

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 2:00 p.m., Hearing Room, 113, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Cathy Beecham, Tracy Corr, Maja V. Harris, Chris Hove, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman and Ken Weber (Michael Cornelius absent); Marvin Krout, Brandon Garrett, Sara Hartzell and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Ben Higgins and Jared Nelson of Public Works Watershed Management; Nicole Fleck-Tooze of Parks and Recreation; Glenn Johnson of Lower Platte South Natural Resources District; Mark Meyer of Intuition & Logic; media and other interested citizens.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Presentation on “Middle Creek, Haines Branch and South Salt Creek Watershed Master Plans”, “Stiefel Conservation Easement” and update on “reFORM”

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

MIDDLE CREEK, HAINES BRANCH AND SOUTH SALT CREEK WATERSHED MASTER PLANS

Jared Nelson appeared. He is the Project Manager. Staff is currently wrapping up three studies. They are on Middle Creek, Haines Branch and South Salt Creek Watershed Master Plans. We are looking for a unified master plan. The consultant walked the streams and looked for any special features. They looked at a lot of assets in the area, as well as efforts that are ongoing, such as the South Beltway. The ultimate goal was to pick out CIP projects. The methodology was the same as was used in other master plans in the past. Staff has had a lot of public input. We sent out a lot of letters to property owners, had a few public meetings and sent out three newsletters. We looked at pre-development hydrologic conditions.

Mark Meyer with Intuition & Logic appeared. They are consultants to Public Works. The United States Geological Survey was on our team. We collected ten samples and identified several special areas. There are wetlands and a lot of grass areas. We want to consider these areas as we are doing Capital project planning.

The Haines Branch Watershed study area is a 69 square mile watershed. The study area was 17 square miles. We walked 28 miles in Haines Branch, the main stem and several of the tributaries. We identified ten stream stability projects. Eight were grade control projects and two were bank

stabilization projects. The total CIP project costs are 2.4 million dollars.

The Middle Creek Watershed study area is a 99 square mile watershed. The study area was 19 square miles. We walked 34 miles of stream, the main channel and tributaries. We identified seven stream stability projects. Four are grade controls, one bank stabilization, one stilling basin and one pipe outfall erosion control. The total CIP project costs are 1.7 million dollars.

The South Salt Creek Watershed study area is a 411 square mile watershed. The study area was 53 square miles. This was a much larger area than the others. We walked 78 miles of stream and came up with nineteen stream stability projects. Thirteen are grade control projects, five are stilling basin projects and one bank stabilization project. The total CIP project costs are almost 6.7 million dollars.

Meyer stated that as we went through the process, we noticed some sites with problems. Those were identified as private projects. When we were doing the hydraulic analysis, we noticed the flow depth in the channels was below the road elevation, so we did some preliminary analysis to see if it was a culvert problem. If so, it was passed on to the County. All of this information is available online at <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/watrshed/mplan/>. The drafts of all three of these master plans are available.

Beecham wondered about water quality results. Meyer replied that we used the USGS because they bring a richer knowledge to the table. We looked at things such as saline and e coli. We didn't really find anything surprising. We had ten sample sites, dry and wet weather sample sites. We didn't see anything out of line.

Beecham questioned what impact, if any, did the recent nine inch rain have on the results. Meyer replied the results are still the same.

Hove inquired if all the projects are on public or private land. Meyer responded that some are on City owned or County owned properties, some are on private land.

Lust asked if this is a list of items that are already funded or things that need to be added to the list. Nelson stated that each year, the CIP identifies funding. As we find funding, we can fund the projects. Meyer added that the projects in the studies are ranked by priority. Nelson added that the Lower Platte South NRD cost shared on the study and cost shares on projects.

Beecham questioned what portion was agricultural land. Meyer replied the majority was agricultural land. Beecham asked if as the city expands, does more development change the recommendations? Meyer replied no, but it does change the hydrology. Beecham wondered about water quality. She is curious, as the city develops, if there will be more problems with fertilizer, runoff, etc. Meyer replied that as a rule, we see more from urban runoff, but that is just from his experience. It is not as much as you would see from agricultural.

Harris wondered, when the extensive walking was done, were public complaints part of the decision on where you went? Meyer replied that complaints were looked at, but only as they were directly related to the stream. There were a lot of things that were looked at.

STIEFEL CONSERVATION EASEMENT - SW. 84TH ST. AND OLD CHENEY RD.

Nicole Fleck-Tooze from Parks and Recreation and Glenn Johnson from Lower Platte South NRD appeared. Fleck-Tooze wanted to review a request for acquisition of a conservation easement with the Commission. This is part of a joint project. The Comprehensive Plan talks a lot about the Salt Valley Greenway. It is part of the Salt Valley drainage area and is comprised of Salt Creek. The idea is that eventually over time, it will be implemented through a series of easements. The Plan also talks about some key connecting links that drain into the Salt Creek. One of those priority links is the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor. They are beginning to look at some more specific strategies. In the past couple of years, staff has taken on a number of those things. We received some grant money from the Environmental Trust and also received some matching funds.

Glenn Johnson reiterated that this is a joint project. We have an easement in place that was purchased from Dr. Sumani that was acquired earlier, to the south. This is right in the middle. It is 100 acres along the Haines Branch. There is a lot of flood plain. 75 percent of the property is in the flood plain or flood way. There is a lot of grassland prairie. We would be protecting the corridors. The landowner would still own the property, but there are restrictions on how that property can be used. The grassland and cropland that exists today can continue to be used, with the option to turn into a grassland. Protecting the floodplain and riparian corridor is another component.

Lust asked if the grassland can be grazed. Johnson replied yes, with some conditions. If the planting goes into native, then it is set up with some management requirements.

Johnson continued that all of these responsibilities are essentially set upon the landowner. Another provision in the whole corridor is an anticipated trail. It is proposed to be a 100 foot public access trail. This is part of a CUP that was adopted a number of years ago. There are provisions for access limitations and grading. This easement is subject to all those conditions.

Lust inquired if the landowner still pays property tax. Johnson replied yes, she is correct.

MISCELLANEOUS

Marvin Krout sent a note to Commissioners regarding protective covenants. This was an unusual situation. There were private covenants going back many years. They couldn't expand without changing some of the rules. There was a closing that was set. They are not required by zoning ordinance. This was a private protective covenant. It was moved quickly through the process. In the future, staff would bring something like that to Commissioners because we believe Planning

Commission is a good process. We would send a notice to neighbors. He just wanted to let Commissioners know that in the future, we will try to bring it to Planning Commission for recommendation. It was pretty minor and there was no objection.

Krout stated that the wind farm application was delayed indefinitely. The applicant had one turbine that was going to be in the jurisdiction of Hallam and that the turbine has been removed and the application with Hallam withdrawn. There are still dozens of turbines. He does believe this applicant is serious and will be back. He believes they want to talk about the rules for wind farms in the County code. There are some of those that they want to change. This all needs to be discussed further. The applicant wants to have a neighborhood meeting and staff encouraged them to do so.

Krout stated there are a couple of text amendments coming up before Planning Commission. One has to do with block lengths and mid-block pedestrian ways. Staff has been working on this for a couple of months now. Another like amendment is coming from an applicant who would like to turn an office building into a self-storage facility on Cotner Blvd., on the back side of Gateway Mall. Staff has been told that this is a preferable use. The office building on Cotner Blvd., north of "O" Street has had a lot of problems renting space. This would be interior storage. The office market is not very strong right now. There are questions if this is a use that belongs in the B-5 district.

Krout stated that there has been discussion regarding Saltillo Rd. There is the possibility that the South Beltway might take some traffic off Saltillo Rd. In the Comprehensive Plan, there is a plan for a bike trail to run along the South Beltway. We need to see how well this would work at the interchanges. It would be good for the priority of the bike trail project to be accelerated so they could be built at the same time.

Beecham questioned if this would be a County project. Krout replied no. It would be a City project. This will be both in the City and the County, immediately when the Beltway is built. Eventually, it will be all in the City. There are access to funds over time, through Federal grant money specified for these kinds of projects.

Krout stated that the Mayor has told staff that reFORM is being delayed until next summer. Generally speaking, it is not a good idea to bring controversial ideas in front of a City Council that is changing. We are hoping to have this done by the end of the year 2015. He believes there is good reason to delay. He thinks there needs to be some additional conversation. We need to get the details of the successes from other cities. Staff is still working with the City Attorney's office. Planning sent out 1,600 letters and postcards to property owners who would be affected in one way or another. We felt we needed to talk to owners and receive feedback on how they felt about these changes. We got around 40 or so phone calls. A few had some serious concerns and we talked about their sites with them. Three open houses were held last week. Presentations were given and one-on-one conversations were had. Ten to twenty people attended each open house. Most were okay with the proposal, a couple had issues, a couple were still thinking about it. We also knew it would be difficult for Planning Commissioners to make a quick decision about this. We are going to do some more research and be prepared to come back next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

F:\Boards\PC\Minutes\2014\pcb101514.wpd