

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, April 6, 2011, 2:55 p.m., City Council Hearing Room, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Leirion Gaylor Baird, Michael Cornelius, Dick Esseks, Wendy Francis, Roger Larson, Jeanelle Lust, Jim Partington, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor; Marvin Krout, Nicole Fleck-Tooze and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Dennis Bartels and Randy Hoskins of Public Works and Utilities; and other interested citizens.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: LPlan calendar by Planning staff and briefing on “Proposed Access Management Policy” by Public Works & Utilities staff.

LPlan calendar

Nicole Fleck-Tooze submitted a tentative schedule for the LPlan 2040 public process. The schedule is tight. She would like to identify a couple of key dates. The last meeting of LPAC is June 15, 2011. The group intends to provide a summary of the major elements of the 2040 plan, the difference between the 2030 and 2040 plan and written feedback. In July, the plan will be finalized and available for public review. There has been low attendance at some open houses in the past. Staff will make a concerted effort to advertise public opportunities through social media, libraries and community centers. In lieu of open houses, there will be a special Planning Commission public hearing on a non regular Wednesday for an evening meeting. Then, two more public hearings at Planning Commission on the regular Wednesday meetings. We believe people might be more inclined to come out to a public hearing than an open house.

Francis questioned if feedback is ex parte. Lust doesn't believe so. This is asking for public input and exercising the Planning Commission legislative function. Tooze added that comments will be encouraged to be submitted to the Planning Dept. also.

Tooze continued that this should give staff the month of October to go before the City Council and County Board and MPO Officials Committee in perhaps December. August 17, 2011 is the tentative public hearing date for Planning Commission.

Lust wanted to know when there will be a complete draft available. Tooze responded the draft will be complete in July.

Esseks stated that the LPAC members have put in a lot of time and this is a long process. There needs to be some type of end goal. He questioned if there will be a vote of the Committee. Tooze does not think it would be practical. They will provide to LPAC a summary document. This will hit on the major points and the differences between the two plans. They will receive it ahead of the June 15 meeting. This will be a review document. Each member would have two pages of length to submit comments. This would become part of the summary.

Lust questioned if the Committee members are being given an opportunity to comment on the completed draft.

Sunderman doesn't feel we need to word smith page by page.

Tooze is trying to strike a balance between many different opinions. Individual members can provide their opinions during the feedback process.

Gaylor Baird doesn't feel right that the Committee members don't get to review the final draft. She would like to give them the choice.

Esseks noted that this is such a big document. Maybe key issues could be identified that haven't received full consensus yet. He wondered how you bring this part of the whole process to fruition so the group is satisfied. He would like to see it narrowed down to key issues and then have some type of means to measure opinions. He would like to let the folks leave with a sense of achievement. Tooze stated that perhaps key discussion points can be identified where there wasn't total agreement on all points.

Lust suggested that the dates of the draft plan distribution and questionnaire be switched. She would like to see the draft document ready before the LPAC questionnaire.

Marvin Krout stated that two workshops have been suggested for Planning Commission. LPAC could join one session and participate in the discussion.

Sunderman would prefer written comments as suggested by Lust and then on to Planning Commission.

Lust would like to see the questionnaires returned before the workshop on July 27.

Cornelius stated that it has been the case all along that at some point there would be a narrowing of scope from LPAC to Planning Commission.

Proposed Access Management Policy

Randy Hoskins stated this policy has been a couple of years in the making. Access management is controlling the vehicle movements onto and off the streets as safely as possible. Sustainability ensures our streets can move vehicles at top capacity. Safety is another big point. Change in speed being introduced is when crashes happen. Efficiency means moving traffic with the least amount of delay. Economic vitality, well-managed streets attract more businesses and customers. Someone generally determines how far they are going to travel based on time, not distance. 70th and "O" Street on the north side has pretty good access management, the south side not so much. Some of our proposed policies might help this site work a little better. You still need to provide reasonably convenient access. That is not always the best access. You need to minimize the conflict points, minimize on-street speed differentials and look ahead to where the median breaks and traffic signals will be.

In this document, streets have been broken down into five different categories. The big question is taking into account the difference between new roads and existing roads in the center of town. You want a major arterial every two miles. A lot of those are missing in the center of town. What's new in this document are access spacing requirements, turn lane requirements, throat length requirements, on-site storage requirements, traffic impact study requirements and variance procedures. Connection spacing is dependent upon street category and traffic speed. Some driveways will be limited to right-in and right-out. They like to encourage developers to consider their access up front. Connection spacing involves looking at existing conditions. Right turn lanes will be required for nearly every access. Left turn lanes will be required for nearly every access also. Length of turns lanes are being based on speed and access. Throat lengths are the distance between the edge of the street and where you encounter driving that could impact traffic. We are trying to minimize the chance that you could get stuck halfway in and out of the street. Waiting vehicle storage already exists.

Staff went out and looked at current numbers in the policy and considered whether these are still good numbers. Particularly banks, are probably excessive. There aren't as many people going to banks these days with all the electronic options available.

The traffic impact study guidelines are intended to follow the Institute of Traffic Engineers policy. The main difference is the Institute of Traffic Engineers have three categories. Staff added a fourth category. This looks at areas where there are crash problems and streets are over capacity. We are worried there may be issues that arise from adding driveways. We also go into items that will need to be covered in a traffic impact study.

Lust questioned page 13 of the study that talks about traffic impact study requirements. Hoskins responded the chart speaks to the analysis of streets based on the amount of delay that vehicles incur. A grade is assigned. Most streets in town are probably around a grade C. For the two higher categories of streets, we like to see those at least a level C. If a developer came in and their development causes below a level C, they would need to do mitigation to bring it back to a level C.

Hoskins talked about variance procedures in the policy. A petition for variance would be filed with the Director of Public Works. It would only be granted when a variation is not contrary to public interest or safety, unavoidable practical difficulty results or unnecessary hardship. This would create a Board of Appeals. The final decision would be made by the Mayor.

Krout stated the final details would need to be worked out with the City Attorney's office. He doesn't foresee this as changing the way that Planning Commission makes their decisions. This is still part of the Planning Commission job and responsibility. He thinks there are an equal number of occasions that access management is not affected. There are times when zoning standards are waived as part of a planned unit development.

Hoskins stated that the policy is currently being reviewed by the Law Dept. It is available on the Internet for public review. The presentation is being taken out to various groups. This will be before Planning Commission and City Council in the future. There are opportunities for input. There is a comment form on the website. There will be a public information meeting at the end of this month or early May. They are hoping to bring it before Planning Commission on June 29, 2011, and City Council introduction on July 18, 2011 with action on July 25, 2011.

The Planning Commission members indicated their appreciation at having plenty of time to review the information.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

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