

## MEETING RECORD

<b>NAME OF GROUP:</b>	NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION
<b>DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:</b>	Thursday, October 22, 2009, 8:00 a.m., Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
<b>MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Jim Hewitt, John Kay, Tom Laging, Jeff Searcy Cecil Steward and Larry Stoll. Kim Todd absent.
<b>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Dennis Scheer and JoAnne Kissel (The Clark Enersen Partners); Susan Larson Rodenburg (SLR Communications); Patty Pansing Brooks (Mayor's Office); Lynn Johnson (Parks & Recreation); Bob Ripley (Capitol Commission); Ed Zimmer and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)
<b>STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:</b>	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 September 24, 2009**

Searcy moved approval of the September 24, 2009 meeting notes, seconded by Stoll. Motion carried 6-0. Hewitt, Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Stoll voting 'yes'; Todd absent.

### **Centennial Mall redesign: Progress report from design team**

JoAnne Kissel began by introducing Tom Laging and Dennis Scheer. The design team includes The Clark Enersen Partner, BVH Architects and Tom Laging. Kissel stated that they have met with stakeholders, State associations and State departments. They had a meeting with the Centennial Mall Task Force last night. The public open house will be November 10 from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at the Scottish Rite Temple. A joint presentation will take place on November 12 with this Commission and the Nebraska Capitol Commission. They will come back to this body in December.

Kissel showed a PowerPoint presentation that began with a history of Centennial Mall. Centennial Mall began with the building of the capitol. In 1937, it became clear that the corridor needed to be protected. In 1967, Centennial Mall was created on the four blocks that were closed to traffic. In the 1960s, it was a very popular space. In the 1970s, UNL developed design guidelines for the Mall. In 1987, the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission was formed whose purpose was to protect the Mall. In 1997, the City & State commissioned a Master Plan which was called the *Spirit of the Mall*. In 2005, the City embarked on a Downtown Master Plan, which called for the Mall to provide festival space and a promenade. It also called for opening the Mall to vehicular traffic between P & Q and possibly Q & R. This is to facilitate retail and ease of movement. The Centennial Mall design team recommends that the Mall not be opened to traffic. Currently, the City has made \$2.2 million of tax increment financing (TIF) available for essential improvements to the Mall.

They are proposing a plan for the essential elements and then an overlay of opportunities for future development. The essentials include accessibility, safety, turf & paving, seating, lighting, north/south pedestrian connectivity, trees, plant material and signage. The opportunities are additional seating, water features, donor recognition, and interpretive possibilities.

Kissel stated they discovered from their stakeholder meeting that there is a lot of sentimental attachment to the Mall and its functional use. There are many great activities that occur on the Mall.

Scheer provided the design goals and objectives as follows: make it beautiful, safe, flexible, affordable, accessible, sustainable, create edges, make festival areas, connect the two ends, give attention to the center three blocks, light it well, get it done, keep the four outside blocks closed, and promote ownership at the edges.

To establish the edge, they want to create linear continuity, define the edges and make it secure. They feel that seating is important. They want to clean the edges, create simple paving and turf areas that knit together. Trees are very important as they create the vista. The trees on the Mall are in poor condition. There is some light on the Mall, but they feel pedestrian light is important as well as area light that can help the space be active at night. The connective route from north to south is very important. The ability to create flexible space is also very important. This is not just a way to think about some of the design features, but it is an integrated element on the Mall.

Laging stated that opportunities happen in a different sense. He believes the first block north of the capitol is the most sacred area and it belongs to the State and the people. He feels there is an opportunity for a visitor center there. It would be an introduction to the capitol. It might be a place where we honor some of the early Nebraskans. It could also include a memorial wall. There is an existing fountain and he believes it is a good location for a different type of fountain. This area is an opportunity to promote energy savings. Another idea is to create fountains on the cheek walls with ramps on the sides. A third idea is to create a holiday festival celebration space. A long range idea is to create a café in front of the State Office Building where people can gather for lunch and breaks. Another idea is to have the library wrap around Pershing Center. He would like to create curbsless streets which would accommodate festival space. They have had discussions with General Services Administration to create garage-type doors which would also be used for festival space. In the College of Journalism block, he envisions demonstration housing.

Kissel stated that this is a progress update and asked the Commission for their input.

Kay stated that he agrees with the essentials list, but he asked if we can take care of the essentials while still planning for the opportunities. He likes that they have allowed for formal and informal activities. Kissel stated that one of the things identified early on is to develop a plan that is tied to realistic funding strategies. They are still in the early stages, but it is a big part of how they look at the project.

Hewitt stated that he is pleased that they are recommending keeping the Mall closed to traffic.

Steward stated that the design and approach needs to recognize that if we do not conform to the Downtown Master Plan, they have to form an official request to the Planning Department that the Plan be changed. He feels the approach for essentials is correct and controllable within the budget constraints. However, some of the constraints are going to affect the entire infrastructure. He would be disappointed if we are going to set the stage for the additional opportunities, and then find out there is not the budget to do those things. He commends the notion of activation of the edges. He feels it is the right strategy to populate the edges and have more activity there. He is concerned about a proposal for housing on the edge that is directly related to the Mall.

Searcy stated that he is encouraged to hear about the statewide sentiment of the Mall. He asked about the pay as you go approach. Scheer stated that they believe the \$2.2 million could take care of doing the essentials and providing the infrastructure for the additional opportunities on the four closed blocks. Laging stated that the federal, state, & city governments benefit and he believes they need to step up to the plate.

**Centennial Mall redesign: Donor recognition (Lynn Johnson)**

Johnson stated that donor recognition needs to be simple and tasteful and integrated with the design elements. The interpretive features may also be an opportunity for donors. They need to discuss whether or not they are going to encourage broad participation from citizens throughout the state.

**Staff report: UNL Multicultural Center, etc.**

Zimmer stated that the Multicultural Center was reviewed in the summer of 2007 and design materials were presented in September 2007. The building evolved from the design the Commission saw. The cupola was not built and the windows were reduced slightly on the north side of the building. The building is 56.5 feet tall which is below the 57 foot height limit. The Multicultural Center cannot be seen in views directly from the State Historical Society. From north of P Street, the building can be seen from the State Historical Society.

Hewitt asked Zimmer if he is satisfied that the building is under 57 feet. Zimmer replied that he is confident the building is under 57 feet.

Laging stated that it seems the Commission needs to look more carefully at the views to and from the Capitol. He believes perhaps the Commission failed to consider the view from the Capitol. He also believes it speaks to the fact that the boundary on the west was expanded.

Ripley stated that it is a bit disingenuous for the University to come before the Commission with a design that was approved by the Commission and then not build what was approved. He feels they should have apprised the Commission of the change. Views from the capitol have been seriously abridged by the fact that the University did not build what they said they were going to. He would like the University to be more forthcoming when making changes.

Hewitt stated that if the building is within the height limits, he feels maybe there was an aesthetical mistake made by the Commission.

Searcy asked if there is anything that can be done today that would help with this issue. Steward that the very basic problem is that the Historical Society should have never been constructed at that location. Perhaps that site will be better utilized in the future.

### **Miscellaneous**

Zimmer asked if the Commission is willing to meet on the third Thursday in December. Commissioners agreed to this date.

Ripley presented a draft letter to LES regarding the burying of underground cables. He asked if the Commission would like to formally send the letter to LES. Kay made a motion to send the letter to LES, seconded by Steward. Motion carried 6-0. Hewitt, Kay, Laging, Searcy, Steward and Stoll voting 'yes'; Todd absent.

Laging asked if there would be benefit in bringing the Centennial Mall issue before the City Council. Zimmer stated that this is an advocacy group, so he feels that as the budget comes forward, then that would be appropriate for the Commission to address. Johnson stated that he believes this may be a good time to bring this project before the State as well.

Steward stated that if the design team is interested in this being a demonstration project for urban sustainability, there could be some money available from the federal level specifically for that purpose.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:44 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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