

Minutes
Streamlining Process Joint Committee Recommendations
February 3, 2004

Attendees

Glenna Graupmann	Lana Zumbrunn
Ann Bleed	Larry Chilese
Tim Gergen	Lance Loschen
Mary Lowe	Roger Figard
Thomas Shafer	Gwen Thorpe
Michaela Hansen	Michael Merwick
Chuck Zimmerman	Mark Hunzeker
Bob Hampton	Lisa Darlington
Dave Johnson	Jim Christo
Mark Bowen	Ken Svoboda
Bob LeZotte	JoAnna Kissel
Bill Austin	Joe Hampton
Mary Bills-Strand	Greg Schwinn
Randy Hoskins	Ray Hill
Kent Seacrest	Lynn Johnson
Dennis Bartels	RandyHoskins
Tom Cajka	Darl Naumann
Mayor Coleen Seng	

Greetings from Mayor Coleen Seng. She gave a recap of the responsibility that has been put on these committees to streamline the permit process and the issue of speed. In 1995, then Mayor Johanns began an initiative on regulatory streamlining. The process at that time was reported to be inconsistent, confusing, inflexible to people inside and outside of the system. This is only the 2nd most difficult task for businesses in Lincoln. The 1st would be the city's unresponsiveness to their concerns and giving assistance to them. Lincoln is unique with very strong neighborhoods, and because of that we need a community solution. The recommendations must be accepted by the community and elected officials. Outside businesses need to be able to see Lincoln as a partner in fulfilling their business needs.

Darl introduced David Jane' to the group and explained that there were various websites across the county that were looked at for their recognition of being outstanding websites and information available and accessibility. Darl asked that people look at the website, go through it and make recommendations.

There was then a demonstration by David Jane' who is the website developer for Lincoln/Lancaster County. David used Henrico County, VA's website as an example and explained that the goal was to make our website friendly and easily navigated. A group of people went through Henrico County's website and came up with categories along with links, trying to make it easy to navigate. David reminded everyone to look through the website and make suggestions.

Darl informed that this information was being sent to a site selection consultant to be critiqued. This site will have links to the GIS system along with the MLS system along with utility information and infrastructure. This also links into the state for information on their permits and licensing needed.

The next segment was looking at the recommendations made by each committee. The first of which was presented by Greg Schwinn with the Zoning and Process Committee. Greg stated that changes use permit and instead establish/strengthen key standards for new development in all zoning districts. Allow the Planning Commission to approve all special permits, retaining the right for persons to appeal their decisions to the City Council. Simplify the Planned Unit Development process to expedite processing, encourage more mixed use development and allow for appropriate in-fill and renovation in established neighborhoods. Consolidate all of the separately listed land use typed in the zoning ordinance into general categories. Eliminate the 14 day waiting period for the filing of final plats. Demystify the process.

Greg stated that committee work needs to be continued later too. He then opened it up for questions. Marvin brought up the idea of reducing the PUD minimum from 3 acres to 1 acre along with changes that can be made without state legislation. Jon Carlson commented that reducing the PUD down to 1 acre is not really a streamlining issue. Darl wanted to take a vote on including that issue as one that was looked at and tabled to be looked at later. Bill Austin commented that he would like to see the CUP reverted to something that the Planning Commission could approve due to the fact that it is basically a change in zone. He sees this as a streamlining issue because of taking 2 processes and converting into 1 process to simplify with both having to go before the City Council. Darl asked for a vote of whether this issue should be left at the current 3 acres or change to 1 acre. It was voted to not change at this time. All other recommendations from the Zoning and Process committee were moved to forward to the Mayor at this time.

The recommendations from the Subdivision and Engineering Committee were gone over by Roger Figard. Roger explained that the main issue dealt with was the idea of ownership being privatized. The following are their recommendations that will be presented to the Mayor: Make the Consulting Engineer responsible for generating the e.o. documents. Create a submittal meeting for e.o. construction plans and set a date for the on-site plan in hand review meeting. Allow the Consulting Engineer to provide construction services for e.o. projects. Allow e.o. documents to be approved by the Director of Public Works rather than the Mayor. Increase the maximum subsidy amount from \$10,000. Resurrect the Street Tree and Sidewalk Ordinance amendments that are currently on the pending list of the Planning Commission. Create an interlocal agreement between the State of Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) and the City of Lincoln to allow the City to approve sanitary sewer construction plans.

Allan Abbott spoke about how privatizing could work for everyone and how the City's fees would probably go down due to this, but that consultants' fees would probably go up. Bob Hampton brought up the issue of the subsidy amount of \$10,000 and how it should be raised to \$50,000 to speed up the process; and trying to get escrows released in a more timely manner because developers are getting killed by sidewalk escrows.

Lynn Johnson spoke on changes that were being proposed for street trees and the surety releases.

The first being with the problem of trees that die before the surety can be released. Lynn suggested that the developer can submit a check for the value of the trees to the city with their surety being released then. The second proposal was that the street tree fee be paid at the time of the building permit, giving the city the responsibility for planting the trees which would be then taken care of by the Parks and Recreation Department. The certificate of occupancy would be issued from Building & Safety and notification of that would be sent. Lynn's 3 proposals were the following: establish a percentage of trees that would be outstanding; allow a street tree fee as an option on residential streets; fee established for planting trees along arterial streets. Larry Chilese was concerned about the fact that the building permit would be held up when it is a requirement to have the street tree fee paid when the permit is issued. He did not see that as the appropriate time to collect the fee. Bob Hampton stated that it is the developer that pays the street tree fee and it makes no difference to him if it goes to the landscaper or the city and that the fee should be tied to the certificate of occupancy. Mark Hunzeker brought up the point of if the occupancy permit is not issued until trees and sidewalks are in. Lynn explained that with a house completion in July or August, that not being a good time to plant trees, then it becomes the city's responsibility to replace those trees. Having the fee paid up front would allow the trees to be planted by a nursery or the city, so that they are planted at the right time.

Roger followed up with the primary recommendation to the big committee was having the private sector take on more ownership and responsibility. Developers will have to hire consultants and contractors from the list. Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) is currently to review and approve sanitary sewer plants and another recommendation being made to the committee would be to have the City work with NDEQ to invest the responsibility back to the City.

Darl then asked for a vote on all the recommendations, except for the Director of Public Works signing the e.o. contracts and was questioning whether the tree and sidewalk ordinance should go as stated. Bob Hampton stated that this subject has been a consideration for a long time and that it needs to be done before the occupancy permit. Allan Abbott wanted to make the point that whatever is decided about trees that we need to act on it and not table it again like before. He also stated that comments after the preliminary plat review will have copies sent to the Planning Commission, the developer, his attorney and his engineer so that everyone knows at the same time what the concerns of the City are. The question was asked of Allan when the term consultant is used what certification is needed? Allan's response was it has to comply with the State of Nebraska and who is sealing plans, and most of the time it would be the engineer. Allan also stated that they had been working with the ACEC to help clarify if it would be consultants doing the inspections or if it would be the subs somewhere else.

Darl asked if the committee was ready to make a recommendation to the Mayor; with the idea that these recommendations would be taken to the professional groups, the homeowners association for review before the next Streamlining Recommendations committee that is currently scheduled for March 2, 2004. The vote today would be to solidify the recommendations to be taken for review. There was a motion that the street tree money issue would be finalized between now and the next meeting along with eliminating the director's review. There was some discussion about when the money for street trees needs to be paid and therefore when it could be released.

Vote was taken by Darl and passed.

Recommendations from the Building & Safety Committee were next, being presented by Bob LeZotte. Bob informed that one of the main concerns of this committee was building codes and safety issues. The recommendations being made are: Reduce Special Permits/Allow for More Conditional Permits; Enhance Special Permits on-line; Improve City's Websites and create Economic Development website; Create a Building & Safety quarterly newsletter in print and online; provide a Building & Safety Informational Kiosk which may assist homeowner projects with FAQ's, maps, application info, legal description, etc; Provide seminars to design professionals; Encourage design professionals to be ICC Review Certified; Develop Submittal or Intake Standards to be utilized for commercial projects; Require code analysis information for commercial projects on the drawings; Encourage preliminary code meetings; Allow a Master Plan concept for single family residential projects; Explore the possibility of utilizing on-line plan submission; Formalize the process by which "Conditional" approvals are granted; Examine the Sign Code Permit Process to free up plan reviewers time; Improve the response of Reviewers from outside Building & Safety by having more frequent reviews; Examine the need for landscape screening reviews as part of the Building Permit; Greater involvement from design professionals in public policy decisions which affect the permitting process; and Continuation of Streamlining Subcommittee for follow up to recommendations. Bob made the comment in closing that he thought that Mike Merwick and Chuck Zimmerman from Building & Safety have made tremendous leaps and bounds considering the amount of money that they have to work with.

Darl asked then that there would be a vote taken to move these recommendations to the Mayor. There was a vote and a second to forward; no discussion. All of these recommendations will probably be put on the website.

Allan Abbott made the comment that all of this cannot work unless we solve the financial package that is facing us to get financing for streets, water and sewer in working together on this. The main issue is to convince the public that we are all in this together.

Joe Hampton commented on what the comprehensive plan stresses, which is that we rehab built up areas, that we encourage mixed hues and because of the resistance we change the comprehensive plan. Marvin Krout commented that we do have a generation of mistrust that has been built up and we need to find a way to make it work, through communication. Design standards are in place and working for the neighborhoods. Mary Bills-Strand wanted to make the point that we still need to revamp the older neighborhoods for affordable housing to be available. Jon Carlson made the point that making an inappropriate development may drive down values and push people out, so we need to make being able to do that easy for developers.

Darl closed with comments on how the committees have worked together and how hard they have worked at bringing issues to the table and the process that all have put to help come with streamlining. All will be put on the website to be viewed by all. A professional group will evaluate. Ken Svoboda asked if Economic Development could have their own website for people outside of Lincoln looking in.