

MEETING MINUTES

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 11:00 a.m., Hearing Room
1510, Nebraska State Capitol, 15th & K Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Gene Crump, Christie Dionisopoulos, John Kay, Karen Nalow, Jeff Searcy and Jon Weinberg; (Tom Laging absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Zimmer and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Lynn Johnson and JJ Yost of Parks & Recreation; Greg Allen with of Farmers Mutual Insurance; Matt Metcalf of Davis Design; and other interested parties.

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 October 22, 2015. Motion for approval made by Kay, seconded by Weinberg and carried 6-0: Crump, Dionisopoulos, Kay, Nalow, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Laging absent.

A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR WORK AT THE FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY HEADQUARTERS, 501 S. 13TH STREET (AT LINCOLN MALL)

PUBLIC HEARING: November 17, 2015

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

Ed Zimmer stated that representatives from Famers Mutual and Davis Design were present. Last month the question was if this was appropriate for 'no material effect'. The commission wanted a little closer scrutiny on this item. He recommends this for approval. He believes this will have a very minor effect on the environs.

ACTION:

Weinberg moved approval, seconded by Kay.

Greg Allen stated that the concept for the south courtyard was school children coming down the mall, having a place to congregate. They aren't utilizing the space as hoped. There could be a table for lunches, or this could be a place to hold small events. They want to make the space more inviting. There needs to be more seating, a stone floor and a little more screening from the elements.

Searcy questioned if the the total renovation of the old headquarters building is complete. Allen replied yes, both buildings are done.

Kay inquired if this courtyard serves the new/current headquarters. Allen replied he was correct. He added that their former building is being leased out.

Searcy commended Farmers Mutual for always doing a nice job with corporate citizenry in the Capitol Environs District. They are always willing to listen and make any modifications necessary. He thanked them for that.

Motion for approval carried 6-0: Crump, Dionisopoulos, Kay, Nalow, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Laging absent.

A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR CONTINUED DESIGN DEVELOPMENT OF NEBRASKA'S CENTENNIAL MALL

PUBLIC HEARING:

November 17, 2015

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

Zimmer stated they are still working on treatment of the north terminus of Centennial Mall and how to acknowledge UNL. This will appear at a future meeting.

Lynn Johnson stated that he has no new information to present.

Crump wondered if this is usual. Johnson stated that this is being reviewed by the UNL Chancellor's and the Mayor's office. That takes time.

Searcy would like to ask for an agenda item to begin the conversation for timing of various activities on the mall with regard to the upcoming sesquicentennial. He was in meetings yesterday, all day. One key signature event was a sesquicentennial event on the mall, which he could like to see this commission involved in. There needs to be discussions regarding the timing, venue, concept, amongst other items. On August 21, 2017, there will be a total eclipse of the sun. There was discussion of this being a great opportunity to promote Nebraska, since Lincoln is in the path of the total eclipse. The sesquicentennial could play a part of that. He would love to begin to have the formal discussion. He thinks it would be appropriate to have the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission make the formal request to the Sesquicentennial Committee.

Johnson would offer the city event team that coordinates multi-department events. He believes they will be of great assistance.

Searcy stated that the first lady is coordinating and would like some of this information as early as December 1, 2015. He was doing research on the centennial and found it a very interesting read. One part of the final report was from a statewide perspective and people seemed very pleased with the celebration. There was a sense of disappointment from a lack of a grand finale. He hopes to have a discussion next month. He would like to provide something that has never been seen before.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Zimmer noted that next regularly scheduled meeting would be on December 24, 2015. He inquired what the commission preference was for a date, perhaps December 17, 2015. Everyone agreed on December 17, 2015 as the meeting date.
- The Mayor asked Zimmer to dust off the East Mall Plan. Some tree planting might have to be redone. Work is needed on a project on the east mall where there is a visual disconnect. The north right-of-way line continues unimpeded, but there is empty property now. This is a problem with the view from the Capitol. The Mayor would like to see something happen on the half block. That was combined with the question on Standing Bear. He questioned if this would be an appropriate location for the Standing Bear statue. The Mayor is mostly interested in seeing something happen. He will draw together Parks & Recreation and the old plan, and direct the environs question of how that might be done. Public Works will have to be involved. There is the possibility of closing that half block. Those will be the questions to be wrestled with.

Searcy knows that the same question has been raised with the Sesquicentennial Committee. They wonder what to do with Standing Bear. Zimmer believes the question came from Judi Gaiashkibos, Exec. Director of Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs. Centennial Mall maintains an open center, with some possible art locations along the sides. We don't want to hide something that shouldn't be hidden. We don't want to shoehorn something in a way that doesn't have dignity and a gathering space. On the other hand, Standing Bear is a significant historic figure of the stature envisioned for recognition on Centennial Mall.

Dionisopoulos wondered if there are guidelines that address this. Zimmer replied there are very little guidelines regarding the east mall. It mostly addresses residential property. This is an area that we might want to address through the standard review. The 1986 plan that envisions some kind of major landscape element at this location, is a broad concepts. It is a starting point for the conversation. The original plat of Lincoln went to 17th Street. Thomas Kennard owned the property east of that and in dedicating a right-of-way only 60 feet wide, rather than the 120 feet of the 16th-17th ROW of J Street, created that awkward jog.

Searcy believes the apartment complex at that location is in good physical shape yet. Zimmer agreed. This is a view from the State Capitol which makes it unique.

Dionisopoulos questioned what Zimmer anticipates. Zimmer envisions bringing together city departments and working with the commission to look at proposals.

Dionisopoulos feels like this should be discussed as policy prior to any design work. She feels this could set a precedent. She is concerned if the idea moves forward, many people feel strongly about many people in history, and we could be approached for other parties. She is concerned this could set a precedent. Zimmer believes there could be some appropriately identified locations. Searcy commends the Mayor for coming forward with an east direction. Zimmer believes since discussion has begun, this can incorporated into a bigger piece.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.