

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, February 16, 2022.

NAME OF GROUP: NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Friday, February 25, 2022, 8:30 a.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: David Cary, Collin Christopher and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Bob Ripley and Matt Hansen with Nebraska Capitol Commission; Michelle Potts from Nebraska State Building Division; Lynn Johnson from Parks & Recreation; Bill Deroin with HDR; Dave Meagher with WRK, LLC; Mark Bacon with BVH Architecture; Roger Lempke; Liz Shea McCoy; Matt Olberding from Lincoln Journal Star; and other interested citizens.

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 December 17, 2021. Motion for approval made by Nalow, seconded by Post.

Quade noted a correction to Page 9. Statement by Quade noting 'normal' brick size should state 'Norman' brick size.

Motion for approval of minutes as corrected carried 7-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONER ANDREA GEBHART

Kile Johnson introduced new Commissioner Andrea Gebhart.

Gebhart stated that she works for JEO Consulting Group. She moved to Lincoln in 2008. She is excited to be on the Commission and protect the sense of place around the capital.

The other Commissioners introduced themselves, along with the Ex-Officio Commissioners and City staff.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Christopher stated that Mary Campbell was the Vice-Chair, and since she is no longer on the Commission, a new Vice-Chair must be elected.

D. Johnson nominated Nalow, seconded by Cuca and carried 6-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Post and Quade voting ‘yes’; Nalow abstaining.

NEW CONSTRUCTION WORK AT 220 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH

PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION:

February 25, 2022

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

Christopher stated this is the next step in development of the Pershing block. This first phase is primarily focused on a new building that will front 16th Street. It doesn’t include new construction along N Street or Centennial Mall. The streetscape work on this block is not part of this certificate request, nor is the proposed open space. The Commission offered some feedback on this project late last year, and the design team has attempted to address some of that feedback in their updated design.

Bill Deroin with HDR is working with the White Lotus team to develop an affordable housing project. He showed the site plan. The scale has been adjusted and reduced a little. This will be a building lining 16th Street with an entrance to the housing on the north. There will be retail opportunities on the first level along 16th Street. They had previously shown a lower level parking garage. They are still working with the City on the location of the entry. They are working on the entrance coming off ‘N’ Street to the west. They have updated building elevations with previous feedback from the Commission. The proposed primary façade material is a face brick. It will be a traditional face brick for the housing floors two through five. The ground floor podium would be a lighter brick. They had previously talked about a Norman brick. They are looking at possibly doing some fiber cement panels in a few accent colors to bring in some warmer color. The plan is largely unchanged from the plan they presented in December 2021. This building is proposed for the 57-foot height limit in this district. For current design options, they are exploring the need for any rooftop mechanicals or if they will be located within the units themselves. If they end up on the roof, they will be the minimum fifteen feet from the roof line with a screen wall. Regarding material selection, the ground floor to the second floor is intended to be a full face brick. They are targeting a lighter buff color, something that matches a limestone color. The housing levels will be more of a traditional face brick construction and traditional masonry construction. They would like a lighter color mortar. They don’t want something that is too dark. A Nichiha panel is the baseline for the design. They would be at specific accent locations to bring in some warmth. Glazing and other materials are unchanged as previously presented. They are proposing an aluminum clad window system for the housing. One alternate to be considered if cost drives the decision would be the façade material of the podium. The plan currently assumes the podium to be steel construction. If a full cast-in-place podium is desired, it would seem to him to be consistent

with Nebraska Capitol Environs guidelines. The baseline assumption is a steel podium with the brick. He showed some other examples of gray brick buildings in the area. He believes there is precedent in the area. He showed a rendering of the project and pointed out the location of the retail opportunities. They want this project to work well with its neighbors. He wants this to be a warm, inviting space. He showed a carve out for an outdoor amenity deck. This would be a public space that celebrates the views to the Capitol. On the west side, a couple of housing units were removed for the outdoor deck. White Lotus Group is in the process of applying for some low income tax credits.

Bob Ripley asked about the scaled-back approach. He remembers the previous proposal having an "L" shaped footprint that extended along the N Street side. He asked if there is any intent for traditional housing on the north building or if that would be independent from this. Deroin responded that some of that was based on the Build Back Better funds. That doesn't seem to be an option at this point. It could be housing or if the market drives something else, they would work on a separate project. Ripley asked if that could be extended as part of this. Deroin replied yes.

Quade thinks from this presentation, he likes the improvements he has seen. He likes the reduction or elimination of stucco finishes. He would approve of either Norman brick or cast in place if finished appropriately. The biggest disadvantage he sees is this phase not extending out to the Mall. His concern is the timing between Pershing coming down and new development occurring on the block. The library project is dependent on a bond issue passing. He is concerned how long this site would be vacant or partially vacant. He is curious as to why the proposed building is running along 16th Street. He could see it rotating and lining the N' Street side. Nalow echoed that concern on what will happen along Centennial Mall. Deroin would defer to the White Lotus Group. It has been a struggle to work full brick into the design costs. He reminded everyone this will be low income housing. They want to keep the site on the 'N' Street side free for a future development that might have a more significant use or if that is where the library ends up. They want to keep it flexible. The bike lane along the 'N' Street side needs to be taken into account as well. There are limited options on how to get to the lower level parking.

Post inquired if there are any plans for how it will be developed as part of Phase One. Deroin hasn't talked about that specific to this housing project. He believes that will be part of ongoing negotiations. They haven't talked about how that will be once Pershing Auditorium comes down.

Quade asked if the intended parking is underneath the building. Deroin stated they are currently showing a parking ramp entering west of the building. The idea is that if the library eventually wants to share the use, there is a break point to separate the housing from the rest. They could have separate security as you make the transition underground. They want the housing parking to be separate from a security standpoint. The library could still utilize the entrance and do something separate.

Nalow noted this presentation has introductions of new materials in response to previous comments from this Commission. She asked the applicant to talk about the west side with the ramp going down. She is trying to understand how the alley will work and what it will look like. She is concerned if it is exposed to Centennial Mall, will there be a streetscape

component to the ally and what the north side will look like. Deroin stated they are trying to keep this design flexible for how the library project will utilize the space. He knows there have been some thoughts on how this integrates. This project is trying to keep it flexible which will eventually conceal it. The main goal of the project remains unchanged. The entire interior courtyard is intended to be an engaging space for the public. They intentionally kept some of this area a little closed off at the base knowing there could be a Phase Two of the housing project. They are trying to hide some of the areas that this Commission had concern with. They would love to be engaged in helping with those things that would engage this project.

Nalow asked about the building today and the alleyway. Christopher responded that in reality if this could be pulled into one phase, that would be best but that is not the reality. There are many factors. The goal is to keep this site as flexible as possible. The applicant is showing their footprint with the understanding that the coordination between projects will continue to happen. He believes the concern is short-term once this is built, since future phases are lagging. The expectation would be after demolition, it would be filled in with turf for the short-term. We don't want to leave a big hole in the ground. It will most likely be a turf space for a couple of years.

Ripley is concerned that this project was proposed as a single enterprise last time. Perhaps there was something available to the public as to how this is being organized. If the City is the owner of the entire project, for this Commission to be able to react to a more piecemeal development of the site, he is hoping the design team will be the same. He is hoping there will be some continuity here. The fragmentation of this into several project areas could be problematic. He would like to see how this is evolving. He is concerned when he sees individual elements. This could become a problem. He thinks an explanation of what we best think about the future of this block is appropriate. He understands the reduced scope of this applicant. As a City body, we are responsible for the entire project. He wants to hear why the fragmented sections are appropriate. He hopes for a unified project in the Environs. He wants the City and public to know what the process is now.

Deroin speaks for White Lotus team and the vision for the site as presented remains unchanged in terms of how they are seeing this used. Affordable housing, a civic site and a newfound energy within the Mall are all included. One of the main concepts they would like to pursue would be eventually developing a Phase Two. Funds aren't available at this point. White Lotus sees this developing as initially proposed. He offered assurance that is their vision.

Christopher agreed. The master plan is still the master plan. The reality is that this can't come together as one project for a variety of financial reasons. The City will enter into an agreement with White Lotus that will give them ownership of a portion of this block. He will continue to update the Commission as this goes forward. This is a continually evolving project. It is fair to ask questions on why the plan appears to have changed, but the economics of this project have forced an evolution in how it is phased.

Quade would still recommend that the building orients along 'N' Street as opposed to 16th Street. He believes parking could still orient off 16th Street. He was curious to know the restrictions on making this happen. His concern is regarding future development. He would

hate to see someone in the future say it wasn't worth it to develop along the Mall.

Deroin stated he believes the inclusion of residential along 16th Street is keeping more of the civic function off Centennial Mall. He thinks there would be concerns on making that change. That ties in with how they have envisioned more development growing in this area.

Quade asked if the future development is not intended to be residential. Deroin believes it could be. They felt 16th Street was the key location for residential. They felt 16th street was a better location. He also believes that 16th Street is more viable for commercial opportunities. With the bike lane, drive up and parking access is more difficult on 'N' Street. He believes this is a better opportunity for success.

K. Johnson inquired how many parking stalls are proposed for the underground parking. Deroin responded that 46 stalls are currently planned. K. Johnson asked how many housing units are proposed. Deroin responded that 90 are planned. K. Johnson asked how many units were in the previous plan. Deroin believes there were 152. K. Johnson asked about previous plans for parking. Deroin believes the last proposal had 92 stalls. K. Johnson asked if parking was driving this change. Deroin responded that was part of the change. He believes there was some concern on how it would be accessed on the north part of the site, along with the high cost of parking in general. There were also concerns about providing something that could coordinate with the library. K. Johnson asked if any stalls would be available for the library to use. Deroin responded that the 46 stalls would just be for the housing. If the library moves forward, they would be responsible for developing their parking stalls. K. Johnson asked who will own the parking after development. Christopher stated that White Lotus will own their portion, and the City will own the library space. K. Johnson asked if any future development would be owned by the City. Christopher believes White Lotus will have the option to develop it first, at least for a period of time. K. Johnson asked how much time the undeveloped portions would remain open. Christopher doesn't know what the WLG option would look like, as that is something that would need to be agreed to in a redevelopment agreement. He is not sure he can give an answer. He will follow up with Urban Development. The reality is that if the bond fails, the City would have to re-examine what the remaining portion would look like. It could be opened up to the public for additional development proposals. There are lots of specifics and scenarios still to be finalized. At the moment, White Lotus is applying for some low income housing credits, and the success of that proposal is tied into how this site gets developed.

Post would like to redirect the conversation and focus on whether the proposed façade meets Capitol Environs design standards. She believes this falls in line with the standards. She shares concerns it would be better to have the whole block develop at the same time. There have been many proposals over the years. As with any private landowner, you can't force the owner to do what you think best. There is a heightened concern on how the rest is used after this piece is sliced off. She knows the scaled back version isn't ideal. It is in the Capitol Environs and that requires a heightened design and façade. As far as how the rest of this project develops out, it is within the Planning Department's scope to review. She appreciates the presentation before this Commission.

ACTION:

Post moved approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction as presented, seconded by Cuca.

Gebhart noted the design standards discourage wood as a primary façade material, and the proposed façade includes accent panels that mimic wood. She is slightly concerned that might carry over to future developments. The design presented appears to depict wood and she wonders if that is appropriate. Deroin stated the current image appears to replicate a wood texture. That isn't what they are proposing. It is just an accent panel with a slightly warmer color.

K. Johnson pointed out a comment that was made about rooftop structures. He would appreciate no rooftop structures. He would like the applicant to comment on screening if that happens. Deroin stated it would most likely be a flat panel aluminum gray that matches the façade. He envisions more of a linear pattern. It would be a metal material, keeping it as low profile as possible. K. Johnson inquired if the applicant could give an existing example. Deroin can share some examples to Christopher to share with the Commission.

Motion carried 7-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

YWCA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Christopher stated the YWCA project is a discussion item today to give an update on the project and to allow the Commission to provide feedback. In theory, this could be back as early as next month for a public hearing. The project was taken to Historic Preservation Commission for their review last week. They recommended approval of demolition and new construction.

Dave Meagher from WRK started by going over the background of ownership of this property. He showed a site overview. The site is just under a half an acre with the east side being open green space. The building is three stories. Right now, it is an H shaped construction primarily with limestone trim. The building was built in 1932. It was purpose built for the YWCA. There is a second floor swimming pool and basketball court. WRK was the only bidder when this property was offered for sale. From 2009 to 2014, they leased it to the YWCA and other tenants. The YWCA left in 2012. There were other tenants. Following a childcare business leaving the facility, they engaged BVH Architecture. The current building condition was looked at. There were numerous inspections. A budget was prepared to remedy a lot of issues that were found. It was financially difficult to move forward. They sought different funding sources. Ultimately, they weren't able to move forward with improvements. The building has many issues from asbestos and lead paint to outdated mechanical systems. There are a number of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues. The elevator is original and needs a full replacement. The development team has done many projects throughout downtown. BVH has been working on the Capitol building restoration for three decades. There are a number of adaptability constraints. First, they looked at office and commercial. There are many parking constraints in this area. This

made it infeasible. There are also building site and orientation issues. This left them to pursue residential. They still have to look at parking. There are no windows on the west side since the building abuts the library.

Mark Bacon from BVH stated that part of the challenge is the adjacent library. In order to lay out residential units for ingress and egress challenges, they couldn't use the west façade. You would have to have long units that expand all the way across which dramatically limits the number of units you could have. As a team, they felt that wasn't a viable option for the redevelopment use of the building. There would still be the ADA issues.

Meagher continued by stating they have looked at many options. They looked at sales and rental. They have looked at everything from microunits to larger residences. The large size would make the units unrentable. They found that utilizing the existing structure made everything difficult. Ultimately the State said this could be done, but quite a few elements would need to be taken out for historic tax credits, along with removing the parking underneath. WRK has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in this. They are interested in moving forward as quickly as possible. They have been trying to maintain and repair the property, but it is just not possible to move forward and remediate a lot of issues in the building. They have salvaged a painting in the building with the intention to salvage another one. They went through a real estate tax appeal. The appraiser argued the fullest and best use was commercial with full demolition. That is not their intent. The improvements on the site are viewed as taking away value from the site. They don't see it that way. They didn't agree with that. He showed the current condition of the building. He showed the degradation within the structure. Some drop ceilings were installed in the building and some crown moulding was damaged in the process. It is their intent to keep that and restore it. The pool had to be closed because the inspector deemed the filtration system to be unsafe. Their proposed solution to the property is to create an economically feasible project to redevelop the property. They also want to repurpose where they can. It was clear to them that it wasn't feasible to keep the entire building. They looked at which portions were most important. They looked at the nomination form to the National Register. He believes most of the nomination text describes the 'N' Street façade. In addition, the application form describes the structure as a virtual façade building due to the bulk of the design being on the south façade. They believe that most of the architectural design and interest is on the south façade. They are proposing to keep the south façade and to place a massing around it with new construction that would go to the Centennial Mall property line. He showed a rendering from the 'N' Street view. He pointed out the portion of the building that they plan to keep. They are proposing a little over 30 condo units that would be two bedroom, two bath. They are proposing some walk up units. He believes it could be a neat design element that would add some activity to the Mall. There would be an ADA accessible unit along with a corner retail space. It is important to them to be self-sufficient with parking. For the first floor and lower level, they are proposing about 50 stalls. He showed some text from the Downtown Master Plan and noted it states a need for residential south of 'O' Street and East of 9th Street.

Bacon stated that when looking to develop this along Centennial Mall, all current properties other than this block have a strong relationship with the view to the Capitol. Part of Capitol Environs states the 57-foot height limit must be respected. He believes they

are doing that. They believe this proposal enhances the environs. They are redeveloping the historic portion of YWCA into residential units. There would be several units along Centennial Mall and retail on the southeast corner. There would be walk up units off Centennial Mall. There are other amenities in the building such as places for dogs, a gym, and other amenities.

Meagher commented that they are maintaining the historic 'N' Street entrance, but the primary entrance would be off Centennial Mall, north of the retail space with ADA access.

Bacon showed the location of the building. Meagher noted the primary façade along Centennial Mall. The patios go past the building line. There is quite a bit of right-of-way space on the Centennial Mall side. They are working on the specifics.

Bacon continued that the redevelopment is intentionally framing the historic building. The streetscape surrounding it is intentional to bring down the scale. They want to address the desires of this Commission for what happens along Centennial Mall. They want long lasting materials of a singular color that go along with the mall. There will be no awnings and want to make sure it will be welcoming to pedestrians. Meagher noted they are trying to show as much of the historic building as possible.

Bacon continued that they are looking at long-lasting materials such as brick or stone with a muted palette. They are making sure they strengthen the inner relationships amongst the buildings and providing the appropriate amount of ornamental detail. Landscape features and overall color finish and texture are guidelines that they intend to meet. They plan to maintain a consistent cornice height of 57 feet. There are places with rooftop access. They are recessed from the cornice line. There is a well-defined urban planning intention behind this new development. In looking at the main height of the building, the new portion will be taller than the existing YWCA building.

Meagher added that the new structure will not loom over the old building. It will only be one floor above the YWCA.

Bacon stated that the guidelines call out the YWCA building as one that should be preserved. He feels this plan is consistent with that.

Quade thinks this looks like a great development. He likes the aspect of saving the historical portion. He appreciates the subtleness of the glass. The activity with the recessed balconies help provide some mitigation to the mall.

Gebhart noted that the balconies will be recessed, but those on the main floor extend into the mall.

Nalow voiced some caution about right-of-way use and Centennial Mall. Overall, she thinks the building is a beautiful approach to historic preservation and materials. The issue is that Centennial Mall represents strong north/south movements coming out of the Capitol. The view is towards the Capitol. She would caution them in thinking about encroaching on the Mall. Strong linear movement has already been created along the Mall. There is a generous right-of-way, but that is part of the mall property and she thinks that it is something to be

considered. She is excited about engaging the Mall, but would like them to think about how that can happen while still maintaining its design intent.

Post understands the applicant is showing a dog run. Meagher stated that it will be an indoor covered run that will open up. Post also asked about roof deck space. She inquired if this would be on the new building portion. Meagher replied yes.

Cuca applauded the preservation of the old and bringing in the new. She asked if the applicant is aware of any plans for the current Bennet Martin Library building. Meagher stated that these are two separate structures. Bacon added that in order to reinforce the building, that is why we located parking in that area. Cuca noted with walk up residential, she assumes there are security concerns to address. Meagher replied yes. Special attention will be paid to how those are designed. He can't speak to the actual hardware at this point.

K. Johnson mentioned the bump up over staircases going over 57 feet. Meagher noted that is for the rooftop element on the new structure. That would exceed 57 feet.

Bacon pointed out the elements on the drawings. K. Johnson asked if they would be recessed. Bacon replied yes. Meagher added there is nothing along the property line.

K. Johnson wondered about the price point of the condos. Meagher stated the preliminary cost is too early to say with the current construction environment. Assuming this is approved, they would develop more finalized budget numbers.

K. Johnson believes the bump out from the walkups changes the environment of the Mall. He thinks it is inconsistent with other design elements along the Mall.

Ripley stated that having been around as long as he has, he compliments this proposal for doing what can be very tricky stuff. Having a historic building with the exterior it does is worthy of preservation. This proposal does as good a job as he can imagine with trying to keep the south façade as preserved and visible as possible. He used to go there to swim when he was younger. He believes the applicant has done a good job with this proposal and keeping the historic elements available to the public. Ripley asked about the plan drawings on page 31, which appears to show how the building would project out at the southeast corner. Meagher replied that the area he is referring to would be for outdoor seating. Ripley complimented WRK. They have had this building a long time and this is a lot of money and commitment. He thanked them for their efforts. This is a proposal that preserves a lot of the historic character of the property.

PERSHING MURAL UPDATE

Roger Lempke and Liz Shea-McCoy appeared to provide an update on their efforts to save the mural. Lempke stated that he and his wife have lived in Lincoln since 1979. They are originally from Tecumseh, Nebraska. Everyone is familiar with the Pershing project. There have been questions over the years on what to do with the mural. There are no preservation plans at this point. They have begun to take steps to see what would be possible. This is entirely a private enterprise. They would be involved with taking it down and the preservation. Their major objective is wherever it goes up, they want it to be

visible. Growing up in Nebraska, they remember their trips to Pershing Auditorium. That mural itself brings back memories. As they reached out as private citizens, they got the same kind of reaction. They are on a mission to take the steps to hopefully save it and place it in a location that will be very visible. Liz Shea-McCoy stated that it will take a couple of months to get through the takedown of the tiles. They are on a path to raise funds. One big thing to emphasize is to explain to everyone what they are trying to do.

McCoy stated that they want to be transparent with their efforts. She has lived in Lincoln since 1961. As a longtime resident, she thinks sometimes you get used to beauty and take things for granted. The more people she talks to, the more it reinforces her drive to save this mural. They are a small group of enthusiastic individuals who want to save the mural. They needed a feasibility study to understand how the mural could be removed and to make sure there was no asbestos. That was done in January. It was found that there is no asbestos in the mural. There is local ownership of this mural.

Based on their conversations with the City, they have determined that there are three major phases in this project. First of all, it is their understanding the City wants to rope off Pershing in June and start taking off the asbestos in the building. After that is done, the building will come down. They are hoping to start in two months. Mike McCullough and his company will be tasked with taking it down. They would remove the 780,000 tiles one-by-one and clean them. They would restore the areas that are missing. The last phase would be reinstalling it in a Lincoln location. Their fundraising goal is \$3 million. For fundraising purposes, the next two months she will be dedicated to that effort. They wanted to let the Commission know what is going on.

Lempke is open to ideas on potential locations. They need to generate resources to make that happen. They have a plan in mind.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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

Christopher stated that he presented the first draft of the annual report at the November meeting with the Capitol Commission. Since then, he has made a few updates to represent the November and December meetings. He would ask for a vote on the report.

Nalow moved approval, seconded by Cuca and carried 7-0: Cuca, Gebhart, D. Johnson, K. Johnson, Nalow, Post and Quade voting 'yes'.

STAFF UPDATES

Christopher stated that in February of 2020, a plan was approved to demolish 1515 'F' Street and rebuild a four-plex for rental. The owner got their building permit approval and then had some financial issues. Ultimately, they had to sell the property. In the fall of 2021, they found a buyer who was interested in taking the plans the previous owner had developed and that were already approved. Christopher's advice was that as long as the new owner wasn't changing what was approved, they should be okay to proceed. There is one potential change to that plan. The new owner is asking if it would be acceptable to

change out the approved windows with a slightly different color finish. An aluminum clad window with a black finish was originally approved. The new owner is proposing to replace those with a white aluminum or white vinyl cladding. The reason given was the lead time on getting the materials on site. He believes the applicant would like to move forward fairly quickly. He is requesting advice on how to proceed.

K. Johnson inquired if Quade had any concerns with the substitution. Quade replied no.

The Commission indicated they were amenable to the change. Christopher will provide that direction to the applicant.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.