

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 11:30 a.m., Bill Luxford Studio, Room 113, County-City Building, 555 South 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Cathy Beecham, Michael Cornelius, Maja Harris, Chris Hove, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman and Ken Weber; (Tracy Corr absent).
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	David Cary, Paul Barnes, Brandon Garrett, Kellee Van Bruggen, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost and Sara Hartzell of Parks & Recreation; and Brendan Lilley of County Engineer.
STATED PURPOSE:	Briefing on “ LRTP and LPlan 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update ” by Planning staff

Chair Chris Hove called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

David Cary welcomed everyone and explained that the briefing today is regarding Environmental Resources and Parks & Open Space. We will review the upcoming schedule and submit some follow-up information from the last meeting.

Brandon Garrett stated that by completing these two chapters, we will have gone through a review of every chapter in the Comprehensive Plan, with the exception of transportation, which is LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan) and Plan Realization, which we feel would be better to review when we have the first draft.

Chapter 3: Environmental Resources

Garrett stated that staff communicated with the METF (Mayor’s Environmental Task Force) and the Lancaster County Ecological Committee to gain their input. It was in the news recently that a species of bat was identified in the Blue Blood Brewery. We will need to address the northern long eared bat under threatened and endangered species and update the Tiger Beetle status. Lynn Johnson from Parks & Recreation had previously spoke about the Emerald Ash Borer. One comment we received from the County Ecological Committee is that perhaps we need a statement regarding planting of new areas and promote development of new wooded areas.

Harris wanted to know more about the County Ecological Committee. Sara Hartzell stated that she is the staff administrator. They are appointed by the Lancaster County Board. The group originated out of the Wilderness Park effort. The group advises on natural resources and assists with the county review of subdivisions. It is comprised of professionals from ecological backgrounds, University representatives, Parks & Recreation personnel, Audobon Society members and others. Harris asked if the County Board is represented on the committee. Hartzell replied not any longer. They were initially on the committee until about one year ago.

Garrett continued that local food was a major item we incorporated last time around. He has noticed the last few years that more stores and restaurants are promoting local food. There seems to be a number of community supported agriculture ideas. This is similar to the YMCA on the private side. Community crops is an area that has grown. They encourage farms to grow local edible crops. They host a lot of community classes and have urban gardens. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Food Policy Council actively promotes local food.

With regard to native prairie, the County Ecological Committee had a lot of concerns about the burn schedule. Burning at the same time reduces the chance for certain species of grass to reproduce. There is an alternate burning schedule for diversity. The Prairie Corridor was a concept shown in the environmental resources chapter. Parks & Recreation has worked actively to turn this into reality.

Lust questioned if the native prairie burning is a set schedule or something set by private landowners. Garrett believes it probably means both, grassland or pasture land. Alternating in some way will help additional species to grow.

Harris questioned what alternating schedule means. Hartzell replied it could be alternating years, seasonally, alternating patches of what grows. Typically you burn in the spring. There has been a lot of work on doing fall and winter burns to try and encourage diversity and growing through different management strategies.

Garrett continued that for plants, cedar trees are specifically mentioned and seem to be an invasive species. Once you have them grow and fill in, there is a limited amount of species that can grow because it chokes them out. Alternating burning could assist with this.

Diversity of species extends to animals and insects. The bee situation across the country is something that a lot of people are aware of. Being careful about spraying certain pesticides could help the bee population.

Chapter 9: Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Hartzell stated that Parks & Recreation went through an intensive planning process and reorganized the way the department is managed and organized. We went through the

development of a ten year facility master plan. It helps to get CIP (Capital Improvement Program) projects prioritized. It is being updated every two years. We have also been working on the City Asset Management. We identify park units, public trees, keep a detailed inventory of facilities in parks and pavement inventory. This has been a good process for us.

Regional Parks and Tournament Sports Facilities. Mahoney, Holmes Pioneers Park and Union Plaza are regional parks. They encompass some unique or special feature. They have a broader draw. We don't have a set level of service, no minimal acreage. Stevens Creek was acquired on approximately the corner of 98th St. and Adams. This is approximately 80 acres. We continued to work with the public/private partnership that is working on the sports facility in Oak Lake Park.

Community Parks. There are 18 community parks encompassing 746 acres. They often include some kind of special activity area. A community park might also serve as a neighborhood park. The current level of service is 2.9 acres of community park per 1,000 residents. The LPlan 2040 goal was 1.3 acres per 1,000 residents. The strategy is to select sites for community parks that allow for multiple functions such as storm water management. We are in the early stages of planning Jensen Park which is located at 84th St. and Yankee Hill Rd. Another one is Bison Park at Coddington Blvd. and W. Van Dorn. It will be developed with play fields. The third is in Stevens Creek Basin around 120th St. and A Street. It is possible that could be associated with a school.

Neighborhood Parks usually have a playground. They don't usually have a parking space since most users walk to neighborhood parks. The current level of service is 1.4 acres per 1,000 residents. LPlan 2040 plan set a goal of 1.3 acres per 1,000 residents. In the last five years we have completed two neighborhood parks, Grand Terrace and Phares. We have also obtained land for five more parks. When a school is going to be located in a neighborhood, we work with LPS (Lincoln Public Schools) to identify an area for a neighborhood park. In LPlan 2040, there was a strategy for a formal agreement with LPS. This is the Sparks effort.

Lust questioned if the Library has been involved in the Sparks effort. Hartzell replied that it consists of people from LPS, Parks & Recreation, Lincoln City Libraries and the YMCA. This SPARKLY group meets monthly to coordinate efforts.

Hartzell continued with Community Recreation Centers and Activity Centers. These are centers that often times have a community service element. The City is involved in seven of these. Four are associated with elementary schools, others are freestanding. There are additional facilities that are managed by others. Non-profits have three facilities. There are community learning centers that are part of the LPS system. A lot are funded through different federal programs. Then we have the YMCA. Four are existing, one is being built. There are many private fitness centers. The concept of centers associated with schools is to set them up when

the building is being planned so classrooms can be closed off from the gym. There is a strategy and plan that a community center is considered with the schools.

Aquatic Facilities. There are a couple of pools that had goals for upgrades. Some have been done, some still need improvements. There are still some additional facilities we hope to build if funding allows. The Cooper YMCA has had an outdoor pool for a while now. Fallbrook YMCA will have a pool opening this year. There will be an outdoor pool at the Cople Family YMCA.

Harris inquired if the downtown YMCA was not considered since the pool is inside. Hartzell replied she was correct. This information is regarding outdoor pools.

Hartzell continued with Open Space and Greenway Linkages. This chapter talks about open space. Progress continues on the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch. There is a formal study done by the Flatwater Group. Parks has been working with landowners in this area for conservation easements. There is a lot of landowner interest. Denton has been active in this as well.

Urban Forest. Planning Commission members had a briefing on the Emerald Ash Borer. We will include a statement to keep aware of these diseases and invasive species. We want to work with the public and make sure they have the education they need. We will need to develop readiness plans. We want to add a strategy that will continue to look for funding for implementation of the Emerald Ash Borer Recovery Plan. We will consider development regulations that will help preserve existing significant trees.

Lust inquired what Parks solution is for this. Hartzell replied that they are looking for grants. J.J. Yost added that Parks is looking at the CIP (Capital Improvement Program) as well and will keep our eyes open for federal, state and local opportunities.

Hartzell continued with Other Recreational Facilities. This section talked about the future Breslow Ice Center. There are golf courses addressed. The YMCA is referenced. Lincoln Children's Zoo is mentioned, along with community gardens. We have gone through a process to develop standards and procedures for private gardens in parks.

Beecham questioned what happens when there is a change in private sector leadership and something is not being taken care of. Hartzell believes all agreements have a strategy for this that is built into the contract.

Hove inquired about community crops. Hartzell replied that community crops have a lot of spaces and coordinate with churches. The Planning Dept. went through a process to allow community gardens in a vacant lot. Garrett added that these are now called Urban Gardens in the zoning ordinance.

Hartzell continued that the Nebraska Game and Parks shooting sports facility is referenced as well. This is a facility around 44th St. and Superior for archery and shooting. Pinnacle Bank Arena is not named in the Comprehensive Plan, but has been finished. The Master Plan for Dog Use Facilities was mentioned. It is now complete. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board reviewed that plan. There is the relocation of the Oak Creek Dog Run to Roper Park East. A new dog run is planned for Mahoney Park and Peterson Park. We want to reorient the entrance to Rickman's Run at 70th St. and Holmes Lake. It is a heavily used facility. More parking is needed.

Yost stated that there is high demand for a downtown dog park. It is just a thought for now, but there is a lot of interest. This idea is mentioned in the South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan.

Hartzell continued with Emerging Recreation Activities. Parks had a workshop with a young professionals group this morning. Pickle Ball is a combination of tennis, ping pong and badminton. It is played on a tennis type court with a solid paddle. We are working with a contractor to retrofit an area at Peterson Park. Foot Golf is another emerging activity. This is played with a soccer type ball. Yost stated that Parks is going to introduce foot golf at Ager Play Center this year. Flying Disk Golf is another new activity.

Hartzell stated that a community group has been working on a bike park. This is in the early planning stages for N. 48th St., around the landfill area. They are just getting started on the fundraising.

Beecham wondered if these new activities bring a different liability for the park. Hartzell does not know. Preliminary plans show a possible layout. These bike parks have small push bike trails for tots, all the way up to daredevil skill levels. That discussion is underway.

Scheer inquired how many acres this will be. Hartzell believes around 20 acres, approximately.

Lust questioned if Parks and Recreation receives any revenue from the concert series at Pinewood Bowl. Yost replied that a small percentage of the revenue comes back to cover expenses and make capital improvements to Pinewood Bowl.

Harris asked if there are any plans for riding stables. Hartzell replied we have horse trails. The stables have all been handled at the private level. This morning there was a discussion about an ability to rent kayaks and canoes. We have events with alcohol in the parks. There is a desire for fire pits. Yost added that there is a desire for more water parks or splash pads like Trago Park. Surrounding communities have built newer water parks with more amenities.

Beecham is aware that water parks cost more to operate than golf, for example. Yost stated that the golf operation is a separate enterprise fund. They are not tax supported. They have

struggled to make ends meet. They are looking at management. A citizens committee has been meeting to look at management strategies to make improvements to the golf program. Beecham has heard that golf at the Mahoney facility on N. 84th St. is not heavily used. Yost stated that one strategy looked at was repurpose. Mahoney has land and water restrictions on it. The property has to stay in public recreation purposes. It is better off being a golf course that generates revenue instead of another use. Many pieces of park land are deed restricted.

Hove noted that Woods Park has tennis. Hartzell believes a couple of different entities have a lease on park property. Parks is working through capital improvements at Woods Park. Yost added that Friends of Woods Tennis has a lease arrangement to operate the facilities. We have a similar arrangement with the Lincoln Children's Museum and the Children's Zoo. We are about to embark on construction of a new indoor tennis facility to replace the tennis bubbles. There will be a fundraising campaign. It is a public/private partnership.

Quiz via KAHOOT

Question: When talking about local food, what is a CSA?

Answer: Community Supported Agriculture

Question: What native plant species threatens biodiversity in Lancaster County?

Answer: Cedar trees

Question: What is a "spark"?

Answer: A school and park combination

Question: Which of the following includes three "emerging recreation activities"?

Answer: Pickle ball, foot golf and bike parks

Question: What kind of bat is living in Lancaster County is listed as endangered?

Answer: Northern Long-Eared Bat

Garrett provided a handout related to the March 2, 2016 Planning Commission briefing where the Neighborhoods and Housing chapter was discussed. Staff tried to address some of the questions put forth from commissioners. One was regarding the optimal or desired vacancy rate. Looking online and talking to others provided no consistent answer. We looked for additional data. Lincoln is lower in homeownership and rental rates when compared to State and National data.

Lust stated that NPR (Nebraska Public Radio) has been running a series on the high prices of rent creating a crisis. She inquired if there are any statistics on eviction rates in Lincoln. Garrett doesn't believe so.

Garrett stated that population and household growth is relative to vacancy rates and housing units. Non-households are growing at a faster rate than family households. Households are moving up faster than household units. Rents have been pretty steady when adjusting for inflation. The aggregate contract rent citywide has increased quite a bit. This says that we are just keeping up.

There was a general discussion on rental properties and rents.

Cary noted this is good information to keep in mind when applications come in. It appears we are just keeping up with the demand for rental units.

Garrett noted that home price data is from the Lincoln Realtor's Association. They use the multiple listing service. "For Sale By Owner" data is not included. Lincoln existing home prices have gone up a little. The number of new homes being built has gone up. In looking at affordability relative to income, incomes have gone up a little in 2015. In looking at affordability relative to gross rent, the percentage of income needed has risen.

Long Range Transportation Plan

Cary stated that the briefing on April 13, 2016 will be from Lonnie Burkland of Public Works speaking to Green Light Lincoln. Very exciting things are happening for Lincoln with technology. April 27, 2016 will have a lot of information on private proposals for the Comprehensive Plan. Applicants will be invited to give overviews on their proposals. He reminded everyone that the May 11, 2016 briefing will be on the Community Indicators Report (CIP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Public hearing for the CIP and TIP will be at the May 25, 2016 Planning Commission meeting, as well as their regular public hearing items.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.