

President's Report to Board

January 12, 2012

Introduction

Conversations with potential new board members resulted in Tom Madsen and Matt Perlinger joining the Board. Ann Tyler is giving serious consideration to joining, but wanted to attend a meeting with us before she makes her decision.

Liaison with the University

I talked with Alan Moeller, the assistant to Ronnie Green, the Vice-Chancellor for IANR about establishing a liaison with the ECCO board. He thought it would be a good idea and asked for an e-mail that he could present to the Vice-Chancellor to ask for the creation of the liaison position. We also talked briefly about parking issues and university strategic planning on East Campus.

Report on Planning Commission Testimony, Discussion, and Vote by the Commission

I did testify on the change of language in the zoning ordinance related to parking stalls for fraternities and sororities. In brief I questioned the basis for the assumption that few parking stalls were needed if a house was within 600' of a university and suggested the commission delay the vote until this assumption was examined further.

I think the testimony did cause the commissioners to think a bit more about the issue. The Commissioners did comment and ask a number of questions:

- They indicated that questioning the assumption that less cars were needed close to campus was valid. One Commissioner suggested that perhaps the distinction should be that fraternities close to downtown should have a different standard than those farther away.
- They asked if students with parking permits could keep their cars on campus 24 hours? (Staff did not know, but I think they can).
- They said they understood that parking was an issue, but how much of the problem was due to fraternities and how much was due to students parking during the day. Staff stated that when she asked the campus police and city police about fraternity and sorority parking, the police said there were not problems with the fraternities and sororities.
- They asked why we need a separate standard for Greek houses than the one for R6 dwelling units?

The staff suggested we needed to ask "What are the problems we are trying to address?"

- Eliminating the difference in requirements for sororities and fraternities - all agreed.
- Eliminating vague language in the existing requirement that requires the calculation of the number of parking stalls based on the amount of “living” space in the house – a vague definition that is hard to measure – all agreed that this language should be changed

The staff also stated the questions that needed to be addressed were:

- What should be the parking requirement for fraternities and sororities?
- Should we have two standards, one for houses within 600’ of a university and a different one for those houses farther away?
- If there are to be two standards, where do we draw the line? (The 600’ line was based on other language that allows any parking within 600’ of a building to be counted as part of the
- parking that allows the building to meet their parking requirements.)

There was no response to my question of which requirement takes precedent, the language for fraternities and sororities or the underlying zoning. I assume the special language controls. In the end the Commissioners voted not to delay but to approve the proposed change in language. The basic logic was that staff had already spent a lot of time on this issue and they seemed to agree with staff that there was no further “scientific” information that could be obtained to help with the problem.

However, we did achieve a victory of sorts. As I was leaving the hearing Marvin Krautman, the planning director stopped me and said he would like to meet with ECCO before the issue goes before the City Council. I responded that ECCO would welcome this opportunity and that I thought it would be good to have someone from the University of Nebraska at that meeting as well. My thought is we can talk about the Greek houses but perhaps also have a bit of a discussion about parking at the University in general, at least start the conversation.

Questions we need to think about before any meeting with the Planning Department

The following are questions that I believe we need to consider before we meet with the Planning Department regarding this zone change:

- Because sororities and fraternities are really boarding houses and not apartments, developing a parking requirement based on the number of units does not make sense. However, although it may once have been safe to assume that students will have fewer cars than other adults, that is no longer the case. So what should the parking requirements for such “boarding” houses be?
- One thought would be to relate the requirement to the parking requirement for the zoning district in which the house sits. (The planning staff report stated the parking requirement in R-6, R-7, and R-8 was one parking stall per dwelling unit. However, based on the parking matrix in the zoning code, it looks like the requirement for R-6 is 1.75 parking stalls for dwelling unit. Is the staff report wrong?) A quick review of the zoning

map for Lincoln indicates that areas around universities are likely to be zoned R-2, R-5, R-6, R-7 or commercial. The parking requirements according to the parking matrix in R-2 is 2 stalls per dwelling unit, in R-5 and R-6, 1.75 and in R-8 1. (I mentioned to Marvin in our brief conversation that a parking requirement based on the number of stalls per dwelling unit could not be compared directly with the number per person in the dwelling unit. However, here is one way to compare: If there can be 3 non-related persons in an R-6 residence, there would be 1.75 stalls per 3 people or approximately .58 stalls per person. In R-2 there would be 2 stalls per dwelling unit or .66.

- Staff indicated that all the Greek houses were in R-6, R-7, or R-8 zoning. However, based on the zoning map, the FarmHouse is in an R-2 zone, which has a parking requirement of 2 stalls per dwelling unit. (Please remember that the requirements for all existing fraternities, and for AGR because they already have their permit, are grandfathered in. Any new requirements would be applied only if the house expands the outside structure, and even then there are special conditions that could be applied to relax the requirements.
- We need to be careful about what we ask for because if we have too strict a parking requirement, we will force fraternities to build more houses if they are allowed to expand. I am not sure that as a neighborhood we would want this expansion of parking lots.
- How big a deal do we want to make of the fraternity parking question? Do we want to fight this before city council?

What other questions are there?

After the holidays I sent the following e-mail to Marvin Krout.

Marvin – I just wanted to let you know that I talked with Roger Wehrbein about the number of residents at the AGR house. The fraternity has limited the number of residents to 64, not the 80+ we had talked about earlier. Their parking spaces should be more than adequate no matter which way the wording of the zone change goes.

We are still looking forward to talking with you more about this issue.

Members of the ECCO board have discussed parking issues in general with both Alan Moeller and Christine Jackson at the University. We would suggest that it would be good to have them at the meeting. We would also suggest that some one from Wesleyan and UPCO may also want to attend.

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Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help set up this meeting.

Thanks again for your willingness to listen to our concerns.

Ann
President of East Campus Community Organization

North East Lincoln Partnership Meeting

Saturday January 7, Brian Striman, Rebecca Carr, Mary Eisenhardt and I attended an hour long meeting hosted by Nick Hernandez, from the Havelock Neighborhood Association, who has organized the North East Lincoln Partnership. The partnership includes the neighborhood organizations in North East Lincoln. Fifteen people in all attended the meeting, from UPCO, Uniplace, Havelock/Bethany, and Huntington. Mylan Wall executive director of the Heartland Center led us through a brief visioning exercise asking us to think about 1) a successful business or community project and what made it successful, and 2) a short phrases that would describe what we would like North East Lincoln to look like five years from now.

The process was very interesting to me because it was very similar to what I would like to do with ECCO. The best part of the meeting was that we were all able to network with folks from other neighborhoods, but no plans for further discussions on planning were made. I did talk with a few others about getting together to do some more concrete planning. The idea was well received and I plan to try to arrange a meeting soon.

Neighborhood Round Table

I attended the Neighborhood Round Table meeting on January 9 – to be filled in after the meeting

Development around Valentinos

Thursday night, January 5, I heard that there was a plan to develop the parking area between Valentinos and the AGR fraternity on Holdrege Street. A follow-up discussion with Alan

Moeller on January 6, confirmed that the Scott Brothers are planning to build a three story building with the bottom floor as commercial space and the top two floors as living space. Valentino's would also rebuild. (I will try to follow-up with the Scott brothers before the Board Meeting.)