

## MEETING NOTES

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

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, March 24, 2016, 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, Thomas Laging, Jeff Searcy and Jon Weinberg; (Gene Crump, John Kay and Karen Nalow absent).

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Ed Zimmer, Stacey Groshong-Hageman and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Lynn Johnson and JJ 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 meetings January 28, 2016. Motion for approval made by Laging, seconded by Weinberg and carried 4-0: Dionisopoulos, Laging, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Crump, Kay and Nalow absent.

### **A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR ADDITIONAL PLAQUES ON THE SPIRIT OF NEBRASKA PARTHWAY, PART OF NEBRASKA'S CENTENNIAL MALL**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

**March 24, 2016**

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

Ed Zimmer stated there were two plaques that just recently came in. The contractor is doing great work on this project. There was discussion and the commissioners agreed that the date of the MECO-HENNE plaque should read "2016". Zimmer further explained that the second plaque is for the Rohman family.

**ACTION:**

Weinberg moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness, with the change that the date of the first plaque be changed to 2016, seconded by Laging.

Searcy would like an update on the progress of Centennial Mall. JJ Yost stated these plaques will fit into the schedule. They are working through all the details. It has been a challenge to get all the characters, spacing and everything just right, before casting. They have had a couple of proofs. The first batch of 17 is in process of being cast now. The second batch is in the proof and preparation stage. It will go faster than the first batch. The first batch will be here soon and they can start installing them this summer as they receive them. They hope to have them all done and in place by this fall.

Ripley inquired if Parks and Recreation is doing the installation. Yost replied yes. If they get the first batch in time, the contractor may install them. It was in the contract that way. Parks will most likely be doing the installation.

Ripley questioned if the letters are engraved and recessed or raised. Yost replied they are raised. There is the recessed corner receptacle for the QR code. Dionisopoulos added they will start installation with the block closest to the capitol. The first set is the Hall of Fame and bronze. Moving farther out is granite.

Searcy wondered if anyone has seen a completed plaque. Yost replied yes. The final product is excellent. Searcy conveyed his gratitude for a job well done.

Motion carried 4-0: Dionisopoulos, Laging, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Crump, Kay and Nalow absent.

**SPECIAL PERMIT NO. 16013, 100' FLAGPOLE AT 400 NW. 56<sup>TH</sup> STREET, CRETE CARRIER****PUBLIC HEARING:****March 24, 2016**

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

Zimmer stated that the Capitol View Corridors are mentioned in the Ordinance, but are not mandatory. They are embodied in the Comprehensive Plan. When staff receives a request for a special feature in a view corridor, they can ask the commission for advice before the application goes to Planning Commission. They have tried to go out and assess the impact of

the specific request on the view opportunity that we are protecting. These corridors cover many square miles. They are sensitive areas in which we look at the impact carefully. They looked at this and believe it has no effect on the view. Crete Carrier is located on the Interstate at NW. 56<sup>th</sup> St. This would be a 100 foot pole, along with two 40 foot poles. They tried to create graphics to show where the pole would be in location to the Capitol. Stacey Groshong-Hageman created graphics that show the different views approaching the city. Ed would suggest this is a minimal or harmless impact. They have been successful in the past with finding alternative locations for a few towers that would have impacted the view. He would advise that this application does not lessen the value of the view.

**ACTION:**

Weinberg moved approval of the staff recommendation that this application does not harm the view, seconded by Laging.

Ripley has seen the view many times and it is the building that catches your view, not the flagpole. He concurs that this will not harm the view.

Searcy believes they are trying to enhance the overall look of their facility with landscaping as well, and that will be an enhancement.

Ripley wondered about the size of the flag. Groshong-Hageman replied that it is 30 feet by 20 feet. Zimmer believes that to be a very modest size for a 100 foot pole.

Motion for approval carried 4-0: Dionisopoulos, Laging, Searcy and Weinberg voting 'yes'; Crump, Kay and Nalow absent.

**STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Zimmer stated that in the next few months, he hopes we will see an application For a sculpture for the niche across from Anderson Hall. Parks and Recreation is working with the donor to pull this together.

Dionisopoulos questioned the timing and wondered if perhaps something temporary wouldn't be appropriate, to visually hold the space. Zimmer believes this permanent installation can happen in a year or so. He thinks there is reason to be cautious with something temporary on

the mall. The language of honoring state or national figures can be hard to do. A piece on loan probably wouldn't be as dramatic. They should know more about the schedule relatively soon.

Laging believes there were sculptures going down the mall for the Centennial celebration. Ripley recalls those as well. He believes they were made out of plywood and were about fifteen to twenty feet in height. They were location in the middle of the grass squares.

Johnson inquired if it was one artist or multiple. Laging believes they were created by multiple artists. Zimmer thinks that led to some language in the standards today. Ripley noted the sculptures were wood framed, plywood and painted. Looking at them, you wouldn't know they were made of plywood and painted. For the length of time they were there, they looked like sculptures.

- Searcy would like to hear an update on Centennial Mall and the fountains.

Dionisopoulos believes the fountains will be ready May 17, 2016. The Mayor would like them turned on shortly thereafter. They thought it would be fun to have a community event surrounding that. That will happen on May 24, 2016. They are looking at possibly doing an event starting at the Capitol, proceeding down the mall and ending at the Lincoln Children's Museum with activities. The Lincoln Boys Choir may be available to sing. The Plymouth Brass Group will lead, somewhat like a parade. They are also talking to the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs to see about having a group do a dance or ceremony. There would be an event at each stop. The Children's Museum location would be a little more fun with events, food trucks, etc. It will be a fun celebratory event. The mall will appear mostly done. Some landscaping will still need to be placed along with the tiles. She has heard that the Museum folks are excited about this opening. They want to reserve some spaces to hold events. This will be a community celebration. Departments will be working on areas that may be available for rental. The Lincoln Children's Museum really wants to hold events in the mall. They plan to invite the donors, but are looking at possibly having just a donor event once this is completed with all landscaping done and all tiles installed.

Searcy thinks this is a great idea to honor everyone who had so much to do with this. Johnson thinks this is all exciting. Yost noted they have a way to go yet with the fountains. The subcontractor is still working on the details and programming. Everyone says they will be done by May 17, 2016. There are liquidated damages that could be charged if they can't complete by that date. There are weather days that have to be accounted for. Yost stated that the weather next week looks to go back to normal. They will start planting trees next week. A lot of

ornamental grasses have yet to be planted. A good share of the trees are in. Within two weeks, they may have all the trees in. The rest depends on availability from the nurseries. The perennials and grasses need to be done yet.

Matt Hansen questioned if this is intended to be the dedication event for Centennial Mall/ Dionisopoulos replied this will be a celebration event. This project might not be completely done until September, 2016. This is more of a celebration, a commissioning of the fountains. The tiles might be done by September, 2016.

Searcy would like Yost to give an explanation of the process with the pavers. Yost replied there are colored pavers in the center of the block abutting the Nebraska State Office Building. Next, they will sandblast the outline of the state, the rivers and the railroads. The Chief Standing Bear Trail will be represented with different medallions. County seats are also medallions. It is a metal disk about two inches in diameter with a pin that anchors it in. The counties have a star. The Chief medallions have a bear print and date of each campsite location.

Searcy has heard of some challenges with the pavers on the southernmost block. Yost stated that the pavers used to create that plaza were made with a faulty batch of material. They had some iron deposits that started to show some signs of rust. Those pavers are having to be replaced. They are not just replacing those they observed with rust spots, they are all getting replaced. This is being done at the supplier's expense. All of the lower plaza is being removed and they are starting to put back new pavers. He thinks they might have this done in four weeks.

Hansen questioned if this is a local product. Yost replied it is from Kansas City.

Regarding the northernmost block, Johnson thinks the sod might be lifted on the north half of the block for a regrading so it feels more like a bowl. Searcy stated that it impacts the vista from the other side. Johnson noted that in looking to the north, it was the intent for this to be semicircular. It looks more like a ramp now.

Searcy commended the whole team. When the discoloration and rust was noticed, it was brought to attention and taken care of, along with the north end. They have to get this right. He is curious about the north end. That wall will be more visible. You really can't see the letters very prominently. Yost stated it was more the intent for this to be subtle. There are historic panels on the top. There was an earlier concept for the letters to stand out. Johnson

noted those tend to be removed as souvenirs. There are ongoing conversations with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln about recognition.

Laging is the Commission representative on the South Downtown (SODO) group. They have been meeting off and on, and have come to a conclusion they want to create a CDG (Community Development Group) to further the plan. The group has met with the city over the last few months. They have been trying to get some integration with city objectives. The city seems to support the idea of a CDG, but a concrete plan hasn't been generated yet with something that works for everyone concerned. This is still in flux. The group wants more input. They have a tentative plan. They are pushing 11<sup>th</sup> Street for a big improvement. He knows parking is a big concern. That is a part of the plan that could impact the thinking of this commission. It might not be a bad idea to have our thinking incorporated into their plan.

Zimmer believes the group's plan could have a stronger Capitol Environs component. It has been a challenging process. The planning was privately contracted and managed by the Lincoln Community Foundation. The boundaries of the study area have been somewhat indistinct; they had a little trouble finding meaningful boundaries. The most encouraging component has been the contributions of the Near South Neighborhood Association, Everett Neighborhood Association, and other residents. This project has helped energize a renter-based resident group that is now turning into a positive for the neighborhood, if they can figure out a way to keep contributing. The Capitol Environs frames two sides the neighborhood. There is a vibrancy to the neighborhood.

Ripley stated that it sounds like they did not know about this cohesiveness of this area until the process was started. Zimmer believes this was driven by the "We Are Vital" group. There is a fear of gentrification, but a desire to have properties improved. This is a third leg that could help if a community organization can be pulled together. Laging believes it is a broad group, but not highly representative of the renters in the area. Ripley notes this is a resident issue, not an owner issue. Zimmer hopes that a positive result can come together.

Laging stated that state parking and where that is located, impacts the environs as well. We might consider a restriction for parking around the collar blocks. Underground parking would be a possibility. Ripley noted there is more discussion going on about this now, than his entire 32 years with the government. You can't approach the state and the state buildings like a private corporation. State Government is more solid state. It is presumably a "in perpetuity" institution. If you are going to invest, then why wouldn't the state put money into a high quality building? The initial cost of putting parking underground is great, but over time it is not

that much. The parking garage at 13<sup>th</sup> and K St. was intended to have two more levels. There was no long term thought given to it. It isn't cheap to do underground parking, but in terms of how government will be there in perpetuity, investment in this location needs to think long term.

Weinberg believes the state needs to develop this, so there is a long term commitment. Ripley added that contracts need to be written appropriately. He believes there is discussion today regarding the state can't lease office space from private parties any cheaper than they could build it. The State has plenty of property that would allow for construction of new office buildings with parking below. There are two and a half blocks of area in the collar blocks that could be potential office sites. There is discussion. If something is more concrete, he will bring it here.

Searcy would encourage Dionisopoulos to extend invitations when further information is gained on the fountains.

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