

## MEETING RECORD

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

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, October 23, 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, Jeff Searcy, Cecil Steward and Jon Weinberg. Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost of Parks and Recreation; Robert Ripley and Matt Hansen from the Office of the Capitol Commission.

**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 then requested a motion approving the minutes for the regular meeting held September 25, 2014. Motion for approval made by Kay, seconded by Weinberg and carried 6-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Nalow, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Laging abstaining.

Searcy announced that Lynn Johnson, Director of Parks and Recreation, took a fall over the weekend and is at Bryan Hospital for rehabilitation.

### **TEXT AMENDMENT TO ZONING CODE, DELETING SECTIONS 27.67.075 REGARDING RESIDENTIAL PARKING IN CAPITOL ENVIRONS DISTRICT**

**PUBLIC HEARING:** **October 23, 2014**

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

Ed Zimmer stated that this application originated from Gill Peace on behalf of the owners of Century House on Lincoln Mall. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor was originally apartments. They are converting it back from office space to apartments. Changes in the parking standards in 1996 have increased required parking for all residences in the Capitol Environs to two stalls per dwelling unit, regardless of the underlying zoning. This is higher than the standards of the underlying zoning districts. The code also says that the City Council can reduce parking to one per resident. There were originally 14 studio apartments on the second floor of Century House. The standards today would require 28 additional stalls in the Capitol Environs District, regardless of the

underlying O-1 zoning which would require .5 stalls per dwelling unit. Those seven stalls are currently available. They cannot obtain an additional 28 parking stalls.

As staff looked at this, it seemed proper to encourage residences in the built part of the City. It seemed logical rather than adjusting something in the O-1 standards, to let the underlying zoning govern the parking as it does in other districts. As he looked back at the 1996 discussion, mention was made that Capitol Environs was special as a justification for the waiver from two stalls to one stall. There was no discussion of why this was taken to two stalls per dwelling. It didn't seem to be logical. Striking it seems not only the simplest, but the fairest to the underlying property.

Ripley questioned that Zimmer found no serious justification to quadruple the parking for this district? Zimmer did not find any discussion of why it was increased to the level that it was.

Steward was wondering if it would be fair to assume the Capitol District was called out to try and protect and limit the on-street parking. Zimmer believes that was the overall purpose of the 1996 changes. What it did was decrease permitted residential density by increasing parking requirements. In B-4 (Lincoln Center Business District) particularly, it is harder to justify and not explained at all in the record of the 1996 actions. He is not sure it has been applied anywhere.

Searcy wondered what impact this would have for future development in the South Haymarket. Zimmer responded this would be a steep hill to climb with two stalls per unit, particularly for the row house concept on J Street.

Dionisopoulos stated that the reality is that everyone seems to have a vehicle. She questioned that the other options would be. Zimmer replied that we face something similar with Tifereth House. There are 11 stalls in the old synagogue. Many of their residents had bicycles and no cars. They were in a part of the B-4 which required parking. The owner asked if parking could be adjusted with the special permit. His argument was if he needed to get a parking stall to get a tenant, he could obtain one. In these settings if the tenant is not satisfied with the parking arrangement, they won't rent there. He thinks it is the location as much as the requirement.

Ripley wanted to hear Zimmer's perspective on what downside there is, other than pushing more parking on the street, if the current parking standards are revised and parking goes back to underlying zoning. It is that way everywhere else. Zimmer struggles on this one a bit. He knows when there is a provision like this that only applies in a limited area, he believes it gets missed. A circumstance unlike the others, it is not surprising that it is accidentally overlooked. The anomalies are the ones that get unevenly applied. Ripley stated that it seems to him to be a real complicating matter. It would be a disservice for someone trying to develop the area with residences. We don't want Capitol Environs to turn into a parking lot either.

Weinberg hardly ever sees two to one parking in an apartment. He believes a one bedroom doesn't need two stalls, and many times, a three bedroom apartment has one car. This

standard doesn't seem to make sense. Two to one in South Haymarket will force them to make larger parking decks. Ripley agreed. This is a dis-incentive.

Searcy questioned if this affects Goodhue. Zimmer replied that Goodhue is mostly R-6 and R-7 zoning. There is a bit of R-8 zoning which is the densest district. O-1 is the zoning of most of Lincoln Mall. As you get into the extended west part of the environs, it is mostly Public Building Commission land and I-1 Industrial. Eventually if there was redevelopment there, it would be a private zoning district. To the east over to Lincoln High is a mix of O-1 and R-6 zoning. There is a spot of B-3 at the Laundromat. The district is a grab bag of zoning districts. But all those districts are much broader and the zoning extends to either side of the Environs.

Laging asked if this commission has the capacity to do incentives in terms of zoning, and adjust the underlying zone. Zimmer replied that the basic Capitol Environs District is an overlay. There are no incentives. For historic landmarks, there is a special permit option. Someone has to come in and make a case that their proposal is not harmful to the landmark or its neighbors. Tifereth House is a landmark special permit. He believes there are buildings that probably couldn't be used otherwise. Conceivably, the Environs District could have the same provision. It would be an interesting one to describe.

Dionisopoulos believes the concern is about excess vehicles that would be parked on the street. What about hourly parking? Sadly, we keep bringing this up. When you visit the Capitol, where do you park? Ripley keeps asking that same question. Zimmer bikes through the area every day. Clearly there is heavy utilization of daytime on-street parking. You don't develop a new project based on on-street parking. It would not work.

Steward is curious what it looks like in the evening. Zimmer has seen that the parking is a little looser, but it is a densely populated neighborhood. There are a lot of bikes and pedestrians, so there is that opportunity. Skypark has interior parking. He doesn't think this proposed amendment creates more problems than it solves.

Dionisopoulos understands that this would adding cars on the street if you make this change. Zimmer does not see that happening in the case of the Century House.

Steward sees both sides. He drives twice a day from Capitol Parkway to D Street. It is a total residential environment. There is parking on both sides of the street. The driver is forced to drive 20-25 miles an hour. That is a good thing. Let's think about the social views.

**ACTION:**

Weinberg moved approval of amending Section 27.67.075, deleting the two parking spaces per dwelling unit in the Capitol Environs District and going back to underlying zoning, seconded by Nalow.

Dionisopoulos would like to recommend the State build a parking lot or garage.

Ripley has long wanted to see a parking structure operating the same way the garage does for the County-City building. He is frustrated on behalf of the people who try to visit the Capitol and have nowhere to park.

Dionisopoulos sees that some great concerns have come up. She does not want to see lack of parking limit development.

Ripley is considering sending a letter to the Director of Administrative Services.

Steward believes we would be better served if it was more deliberate. If we would work with State and local staff, we would begin to get a broader picture of parking.

Laging believes this could be corrected with action on this application.

Weinberg remembers a parking study that was just completed that he believes includes the south Environs. It recommended two new garages in the downtown area. Zimmer will try to find more information on this study and report back.

Motion for approval carried 7-0: Dionisopoulos, Kay, Laging, Nalow, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes'.

**A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR INSCRIBED PLAQUES IN THE SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA  
PATHWAY OF NEBRASKA'S CENTENNIAL MALL**

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**October 23, 2014**

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

Zimmer stated that the committee has been working on drafts for the next series of plaques, but they haven't met again for editorial purposes. They are considering a working session in Lynn Johnson's absence and will see how to finalize the next set.

Dionisopoulos stated they will keep moving forward. This next section is a little more difficult.

Searcy thanked the entire committee for all their efforts.

**A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR A MARKET OR MONUMENT ON GOODHUE  
BOULEVARD IN THE VICINITY OF A STREET, HONORING BERTRAM G. GOODHUE**

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

**October 23, 2014**

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

Zimmer looked at the 1986 study to see what it said about precinct markers. The plan shows markers on the corners, not in the center median. It also makes clear that it was a very

conceptual plan. It was not meant to be followed in detail, but broad concepts. He had a brief conversation with Jon Carlson from the Mayor's office and Stronger Safer Neighborhoods to gauge his opinion. The applicant may bring back a more developed proposal that may still be centered on the median. They would need to make sure it is at a height level that someone in a wheelchair or shorter could still read it. That could require lowering the curb. There are a lot of things to refine. They are talking with Public Works and getting their input.

Searcy asked what defines a precinct marker. Ripley replied one of the grandest ones is Piedmont. Searcy was not sure one that large could still be called a marker. Zimmer stated that a more modest one is Woodshire. It is limestone posts on either side of the entrance to the neighborhood.

Searcy would like defined what determines a precinct. Zimmer replied it is just a place.

Searcy knows that Ripley had strong feelings on markers in the medians. He would like to hear his opinion.

Ripley would like to see planting only in the medians of Goodhue Blvd. and have the plants limited to a certain height of growth to preserve visibility along the seven block length of the street. For instance, trees planted in the median would only serve to block the end to end view along the boulevard the medians were designed to create. The issue of locating something like a permanent marker in the median could affect traffic and other issues along this street. It could create a potentially unsafe condition where adults and children are encouraged to walk out and stand in the middle of the median among vehicular traffic to read the marker. He is also concerned about the precedent being set where someone on "D" Street, at McPhee School or elsewhere along the boulevard, might want markers as well. He tends to think that markers at the sides of an intersection, near the sidewalks, will be more effective and visible for pedestrians to read.

Dionisopoulos believes Ripley makes a good point about precedent. As soon as South Haymarket is developed, we don't want to see markers all over.

Laging thinks that markers tend to have a symmetrical aspect to them instead of being in the center. Ripley has no problem with the precinct marker concept, just the location.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Searcy has seen plans the N Street protected bikeway. This project is quietly working forward. Zimmer stated they are seeking funding. Searcy added that the Great Plains Trail Network is attempting to raise \$250,000.00. Zimmer clarified that plans call for a protected two way bikeway on the south side of N Street with a median between bikes and cars.

- Zimmer announced that the American Planning Association has done a “Great Places in America” program for a number of years. Lincoln’s trail system has been chosen as a “Great Place”. Lincoln is one of the few communities that has two recognized “Great Places,” with the Haymarket honored in the past, and the trail system just recently designated.
- Zimmer reminded everyone that the November meeting is a joint meeting at the State Capitol.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.