

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, September 24, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jim Hewitt, John Kay, Tom Laging, Jeff Searcy, Larry Stoll and Cecil Steward. Kim Todd absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: JoAnne Kissel (The Clark Enersen Partners); Lynn Johnson and Jerry Shorney (Parks & Recreation); Bob Ripley (Capitol Commission); Marvin Krout, Ed Zimmer and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

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

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 a.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Approval of meeting notes of July 23 and August 27, 2009

Stoll moved approval of the July 23 and August 27, 2009 meeting notes, seconded by Hewitt. Hewitt, Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Stoll voting 'yes'; Todd absent.

Centennial Mall redesign

JoAnne Kissel of The Clark Enersen Partners began by stated that there have been several stakeholders meetings with people along the Mall. There has been a fair amount of new information and perspectives. They met with focus groups, tourism and special events groups, the University, the State Department of Administrative Services and General Services Administration. They will also meet with Lincoln Community Foundation building tenants, businesses and residents in the area and State of Nebraska employees. They also have a meeting scheduled with the Centennial Mall Task Force.

During these discussions, they learned that the University clearly sees Centennial Mall as an asset for their two facilities directly on the Mall. It was exciting to hear that there are 10,000-12,000 people every year touring campus. In many ways there is a connection with the Capitol and the state and they want to use that as a familiarity connection. They talked about the informal uses where students can gather on the Mall. They would like to see more ceremonial uses and special events.

The tourism group expressed that this is a link and likes the functionality of the Mall. Traffic and wayfinding are issues. Designated visitor parking along the Mall is important to invite visitors to the Mall. They heard from nearly everyone that they could do so much more. Flexibility is important to accommodate special events especially with traffic and streets. They want to be able to use the Mall for special events, but everyone expressed that it is important to keep the view to the capitol sacred. The opportunity for food service along the Mall is valuable.

In general, the stakeholders care a great deal about the Mall and see the potential for expanded uses.

Hewitt stated that one of the things that strikes him is that the State of Nebraska is using the Mall a great deal and sees them as a potential donor. Kissel agreed and sees that there is a lot of support that could be capitalized upon.

Ripley asked if there was much discussion or interest in an outdoor performance area. Laging stated that the Masonic group would like to sponsor concerts.

Commissioners were encouraged with the responses received from the stakeholders.

Steward asked about the possibility of organizing a lobbying campaign with the stakeholders. Johnson stated that there is a communications group discussing donor possibilities. There is another opportunity with Senator Avery's study.

Laging stated that the Commission is uniquely positioned as a liaison with the state and local government, and he feels that could have a lot of impact.

Johnson stated that in terms of the timeline, they feel they need to focus more time on the stakeholder discussions. They anticipate having a draft plan at the November joint meeting and the Master Plan late in the year or early next year.

Steward asked about the Commission having a January meeting with all the stakeholders invited and conducting business in the open. This would serve two purposes; first, it would take away the opportunity of the public or anyone to say that the plan has been decided outside the public view; and it would maximize the media and public awareness. Johnson suggested having a public forum in a public meeting room such as Council Chambers and take testimony from the stakeholders. Ripley added that he feels public input from the general public is very important and it needs to be well publicized.

Ripley noted that the fiscal projections for the State are not good. Steward stated that he does not want the state legislative impacts to dictate the plan.

Kissel stated that a Centennial Mall Task Force design session will take place on October 12. The results of that meeting will be brought to the October 22 Commission meeting. Following that would be a stakeholder session open to the public.

Laging noted that that the City Council voted on Monday to extend the TIF district to R Street, broadening the question of where and how the TIF funds should be targeted.

Hewitt noted that there is another issue in the public as to whether or not there should be traffic on the Mall. The Downtown Master Plan recommends traffic on the P to Q block. Zimmer stated that if a new plan is in conflict with an existing plan, the existing plan should be discussed and proposed for amendment.

Searcy stated that he believes Congressman Fortenberry would be supportive of this plan, and he believes there is an opportunity for federal support.

Kissel recapped the timeline as follows: a Centennial Mall Task Force design session on or around October 12 (date still to be finalized); Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission meeting on October 22; the joint NCEC and State Capitol Commission meeting on November 12; the public open house between October 22 and November 12; and a possible NCEC meeting in December.

Steward moved to accept the proposed schedule with the addition that the December NCEC meeting include public participation. Specific dates and details would be the decision of the design team. The motion was seconded by Stoll. Hewitt, Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Stoll voting 'yes'; Todd absent.

Johnson stated that the donor recognition discussion will take place at the next Commission meeting.

Miscellaneous

Hewitt stated that the Nebraska State Historical Society is extremely irate on the construction of the Multi-Cultural Center, and the building is significantly beyond the height limits approved by the Commission. Zimmer stated that he would check on this and report back to the Commission.

Ripley asked the Commission if they would like to send the annual letter to LES regarding the burying of overhead lines. Searcy suggested acknowledging the open house in the letter.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:36 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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