offered the Woods Park location. Yost replied yes. Woods Park has a curved pathway that has some art there now. Many of these pieces could be located there.

Shea-McCoy would also like to see some along P St. or R St. We worked with the city and went through the licensing with the light bulbs. In that instance, they said we could have four locations. We selected the four locations. The door was open for some flexibility. We were hoping to have some choice on where we could place these pieces. Woods Park doesn't fit into our vision for this.

Zimmer noted that this item is listed for discussion. He has had preceding conversations with Shea-McCoy, but he hasn't received a specific site based request. An item should be listed on the agenda with some specificity before it should receive a vote. This is for discussion.

Shea-McCoy initially wanted all 93 on Centennial Mall. The reason she left the door open, she had hoped she could work with this Commission and the City to find a few locations that shows the support of the Capitol Environs Commission in this City. She would be happy to get one location.

Zimmer explained that it is the responsibility of this commission to review specific proposals and items. This project hasn't reached that point yet. The other part is the licensure of art displayed on public property. This hasn't reached that stage either. He would caution that most of Centennial Mall is public property. In the downtown district, there might be some spots near Pershing Auditorium. It might be possible to display some pieces in front of properties in the downtown district on their private property. This could be difficult. Buildings such as the Community Foundation, he believes the area in front is all city property until you

get to the front porch. In the downtown area, most buildings come right to the edge of the public right-of-way.

Shea-McCoy knows there are regulations, but this is only going to happen once in 150 years. She thanks everyone for their time.

Rhonda Seacrest would like to know the exact objections of the commission. Zimmer explained that there is a process in Section 27.56 of the Lincoln Municipal Code that establishes this commission. The Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission is the design review body for projects within the Capitol Environs District. There are guidelines, along with past decisions that express or create precedent within which they operate. Zimmer advises the commission as city staff. The precedent is, since the creation of this commission, it has not approved a public art display. Shea-McCoy had proposed a concept project some years ago and the commission was not supportive of that project. That was before the rebuild of Centennial Mall. There was a public art display around 1968-1969. Sheldon Art Gallery did some temporary displays before there was a review process. It hasn't been done since.

Seacrest inquired if Centennial Mall is city owned. Zimmer replied it is city owned, public right-of-way. Seacrest asked what the restrictions are. Zimmer replied it is based on a city restriction. This commission is a city/state commission. The Nebraska State Legislature directed the City of Lincoln to create this commission. The State appoints two of the members. This grows out of state law that says the state will be subject to this process, along with city, county, schools and the University. All those bodies that aren't normally subject to zoning are under this commission.

Seacrest stated that it seems that everyone is telling us what can't be done. Ripley stated that he suggested Woods Park as an idea. He had not heard any further discussion. Shea-McCoy noted that idea was mentioned to her. Zimmer believes Johnson received a broad endorsement of Woods Park as a display space for this.

Zimmer stated that with the ownership of the proposed space under the City of Lincoln, the review falls to this commission. He noted that he has not received any items for full review yet. He believes the commission is very interested in having some of the Sesquicentennial celebration within the spaces of the public mall. Doesn't think this commission has held back with cooperation.

Seacrest believes that it became very apparent in the mid 1980's that cultural activities in Nebraska ended at West "O" Street. She complained to the University of Nebraska. This is now the 125<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Nebraska Art Association traveling art. It is the Sheldon Art Museum statewide program now. It is an enveloping experience. The hearts have that same potential. She can get excited about the hearts, particularly having them in a public space. She was in another city recently that had hearts and they were a big draw. If this project doesn't get to the point of a formal application, perhaps it could be considered how it might be done.

Ripley appreciates the comments. It is not for a lack of excitement for the project, it is a matter of the right placement. We will continue to encourage these projects.

Searcy would encourage any formal application to involve Ed Zimmer. We historically look to assist with the discussion ahead of time. A lot of detail would be involved with actual placement. He encourages looking at alternative aspects so it doesn't hold back the project. He inquired about the development of the sponsorship. Shea-McCoy replied that it just started last week. We have four sponsors already. Usually placement of the piece is a large part of the process.

#### **STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Zimmer stated that Searcy asked him for assistance with a talk on the history of Centennial Mall. He found a 1909 newspaper article which talked about which side of the Capitol to create and install the Lincoln statue. He presented pictures and information of the proposal for the public building plan in the downtown area. A lot of what actually develops is laid out in Lincoln's very first comprehensive plan.
- Further discussion on "Nebraska by Heart" art project

Crump is hesitant to approve the placement of temporary art on the mall. Ripley noted that two years could be considered temporary. The word temporary is open to interpretation. Crump understands that anything that is not fixed, is temporary. He doesn't want to set a precedent. Campbell echoed those sentiments.

Weinberg wondered about art around the Capitol building. Ripley stated that he is dealing with precedent. He can recall three times that someone has proposed artwork. In every instance, they have been told no.

Campbell thinks Woods Park is a fabulous alternative display space.

Searcy stated that we have had the opportunity to have direct conversations with the parties involved. He would agree that precedence is the major conversation. We are looking at a year-long celebration. Centennial Mall will be the focus. These are beautiful, but it would be a dominant placement on the mall.

Ripley believes this could impede activity on the mall. Searcy agreed. He thinks the hearts would impede the view and make activity difficult.

Ripley appreciates the logistical problem, but a display such as this is not part of Centennial Mall.

Zimmer thinks Woods Park is a very big offer. Ripley noted there is available parking and access at Woods Park. If this is set up once on Centennial Mall, you set a precedent. Groshong-Hageman agreed that this would set a precedent. Crump thinks it is a great project, but not on Centennial Mall. Ripley understands they have approached a number of property owners on the mall. He understood they already had some locations available for display. Zimmer added that this Commission also has a regulatory process for private spaces as well.

Ripley would suggest that any proposal for “temporary” include a definitive time period.

Searcy believes that this commission didn’t close the door on this project. It is important to note that Woods Park was offered as a location. He appreciates the project and the tenacity of those involved, but he thinks there are lot of logistics to work out yet.

Zimmer assured everyone that he will require a specific proposal before he will place it on the agenda for action, just as he would from any applicant.

Crump stated that the hard part is that we don’t know what the hearts will look like. Weinberg agreed. Every word is approved in the plaques on Centennial Mall. Zimmer suggested the Commission can expect to be told the design, exact placement, content and the look of each piece installed on Centennial Mall. Serial art projects of vary greatly from piece to piece.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.