BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, September 7, 2011, 11:45 a.m., Room 113, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Michael Cornelius, Dick Esseks, Wendy Francis, Leirion Gaylor Baird, Jeanelle Lust, Jim Partington, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor; Roger Larson absent. Rick Hoppe of the Mayor's Office; Barb Fraser of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee; Miki Esposito of Public Works and Utilities; Randy Hoskins and Thomas Shafer of Engineering Services; Marvin Krout, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, David Cary, Sara Hartzell, Brandon Garrett, Mike Brienzo, Jean Preister and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Draft LPlan 2040/LRTP Briefing

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Krout stated that today's discussion is regarding the $7 million budget increase and an addition to the staff proposed amendments.

Hoppe stated that he thought long and hard about the comments received at the last Planning Commission meeting. Sometimes there is tension between a 30-year plan and a year-to-year budget, but he would like to bridge that gap. He noted that the ex parte communication was the result of the conversations among the Mayor's staff and the Commissioners to get their thoughts on the Plan. He is proposing to strike the new strategy for funding the sidewalk rehabilitation program (under the Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities section on page 10.66 of the Plan), and replace it with a revised strategy that reads "The Mayor and City Council should examine funding options with a goal of proposing a strategy prior to the 2012-13 city budget year that more closely match funding with identified needs in the sidewalk rehabilitation program."

He believes this is a compromise of the Comprehensive Plan and the commitments the Mayor has made.

Esseks stated that this gives the Mayor and City Council a year to figure out the sidewalk repair needs. Krout stated that there will be a new CIP, so it will be next spring when the Commission is dealing with this question.

Lust asked if amendments can be made to the Plan in the future. Krout stated that there is an annual review process, although the review process is not planned for this coming year. He noted that there will be amendments considered for the Long Range Transportation Plan as well.

Cornelius noted that with the injection of funds, we couldn't find a way to funnel that into sidewalk rehab and asked why in less than a year there is expected to be any additional funding available. Hoppe stated that he recently convened a meeting on prioritization of sidewalks, and there may be some strategies with respect to that. Of the $500,000 that was spent in 10/11, about $330,000 of that was spent on sidewalk ramps that had been requested. He asked if the ADA looks equally at sidewalks and ramps in terms of prioritization, and they didn't know the answer to that. He feels it is a question worth asking. Also, $110,000 was spent to reimburse people who paid for sidewalk repair. He feels that is a good program, but we put money into sidewalks without regard to the condition or need. He questioned if the $500,000 budget could go further in addressing the issues identified. There are also a couple other one-time funding options to pursue. He is not ready to identify those at this time, but it will become clearer in the coming weeks. In short, there are a couple avenues to pursue before we consider Gaylor Baird's amendment. He greatly respects Gaylor Baird's opinion, and she is correct that we have to do something about sidewalks.

Esseks asked if there is an inventory of sidewalks that are in critical need of repair. Hoppe stated that there is a priority list based on specific criteria. That priority list could be taken care of with the $500,000 budget.

Gaylor Baird stated that it is important to come up with the best Plan based on the data. She feels that we would be doing a disservice if we have a Plan that is not the best guideline. The Plan should reflect what the City needs.

Francis stated that the $500,000 budget is not enough to take care of the problems. There also must be a quicker turnaround on City inspection of sidewalks.

Partington stated that he would lean toward supporting Hoppe's recommendation as he does not feel comfortable dictating a budget 30 years in the future.

Gaylor Baird stated that she feels a realistic effort must be made to get the sidewalks in reasonable shape.

Esseks asked about the implications for a $1 million sidewalk budget. Hoppe stated that there was an extensive public process for the budget. They feel that it is important to follow through with the commitments they have made. While this is a planning document, please do not discount the impact this has on the City Council and budget. Krout added that because of the new federal requirements, we are starting to intertwine the budget and the Plan.

Esseks asked if the budget would have to go back to the City Council for approval again with this amendment. Krout stated that Gaylor Baird's amendment would take effect in 2012/13. Hoppe stated that he would have to go back to the Mayor and City Council and seek to have that amendment overridden. This is why they would like the year to see if they can smooth out the edges on those two contradictory positions.

Cornelius asked how the Planning Commission will be informed in the future so this does not happen again. Hoppe stated that they will have to coordinate more closely with the Commission.

Sunderman stated that he will support the Mayor's recommendation. He asked if Commissioners can propose amendments during the annual review process. Krout stated that they can.

Francis stated that she will support Gaylor Baird's recommendation as it shows that we are taking sidewalks seriously, but we just do not have the funding available now.

Cornelius stated that while we are an advisory board, he asked how we harmonize our role as advice-givers. Hoppe stated that the Mayor would like to have that discussion. Cornelius stated that the Commission wants to give the best advice, and they want that advice to be heard, but they do not want to take over the legislative role. He believes that discussion is vital. Krout stated that it is possible to have a more general transportation element in the Comp Plan and have the same review and recommendations in the LRTP, but that would not have a super-majority requirement.

Lust asked if the words "with a goal of proposing a strategy" could be removed from the proposed amendment. Hoppe stated that sounds reasonable. On that basis, the staff recommendation for this strategy was revised to read as follows:

- The Mayor and City Council should examine funding options prior to the 2012-13 city budget year that more closely match funding with identified needs in the sidewalk rehabilitation program.

Next, Cary reviewed the amendment proposed by Gaylor Baird. He noted that the amendment is to increase the sidewalk budget from $500,000 to $1.5 million. There are 10 specific references to amend the Transportation chapter. The biggest impact is that six roadway projects would not be funded during the 2040 planning period under the Financially Constrained Plan. Gaylor Baird asked if the impact is minimal in the near future. Cary stated that there are minimal impacts in the near future.

Next, Cornelius asked staff to review the letter submitted by Richard Schmeling. Cary stated that there are a lot of good points identified in the letter. He noted that the Plan is proposing a study of the transit system. The Plan is addressing many of the issues identified by Schmeling. He noted that Lincoln does not have the population for the light rail investment.

Fleck-Tooze briefly reviewed the new staff recommended changes to the Plan. She noted that most of the changes are fairly minor.

Gaylor Baird stated that it is due to staff's credit that there are so few amendments. She appreciates all the work by staff.

Krout stated that the Comp Plan is subject to ex parte communication policies, so if there were any outside communications, it is appropriate to disclose that during the hearing.

Krout noted that there will be a series of briefings on the zoning code.

Krout also noted that there are three Planning Commission members who will be leaving the Commission. The Mayor has not made any decisions on appointments. He appreciates all the Commissioners' work during this process.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

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