

## MEETING NOTES

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

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, June 27, 2019, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room 214, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Mary Campbell, Heidi Cuca, Delonte Johnson, Kile Johnson, Karen Nalow, Ann Post and David Quade

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department, Robert Ripley of the Nebraska Capitol Commission, Lynn Johnson and J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Jeff Searcy and Jasper Searcy; Tara Knuth from Lincoln Children's Museum and John Badami of DLR Group.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Ed Zimmer called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room. He noted that with the departure of Jeff Searcy from the Commission, a new Chair is needed for the group.

Campbell nominated Kile Johnson for Chair, seconded by Post. Cuca nominated Campbell for Vice-Chair, seconded by Kile Johnson. Motion for Kile Johnson as Chair and Campbell as Vice-Chair carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

Searcy thanked everyone, all the Commission members, City staff and the Nebraska Capitol Commission. The joint meetings have been very successful. It was always an honor to have both groups work together. When he was first appointed by Governor Nelson in 1997, they were doing a remodel of the City-County building. Ripley facilitated the meetings at the State Capitol building. The charge of this Commission is to protect and enhance the environs around the great Capitol. It is an honor to be involved. He has always been appreciative to Governor Nelson and it has been an amazing honor to serve, a joy and a love. To have three additional Governors that placed confidence in him was fantastic. He appreciates the fact he has been able to serve through many administrations and there is great leadership on this Commission. He takes great pride in what has been accomplished. He remembers the first meeting where it was the beautiful iteration of the desire to redo Centennial Mall. We worked on that for two decades. Some adjustments were made, but that is the way progress works. We can all be proud of the new Centennial Mall. We made a lot of progress on Goodhue Boulevard as well. We have also completely eliminated all the overhead wires through our cooperation with LES (Lincoln Electric System). The Standing Bear monument is a great long lasting historical accomplishment. We also worked on small details as well. He is honored to have had the time

for service and looks forward to hearing great results in the future. As the Environs District continues to enhance, he encouraged everyone to be willing to be bold, but remember this is an important role. He knows this is in good hands. He thanked the Commission and encouraged everyone to always have a quorum. It is important to be able to make a vote. It has been an amazing experience and he passes this forward with great confidence.

Kile Johnson thanked Searcy for all his work. Searcy has always been gracious, kind and efficient. He will strive to maintain the standards that have been set. The changes around the Capitol that have been done with the leadership of this Commission have been wonderful.

Ripley offered that he would be happy to attend the next board meeting of LES and thank them for the work they have done with regard to the removal of overhead wiring on Goodhue Blvd. If Searcy has time to attend as well, he believes it would be a great idea. It would be nice for them to hear praise instead of complaints. Kile Johnson stated it would be appreciated. Searcy would be willing to attend.

Zimmer read into the record, a Resolution of support and recognition of thanks to Jeff Searcy for his work on the Commission, offered by the three ex-officio members, Bob Ripley for Office of the Capitol Commission, Lynn Johnson, Direction of Lincoln Parks & Recreation and David Cary, Director of Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Dept.

Post moved approval of the Resolution, seconded by Cuca and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

Searcy thanked everyone.

Zimmer noted there are three new members on the Commission.

Cuca stated that she is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Nebraskan. She hails from DeWitt, Nebraska. Her Great Grandfather emigrated from Denmark and invented Vice-Grip. She met Bud Cuca and married. He passed in 2002 and they have two kids. She is now married to Tom Stevens. She loves Nebraska and looks forward to serving on the Commission.

Delonte Johnson has been in Lincoln for around 12 years. He came from Omaha. He works at LES. He hopes to bring the everyman perspective. He has long appreciated the resources and opportunities that Lincoln has afforded him.

David Quade moved here when he was three. He is an Architect at Sinclair Hille. He loves architecture and the Capitol building. He loves the City and looks forward to enhancing everything about it.

K. Johnson called for a motion approving the minutes of the regular meeting held February 28, 2019. Motion for approval made by Campbell, seconded by Cuca and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

K. Johnson would like everyone to introduce themselves to the new members. Kile said he is an attorney with his office on Lincoln Mall and long-standing interest in the Capitol and its setting.

Karen Nalow worked on Centennial Mall even before she was on the Commission. She is a landscape architect at The Clark Enersen Partners.

Ann Post is an attorney at Baylor Evnen. She does a lot of development work. She finds this a wonderful opportunity to serve on this Commission.

Bob Ripley is Capitol Administrator for the Capitol Commission at the State Capitol. He works with 28 other individuals. Has been involved with the Commission since its inception in 1988. It has been a delight to see this formed and has been an honor to work with everyone. As a kid, his father told him that no building should be taller than a certain height around the Capitol. The State office couldn't be more delighted with the work of this Commission.

Lynn Johnson is Director of Lincoln Parks & Recreation. They are responsible for maintenance of Centennial Mall and oversee the street trees. He has served with this group since 1997. This group does amazing work for the community.

Zimmer introduced his Planning Dept. colleague Stacey Hageman. They work together for the Capitol Environs and Historic Preservation Commissions and she takes the lead on Urban Design Committee. She is a planner and an architect as well. Planning Director David Cary is an ex-officio member of the Commission and Stacey & Ed are present as his designees. This has always been an important body. It is the only one that looks at public, as well as private work. He believes this Commission has always had good judgement.

J.J. Yost is the Planning and Facilities Manager at Parks & Recreation. He has been very involved with the Centennial Mall renovation.

Mary Campbell is a teacher who went to law school and then to the State Capitol as a staffer. She learned to love the building and the institution of State government. She became a lobbyist with Cline Williams and then came back to LPS (Lincoln Public Schools). She is now retired and enjoys serving on this Commission.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT THE LINCOLN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 1420 P STREET**

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**June 27, 2019**

Members present: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade.

Zimmer stated that the Children's Museum looks to enhance its parking lot area, which will also serve to address the leaky roof over the basement. The parking lot is that roof.

Tara Knuth is Executive Director of the Children's Museum. She has been working on this for about five years. She was previously the Director of the Kearney Children's Museum. One of the first surprises was the leaky basement. It has been an ongoing issue. There have been various band aids and they need to look at a true solution. They want to create an interactive outdoor space on the former parking lot.

John Badami is an architect with DLR Group and also on the board of the Children's Museum. BVH Architects evaluated and studied the problems. There was a building on this site in the early 1900's. It burned down. The basement was kept and the land was resurfaced as a parking lot. Underneath is currently used as storage. They want the highest and best use for this basement space. BVH looked at the structure and top coating. They had good documentation of that. It is internally drained. It does not drain onto Centennial Mall. There are some leaky pipes and corrosion. Knuth noted there has been rain on 66 out of the last 87 days, so there has been a lot of water this year. Badami continued that focus groups looked at this. The outcome was a desire for outdoor space. A few parking stalls will be maintained and they will also provide access for exhibits.

Ripley inquired if the underground facility goes all the way to the alley. Badami replied yes, it goes all the way to the alley.

Badami continued with a visual presentation of some of their ideas. There is a stair tower for access to and from the basement. This was part of an early study. An early design showed a possible play structure. Lucky Climber was a vendor of a structure they looked at. It was designed more for warmer areas and probably not appropriate for our winters. Another structure was found. Knuth stated that they liked the design and felt it integrated better with the surroundings. Badami noted there are opportunities to light this at night for a more artistic feel.

Badami presented the site plan along with views of the area. Knuth stated they are wrapping up their feasibility study. They hope to start quiet fundraising around August 1, 2019. Badami thinks the nice thing about the plan is that they can phase it, depending on the funding. They hope to start with the basement.

Badami presented the new concept. The structure is by a company from Germany. They are long established across the country. There are two play structures. One appeals more to older children and another for younger children. The also looked at ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) accessibility. He believes this offers a lot of different things for the community. He showed the placement of items in the lot. They wanted to create enough open space for the museum that they could program this for other events. They want to address the access.

Kile Johnson noted the drawing shows access from the public sidewalk. Badami stated this is a controlled access point. The museum still wants everyone to access this from inside the museum. Ripley noted it appears to be visually open from the Mall. Badami replied he was correct. Ripley pointed out the parking north of the play area. Badami showed the curved wall to screen the parking from Centennial Mall. This will be the same height as one on other side of the Standing Bear niche.

Kile Johnson noted the height of the structure is 30 feet and the Museum is 35 feet. Cuca inquired if the structure will be lit at night. Badami replied yes. Knuth added that it will always be lit. She believes it helps with security, as well as showcases it as an art piece. Badami noted this will be anchored with concrete columns and anchored from below. Knuth stated that with the previous company they looked at for the structure, they had concerns with Midwest wind affecting the structure. This design is more open. Ripley inquired if there appears to be any exceptional wind in this area. Knuth replied there doesn't appear to be anything out of the ordinary.

Campbell questioned if the applicant has been able to visualize how the lighting would all work together with the Mall. Nalow would encourage them to look at that. We want to make sure the lighting is not distracting from the Mall.

Lynn Johnson pointed out a row of shrubs that aren't mature yet, but will be eight to ten feet tall when they mature. The red oaks will grow and this will eventually be a solid wall of trees. Badami added they would like to soften the wall with landscaping as well.

Knuth said they don't have any specific plan for the lighting at this point, but would like to uplight the play structure. Ripley offered a suggestion. He is a dark skies fan. He would appreciate not a lot of excess ambient light being shot into the sky.

Badami pointed out that as the trees mature, it will screen the area quite well. Zimmer pointed out those are red oaks, the same as along Centennial Mall. They mature very well.

Badami stated that the Children's Museum Board offered their approval of this concept.

Zimmer assumes the play structure will have netting. Knuth replied yes. Badami stated there is netting for safety. Knuth added there will be spaces in the area for art or other items.

Ripley questioned if the area underneath the play deck will be a soft surface. Knuth replied yes.

Quade questioned the material of the fencing. Badami replied they will use powder coated steel.

Zimmer mentioned the guidelines encourage that the general treatment along the Mall is understated, but there is also significant language about focal points such as museums, along with other buildings specifically noted that might have a stronger presence. This has some of that dual purpose. The question is if this is appropriate and is this a signature item. Does it respect the Mall in a meaningful way?

Nalow would like to see a lighting presentation. She would like to see a Capitol view as well, a Q Street view. Zimmer noted that essentially this rises up against the History Museum.

Knuth stated they haven't gotten to the lighting design yet. She foresees coming back here often to give presentations on their progress. Badami stated the Children's Museum Board would like to go forward with this proposal. Confirmation that this Commission agrees with this direction would be helpful.

Nalow has a question regarding the stairs off of Centennial Mall. She wants to make sure we don't create a dead zone. You don't want to walk up to a utilitarian door. She understands they are needed for egress, but perhaps there is another solution where the stairs don't feel like a dead zone.

Zimmer suggested the stairs could go on the P Street sidewalk instead of the Mall. Badami believes that is very doable. Ripley would concur. Adults look at locations as one way and kids another. You are inciting kids to run up those stairs. Kile Johnson agrees. This is more inviting as an entrance. It could be subtly made into an exit. Badami noted there could be the option of getting rid of this door altogether. They will look at that. Lynn Johnson stated it would be nice to continue the landscape along the east face.

**ACTION:**

Post moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness with conditions that the application further address the exiting of the stair tower, provide a lighting scheme, specifics on the fence and show a view of the State Capitol building, seconded by Cuca and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.