

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, May 22, 2008, 8:00 a.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Rick Noyes and Barbara Arendt (Downtown Neighborhood Association); 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 March 27, 2008

Steward moved approval of the meeting notes of March 27, 2008, seconded by Hewitt. Motion carried 4-0. Hewitt, Laging, Searcy and Steward voting 'yes'; Todd abstaining; Nelson and O'Donnell absent.

Landscape Work by Lincoln Public Schools at Lincoln High School, 2229 J Street, in the Capitol Environs District.

Zimmer noted that LPS has requested that this item be placed on the next agenda for review.

Lincoln Downtown Design Standards

Zimmer updated the Commissioners on the Lincoln Downtown Design Standards. He noted that the standards are near the point of submission to the Planning Commission. They will go to the City Council for approval. These standards have grown out of the Downtown Master Plan, at which time they were not approved. Downtown Lincoln Association was not sure about their priorities in terms of the standards, but since then they have wanted to proceed with the standards. The revised standards are simpler and more objective. They want to prevent bad design instead of mandating good.

Zimmer noted there are four ways to receive approval on the standards. First is approval from the Planning Department during the building permit process. Second is approval by the Planning Director with a statement that even though the guidelines are not met, it is a good project. This would require notification of neighbors as well. The third way is an appeal to the design review body which would be the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission or the Urban Design Committee depending on the area of jurisdiction. Fourth is an appeal to the City Council.

The standards will apply to B-4 and O-1 districts. There are three broad areas of requirements including site development, building features and pedestrian considerations.

The Chamber of Commerce has adopted a position that they generally agree with the standards.

Disagreements with DLA have been based on selection of materials, particularly how much masonry is required. Their fear has been that we could possibly scare away a potential developer. Zimmer has maintained that there should be 70% masonry with glass on the first floor.

Ripley asked about the use of descriptive vs. prescriptive standards. Zimmer stated that the standards are written in a similar fashion to the Neighborhood Design Standards. A developer should know coming in what is required.

Steward commented that DLA's argument about the masonry standard is without merit or justification in his opinion. Second, the timing of these standards set up another opportunity for design standards, and that is the assurance of sustainability. And finally, Crandall Arambula would like to see more prescriptive standards. This is a practical first step and he sees the rationale for making it as simple as possible. However, he feels that may be too short-sighted.

Arendt stated that the building designs are great, but they are concerned about what types of businesses may come in. Noyes stated that he believes the Downtown Neighborhood Association will take the first step to support these standards.

Todd moved to accept the Lincoln Downtown Design Standards, seconded by Steward. Hewitt, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Todd voting 'yes'; Nelson and O'Donnell absent.

Misc.

Lynn Johnson informed the Commissioners that the concrete on Capital Mall at K & L Streets has deteriorated beyond repair, and in the interim they have put in fencing. They will bring a recommendation to the next meeting.

Zimmer noted that Kaplan University has requested a change of zone from residential zoning to O1 zoning.

Ripley distributed a draft letter to LES regarding the relocation of overhead utility lines in the Capitol Environs District. He asked for the Commissioners review of the letter and recommended that a letter be sent to LES. It was suggested that this item be on the next agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

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

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