

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, September 27, 2007, 8:00 a.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jim Hewitt, Tom Laging, V.J. Nelson, Jeff Searcy and Cecil Steward. Patrick O'Donnell and Kim Todd absent

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Rick Noyes (Downtown Neighborhood Association); Ed Leach (BVH Architects); Brooke Hay, Mike Leopold, Charlie Francis (UNL); Michael Cartwright, Richard Quinn and Carl Eskridge (University Towers); Lynn Johnson and Jerry Shorney (Parks & Recreation); Bob Ripley (Capitol Commission);(Ed Zimmer and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

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

Chair Jeff Searcy called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of Meeting Notes of August 23, 2007

Hewitt moved approval of the meeting notes of August 23, 2007, seconded by Laging. Motion carried 5-0. Hewitt, Laging, Nelson, Searcy and Steward voting 'yes'; O'Donnell and Todd absent.

Multi-Cultural Center, UNL City Campus, 15th & S Streets

Leach stated that BVH Architects is the executive architects on the multi-cultural center project at the University. Moody Nolan is doing the design part of the project.

Leach displayed photos of the proposed site and the surrounding buildings through a PowerPoint presentation. He noted that they did a site line study to determine the view capabilities possible from the site and the top of the capitol. They determined that at the third floor of the building, you will be able to see the capitol. There are three main axes of the design. Where the three axes come together, they have created a circular atrium. The first floor contains administrative offices and conference rooms. The second floor is primarily meeting rooms as well as a small kitchen and lounge space. The third floor is primarily offices for student organizations and a library. The exterior has elements that are reflective of the union with elements of transparency. The intent is to provide a transition from the Georgian style to a more contemporary style.

In regard to a question pertaining to the height of the building in comparison to the State Historical Society, Leach stated that the State Historical Society is approximately 48 feet above grade level and the proposed building is about 50-55 feet above grade level with another 10 feet for the atrium.

Leach stated that the building will also be LEED certified at the certified level, but they believe they will exceed that level, possibly at the silver level.

Hay asked the Commission about their thoughts on exceeding the height limit. Ripley stated that the state statutes have a height limit of 57 feet, and he does not believe there is a provision for an appeal process. Zimmer added that the height limit can be exceeded for mechanical equipment, but the atrium would not qualify as a mechanical feature. He believes this would take an amendment at the legislature level, which this body could advocate for if they so choose.

Ripley stated that he supports exceeding the height limit in this one instance, and he feels that the language must be carefully worded in this case.

Laging noted that he believes the atrium will not be seen from the street, and he questioned what the architectural reasoning is for the extra height. Leach stated that the impact on the capitol is minimal even though it exceeds the height limit. However, the impact of the view to the north for the University campus will be greater.

Nelson moved to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project; however the issue of the height limit will be addressed as the design process progresses. It was seconded by Steward. Motion carried 5-0. Hewitt, Laging, Nelson, Searcy and Steward voting 'yes'; O'Donnell and Todd absent.

Staff Report

Ripley stated that he has gathered some research on height limits within capitol cities in other states. He welcomes the opportunity to convene the subcommittee as soon as possible to begin formulating a draft policy. Zimmer stated that the downtown design standards are being reviewed again. It does not specifically have the height issue on the list, but it will be a part of the discussion.

Ripley stated that in light of the upcoming Lincoln Bicentennial events, they plan to restore the red flagstone terrace in front of the Lincoln Memorial at the Capitol's west entrance, restore the two original bronze street lights, and locate a spotlight on the NSEA roof to illuminate the bronze statue against the granite backdrop of the Gettysburg Address. He asked the Commissioners to advocate to the Public Building Commission for three projects on the west end of Lincoln Mall in front of the Hall of Justice. These include the construction of a new heightened pedestal for the Rail Joiner statue, installation of a similar exterior spotlight on the statue, and the removal of the central flagpole of the five along with the relocation of the trash containers and bicycle racks near the statue. Commissioners suggested that this item be placed on the next agenda for further discussion.

Miscellaneous

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

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