

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP:	NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Thursday, March 27, 2014, 8:00 a.m., Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Christie Dionisopoulos, Karen Nalow, Jeff Searcy, Cecil Steward and Jon Weinberg. John Kay and Tom Laging absent.
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Kevin Abourezk (Lincoln Journal Star); Randy Hoskins and Lonnie Burklund (Public Works); JJ Yost (Parks & Rec); Bob Ripley and Matt Hansen (Capitol Commission); Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Regular Meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 a.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Approval of meeting record of February 27, 2014

Steward moved approval of the meeting record of February 27, 2014 with the changes submitted by Ripley, seconded by Weinberg. Motion carried 5-0. Dionisopoulos, Nalow, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes'. Kay and Laging absent.

Certificate of Appropriateness for inscribed plaques in the Spirit of Nebraska Pathway of Nebraska's Centennial Mall, in the Capitol Environs District.

Zimmer noted that there are no inscriptions to review at this time. Yost added that they intend to have some inscriptions for the Commission's review at the next meeting.

Discussion of traffic control lights, Centennial Mall intersections.

Hoskins stated it is their understanding that the Commission would like to see the mast arms removed over Centennial Mall. They have a number of concerns with that. The first one is from a liability standpoint. One of the reasons that they typically put their signals on mast arms is that studies have shown it is a much safer situation. When you go from a side pole mount to a mast arm, roughly 50% crash reductions are expected. Every traffic signal we have is on a mast arm. One of the things that is important to them is driver expectation. They want everything to look alike, and to have one corridor different, they are concerned that would increase crashes.

Searcy stated that there has not been any formal action by the Commission, and they want this to be an open dialogue.

Hoskins stated that another concern is visibility of traffic signals. He stated that they received photos from Hansen of various downtowns. In downtown settings, there is a lot of visual clutter and it is hard to pick up the signals and see them. Another concern, primarily with N Street, is that it was built with federal funds, so if they were to remove the mast arms, they would have to repay the federal

government for those signals. Searcy asked what the cost for that would be. Burkland stated that it would be approximately \$175,000 to \$200,000. Hoskins also noted that if they were to go with a pole, they would have to pull those in closer to the street.

Hoskins stated that what they can look at ways to make the corridor better looking.

Ripley asked if there is a rough average of the volume of traffic on a downtown street. Hoskins stated that O Street has approximately 25,000 vehicles per day; P and Q Streets are in the low 20,000 range. Ripley asked if they have the traffic counts on the three open blocks of Centennial Mall. Hoskins responded that it is approximately 3,000. Ripley noted that the volume is low in comparison to the other streets, and the expectation is not the same as on O Street.

Ripley asked how many projects in recent years have raised over \$1 million a block through private donations. This is a slightly different condition than the average street in downtown.

Yost stated that the diagonal parking would affect the location of the poles, which affects the location of the trees. Hoskins stated that they are required to have two signals, so they would need a pole on each side of the street. Burkland stated that visibility of signal heads is very important. It is almost impossible to get the pole signals in the cone of vision. Banners, trees, and benches all make it more difficult to see the poles.

Steward commented that this would not be a discussion at all if the three blocks weren't open to traffic. This is a piece of unfinished business, and the arms on the lettered streets are parallel to the vista and are essentially not in view. He'd rather see the Commission spend its time getting those three blocks closed.

Hoskins stated that after hearing the Commission's concerns, as they look at future designs on this corridor, they will look for ways to minimize the obstruction of the view.

Searcy stated that the original master plan included the three blocks being closed. The possibility of that for the future is exciting, but at the same time, it is important to accomplish what is before us now.

Hoskins stated that one of the biggest values of that street being open now is Pershing, but with the future of that, it is an opportunity to look at that corridor again.

Searcy asked what we can do to strike a balance. Hoskins stated that they will look at other options such as possibly reducing the length of the arm.

Nalow stated that they are passed the time to implement these changes within the current construction. It would have to be done at a later date. Some of the signals are already installed, and some are going to be installed soon.

Hoskins asked what the biggest concern is about the mast arms. Ripley stated that is the combination of the length of the arms with two constantly changing lights.

Hansen stated that he didn't really realize the visual impact of the obstruction until it was gone. When the overhead electrical lines were removed, it really opened up the view.

Nalow stated that we don't want a solution that would create a conflict between cars and pedestrians. We want to make sure that whatever the solution is that it is safe.

Steward stated that if we were doing this project 20 years ago, we wouldn't have the option of that clean pole condition. It would be wood poles, galvanized wire with street lights hanging over the middle of the intersection. He doesn't think there is anything wrong with asking Public Works to relook at the technology of the time to see if the intersection can be cleaned up more. He thinks we should ask them to look at it and see what can be done from the engineering and technology perspective.

Yost stated that we would need to make sure that any solution would work with the landscape plan.

Dionisopoulos moved to request Public Works to work creatively on a solution to enhance the corridor, seconded by Weinberg. Motion carried 5-0. Dionisopoulos, Nalow, Searcy, Steward and Weinberg voting 'yes'. Kay and Laging absent.

Miscellaneous: staff report, etc.

Yost stated that they are about ready to begin construction on Phase II of Centennial Mall. The contractor should be able to get started in the next month. There is a lot of coordination as it involves intersection work and traffic flow. They received bids on the landscape material as well. They should be done by Christmas of 2015.

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

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