

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: March 3, 2015, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 210, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Emily Casper, Tammy Eagle Bull, JoAnne Kissel, Tom Huston, Gill Peace, Michelle Penn and Michele Tilley.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman, Paul Barnes and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Hallie Salem and Wynn Hjernstad of Urban Development; Brett West, Brian Podwinski, Jude Werner, Chris Beardslee and Dave Johnson; Kevin Abourezk of the Lincoln Journal Star and other interested parties.

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

Kissel then requested a motion approving the minutes of regular meeting held February 3, 2015. Motion for approval made by Huston, seconded by Penn and carried 5-0: Casper, Kissel, Huston, Peace and Penn voting 'yes; Eagle Bull and Tilley absent at time of vote.

Zimmer introduced the newest committee member, Emily Casper. She is a landscape architect.

11TH & N BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

Ed Zimmer stated that this item will be postponed until next month.

ADVISORY REVIEW OF ROBBER'S CAVE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT (URBAN DEVELOPMENT)

Wynn Hjernstad stated that this is an amendment to the existing Van Dorn Redevelopment Plan. It will involve tax increment financing or TIF. This project is on an aggressive timeline. It appears before Planning Commission tomorrow. Ed Zimmer assured that a draft of the committee's minutes from this meeting will be provided to Planning Commission.

Brian Podwinski with Blue Blood Brewing appeared. They saw an opportunity to purchase this property and were interested. The cave was used for a brewery in the 1800's for a short time. They would like to hold events in the space, as well as in an upstairs tap room. He said they are really excited to bring this cave back to life and would use it in their production process as well as in for future events.

Ed Zimmer stated there is an interview from the 1920's with a gentleman who dug the cave out of Dakota Sandstone for a brewery in the 1860's. Pioneer Brewery didn't exist very long. Around 1900, the cave became a tourist attraction. This has been a source of legend and lore. Historically, this would take it back to close to its original use.

Dave Johnson with 951 Architects appeared. This project is located around 9th and High St. The grade drops around 15 feet, and then it drops severely to the railroad tracks. They are proposing a fairly tall building, a 20 foot sidewall building. From the west, it will only appear about 10 feet tall. There will be an outside deck. On the lower level, it will be a tall space for the brewing tanks. Half of the production room will be a drive-in cooler. They hope to utilize the cave for cooling the product. It is a tight site but they believe they can get a tractor-trailer to the back of the building. They don't foresee a lot of semi traffic. They looked at doing an engineered metal building but they don't have the time to obtain one, given their aggressive schedule. They are looking at a wood-frame structure. The tap room will be on the south end of the upper level with extended overhangs. He doesn't have the final details on the window glass yet. It will be clear for the tap room but may be obscure lighting the production spaces. For the posts supporting the roof overhangs, he is considering using a structure consisting of a wire mesh cage filled with limestone. They have to investigate that option yet. The grade drops off severely on this property. The back of the building facing the grain elevators will be mostly siding, a few overhead doors and a few windows. They are working on a set of shell drawings. They are looking to get a permit as soon as possible.

Kissel wondered about any buildings around this site. Johnson replied that our look is, we want to give a nice look with somewhat of an agricultural feel. There is nothing contextual in the area.

Kissel questioned if you will be able to see it from 9th Street. Johnson replied probably not. They are hoping you will be able to see the silo, but you really won't see the building except perhaps a portion of the roof.

Penn questioned what the TIF money will be used for. Podwinski replied for property acquisition and improvements that will need to be done to open the cave.

Kissel inquired if people will have to pay to go into the cave. Podwinski replied they haven't worked out all the details yet. They might have a general tour. It all boils down to insurance. They would like to have events in the space. They don't want to leave it wide open.

Johnson stated that they have yet to work out all the issues with City departments.

Zimmer believes it is fair to say a large portion of the City interest is to return some degree of public access to Robber's Cave. The cave has always been in private ownership.

Huston believes this is about placemaking and the community aspect.

Eagle Bull arrived.

ACTION:

Huston moved approval of the project as proposed, seconded by Tilley and carried 6-0: Casper, Huston, Kissel, Peace, Penn and Tilley voting 'yes'; Eagle Bull abstaining.

Kissel thinks this is an exciting project. The other committee members agreed.

L STREET VACATION, 8TH – 9TH (COLOR COURT BLOCK PARKING IMPROVEMENT)

Brett West appeared. He stated that the last month when he appeared before this committee, he talked about streetscape on 9th Street. Along the south side of the Color Court block is a small stub of L Street alongside Rosa Parks Way. L St. still connects to 8th Street but not to 9th St. The project is to vacate the L St. stub and combine it with the Color Court parking lot to create an improved parking area. A deteriorated chain link fence around the existing south parking area will be taken down. They want to redevelop the Peanut Butter Factory. There will be a greater need for parking. The city is being asked to vacate the L St. area. Hallie Salem stated that the city proposes to vacate this, but still retain ownership for future access to and maintenance of the Rosa Parks Way ramp structure.

Kissel questioned who owns the ambulance building. West replied that Russ Bayer owns the ambulance building. Salem stated that normally everyone would receive their portion of the vacated property. In this case, we are asking for them to leave ownership of this with the city due to access to Rosa Parks Way and the utility easements.

Penn asked if this will be leased parking. West replied that this parking will allow them to lease out the Peanut Butter building. West continued that they are working with the Downtown Lincoln Association to salvage the trees. The DLA will use them elsewhere in the city. They will come back with shrubs for screening.

Peace questioned if the alley is being paved. West replied they are not redoing that. It has been paved already. Salem believes it was paved with TIF funds from the previous portion of the Color Court building.

Huston stated that this will be an improvement to the area.

Casper inquired if there is a number of stalls they are trying to achieve, and noted that parking lots with a mix of diagonal and 90 degree stalls can be confusing to drivers, especially if they are unfamiliar with the lot. West replied that the lot principally will provide assigned stalls for employees, and that the diagonal stalls in the southernmost portion would largely be assigned to fleet vehicles of their tenant. Casper urged that the planting areas within the lot be as large as possible to sustain the growth of trees. West agreed to limit the paved areas and increase the planting areas as much as feasible. Casper noted that the plant choices were appropriate for hardiness. West credited the DLA staff for their assistance.

ACTION:

Eagle Bull moved approval of the project as proposed, seconded by Huston and carried 7-0: Casper, Eagle Bull, Huston, Kissel, Peace, Penn and Tilley voting 'yes'.

IMPROVEMENTS OF THE ALLEY BETWEEN N. 16TH AND N. 17TH STREETS IN THE BLOCK BOUNDED NORTH AND SOUTH BY Q AND R STREETS (URBAN DEVELOPMENT, ETC.)

Salem stated that this is a piece of a larger redevelopment area, with several TIF projects. This phase is helping with the pavement of the alley. Installation of some lighting on the alley has been done already. TIF will be used for the pavement of the alley, along with relocation of the overhead utilities to underground.

Jude Werner stated that from Q St. to R St. are nine different owners along the alley. The Husker Catholics have invested a lot of money in this block. He believes this is an opportune time to invest in the alley. The electrical can be upgraded. There are many historic "Greek" chapter houses. As some of the buildings are starting to be renovated, they need to update their electrical. They are working with the neighbors to collaborate as much as possible. Some possible shared transformer boxes will be installed. Currently, there are parking spaces that are negatively impacted by power poles. This will eliminate the poles and add parking spaces. This will also increase traffic accessibility. The electric wires and poles are unsightly. In the construction of St. Thomas Church, they messed the alley, up so they are going to repave it in a more aesthetically pleasing way with some brick pavers and banded with concrete. Street lamp improvements will be done along with wall mounted lamps.

Salem stated there will be a maintenance agreement over the alley as well.

Huston thinks this is a great idea. Tilley agreed. It will be a nice improvement. It will look great.

Penn wondered how the fraternity and sorority parking will be affected. Chris Beardslee replied that this is scheduled to be done by August 1, 2015. There will be no reconfiguration of the parking. They are just dealing with the alley.

Salem doesn't believe it would be too difficult to create a parking plan.

Zimmer believes there is an opportunity to install another light on the north end of the courtyard space. Beardslee replied that this hasn't been developed far enough to determine where all the lighting will be.

Penn wondered if the owners know that this will be a change of the parking area. Beardslee replied that the parking stalls are all assigned. In some areas, the pole will be eliminated and they will gain parking spots. No one should lose parking spots.

Penn thinks this is a great improvement. There is probably more lighting that needs to happen. She questioned if it could be a part of the TIF financing. Salem replied that they can't do a light pole in an alley. They will have to work with the adjacent owners.

ACTION:

Huston moved approval of the project as proposed, seconded by Tilley.

Peace believes that for the big picture, he thinks this is fantastic. He remembers an instance where the city used heavy duty pavers on an alley. They were made out of granite. They are really heavy duty. The manufacturer recommended not putting them on sand. They are on a thinset base. He believes they were made in Minneapolis.

Casper agreed. The applicant might want a thicker paver for an alley.

The committee stated their interest in seeing the lighting of this alley, along with a parking plan.

Motion for approval carried 7-0: Casper, Eagle Bull, Huston, Kissel, Peace, Penn and Tilley voting 'yes'.

Miscellaneous

- Kissel asked if the committee will be seeing updates on Gallery Alley. Salem replied that the project is still in process. She expects installation of the lighting in May. There is some work happening south of the alley with the Lumberworks Liner building. They are working on an agreement. A design is moving forward for the Lumberworks block as a whole. They are doing an integrated plan. They had plans for streetscape improvements, south on 8th Street. They are finishing out the installation of the canopy structure, and then lighting under Harris overpass in connection with the Gallery Alley.

Zimmer stated that the reason those haven't been to this committee, is that they have appeared before Historic Preservation Commission. Part of the UDC ordinance says that improvements within 300 feet of a landmark district go to HPC.

Kissel believes the alley is clearly urban design in context. Zimmer stated that the Downtown Design Standards address private property. Just by nature of the Ordinance, he doesn't disagree that there is more urban design expertise in this committee. It appears in the Ordinance that those items get steered to HPC. Another approach would be to guide them to the board most fitting. In the past, the boards have done a joint meeting on the Haymarket Parking Garage, due to the entryway aspect. He could try to craft some language for items that should be reviewed by this body.

Salem wondered if perhaps there aren't some items that should be reviewed by a joint body of Urban Design Committee and Historic Preservation Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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