

## MEETING RECORD

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

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, October 24, 2013, 8:00 a.m., Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Christie Dionisopoulos, John Kay, Karen Nalow, Jeff Searcy and Cecil Steward. Tom Laging and Jon Weinberg absent.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jordan Pascale (Journal Star); Robin Wilcox (Alta Planning & Design); Justin Petersen (Olsson Associates); Dallas McGee, Wynn Hjermsstad and Ernie Castillo (Urban Development); Jerry Shorney and JJ Yost (Parks & Rec); Bob Ripley (Capitol Commission); Marvin Krout, Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman, David Cary, David Pesnichak and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Regular Meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 a.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

### **Approval of meeting record of October 24, 2013**

Steward moved approval of the meeting record of October 24, 2013, seconded by Dionisopoulos. Motion carried 5-0. Dionisopoulos, Kay, Nalow, Searcy, and Steward voting 'yes'. Laging and Weinberg absent.

### **A certificate of appropriateness for design development of the N Street Bikeway from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Street in the Nebraska Capitol Environs District, legally described as the public right-of-way of N Street, in Lincoln, Nebraska**

McGee stated that they are seeking action on the N Street cycle track. Cycle tracks or protected bikeways are beginning to show up all over the country. Our concept began in the 2005 Downtown Master Plan. We have a wonderful trail system in Lincoln, but it is difficult to bicycle through Lincoln in a safe manner. The 2012 update to the Master Plan suggested that N Street is the best connection all the way from the Billy Wolff Trail to Jamaica North Trail. Once this is built, we will look at similar bikeways leading directly into campus on 14<sup>th</sup> Street as well as 11<sup>th</sup> Street. This is the first phase of a multi-phased concept. We hired a designer to design this bikeway. The cycle track will be 12' wide and will be two-way on a one-way street. There will be traffic signals just for the bikeway. There will be a continuous bioswale. The bioswale will be 7' wide and 9' feet in some areas and separates the track from the parking. There will be two lanes of traffic; today there are three lanes. Between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street, there will be three traffic lanes.

Ripley asked if there will be no parking lane in that area. McGee stated that they believe they can still get parallel parking. There will be a barrier between the bike lane and the parking lane. The cycle track will be 12' wide all the way through.

McGee stated that they looked at how the track will blend with Centennial Mall. The bioswale separates the parking lane and driving lanes from the bikeway. Green pavement markings are being used everywhere there is a crossing of a street or driveway that shows you are crossing a protected bikeway.

Steward asked how this complicates pedestrian safety and handicap access. McGee stated that the pedestrian crossing width of N Street actually becomes narrower. Ripley asked if there is a reason to have zebra stripes across the pedestrian path. Wilcox stated that the original concept shows zebra striped crosswalks for pedestrians. When they overlaid the concept with the Centennial Mall plan, they did not show the zebra stripes because there is a contrasting pavement treatment.

Nalow stated that there is a granite band that gets carried through the intersection, so both of those crossings are different than any crossing in downtown. There is a distinctive pattern happening at those crosswalks. Ripley stated that his concern is that there is an alert to the pedestrian. Nalow asked how the pedestrian signals work. Wilcox stated that there is a signal for eastbound cyclists, and the bike traffic moves at the same time that traffic is moving on N Street. Pedestrians that are walking parallel to Centennial Mall wanting to cross N Street would have a 'Don't Walk' signal when bike traffic would potentially be in their path. McGee asked if they envision the green crosswalk pattern going through the pedestrian crosswalks on other intersections. Wilcox stated that they are not showing it that way. Dionisopoulos asked where the signals are going to be located. Wilcox stated that they are just starting to work on the signals this week. The signals will be mounted using existing infrastructure.

Steward asked if bicyclists are going to be permitted on the pedestrian walkways in Centennial Mall. Nalow stated that the two blocks on the south and north sides are pedestrian only. Steward stated that one of the biggest violations in downtown is bicyclists on sidewalks, and this will only put more pressure on that because it is a feeder. He believes that it will take some enforcement to keep bicyclists off the walkways. Ripley stated that he concurs with that. Steward noted that perhaps there should be some signage at intersections.

Zimmer stated that one of the effects of the protected bikeway should be to encourage bicyclists to use N Street. Steward noted that this is a huge improvement east-west. Kay stated that a big piece is the education of the community and then the enforcement. He asked if there is something planned to help people understand this. McGee stated that he agrees that is an important piece. Certainly education and enforcement will be key to the success of the project.

Searcy asked what other pathways they are looking at for bikeways. McGee stated that the Master Plan identified N Street and then 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Ripley asked how 14<sup>th</sup> Street was selected as a north-south route as this is a complicated north-south area. He is concerned about the safety in that area. McGee stated that what led to 14<sup>th</sup> Street is working with the University, and they are proposing a major corridor through campus on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. They will take a look at whether this is the best north-south connection.

Yost asked about the material for the green crossing. McGee stated that it is a thermal plastic application. Wilcox stated that they are looking at other applications. Yost commented that we will need to look at how to make the curbs identifiable for the snow plows.

Nalow commented on the stencil pattern and asked if we could reduce the green even more on the Mall while still keeping the bicyclists safe. McGee stated that their basic concern is safety and consistency.

Steward moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for this stage of the N Street bikeway design and development with an expectation that there will be further opportunity to review design detail, seconded by Kay. Motion carried 5-0. Dionisopoulos, Kay, Nalow, Searcy, and Steward voting 'yes'. Laging and Weinberg absent.

Searcy asked about the expected time frame. McGee stated that they intend to bid this in the winter with construction to begin next spring. They anticipate completion next August.

Yost stated that the best way may be to add this in to the Centennial Mall contract.

**Miscellaneous, staff report, future items (Spirit of Nebraska Pathway plaques, Cecil Steward sub-area plan proposal, reminder of annual joint meeting with Capitol Commission November 14, etc.)**

Zimmer informed the Commission that a lot of work has been done on the Centennial Mall plaques, and some will be ready for review at the November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. He noted that the joint meeting with the Capitol Commission on November 14<sup>th</sup> will take place prior to the individual Capitol Environs Commission meeting.

Ripley stated that he went to a monthly LES board meeting and thanked them for their cooperation on their work on Goodhue Boulevard. He thanked them for removing utility lines and poles, realigning ornamental lights, and for placement of electrical power to the school, so there are no overhead lines on the school.

Steward provided background and history on his subarea plan proposal. The tipping point for him came through our recent public engagement process with the friends and neighbors of Goodhue Boulevard. It is easy for us to focus on the capitol environs and lose sight of those living near the capitol. For a number of years, he has felt that Lincoln is in a unique situation of having such a tight downtown. We have had successful work on three of the four quadrants of downtown. We have neglected Goodhue Boulevard and J Street. We have had tremendous success with Centennial Mall. It struck him that now is the time to think about the fourth quadrant. There are two or three other current events that relate to this. In the Taking Charge workshop, we were charged to focus on safety in transit. This proposal has everything to do with providing a better means of getting through and around downtown so he thinks it is relevant timing. There is new push coming for the South Beltway which is a push between automobile interests and other transit interests. The idea of higher density and more mixed use properties downtown was solidified in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This would help the Commission bring focus to the remaining axis of the capitol.

Searcy asked about the boundaries of the district. Steward stated that he thinks of this as being the east district of the capitol. He thought that the boundary would be A to R Street and 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Street. This is a seven block strip of downtown that should be planned in an appropriate way. Ripley stated that he suggested using A to Washington Street and A to S Street, which corresponds to the capitol environs district boundaries. Steward commented that he believes that is appropriate. He noted that he met with Planning staff and Urban Development Department staff and felt it was a good discussion.

Steward stated that he is aware there are funding implications as well as political implications. If this resolution were passed, it would go to the city and state for normal procedures.

Krout stated that the Planning and Urban Development Departments have a great deal of respect and admiration for Steward. He challenges them, and they take his advice very seriously. One of things that

staff has talked about is the need to update the design standards for Goodhue Boulevard. There is work and investigation to be done on J Street. This will help guide rehabilitation in those areas. We may need to go outside to find additional resources. Steward's proposal is a huge study. The downtown study was weaker on the east side. There is a land use concept for downtown. We adopted Downtown Design Standards for that area. He is not sure the timing is right to look at what the options are. It would be wonderful if the state had a plan for how it is going to use the parking lots south and east of the capitol. He is concerned about the size and the boundaries. If they were to pick one side to work on, it would probably be the south side. They like the concept, but he is concerned that they do not have the time to do something this big, and they are not sure of the timeliness in terms of the direction in that area.

Searcy asked if there is an opportunity to explore two or more paths. Maybe the higher priorities of Goodhue or south of the capitol and the east capitol area could be a phased approach. Krout stated that is correct and they do not object to the Commission adopting this proposal.

Ripley stated that this does not necessarily exclude working with property north of the capitol. Krout stated that the opportunity is sooner in terms of the interest of neighbors to work with the City on a plan for revitalizing that area.

Steward stated that visions and concepts come from a lot of different sources. Thirty years ago, there was no vision of protecting the capitol. He thought the 2040 Plan set the stage for finding new ideas and concepts. He is suggesting that you can break this into components. This is a major unique potential that has not been recognized. How and when it takes place is not for the Commission to dictate, but it is our place to try to enhance our environment and have a vision.

Ripley stated that he supports that idea. He has an interest in the whole presence of the city. The timing is very good as you want the planning ahead of the investment. This is the right place, the right time and the right idea. He would be very excited about participating in the process. The issue is what we do in a part of the city that is ripe for development.

Searcy asked Steward what his expectations are if this is adopted. Steward stated that his hope would be that others can use this for the Planning Department for practical constraints. Krout stated that Urban Development would have to be in agreement. McGee stated that this area is very huge and very diverse. The downtown boundary is being redefined. More assistance in directing the kind of development would be good. There is an interest in this area, and additional study would be helpful. He is concerned about the time and resources, but it is a good project. Hjermstad stated that they are starting to see some interest west of 21<sup>st</sup> and N, and they are interested in that area but there are unique challenges in that area.

Kay stated that he finds it inspiring when a community voice comes forward with a vision. He gets bogged down in the details but what's important is the discussion.

Zimmer feels some responsibility to revisit our standards. There is the big idea but there is some detail to be done as well. He believes it may be useful to see if we can break it down into parts. Some of the issues are so different between the parts. Steward stated that he has learned one thing in urban design and that is that the edges are more important than the center.

Searcy asked Steward if he would like to revise the proposal and bring it to a future meeting. Steward asked that we put this on the agenda for the November meeting.

Searcy noted that our next meeting will be the joint meeting with the Capitol Commission on November 14 in the Capitol.

Dionisopoulos asked about the December meeting date. Zimmer stated that it will be December 12.

Ripley stated that he plans to go to the school board and thank them for the improvements on Goodhue Boulevard as well as at Lincoln High.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

*\*\*Please note that these minutes will not be formally approved until the next meeting of the Capitol Environs Commission.\*\**

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