

## MEETING RECORD

**NAME OF GROUP:** NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, June 26, 2014, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room 214, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Christie Dionisopoulos, John Kay, Tom Laging, Karen Nalow, Cecil Steward and Jeff Searcy; (Jon Weinberg absent). Ed Zimmer and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Bob Ripley and Matt Hansen from the Office of the Capitol Commission; John Heacock from the State Building Division; and Kevin Abourezk from the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Regular Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Chair Jeff Searcy called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

Searcy expressed his appreciation to Michele Abendroth for her efforts over the years as Secretary to the Capitol Environs Commission, and for the outstanding job that she has done. The other Commissioners agreed. Ed Zimmer stated that Michele has taken a job with Public Works & Utilities.

Searcy then requested a motion approving the minutes for the regular meetings held March 27, 2014 and April 24, 2014; and the notes from the meeting held May 22, 2014. Motion for approval made by Kay, seconded by Dionisopoulos and carried 6-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Steward and Searcy voting 'yes'; Weinberg absent.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT 430 SOUTH 16<sup>TH</sup> STREET, FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**PUBLIC HEARING:** **June 26, 2014**

Members present: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Steward, Steward and Searcy; Weinberg absent.

Zimmer stated that this application had public hearing at last month's meeting, but there was not a quorum present to take action. It was his opinion that the proposal was acceptable to everyone present last month.

Searcy stated that the Commission has worked with members of First Christian Church in the past, on signage. He is thankful they came back in with this update.

**ACTON:**

Dionisopoulos moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed improvements to the landscape, seconded by Kay and carried 6-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Steward, Steward and Searcy; Weinberg absent.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR INSCRIBED PLAQUES IN THE SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA PATHWAY OF NEBRASKA'S CENTENNIAL MALL, IN THE CAPITOL ENVIRONS DISTRICT**  
**PUBLIC HEARING:** **June 26, 2014**

Members present: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Steward, Steward and Searcy; Weinberg absent.

Dionisopoulos suggested that with help from Commissioners, this group identify a subcommittee to review these tiles. That group can bring a recommendation forward so this group doesn't need to go line by line on all of these plaques. The construction timeline has been moved back. This is not urgent. She believes it might be wise to have a small group that looks these over, and then makes a recommendation to this group, as a whole.

Kay stated that the current process has been the review of draft language that was contributed from the donor, and vetted by Danielle Conrad.

Zimmer noted that Conrad is now retired from the Lincoln Parks Foundation. Dionisopoulos is Interim Director.

Dionisopoulos noted that sometimes the donor submits their language. She suggested that Zimmer, herself and someone else from the Commission could review the language. She also believes that Roger Ludemann would be an excellent candidate for the group.

Searcy knew this issue was surfacing. He had a conversation with Ludemann this morning and asked if he would be willing to serve on a small group to review the plaques. It is a key element and Roger is playing a very interactive role in the process. Ludemann is willing to volunteer. Searcy would concur that Roger would be a wonderful addition. He thinks that someone from the design team should be on the subcommittee also. Karen Nalow would be a great addition. These could be reviewed and brought to the Commission as a whole.

Dionisopoulos believes that the group will also review anything that has gone through already. She believes there are 82 in total.

Laging wondered if this is an editorial board. Ripley agreed. He thinks it is as well.

Zimmer is willing to help the subcommittee. He thinks the intent of the Commission's goals are a kind of safeguard that the plaques will be worked up thoroughly. If we should ever encounter something that seems offensive in any way, there will be a group able to say no. He agrees that the Commission doesn't need the burden of editing every single plaque. An editorial board is a fine idea.

**ACTION:**

Dionisopoulos moved for the creation of a subcommittee to review the plaques. She is willing to serve on the committee and moved for other members to be Karen Nalow from the design team for the mall, Roger Ludemann and Ed Zimmer. Motion seconded by Nalow and carried 6-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Steward, Steward and Searcy voting 'yes'; Weinberg absent.

Searcy thanked everyone for their willingness to serve.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT THE MUSEUM OF NEBRASKA HISTORY, 131 CENTENNIAL MALL NORTH**  
**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**June 26, 2014**

Members present: Dionisopoulos, Laging, Nalow, Steward, Steward and Searcy; Kay declared a conflict of interest; Weinberg absent.

John Kay introduced John Heacock from the State Building Division. They are one of the primary leaders of this project. This is the Nebraska History Museum on the southwest corner of P Street and Centennial Mall. There are four aspects to consider. They are adding some loading doors for getting materials in and out, a new store front on the east façade, alteration to an existing mechanical penthouse and one percent for arts budget. There is not a lot to discuss today on the last point. There is a separate Committee that has formed to discuss that issue. That will be brought in once the project is much farther along. The museum is doing all new exhibits inside. They are closing September 1, 2014 and will be closed for about a year.

Kay continued that they would like to add loading doors on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels. They would like to add a fourth bay with a pair of loading doors, roughly eight feet by eight feet. They would use the south alley to lift things up and in. The Fire Marshall wants them to fill the grand central stair. There were some Fire code issues. This building was constructed in 1967 for the Elk's Club. The open area was a drive through, drop off. In 1981, it was repurposed as the Nebraska History Museum. Additional exhibit space was added. The Fire Marshall would like a more direct entrance. In 1981, the plan filled in the drive through. They were asked to incorporate a more direct exit and entry. There will also be new restrooms and upgrades to the elevator. The visitor desk

gets relocated. They are challenged with a new entry that won't extend beyond the beams. There is a slight four or five inch grade difference. They will have to adjust the grade of the sidewalk, which means removal of some of the concrete.

Nalow questioned if they will be matching the joint patterns. Kay replied they are examining that now. He would be happy to follow up.

Kay continued that in conjunction with the architects, they have come up with a simple box frame entry. They are proposing wood siding on the interior side of the frame. They have carried this through to the elevator core. Then it opens up into larger volume gallery spaces. They have investigated the product. It has performed well in a lot of commercial applications. It is five inch board with furring strips. It is termite, mold and fungus resistant. It is the desire of the design team to leave it in the project.

John Heacock stated that the front won't be exposed to snow and ice.

Laging questioned if the columns will be precast. Kay replied they will be an aggregate.

Searcy believes as long as the design team is comfortable with the integrity of the product, he thinks it is a nice flow.

Kay took the comments from last month's meeting to the design group.

Steward stated that he was not at the meeting last month. If the frame doesn't match the texture, could the color be matched? Kay replied they were trying to get it to read differently. Steward believes it would enhance the entrance to be similar in color.

Laging wondered about any signage. Kay stated that the Director, Mike Smith, would like to replace the word 'Museum' in block letters on the top penthouse. They are looking into that.

Heacock stated that this is an eight million dollar project. They have always had problems in trying to identify the building. Kay believes there is around \$15,500.00 in the budget for signage.

Laging questioned if this Commission will review the signage. Kay believes that would be appropriate.

Steward questioned if they are envisioning a lift in the alley space to get materials to the upper floors. Kay replied that happens very infrequently, maybe once every five years. Yes, they will get a scissor lift.

Steward doesn't think a lift operator will respect the projection. Kay believes that is a good point. Charlie McWilliams is the manager at the museum. Heacock believes they will deliver mostly on the ledge. Kay thinks it is about a 30 inch ledge.

Kay stated there will be lighting on the north and east facades. The mechanical equipment was removed and is now in the basement. They need more collection storage space. They are putting the mechanical equipment back in the penthouse, freeing the basement. They will be replacing the signage on the steel panels.

Kay noted that it is 64 feet, 9 inches from the roof deck to ground level.

**ACTION:**

Steward moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for renovation and repair of the museum, seconded by Dionisopoulos.

Laging wondered if we want the signage replaced at the top of the building. He doesn't think that the existing signage captures the essence of the museum. He is not sure it is a positive contribution to replace the signage on the penthouse.

Heacock stated there was a discussion on whether to maintain or get rid of it. It is probably not an appropriate way to identify the museum.

Ripley has reservations about the steel panels and the signage.

Hansen noted that it is difficult to see from street level, if not impossible.

Kay agreed they aren't very fond of the sign, but acknowledge it is great advertising.

Ripley believes that this is something that is an integral part of the approval process. It is a timely point of discussion.

Heacock stated that by July or August of this year, we should be ready for another presentation to this Commission.

Laging noted that there is a colonnade that runs around the building. There might be an opportunity for signage.

Kay stated that internally, there is not a consensus on what they want to do. They are busy dealing with a new exhibit plan and closing the museum on September 1.

Steward would suggest modifying his motion to approve the Certificate pending receipt and review of a study of exterior signage, consistent with other design elements of the project. Dionisopoulos seconded the original motion. She is okay with amending the original motion to include this language.

Steward believes it is useful to the design team to know what is acceptable. It is not the job of the Commission to designate.

Zimmer clarified that from what he has heard, this will be back for an additional Certificate of Appropriateness for the signs. Steward and Dionisopoulos concurred.

Motion for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for renovation and repair of the museum, with receipt and review of a study of the exterior signage, consistent with other design elements of the project, to come back for further review at a later date, carried 5-0: Dionisopoulos, Laging, Nalow, Steward and Searcy voting 'yes', Kay declared a conflict of interest, Weinberg absent.

### **Recommendation on P Street East Redevelopment Project**

Zimmer stated this is mostly outside the boundaries of the district. The key element is a new brewery on P St., between 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Street. City staff suggested a TIF project. The boundary map includes small portions of the Environs district. He believes this needs to be reviewed by this Commission before a Planning Commission review.

### **ACTION:**

Steward moved that when plans come forward for the streetscape, they will be reviewed by this Commission, seconded by Kay and carried 6-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Searcy and Steward voting 'yes'; Weinberg absent.

### **Discussion**

- Searcy had a conversation with Zimmer about the possibility of canceling the August meeting. This would only happen if there are no action items.

Zimmer has taken steps to accommodate that. The Planning Director asked for this Commission to look at the South Haymarket Subarea Plan in August. Zimmer suggested July. The Planning Director is okay with that.

- Laging doesn't know what the thinking is on Pershing. Zimmer stated that to the best of his knowledge, any decision hasn't been made or funds identified. There has been discussion on whether to clear the site for redevelopment. They have been exploring any ways to identify the cost of salvaging the mural.

Nalow wondered if anyone has talked about any other exterior elements. The building is wrapped in a great deal of stone.

Steward asked Zimmer to define whether this Commission has any authority for review on demolitions in the district. Zimmer believes regarding demolition, certainly so. There is explicit language that says before demolition, plans must be reviewed by this Commission. Ideally, they should discuss any new use.

Steward believes there has been too much discussion on demolition, and no discussion with the public on future uses.

Ripley completely agreed. The cart has been put way before the horse. The fact that the remainder of the building is clad in limestone and granite seems to be lost. The mural can be handled any way the public chooses. The building is the issue. The discussion is in reverse right now, in his opinion

Steward believes there are only one or two other buildings facing Centennial Mall that would have as much impact as Pershing. It is entirely urgent to have public consideration of this project, from now forward.

Searcy wondered about the Pershing Committee. Zimmer stated that there was a study about five or six years ago, the Pershing Re-Use Study. It was mostly a public conversation about opportunities. Following that, about two years ago there was an invitation for redevelopment proposals. Three came forward. All were rejected. Today, additional information has been gathered, but there has been no further action.

Hansen stated it was interesting to see the Library Board acknowledge that we need a downtown library. Zimmer added that was one of the three proposals. There was a large challenge on funding that one.

Searcy would request to continue to bring forth news on Pershing. Zimmer thinks we are nearing the time where the last events are scheduled for Pershing in the next few months.

Searcy questioned who would bring forth something for review. Zimmer believes it is all within City administration. If there was a proposal to demolish, it would have to come in for review. Information gathering is what is happening now. Any redevelopment proposal would come here also. It depends on the readiness of the administration to have the discussion. Zimmer will communicate this conversation and the concerns.

- Searcy wants to revisit formal discussion and approval of traffic signals on Centennial Mall.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 9:00 a.m.