

## 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.*

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

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Friday, September 22, 2023, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Collin Christopher, David Cary and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; J.J. Yost with Parks and Recreation; Matt Hansen with the Nebraska Capitol Commission; Bob Ripley; Michael Weskamp with Lincoln Electric System; 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 a motion approving the minutes of the regular meeting held August 25, 2023. Motion for approval made by Nalow, seconded by Cuca and carried 5-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson and Nalow voting 'yes'; Post and Quade absent.

### **LES WORK AT 332 CENTENNIAL MALL:**

**August 25, 2023**

Collin Christopher stated this review is for some additional utility equipment in the corridor adjacent to Centennial Mall, between the State parking garage and Scottish Rite. He noted this application came in a few days past the legal deadline for advertising. If this group thinks this project is a candidate for no material effect, that can be done. If the commission feels that more needs to be done to screen the equipment, it can come back for a public hearing in the coming months. He showed some images of the general area. He provided some imagery where he thinks it would be largely not visible, due to the existing screening associated with the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture. There is one view from Centennial Mall where the equipment would be visible and could be addressed with additional screening. If additional screening is preferred, one thing to consider is the large number of utilities running through the corridor. Karen Nalow was involved with the sculpture project and may know more specifics regarding the utilities.

Michael Weskamp appeared. They are looking at installing an additional piece of equipment. This is driven in part by the redevelopment of the Pershing site. They are also looking at how they can address their regional system. This will require a larger piece of equipment. They believe this is the most efficient area.

D. Johnson inquired about the size of the existing cabinet as compared to the cabinet that LES (Lincoln Electric System) wants to install. Weskamp stated the proposed cabinet is identical to a piece that already exists there. He pointed it out on an image of the site.

K. Johnson wondered if the current box was in place before the statue was placed. Weskamp believes they may have gone in at the same time. Nalow believes the existing box shown was there before the statue.

Bob Ripley questioned what the box serves. Weskamp stated it effectively provides a breaker for a larger area.

K. Johnson inquired about the timing of the project. Weskamp stated they are ahead of schedule. The equipment needs to be online before the Pershing project. They are hoping to be completed next year, or the year after. They hope to get it done in advance of that project. K. Johnson asked if any screening is being suggested. Weskamp noted they are looking to stakeholders first. K. Johnson asked if screening were involved, if it would present a future maintenance issue. Weskamp doesn't believe so. Even if there were some screening, he believes they could get their machines back there. K. Johnson believes there needs to be screening for pre-existing and proposed structures. He realizes that the statue presents some screening, but pointed out that the stone work below the statue doesn't give much screening. He would prefer to see some screening and believes it would be consistent with the guidelines.

Nalow believes we should be open to what screening is placed there. There are a lot of utility lines there. Part of what made this area particularly difficult is there are north/south, east/west and angled utilities running through the corridor. She inquired if there has been any discussion with Parks and Recreation. Weskamp replied no. This is on State of Nebraska property. They recommended we appear before this body. Screening would most likely be on State property.

Ripley asked why this is not being located on the Pershing block since this piece is being added for the Pershing block. Weskamp responded this is an artery that runs from the Scottish Rite Temple to the parking garage. This steps down to a cable that can be fed down to a distribution loop. It is the result of a number of redevelopment projects being proposed and the added demand they will create. It is much more expensive to extend an artery, as opposed to a distribution loop. The zoning allows the Pershing block to build to the property line. We look at the surrounding area in situations like this. Ripley asked if this is an installment to the Pershing block. He wondered if LES will be adding more boxes like this as the block is developed. He further wondered if there will be a series of these. Weskamp stated this is the beginning of a switch loop. Ultimately, they will loop the underground cable to another piece blocks away. This will serve the entire area. This isn't geared specifically toward the Pershing development, so much as geared toward the added development in the area. Ripley see this as adding more to the very thing we are trying to screen. It seems contrary to what we are trying to do in the Environs. He believes accommodations would be made by LES in some way. If this ends up being the outdoor equipment closet for this block, he

has concerns. This is an area we are already trying to screen. He believes there might be blocks that could be screened better and not visible to Centennial Mall.

K. Johnson asked if there were more locations planned on Centennial Mall. Weskamp is not aware of any. This sets LES up for two additional distribution loops. He doesn't have any reason to believe they will need more on top of that. K Johnson asked if there are any more plans to place additional equipment in this area between the two buildings. It is a narrow area. Weskamp replied no.

J.J. Yost wanted to add a few thoughts. He believes it is important to note that the back of the vertical wall is the backdrop to the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte statue. There are both north/south and east/west utilities. Parks and Recreation had looked at landscaping as part of the statue. Taylor junipers were planted on the back side of the retaining wall. Anything further down the alley, the space is unavailable for planting due to utilities that run there. This was the most challenging spot for a statue. There is not any more opportunity for more plantings. There is also a storm drain behind the wall. He wanted to emphasize that anything to the east of the bollard is State property. Centennial Mall is in the forefront and there is State property to the east. They had to coordinate with the State to get access to this property for the statue installation. He doesn't think that another box will have a negative impact. From a Parks and Recreation standpoint, the department is not opposed to this.

K. Johnson asked for Yost's opinion on any suggested screening, if there were to be any. Yost believes since there isn't a planting opportunity, perhaps there could be some kind of fence panel to block the view. It would have to be in coordination with the State. He noted that this area couldn't be blocked off so much that equipment couldn't be reached if needed.

Cuca remembers when this group first saw drawings of the statue. The proposed trees behind the statue were depicted as much larger. She asked if the trees will grow to any extent. Yost noted they were not able to go back with as large of trees as they wanted. He pointed out the Taylor junipers. Those will get eight to ten feet tall. Due to the soil, they might not get to their full growth potential. There is one particular angle that is difficult to screen off.

Cuca asked if this is the only spot where new equipment can be placed. Weskamp stated they considered a few other locations. This is the best location from an efficiency standpoint.

K. Johnson inquired about the color of the proposed cabinet. Weskamp stated it would be the standard green color.

D. Johnson agrees with what was said. He doesn't know that the view would be any worse with one more box. Screening would be ideal. Consolidating this equipment to one area seems better, as opposed to being spread out in multiple locations.

Gebhart would echo those comments. She would like the applicant to investigate what kind of screening could go there.

**STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Christopher noted that the joint meeting with the Nebraska Capitol Commission is scheduled for November 28, 2023.
- Gebhart asked if there has been any progress on the YMCA site. It is starting to look a little unkempt. Christopher will look into it.

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