

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 Thursday, May 19, 2021.

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Friday, May 28, 2021, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Mary Campbell, Heidi Cuca, Delonte Johnson, Kile Johnson, Karen Nalow, Ann Post and David Quade.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Collin Christopher, Paul Barnes and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Dallas McGee of Urban Development Dept.; Lynn Johnson from Parks and Recreation; Scott Gatewood and Doug Hanson with the Nebraska State Building Division.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Meeting

Chair Kile 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 April 23, 2021. Motion for approval made by Nalow, seconded by Campbell and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

NEW SIGN AT MCPHEE ELEMENTARY, 820 GOODHUE BOULEVARD

PUBLIC HEARING:

May 28, 2021

Members present: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade

Collin Christopher appeared and stated that Scott Wieskamp from Lincoln Public Schools was unable to attend the meeting today. In his opinion, this application seems pretty straightforward. This monument sign would be in front of the main entrance on the west side of the building. It is four feet by eight feet in size. The letters are changed manually and there will be no additional lighting.

ACTION:

Quade made a motion to approve the sign as presented, seconded by Post and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

2 LANDMARK CENTRE UPDATE- 1111 LINCOLN MALL, 601 SOUTH 12TH STREET AND 1106 'H' STREET: **May 28, 2021**

Members present: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade

Christopher stated this application is on a quick timeline, and there is an ever-evolving discussion on parking taking place. He believes at this point it is worth updating the Commission on where things stand. There are two components to the changes being highlighted today: 1) street trees and 2) how staff is addressing access to Pioneer House parking.

Lynn Johnson appeared. The arborist has evaluated the street trees. There are oaks on all four block faces. Two of the oaks are in fair to approaching poor condition. They are proposing two of them be removed. One is adjacent to the alley and one on the 12th St. frontage would be replaced. There are two oaks to be replaced on 'H' Street. 11th St. has one oak tree to be removed and one to be replanted. They are trying to diversify the street trees so if something were to happen, we do not want to lose the entire block faces of street trees. The staff recommendation is for an espresso coffee tree. These trees don't have the mess with pods and beans. They will be 15 to 35 feet tall at some point. They are native and drought tolerant. They would mix well with the oaks.

Christopher presented an exhibit of the plan for the trees. L. Johnson has made some recommendations about protecting the roots since there will be construction happening around those. The oaks tolerate construction pretty well.

D. Johnson asked about the size of the oaks. L. Johnson replied they are large trees around two feet in diameter and approaching 50 feet in height range. It will make a difference. By planting trees now, we get multi-generational plantings. K. Johnson inquired how large the coffee trees will get. L. Johnson replied that they typically recommend planting 2.5 to 3 inch diameter trees. Coffee trees tend to have coarse branch construction. These should be in the 8 to 10 foot tall range when planted. Initially they grow pretty slowly. They are beautiful architectural trees but it takes a period of time to get to that point. It can be a race between planting younger trees and larger trees. They like to plant a little on the small size to get them established.

Nalow wondered if any consideration was given to establish addition species of trees. L. Johnson stated they have thought about the coffee trees. Linden trees were also considered. They are starting to see the Japanese Beetle in Lincoln. They feed on leaves of Linden trees. They affect the appearance, but not necessarily the health of the tree. Silver Lindens were planted on Capitol

Parkway on 16th St. and 17th St. A Silver Linden has a fuzzy leaf. That appears to be less desirable to the beetle. If that is the case, Parks might consider more of those in the future. As of now, the suggestion is for Espresso Coffee Tree.

Nalow questioned if Lincoln Mall and other boundaries would be diversified in the long term. L. Johnson believes the point is to maintain the Red Oak as the dominant species. If we have trees that fail in the future, we might want to reconsider that. It would be nice to keep these stately trees.

Christopher pointed out that improvements being made to the alley along this block will limit access to Pioneer House parking in the short term. The solution that the developers have come up with is a temporary access point on the H St. side. That would allow residents to enter and a portion of an island would be removed for circulation. This would result in the loss of one tree in the short term on the private side. However, the proposed landscape plan for the new parking lot will add additional trees and screening. He believes the long term solution is a good one. Once access to the alley is allowed again, that access point would be removed. He believes this would be a significant improvement over what is there now.

501 BUILDING UPDATE:

May 28, 2021

Members present: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade

Scott Gatewood appeared to give an update on the process that has been going on since around 2016. This is an ongoing effort to address existing rooftop equipment. He showed an image of the building and pointed out the cooling tower and air handler on the roof. As they move forward in time, this equipment will eventually be removed. It won't be removed in this renovation but will eventually go. Evaporation of heat can be seen with a steam plume from the roof. It is also very visible from the other direction. The goal is to remove the equipment and modernize the building mechanical structure. Over the coming years, they are heading to a louvre on the east exposure. There is a small louvre towards the roof for a ventilation exposure. It needs to be in the proposed place due to the equipment location. When this happens the goal is to first add the louvre, and then in the coming years, the remaining equipment will go away.

K. Johnson inquired about the timeline. Gatewood believes the improvements are not funded under the current biannual budget and will need to be added to the next budget. Doug Hanson stated that this is future work that has not been funded yet. The intention is to eventually rid the roof of these visible rooftop elements. It could be two budget cycles before this is done. It is uncertain at this point.

K. Johnson thinks it looks good and appreciates the depiction of the building without the equipment on top.

O-1 ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT:

May 28, 2021

Members present: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade

Christopher stated that this topic was discussed at the last meeting – allowing restaurants in O-1 and making them a more viable option. The first question brought up by the Commission last month related to parking. It was a valid question. He showed a table with the allowed uses in the O-1 zoning district. A restaurant would be required to have significantly more parking than other allowable uses. However, he mentioned that the Planning Dept. is preparing a text amendment to be rolled out this summer that centers around affordable housing zoning-related changes. One of those changes is to eliminate the parking requirement for all uses in O-1 entirely. That change would resolve the parking issue for restaurants in this district. The second topic brought up by the Commission was the idea that we might want to do sidewalk cafés as part of O-1 restaurant uses. There is a section in the zoning code focused on sidewalk cafés that currently limits them to B-1 through B-5 zoning districts. So, allowing sidewalk cafes would require additional changes to the zoning code. There is a Sidewalk Café Committee that reviews applications. They have indicated that they would be willing to explore this topic. They want to walk the O-1 district and understand the possible ramifications. So much of O-1 zoning is in the Capitol Environs District.

Campbell wondered if alcohol is added to the district if extra fencing or barriers would be required. Christopher replied yes, there has to be a fence. O-1 does not allow for a bar who only serves alcohol. It has to be restaurants that serves alcohol secondarily.

K. Johnson would find restaurant cafes in O-1 very helpful. He believes they would not be appropriate on the mall, but in the back maybe. Some of these alleys are becoming urban gathering places. To have that flexibility would be helpful.

Nalow agrees with the sentiment. We need to keep them off Lincoln Mall and Centennial Mall, but on adjacent street faces, it would be nice to have more activity and life.

Post would like to have the committee look at this further. She is supportive. She likes the idea of more activity and thinks this needs to be researched more.

Quade agreed. Added activity in the area would be nice. It would liven the entire area. He is curious about the thought of not having them on Lincoln Mall or Centennial Mall. What is the specific concern? K. Johnson believes the concern is that the setbacks do not allow it. With a sidewalk café, it would extend to the sidewalk. Quade asked if inhibiting the view would be the main concern. Nalow stated that while we want to encourage activity on the mall, we don't want conflicting uses. The mall goes right to the edge. Those uses wouldn't truly be a sidewalk café.

K. Johnson believes this is particularly true with a no parking requirement. Perhaps parking lots behind buildings could be used for a sidewalk café.

Campbell agrees with all comments, as does D. Johnson and Cuca.

ACTION:

Post moved approval of a recommendation to the Sidewalk Café Committee to review the possibility of allowing sidewalk cafés in the O-1 district, seconded by Nalow and carried 7-0: Campbell, Cuca, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

Post asked who is on the Sidewalk Café Committee. Christopher replied it is staff from the Planning Dept., Lincoln Transportation and Utilities and the Health Dept. It is an inter-departmental group. There are a lot of specific requirements related to size and how far they extend into the right-of-way.

K. Johnson inquired if staff is pursuing a legislative change. Christopher believes if a change were proposed, it would be up to the Planning Dept. to make formal application, but only if the Sidewalk Café Committee gives the final recommendation.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Christopher wanted to provide an update on the approved four-plex project at 1550 'F' Street. The property was demolished last year, and they began construction. However, the property is now for sale. Some footings were done but it is largely incomplete. He doesn't know what that means for the future of the project. It is possible that someone will buy the property and move forward with construction, but at least for now, there's no guarantee it will be completed as originally approved.

K. Johnson questioned if a new owner would have to bring this application in for review again. Christopher replied that anyone can go forward with the approved plan as all the permits are there. It will require a second review if anything changes.

- Christopher stated that since social distancing isn't required anymore, he would like to discuss scheduling of future meetings. He asked all members what room they would prefer to meet in for future meetings. The City Council Chambers has been reserved through the end of the year 2021, but this group used to meet in a smaller conference room and it would be possible to go back to that setup. The second question for members is if they would like to go back to meeting on Thursdays or keep the meetings on Fridays.

D. Johnson is flexible on Thursday or Friday.

Campbell thinks the current location of Council Chambers is comfortable. She wondered if staff has any opinion on the location. The conference rooms can get quite crowded. Christopher noted that we haven't figured out the future of Zoom meetings yet. We want to keep open the possibility in the short term.

Cuca knows that the past meeting day for this group is on Thursday, but Friday works better for her. She believes keeping Zoom is a good option.

Nalow stated that we have had meetings in the past that got very crowded. This room is a much better option.

Post would be happy to keep Friday and likes the 8:30 a.m. start time.

Quade is flexible.

K. Johnson likes the idea of staying in the Council Chambers on Friday and keeping the Zoom option available is preferable.

- L. Johnson stated that the sculptor Ben Victor will be in Lincoln with the Susan La Flesche Picotte sculpture the week of June 14th. He will have public studio hours from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Jayne Snyder Trail center at 21st St. and 'Q' Street.

K. Johnson pointed out that Victor is the only sculptor to have two sculptures in Statuary Hall. L. Johnson stated that Victor could have perhaps a third sculpture in the future.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.