

MEETING RECORD

Advanced public notice of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission meeting was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website. In addition, a public notice was emailed to the Lincoln Journal Star for publication on Wednesday, January 17, 2024.

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Friday, January 26, 2023, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Delonte Johnson, Kile Johnson, Ann Post and David Quade; Heidi Cuca and Andrea Gebhart absent).

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Collin Christopher, Paul Barnes and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Matt Hansen with the Nebraska Capitol Commission; Travis Barrett, Tim Gergen and Josh Sundine with Clark & Enersen; William DeRoin with HDR, Inc.; Drew Sova with White Lotus Group; Kelsey Moline with Clark & Enersen appeared remotely; Bob Ripley; and other interested citizens.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Chair K. Johnson called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

K. Johnson then called for the approval of the minutes of the regular meeting held November 28, 2023 and December 22, 2023. Motion for approval made by D. Johnson, seconded by Quade and carried 4-0: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade voting 'yes'; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR: **January 26, 2024**

D. Johnson nominated Quade for Vice-Chair, seconded by Post and carried 4-0: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade voting 'yes'; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

DEMOLITION, SITE AND ADJACENT STREETScape WORK, AND NEW CONSTRUCTION AT 401 SOUTH 14TH STREET AND 1335 'L' STREET
PUBLIC HEARING:

January 26, 2024

Members present: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

Collin Christopher stated that the intent of this project is to demolish two existing buildings – the Woman’s Club building and the existing League of Nebraska Municipalities building – and to replace them with a new building that will serve as the new home of the League. The Woman’s Club is a local landmark and its demolition must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The applicant went to HPC in December of last year, at which time the commissioners asked for some additional information. That include wanting to understand the structural integrity of both buildings. They also wanted to see some scenarios developed in order to understand if there was a project that could be viable that included demolishing one building and not the other. He also believed there was a concern that they didn’t want to approve demolition of an historic structure if the state of the Woman’s Club building was due to neglect on the part of the League. In January, the applicant came back to HPC with responses to each of those concerns. Ultimately, HPC approved demolition of the Woman’s Club, with the condition that there be a mitigation plan to memorialize the building and maybe more importantly, the Woman’s Club itself in a meaningful way. With that action taken, it is now the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission’s responsibility to review the remainder of the proposal, including the demolition of the existing League building and the construction of the new building, along with any site and streetscape improvements associated with the project. The building being proposed is a two-story building with a light brick serving as the primary façade material. There will be parking lot south of the building to be fully screened on all sides. The L Street and S 14th Street sides of the project also include streetscape enhancements that work well within the context of the downtown environment. He wanted to note there were conversations at the last meeting of this group regarding a potential bump-out at the S 14th and L Streets intersection. That was a request from the City that falls in line with the Downtown Master Plan. Staff is very supportive of a bump-out in this location. However, it is not a standard requirement, and would have to be negotiated as part of a TIF-supported redevelopment agreement. If the bump-out ultimately gets added to the plans, staff would bring that proposal back for review.

Tim Gergen was initially concerned with the potential bump-out. They talked to Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU) and they analyzed the street. LTU decided that traffic counts are not significant enough to warrant preservation of the rush hour lane that would be removed for the bump out. They have a concept which shows the bump-out. It has some cost implications that they will analyze next week. It may be done at a later time in coordination with a City project, but not this project due to cost.

K. Johnson noted it would allow for parking on the street throughout the day. Gergen noted that one spot would most likely be eliminated.

Travis Barrett showed the existing site. The Woman’s Club has been approved for demolition. The League of Nebraska Municipalities has occupied the west building for decades. They intend to develop the entire corner of this block.

Gergen showed the bump-out. It shadows the parking stalls on the street. The bump-out would proclaim the lane to be parking all the time on this block.

Kelsey Moline showed the hardscape perspective. They are proposing a band of concrete pavers similar to what has been done at Lied Place. She also pointed out the shaded landscape planting beds. There is a wider width to this segment of the streetscape. They are trying to introduce a little color. Along the east side on 14th Street, they are proposing matching the existing trees to preserve the rhythm of the street. They would also like to introduce a couple of shade trees close to the parking lot. They would be paving the surface parking lot and adding the curb to help organize the space with a landscape screen around most all sides. She showed the angled landscape curb. They are also proposing to match the self-watering planters in front of the building that Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA) likes to use.

Barrett went through the renderings and noted that very little has changed since December 2023. They are looking for a traditional civic government building. The design concept with windows is for punched openings.

Moline showed the north streetscape, which would include a variety of plant material.

Barrett noted the floorplan is a little over 15,000 square feet for the building. They would have a large meeting space on the first floor. It would be a nice gathering spot. The second floor will still be owned and managed by the League. There are opportunities for future growth in this building. They narrowed the building materials down to two brick options. One is Acme Ridgemar. The other option is a similar Summit Alaskan brick. The bottom sixteen inches is proposed to be a darker cast material. The window glass would be a dark glass element. He believes it would be similar in appearance to the County/City Building and the Hall of Justice windows. He pointed out they are not proposing any mechanical screening for the rooftop. The design would provide a 5'5" to 6' tall parapet on the roof. If the units get taller, they will raise the parapet. He showed the site lines. They will make sure the units on the roof are not visible from the street views. He showed the tall vertical element windows. Those were voted on by the executive board of the League of Nebraska Municipalities. They increased the amount of vertical glass. They will come back in a few months to show and get approval for a site sign. They are asking for approval of the building design and site plan today. If the bump-out does not happen, they will come back before the Commission.

Quade inquired if the masonry will be a couple of different bricks. Barrett replied they are proposing just one brick product.

Post likes the design changes she is seeing versus the preliminary materials that were shown previously.

Quade likes the separation from a landscape perspective. He thinks it helps to soften the edges and makes it inviting for pedestrian traffic. He also likes the consistency of the masonry. He believes the color complements the area. It helps tie in with the vertical elements. He likes the changes as well. The curtain wall is a nice change.

D. Johnson echoed those comments. He likes the proposal and the improvements.

Quade questioned the rooftop units. He agrees with the site lines from a pedestrian view. He wondered about being up in the Capitol building and looking down. Christopher responded that in terms of standards, the only place where Capitol Environs Commission gets into screening of rooftop equipment is a building directly across from Capitol Square. From a pedestrian level, screening is provided. There is the potential to see it from the Capitol building, but there is nothing in the standards about views from the Capitol building. Barrett felt this was a more permanent way to screen it. Quade believes it gives a little more presence to the building.

K. Johnson likes the building. He is concerned about the bump-out at the Capitol building, but not here. He thinks it improves the parking on the south side of 'L' Street. He inquired if the applicant had any idea what will happen on the corner lot to the west. Barrett replied that he had no information at this time.

K. Johnson asked if anyone from the Woman's Club appeared at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting. Barrett replied no. When they went in front of the Historic Preservation Commission, commissioner Jim McKee noted he was still in contact with one of their members. McKee has since connected them. McKee will be a great help in obtaining an oral history from an existing League member. They will have a website dedicated to the Woman's Club history, along with an interior display. They are working with Mrs. Nielsen who is an existing member of the Woman's Club. It will be beneficial. They will be able to memorialize the history. They will be back before Historic Preservation Commission in April or May 2024.

K. Johnson inquired who will maintain the landscape elements between the sidewalk and the street. Gergen answered that will be part of the Downtown Business Improvement District that DLA manages.

Bob Ripley had a couple of questions and comments. He thinks the building looks good. He applauds the overstory trees in the south parking lot. He believes that will be essential since the building sits at the north end of the site. It will soften the appearance of the parking lot. Having some green space is really good. He asked if the at-grade material would be a precast product. Barrett responded yes, they are proposing a precast material. They will work with the contractor on the exact product. Ripley commented that impermeability is a plus. Barrett noted there will be aluminum panel infill to match the windows. The precast element is just going to be the bottom 16 inches. If they can modify this to a burnished or sealed material, they will make that happen, so it doesn't degrade.

ACTION:

Post moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the building at 1335 'L' Street, and the proposed site work, streetscape work and new building construction, on properties currently addressed as 401 S. 14th Street and 1335 'L' Street, seconded by D. Johnson and carried 4-0: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade voting 'yes'; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

SITE AND ADJACENT STREETScape WORK AT 220 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH

PUBLIC HEARING:

January 26, 2024

Members present: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

Christopher stated that this is a project that the commission is very familiar with. This is the first phase of the Pershing block redevelopment. The project was originally approved in 2022. It came back last year with setback modifications, as well as minor façade changes. At this point, they are coming back with a refined streetscape plan for the first phase which would be primarily along 16th Street, but also bending the corners of 'M' and 'N' Streets. The big thing to notice in this proposal in terms of what exists today versus what is being proposed is that they have negotiated with the City to provide angled parking along 16th Street. Making angled parking work here was a bit of a challenge, but they were able to come to a solution that works for everyone. It creates a fairly tight streetscape when you consider that there is only eight feet of usable sidewalk, some of which will have vehicle overhang. It is not ideal, but the result of a lot of discussion and he believes it is the best solution available. The streetscape is basically a stripped down version of what is along Centennial Mall, following a lot of the same design concepts. On the whole, he believes it is a very good streetscape approach that fits into Centennial Mall and the larger downtown environment. The applicant is also bringing forward some rooftop and ground-level mechanical equipment screening.

K. Johnson inquired as to the requirements for rooftop screening. Christopher replied they are required to make sure the rooftop equipment is not visible from the street. He believes they are going above and beyond what the code asks for. The applicant has agreed to pursue this as part of TIF negotiations, but it is not specifically required in the design standards.

William DeRoin noted they were here about six months ago. The commission reviewed general building designs. The material palette is still going forward as presented. They are working on some streetscape concepts, and would like to show updated renderings.

Gergen stated that the angled parking along 16th Street represents about six months of work with the City. They did parking studies and had numerous talks with LTU. They wanted to keep the number of lanes on this street. They are proposing a four foot shift to the east. That will create additional room for angled parking. They don't anticipate more than one foot of overhang from the vehicle parking. They don't want a building right up against an eight-foot sidewalk, so they've shown narrow landscape beds and paver fields along the perimeter of the building that will allow for safe door swings. Along 'N' Street, there was previously a break in the cycle track median to account for the Pershing loading dock. They are now able to extend the median and add additional parking on 'N' Street that protects the cycle track. They can also add some additional landscaping. The landscaping will include some bioretention beds that capture stormwater. 'M' Street is a little more of a blank palette. That will be further studied by the City of Lincoln as part of a future streetscape project.

Post would like an explanation of where the applicant found the four feet to shift to the east. Gergen stated that the eastern most lane is sixteen-feet wide. Most lanes in the City are twelve feet in width. They are shifting it to the east and restriping.

Josh Sundine stated they are trying to match the conditions on Centennial Mall. They are trying to match building elements as well. Along the building perimeter where there is not glass, that is where they want to add some additional clay pavers. On 'N' street, they will be matching the conditions of the cycle track.

He showed some plant material. He believes it matches the material along Centennial Mall. They are all salt tolerant plantings.

DeRoin showed the renderings. He showed the view looking down the cycle track and the angled parking. He showed the view looking east which shows the west elevation. He pointed out the north leasing entry signage. He also pointed out the rooftop equipment screening. He noted there is a transformer on the site which will be landscaped with tall grass.

Post inquired if the applicant was concerned about safety with tall grass so close to a sidewalk. Sundine responded the grass will only be about two to three feet tall. He doesn't believe it would create a dangerous situation.

DeRoin continued with showing renderings of the site. He pointed out the offset of the clay paver material. There were some ongoing revisions regarding the rooftop screening. There are a series of condensing units. They are all screened with their own separate enclosure. He pointed out some site elements. He pointed out the elevator and trash chute. He mentioned on the northwest corner there will be some site stair features to get to the leasing office. They will do some building signage on the ramp with powder coated steel plate signage. He showed a louvered blade for screening of the utilities.

Quade wanted to talk about clay pavers versus concrete. Generally, clay is probably preferable in a pedestrian application. He encouraged the applicant to be cognizant of the pavers so they don't pop up. Gergen stated they will be using a concrete base. Quade pointed out the window head appears to be a darker color brick, then it turns to white. He presumes that brick returns to the windows. Deroin pointed out the fiber cement panel returns they are using for the trim piece. That aligns with the window sill above.

Quade continued that regarding the roof access, it looked like there might be an access point on the south side. He commented that the roof access hatches are further than ten feet away. He wondered about fall protection. He doesn't want to see code issues that could require a guard rail. He appreciates the screening of electrical.

Post was curious about the angled parking. It is her understanding this building will be affordable housing. She requested more information to clarify that. Drew Sova stated there was a lot of discussion regarding parking in the past six months. One tenant will be medical outpatient services. There will be some drop-offs and pick-ups. That was an important feature to the tenant. DeRoin added for clarification, there will be retail on the first floor with affordable housing on floors two through five. Gergen added that this was a safety issue for them to have angled parking. The City wanted to keep all lanes of traffic. They were able to compromise.

Post believes that angled parking is hugely important to tenants.

ACTION:

Quade moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed streetscape, and rooftop and utility screening work for the first phase of development as proposed, seconded by D. Johnson and carried 4-0: D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade voting 'yes'; Cuca and Gebhart absent.

STAFF REPORT & MISCELLANEOUS:

January 26, 2024

- Christopher stated that the next meeting is February 23, 2024. The commission will be reviewing the annual report.
- Christopher stated that he hopes to have a new commissioner at the February 2024 meeting. The position that Karen Nalow held was meant to be filled by a landscape architect. Staff has been working with the Mayor's office on filling this position. Eileen Bergt has been nominated. She is Assistant Director of Landscape Services at University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL). She is also involved in the Preservation Association of Lincoln (PAL).
- Christopher stated that a bill was introduced in the Nebraska State Legislature that he believes is intended to consolidate many of the State boards and commissions. Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission was noted in that bill. He believes the bill is proposing that termination of this commission would happen in the summer of 2025. From a local perspective, staff would oppose this bill as currently written. Staff has spoken with the City Attorney about what that would mean if a city board was terminated at a State level. If they terminate NCEC at the State level, he believes that means the Commission would stop having State representation, but the board would still continue in some form. He is sure there are many conversations happening regarding this topic.

K. Johnson pointed out that the proposed bill also notes that the Nebraska Capitol Commission would be abolished. Ripley believes it would be reorganized into something that would be unrecognizable. K. Johnson added that the bill was introduced at the request of the Governor.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.