

MEETING NOTES

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, December 13, 2023.

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

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

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Collin Christopher and Paul Barnes of the Planning Department; Matt Hansen with the Nebraska Capitol Commission; Travis Barrett, Tim Gergen and Todd Eppenbach with Clark & Enersen; Scott Lockard with Hampton Enterprises; Lynn Rex with the League of Nebraska Municipalities; 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 stated that the approval of the minutes of the regular meeting held November 28, 2023 will be postponed until the next meeting due to lack of a quorum.

PRELIMINARY PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED SITE WORK AND NEW CONSTRUCTION AT 1335 'L' STREET AND 401 SOUTH 14TH STREET

Collin Christopher stated that this is at the northeast corner of the block bound by 13th St., 14th St., 'K' St. and 'L' St. This is a block the commission is familiar with. In the spring, a new building for the Nebraska Council of School Administrators was approved at the southwest corner. This project has some unique characteristics. They are asking to demolish two buildings and replace them with one larger building. One of those buildings is a historic landmark. The direction from the code is for local landmarks in the Capitol Environs District to go through the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). That commission had a hearing yesterday and did not hold a vote. They asked for additional information. It comes down to the language in the historic preservation section of the Lincoln Municipal Code. It identifies that the commission can issue a Certificate of Exception under certain conditions. They were asked for some specific information to justify that they are meeting those conditions. If the applicant was to appear before

the Historic Preservation Commission on January 18, 2024, the next Capitol Environs Commission is on January 26, 2024. He doesn't believe it would be appropriate for this commission to approve new construction when demolition hasn't been approved yet, so next month's public hearing will be contingent on HPC's approval. Another item is the second of these two buildings. The building the League is in now is not historic. The Historic Preservation Commission would provide the Certificate of Demolition for the Woman's Club, which is a historic building. The Capitol Environs Commission would provide the Certificate of Demolition for 1335 'L' Street, plus a Certificate of New Construction for the building that would go in place of the two buildings being demolished. In order to get demolition approval, they need to show what would be going in its place.

Travis Barrett introduced the team working on this site. He noted that the Woman's Club building has sat empty for about two decades now. The paint is peeling. There is black mold. These two buildings do not meet the Downtown Design Standards as they are today. They want a new building that will work with the space. They want a strong, civil looking building. They hope pedestrian traffic will pick up in this area.

Tim Gergen showed an image of the site. They are talking with Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU) about creating a bump-out on 14th St. and 'L' St. They will replace all sidewalks, curbs and wheelchair ramps. They will install new landscaping. Barrett added that the south half of the property will be parking for League of Nebraska Municipalities employees.

K. Johnson questioned who is proposing the bump-out. Gergen stated that the Urban Development Dept. is proposing that. The street is set to be signed 'no parking' for the 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. rush hour traffic. If that is still needed, the bump-out can't be placed. Urban Development is suggesting the bump-out to them. They are talking to LTU about that. K. Johnson asked if there are any bump-outs on 14th St. Gergen is not aware of any. Barrett added they are currently working closely with Urban Development about the possibility of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). K. Johnson asked if the applicant wants a bump-out. Gergen replied they are open to it. They want to do what is best for the City. K. Johnson noted there was some suggestion that there should be a bump-out at 14th St. and Lincoln Mall, across from the Nebraska State Capitol. There was some concern about that location and worry this might be a precedent. Christopher added that the Urban Development suggestion is most likely coming from looking at the Downtown Master Plan.

Barrett showed a brief overview of the floor plans. There will be no mechanical screening on the rooftop. That is due to a taller parapet being installed. K. Johnson asked how high the parapet would be. Barrett responded it would be 6 feet above the roof line. He continued that they are looking at full replacement of sidewalks along this building. They are also looking at pavers to designate the entry, as well as some connection to the parallel parking stalls on the street. When they return in January, they will have a full planting plan. All the brick will be one color, but the pattern around the windows will change. There will be a black band of masonry product around the building at the base. They do not know what the plans are for the property to the west. They currently have about 18-20 feet from the building to the property line. They will be able to have a nice grassy corridor. In regards to materiality, they looked at products in the existing Capitol Environs District. They are working closely with Hampton Enterprises. They have landed on a masonry product. It will be a full brick building. They don't want something that will be high maintenance. It will probably be a blonde color.

K. Johnson asked about the questions posed by Historic Preservation Commission. Barrett stated that they wanted a full structural analysis of both buildings completed. The commission wondered if the needs of the League of Nebraska Municipalities were causing the Woman's Club to be demolished. The applicant's structural engineer and team went over last night to do an analysis. Full repairs to the Woman's Club building would be needed. There has been 6 feet of water in the basement. Regarding the League building, they found concrete slabs with duct tape to repair them. There is extensive slab damage on the 3rd floor, roof damage and damage to the basement.

Gebhart believes that the overall proposed building looks to match the standards. She asked if any thought was given to window coverings. Barrett stated that their standard is a roller shade. They will discuss that with the owner. This will be a drastic change compared to the amount of windows the League has currently.

D. Johnson likes the design and believes it is a huge improvement.

K. Johnson agreed. He thinks it will be a nice change to the neighborhood.

Barrett appreciates the comments. They have wrapped up schematic design. They will put together a package with more details and will return to the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission regular meeting in January 2024.

Bob Ripley thanked the League and Clark & Enersen for coming in early and apprising this body of their intentions. He appreciates their willingness to share the information they have.

K. Johnson asked if Historic Preservation Commission has jurisdiction over the 1335 'L' St. building. Christopher replied they do not. They are trying to justify removal of the Woman's Club. That is tied into this site. Historic Preservation Commission was wondering if there was another alternative. He believes they would also like to understand if this building was intentionally allowed fall into disrepair, since this property was sold to the League 10 years ago.

Paul Barnes noted there needs to be a hardship for demolition, but it doesn't state what qualifies as a hardship. He believes the Historic Preservation Commission placed the onus on the applicant to demonstrate what that hardship is. He believes they were asking about rehabilitation before demolition.

Ripley offered he has been in the Woman's Club once in his lifetime. It was about 15 years ago, before they sold to the League of Nebraska Municipalities. He doesn't take the designation of a landmark lightly. When he had the opportunity to see the building 15 years ago, it was in very bad shape. The building is likely in much worse condition than what was shown in the pictures from the applicant. He doesn't believe that the League has been a poor steward. The building was in rough shape before they bought it.

K. Johnson inquired if Ripley supported demolition. Ripley will leave that to the Historic Preservation Commission, who will see the reports from the structural engineer. He can understand the premise of removing the building. We know who the applicant is. He has known members of their board and Executive

Director for many years. He believes they will do what they say. He believes they are a first class player and will follow through on what they propose to do. He reiterated that he believes it is not the League of Nebraska Municipalities who has been a poor steward of the building. It was in poor condition at least 10-15 years before the League purchased it. It has had perilously little work done on it in the past.

Christopher clarified that he doesn't believe that LTU can do the 14th Street intersection improvements without approval from this body.

K. Johnson asked if LTU would have to take it to the Nebraska Capitol Commission. Matt Hansen believes since it affects the site, they would like to see it. Christopher believes if technically not required, they would advise them to appear before the commission. Ripley noted the commission meets quarterly, not monthly.

STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:

- Christopher expects to have the streetscape plan for the Pershing block by the January 26, 2024 meeting of this group.
- Christopher stated that this commission is in need of a new member with the resignation of Karen Nalow. To the best of his knowledge, the City is still looking for her replacement.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 9:05 a.m.