

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: July 10, 2018, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 214, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Amber Brannigan, Emily Casper, Tom Huston and Michelle Penn; (Tammy Eagle Bull, Gill Peace and Trent Reed absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman, Collin Christopher and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Hallie Salem of Urban Development; Mike Marsh, Mike Wachal and Christian Petrick from Davis Design; JD Linscott and Trish Owen from Lincoln Electric System (LES); Nate Buss and Sara Jensen from Olsson Associates; Jessica Goodrich from Project Control; Michele Tilley and Elizabeth Fortenberry for the Lied Center; Jayne Seby with Woods Park Neighborhood Association; and Matt Olberding from the Lincoln Journal Star.

Michelle Penn called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

LINCOLN OPERATIONS CENTER, PHASE 2 (DAVIS DESIGN/LES):

Mike Marsh stated that this is his second appearance before the Urban Design Committee. He presented to the committee last August regarding Phase One of the LES project. Now, they are getting ready for Phase Two. He displayed a site plan that showed Phase One. That phase consisted of the operations building and fleet maintenance building. Phase two is the office building, multi-purpose area and additional parking, primarily for visitors and employees. He showed an artist rendering of the office building. It will be three stories. The building will face north. They are trying to harvest as much natural daylight as possible. There will be an indoor training area. LES will be able to practice boring a hole and installation. The public entrance and stair tower will be on the northwest as well. The main entrance will be on the west. There are courtyard amenities in front. They are trying to provide low cost space that provides a good feel for the people inside. He believes the building will have a nice presence on Rokeby Rd. He showed a plan for landscaping. There will be a water detention pond out front, a storm water pond out back and wetlands and enhanced landscaping. There will also be native grasses throughout.

Nate Buss stated that the road curves to 91st Street. They are trying to incorporate the curves in the plan. These are not easy to draw or plan. There will be a wall overlooking the pond. There will be a couple of gathering places on the north side of the pond. There will be landscaping by the fitness area on the north and the west side of the building. There will be an ornamental fence that wraps the property for security with gates at each access. Plantings on the south will be maintained as native prairie. There will be shelter structures. Solar picnic tables are being considered for the area around the pond. There will be a handful of trees throughout the project. He showed some perspectives of the building with the landscaping. There will be landscaping on both sides of the surrounding wall so people inside do not see a plain wall. There will be benches throughout.

Huston inquired about the anticipated schedule. JD Linscott replied that they are looking at early 2021 for the completion of Phase Two.

Casper commended everyone for including amenities for employees. The comments from the last meeting were taken to heart. She wondered if there will be any signage at 91st St. and Rokeby Rd. to direct people. She asked if it will look similar to what has been shown. Marsh replied yes. The same sign motifs will be used to direct people for parking as the signs on 91st S. and 95th St. There will be one sign for visitor parking and one at the service entrance on Rokeby Rd. Casper noted the plan seems to contain lots of trees. She would encourage diversity. Sara Jensen responded that there will be a large diversity of trees planted.

Huston asked about building materials. Marsh replied they will be using pre-cast concrete products, insulated metal panels and a combination of different colors to give variation. Huston thinks the design is impressive.

Marsh is hopeful and confident that this will serve LES quite well. The master plan is to sell the LES office building downtown and those people will move out here.

Penn wanted to know what the material will be for the vertical stripes shown on the building plan. Marsh stated that will be part of a curtain wall system. Some vertical mullions will be more pronounced to break up the monolithic aspect of what appears to be a windshield effect. Penn asked about color. Marsh replied it will be anodized aluminum. Penn thinks it would be cool to have some outdoor lighting. She didn't see any solar on the plan and wondered if there is any intent. There appears to be a lot of roof area. Marsh responded that there are no plans in the budget for solar panels. There are future parking areas for vehicles to the west of the building, with an option to provide covered parking. Possibly, solar panels could be placed on the top of that. Penn stated that seems like a good way to promote solar. Marsh would hope that would be part of future development.

Brannigan thinks this is an amazing site. Penn likes the solar panels for the sitting area. This looks great.

ACTION:

Huston moved approval, second Casper and carried 4-0: Brannigan, Casper, Huston and Penn voting 'yes'; Eagle Bull, Peace and Reed absent.

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Penn requested a motion approving the minutes of the regular meeting of May 1, 2018. Motion for approval made by Huston, seconded by Penn and carried 4-0: Brannigan, Casper, Huston and Penn voting 'yes'; Eagle Bull, Peace and Reed absent.

CAPITOL PARKWAY BANNERS (LIED CENTER):

Elizabeth Fortenberry stated that the Lied Center would like to place 12 banners, approximately 2.5 feet by 6 feet, with armatures the same color as the light pole. Banners will highlight performances at the Lied Center. All costs will be provided by the Lied Center. After the one year contract, the armatures will be maintained by the next tenant. The banners will not block any signage for the Lincoln Children's Zoo or Sunken Gardens. They would like to partner with the City to bring more beauty to the area and bring more of the reach of Lied Center outside downtown.

Hallie Salem stated this is coming to Urban Design Committee due to the fact that the City is contemplating how to allow for banners in the right-of-way. There are a number of perspectives. Aesthetic perspective, policy, legal and the engineering perspective are being reviewed as well. As eluded to, there is an annual application. There are static banners in specific areas throughout the City. There are some more removable and replaceable banners in other areas. We want to know if the committee thinks this is a good location. Do we want to see these along Capitol Parkway?

Penn wondered how the applicant came up with where to place these. Michele Tilley is working on this project. She stated that they looked at the road leading into downtown to highlight the energy. The parkway was driven many times and in all seasons. Elizabeth did a lot of research. Fortenberry added that no trees will be affected by this installation. Salem stated there will be an application process. Lonnie Burklund in Public Works & Utilities is the designee for pole banner applications. The applicant would submit an application on an annual basis. It is routed for review by various City entities such as the City Attorney's office and Urban Development Dept.

Huston thinks this seems like a good idea. Penn agreed, it would be great.

Brannigan questioned how often the banners would be changed out. Fortenberry responded that the lease is for one year. The banner could be changed yearly. Brannigan understands they would be reflective of the shows at the Lied Center. Fortenberry agreed.

Jayne Seby would like to comment on this application. She would highly recommend that the committee not trash the neighborhood of Woods Park. We happen to think our neighborhood is attractive. It is a historic district. There are limits to what we can and cannot do in a historic district. We are not part of downtown and do not want to be part of downtown. This is commercial speech on government property. She asked unless there is something in writing, if there are any restrictions to what goes up. What about the visual restrictions? What comes next? We try hard to keep businesses out that won't enhance our neighborhood. There is the Zoo and Sunken Gardens. Parks and Recreation has planted a number of attractive trees. Woods Park Neighborhood Association cleans up Antelope Creek. Elliott Elementary is in the area. She would rather not see them have to deal with any more commercial speech. She doesn't see any advantage to having the signs on Capitol Parkway. She would do what advertisers do and figure out the traffic that goes by. This neighborhood isn't any more visible than any other. The idea that banners make things look better, it seems to look like clutter to her. There is a lot of visual clutter. We are adamantly opposed to blocking out the trees. If this has to be done, she would prefer they look to some place to get the best bang for their buck. She doesn't think Capitol Parkway is it.

Tilley would never trash a neighborhood. She apologizes if it was mistaken that way. She understands the concerns, but she doesn't have the same view point. It is an arterial street and gets a lot of traffic. This is done in cities all over the world. She finds it charming in many cities. She can say the signage will go through an approval process. It will have to be approved by the City with a particular criteria. The Lied Center is not strictly a downtown business. It is an entertainment venue that has a wide reach. She believes it is an important institution and a driver for revenue. Fortenberry added that the Lied Center wants to reach everyone.

Seby would like to have the right to put these banners in front of anyone else's house. Salem asked if Woods Park Neighborhood would want to advertise. Seby replied they have no money for that. Salem initially wondered if there could be multiple banners with more than one message. Potentially having two sides on each banner could mean more than just Lied Center advertising. She wondered if there are other civic benefits to this. There could be a civic value to be considered.

Seby believes it comes down to personal choice. She knows that the Lied Center would not make something objectionable. We are protective of our neighborhood. We aren't suburban, we aren't urban. We are in between. Salem would be willing to talk to the neighborhood association. Tilley indicated she would be willing to speak with them as well.

Salem stated that there would be a process. There would be a legal review. For a nonprofit or City entity, they are quite strict on what can be shown on the banner. DLA (Downtown Lincoln Association) has participated with the banners in the downtown area. There needs to be a larger discussion on the installation, taking down and maintaining the banners.

Penn believes the point is what comes next. She is confident there is enough review that something inappropriate wouldn't happen.

Salem provided Sebby with the City regulations regarding banners. Zimmer noted the City Attorney's office would review the banner language and it would have to be of a general community benefit with no commercial logos or advertising. There is not a lot of other guidance. He would see the Zoo as wanting a pole near them. There is nothing in the ordinance that speaks to how the annual turnover would happen. Salem believes the interpretation of this is that dates can't be placed on banners. She is looking for guidance as banners move forward, things that should be taken into consideration or questions that should be asked. The City doesn't want to infringe on the neighborhood design or aesthetics of the corridor.

Collin Christopher questioned if there are any material standards. Fortenberry replied that they must be of a specific material so wind passes through and the armature must be a specific material. Zimmer added that DLA learned you must have a maintenance ability on hand. Things will break. Tilley agrees. Part of the agreement is putting up the armature.

Penn wondered if anything controversial could be mentioned on the banner. Huston stated that the Ordinance shouldn't get that deep into controlling content. Penn noted that a church or Planned Parenthood would be considered a nonprofit. She wonders as well, what happens after the Lied Center's first year has expired. Zimmer would suggest language be incorporated to try and limit the scope and avoid it being an open and public forum for messages. He believes the current language states nonprofit organizations of community wide input.

Tilley stated that they drove this many times and it came down to this road is not a straightaway. They walked it as well. It seemed to make sense to do six on each side. Zimmer asked if they are seeking to address inbound traffic or outbound. Tilley replied both. Capitol Parkway is a well traversed road. These are seen in every city. She believes there is precedent in Lincoln. Being next to someone's house doesn't really happen on this road. These are on the parkway and not in front of someone's house. Salem posed if it would be reasonable to say not within so many feet of residential. Huston believes 50 feet would be reasonable. Tilley would agree.

ACTION:

Huston made a motion of approval subject to visual distance requirements of adjoining homes, preferably 50 feet, seconded by Brannigan.

Huston would request that the applicant meet with the neighborhood. He is generally supportive of the concept and the urban design impacts of the proposal.

Casper would suggest that any regulations speak to what happens when the first year is up and what happens with subsequent banners.

Brannigan asked what maintenance looks like. Salem responded that anyone who works on these banners must be permitted to work in the right-of-way. There would be specific requirements for a vehicle in the right-of-way, etc.

Casper disclosed that she works for the University of Nebraska who owns the Lied Center. Zimmer does not believe there is any conflict of interest with that relationship.

Motion for approval carried 4-0: Brannigan, Casper, Huston and Penn voting 'yes'; Eagle Bull, Peace and Reed absent.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL CABINET WRAPS (PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES):

Collin Christopher has explored wrapping traffic signals. This is part of a new contract for traffic signal cabinets. There is an option in the contract to apply a vinyl graphic to the cabinet. It could be artwork or photography, anything you can think of. He believes this will come in a few phases. Today is Phase One. The next step is they have heard from Public Works & Utilities that these will primarily go downtown. They are going to work with DLA. The cabinets are 75 inches tall and 24 to 30 inches wide. This is a general concept at this point. They have no specific locations yet. This would apply to new cabinets being replaced and installed. The first approach would be a site specific or intersection specific graphic and some context. The second approach would be to step away from site specific and think more of districts. Some wider angle imagery could be used that covers certain downtown events such as the farmers market or a festival. The district versions might have images that could be applied to more than one location. The third approach was done at the request of Public Works. They wanted the ability to stock some generic images. He would like some feedback if this is a good idea, is everyone comfortable with the general aesthetic of the three approaches and is there one that makes more sense for downtown. They will probably apply all of these on some level.

Brannigan wondered about vandalism. Huston assumes these would still be accessible. Christopher stated it is his understanding that these are supposed to last five years. Zimmer believes the new installed cabinets will be taller and narrower than the existing ones.

Huston asked if this is part of the Green Light Lincoln initiative. Zimmer believes this is part of Public Works maintenance. Brannigan noted that maintenance and sustainability would be her concern. The box lasts 20 years, but you have to re-wrap it every five years.

Casper inquired who would apply the wrap. Christopher stated that these would be applied by the manufacturer.

Huston likes them. He thinks they are attractive and meaningful. Brannigan agreed. She likes the idea of information and decoration. Casper agreed, but questioned if it's desirable at every intersection. Brannigan believes if these were used as a wayfinding tool, it would be good. Christopher doesn't believe you want to do wayfinding for specific businesses. Zimmer stated that the realities of the Haymarket District is there aren't signals on every intersection. He doesn't believe they would be a wayfinding system.

Casper would like to see the graphic element considered with interactions with any existing banners being used. She would like to see them coordinated. Christopher agreed. P Street would be easier. Haymarket could be trickier.

Penn really likes the graphics. Huston agreed. Penn thinks they are very attractive. Zimmer stated that they were designed by Christopher.

Brannigan likes the dichotomy of seeing something as historic and looking up and seeing what is there today. She questioned if anyone could use these for advertising in the future. Christopher believes there are restrictions for advertising in the right-of-way. Zimmer believes these are more of a long term concept. Brannigan asked if the reasoning is to just beautify the space. Christopher replied beautification, but also to add branding and placemaking.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.