

## MEETING RECORD

**NAME OF GROUP:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, December 18, 2014, 1:30 p.m., Conference Room 214, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE** Greg Munn, Tim Francis, Jim Hewitt, Jim Johnson, Berwyn Jones; (Liz Kuhlman and Jim McKee absent). Ed Zimmer and Amy Huffman of the Planning Department; Kevin Abourezk from the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Regular Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

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

Munn requested a motion approving the minutes for the regular meeting held December 18, 2014. Motion for approval made by Johnson, seconded by Jones and carried 5-0: Francis, Hewitt, Johnson, Jones, and Munn voting 'yes'; Kuhlman, McKee absent.

The opportunity was given for persons with limited time or with an item not appearing on the agenda to address the Commission.

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### • Design for replacement of Penny Bridges, Sheridan Boulevard north of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street.

Members present: Francis, Hewitt, Johnson, Jones, Munn; Kuhlman, McKee absent.

Devin Biesecker, Public Works and Utilities Department, gave a brief history of the project. The City was originally awarded Federal Transportation Enhancement money to replace these bridges. Later it was learned that the bridges could not be replicated, but would have to be rehabilitated if those funds were used. That option was investigated and it was found that it would be very difficult to keep the look of the bridges the same if that route were taken. Therefore, it was decided that local funds should be used. Through a bid process, Alfred Benesch & Company was selected to design the bridges.

Zimmer stated this project comes before this Commission for recommendation because it is in the Boulevards National Register District. This is not a review for a Certificate of Appropriateness, but is an advisory role to City and Public Works on this project due to its impact within a designated historic area. Normally it would be reviewed by the Urban Design Committee.

Anthony Dirks, Project Manager at Alfred Benesch & Company, presented an overview of the project and the deterioration on the current bridges.

Jones asked if the deterioration is mainly in the concrete.

Dirks replied that is correct. There are chainlink cages below to provide protection from falling concrete at this time. There is also exposed rusted steel in areas.

Hewitt stated for the record that he has lived on Sheridan Boulevard for forty-seven years, and the street was substantially upgraded and re-paved a few years ago. This should have been done at that time. The City has been derelict in this regard by causing this extreme inconvenience to those who use this street.

Dirks agreed that this will undoubtedly be an inconvenience for those living along Sheridan Boulevard. The team working on this consists of Alfred Benesch, Clark Enerson who is helping us to design the architecture, and Melissa Dirr from Historic Resource Group, Inc. There was also an advisory group representing stakeholders.

It was clear from the start that there should be significant public involvement. The first public meeting was in February, 2014. No concepts were presented at that meeting. Rather, it was a chance to introduce the need to replace these structures, and to gauge the level of concern from those that will be impacted. Alternatives were presented at the second meeting in May, 2014. The last public meeting was the December 4, 2014 and the final design, detour plan, and schedule were presented.

The project is now in the final design stages and a package is being prepared so that contractors can bid. The goal is to begin construction and tree removal in March, before the nesting period begins in April.

Munn asked if there were trees along the banks near the bridge.

Dirks replied that there are just a few trees under the bridge and a big goal is to minimize impact on them.

He went to say that the advisory board members were very involved, gave a lot of time, and deserve a lot of credit for their work.

The bridge there today has three spans and is 130 feet long. Retaining the dual-bridge boulevard look is very important, and after consideration of several options, it was found that two single span bridges would be the most cost effective and create the best feel for those who use the trail under the bridge.

Munn commented on the improvement with the new, open design, stating that it will be much safer.

Dirks agreed, stating that safety and lighting were also very important to the advisory group. There will be retaining walls added because the incline under the bridges is so steep that it does not retain vegetation. Key characteristics will be retaining the boulevard feel through the design, the materials and finishes, the railings with the arched windows, and better lighting and pedestrian facilities. The lighting will be the same look as exists at 27<sup>th</sup> and Van Dorn Streets.

Johnson asked if that included the lighting above and below the bridge?

Dirks said yes, and that for safety, the light below the bridge will be kept low to prevent problems with adjusting from bright to dark.

Melissa Dirr, Historic Resources Group, Inc., stated that since this is not a Federal project, there is no required regulatory review of the design. Even so, in recognizing the historical significance of the area, it has been important to the entire project team to identify the character-defining features of the roadway and bridges. There was always a bridge and two separate roadways at this location. A trolley car line ran between the two and operated until 1945. Even after it was removed, the important design and bridge experience elements remained, so there is great sensitivity to that. There has also been some record keeping of the current bridges so there will be documentation of what existed, even after the new bridge is constructed.

Dirks stated that the roadway will be closed in March and construction will last approximately nine months. That is a conservative estimate, but more details will be known after bids are submitted. There needs to be a balance between the cost of the project and getting it done quickly.

Jones stated he is sensitive to Mr. Hewitt's concerns because this is a major roadway and there are not many alternative routes, so the detour will be significant. He also wondered about provisions made for trail users.

Dirks agreed that there will undoubtedly be impacts to many people. The detour routes will include 33<sup>rd</sup>, South, and Calvert Streets and there will also be a signed detours along the same paths for trail users.

Munn asked if, since there are two bridges, doing one side at a time was an option, to ease the burden on traffic.

Dirks said that was considered. The problem is that the existing roadway width is only twenty feet. It is best to have two eleven foot lanes. Closing both sides simultaneously also leaves room for the contractors to work. They may need the room for the construction because it is a tight area.

Dirr added that comments from the public indicated there was more support for total closure and a more condensed construction schedule.

Jones stated that ten months does not seem condensed.

Dirks agreed that it is a big project, but it is still faster doing one side at a time.

Munn stated that in terms of the architecture of the bridge, the most important thing is the experience. The rails are similar to what was there, and the design looks really nice.

Jones agreed. He expressed concern over the concrete post adjacent to the pavement.

Dirks clarified that the rendering is not exact. It will meet design standards and will be two feet behind the curb. The curb line is in line with the tangent section of the rail.

Zimmer said the bridge railing design comes from tested and engineered railings that came out of the Texas Department of Roads. These tested designs provide a palette of traditional looking concrete railings that meet standards and allow choice of an authentically historic looking railing that doesn't have to be separately engineered and tested.

Francis agreed that it looks very good. Zimmer said there will also be some interpretive panel on the bridge based on the bridge history.

Dirks stated that decisions are still being made as to what the inset will look like.

Johnson was concerned about people parking and walking to view it.

Zimmer stated there is enough pedestrian traffic to read it.

Hewitt stated that the only thing good about the existing bridge is the higher curb on the pedestrian side. It would be advisable to boost that up for safety because the traffic is moving rapidly here.

Dirks stated that safety was considered. The bridge will be similar to what exists at 33<sup>rd</sup> and J Streets. There is no raised barrier there either. Those create some challenges with maintenance. The sidewalk will be wider than what is there today.

Zimmer noted a cast iron plaque from the 1934, stating it is hoped that if it is legal, it could be reincorporated into the new plaque.

Munn asked for further comments. This is not a motion for approval, but just a recommendation.

Francis moved to make a statement that the design looks appropriate and for approval of what has been done so far. Johnson seconded. The motion was approved 5-0.

• **Miscellaneous**

Zimmer stated that Anne Burkholder and Harry Thompkin were in attendance to report on the progress and design of the Burkholder Alley project. At the head of the alley on the P Street side stands Burkholder Project and the Creamery Building. On the Creamery Building there is a vertical space that has been a sign opportunity for a long time. The proposal is to create an illuminated stained glass piece of artwork in that space.

Anne Burkholder stated that she has been located in the Haymarket for 40 years. 28 years ago, she purchased the building, which was the first to be purchased and renovated. At that time, the idea of a pedestrian walkway through the alley was mentioned. Now, 27 years later, it has come forward again. The project has been in the works for the last year and half. There are five or six pieces of artwork on the wall now, with more being added gradually. On the Creamery wall, which has not yet been touched, the theme will be Van Gogh's "Starry Night." This will be a marvelous place for pedestrians to walk.

Harry Thompkin, Palace Glass Company, stated that this is a highly visible area. It is important that the piece be placed high enough off the alley to make it even more visible and to deter vandalism. It will be 130 inches and fill in 60 percent of the upper space. The piece needs to last a long time and fit into the historical setting, so part of the process is creating something that looks like it has been there for a long time. A cage will be created to allow for the attachment of the LED lights. It will be created in four section to accommodate the space of the kiln where the glass is made. The cage has four doors to support the panels. Iron will be used to fit the character of the area. The screws holes go into the mortar, so this is reversible. This has been a process in balancing the financial accessibility of the project with the design.

The next question was deciding how literal the interpretation of “Starry Night” should be. One of the defining characteristics is the brush strokes. The glass panels will replicate the textures and colors of starry night in glass. The color blue tends to recede and so is difficult to work with. The idea is to create a vertical, rural landscape with round hay bales below to mirror the shape of the stars above, then a green tree line which will pass into a lighter blue and up into the dark blue. The panels will have white behind them so that the colors will still be vibrant during the day when the piece is not illuminated.

Munn asked if the light will glare off the piece.

Thompkin said that is possible, but it would probably be a very thin line, and for a short time during the day. It helps that the display is up high.

Munn added that it could be a good thing since it will be changing throughout the day as the light changes.

Zimmer stated that this piece is like the announcement of the alley. From the south end, it is the most convenient way to walk from Lumberworks Garage to the Haymarket, and there will be other inviting features, so this will be a signpost of the decorated alley in the heart of the district. It is also why this item is being presented here. The rest of the alley has been treated as back side of the building. This will be considered no material effect in historic terms; it’s not a primary facade or street face; this is the one piece that is both, and it is illuminated. It at least needed to be reviewed before it went up so there were no surprises.

Francis and Munn both expressed their appreciation for the design.

Johnson agreed that it is a good design that fits in well with the Creamery Building. There are interesting things on the front of the building and this will add.

Burkholder said this is not your ordinary stained glass; it is quite substantial. It will also be laminated on the back, to further help protect from breakage.

Thompkin add the disadvantage of the laminate is its relatively substantial cost, and that it must be purchased all at one time due to its shelf life.

Francis said that it is nice to see modern things in a historic context. Munn stated this piece has vibrancy beyond just the colors.

Burkholder said this will be a fantastic addition to Lincoln, and it is exciting to bring attention back to the old, historic area, rather than newer development in the area.

Thompkin stated that the glass will be made in his kiln is at his home, but the piece will be assembled in his studio. He is very aware of working with both the historical and with modern and has done work at First Plymouth and St. Mark's. Commissioners are welcome to stop in any time to see the progress.

Zimmer asked if it would be fair to summarize the reactions of the Commission as positive to the concept and to state that you want the artist to make selections about artistic matters.

Commissioners agreed.

Zimmer went on to say that it is complicated because normally, Harry typically produces work that a client chooses to buy off the wall, or he meets with a private client. In this case, the client is diffuse; the Commission is a portion of the client, but not like a single, private client, so your role is broad oversight.

Jones asked how this project is being funded.

Zimmer stated much of the funding for the project as a whole is through TIF. Those funds cover things like the paving and lighting, but not the art. Hallie Salem of the Urban Development Department, is a key City contact for those questions.

#### • **Staff Report**

Zimmer stated other miscellaneous items for today are in the report. Planning Commission approved the height waiver Historic Preservation Commissioners saw last month and the item does not go on to City Council unless appealed.

He spoke with Kevin Rhinehart and Building and Safety regarding the 1717 D Street property. Sprinklers are required unless there are two, separate, independent entrances. Mr. Rhinehart was investigating whether he could accommodate the sprinklers. If so, the front exterior fire escape would no longer be necessary. It is a considerable price trade-off for him and he would have to redo some of the interior design. The sprinklers do not have to be hidden by the ceiling. He has not yet filed for any permits for the exterior changes.

Finally, the Planning Department received an application for a special permit at 1990 C Street from Mourning Hope, who does grief counseling, particularly with young people. They were going to apply for a special permit to use the Fiske Tudor Prairie School house at 20<sup>th</sup> and C Streets for a grief counseling center. There was an HVAC home business and a photo studio as a home occupation there, and that family has moved to a different location. The initial feedback from Near South Neighborhood Association was concern. Mourning Hope went to the Near South Board meeting and presented the project under the terms that if this did not meet with the neighborhood's acceptance, they would withdraw. It was discussed and the key point was that if used for this purpose, it would no longer be a family home. It would require an external stair. A well designed option was presented, but the neighborhood

respectfully asked Mourning Hope to withdraw the application, which they did. They are currently housed in a Wesleyan owned property now, and are not under threat of imminent eviction, but they are still looking for a permanent home. We will work with them to try to find that. It was very well handled by both sides. The group made a very good presentation, but also a very honest one. It is such a prominent home and has never been subdivided or needed an attic stair, so both groups came out knowing more than what they went in knowing. Next month, we will present a 2014 annual report. It was a busy year and we accomplished what we are here for.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:34 p.m.