

Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission
Board of Commission Meeting
7:00PM, January 19th, 2006
Mahoney State Park – Blue Agate Room

Commissioner Attending: Mary Ann Borgeson, Inez Boyd, Dean Bussing, Marsha Babcock, Peter Kotsiopulos, Jim Grotrian – alternate for JoAnn McDowell, Dave Nielsen, Steve Oltmans, John Plucknett, Chuck Sigerson, Ken Svoboda, Jeff Weak, Bob Workman, Jeff Quist, Ron Melbye, Brenda Gunn.

Members Excused: JoAnn McDowell, Jim Strand, Kyle Hutchings, Tim Gay

Department of Economic Development (DED) Staff: Richard Baier, Kathy McKillip, Zach Schroeder

Visitors: Rodney Verhoeff, Jim Sanders, Sue Brauckmuller, Bob Twiss, John Winkler, Dave Kotok, Fred Uhe, Ronna Wiig, Brad Stauffer, Scott Berryman, Rick Houck, George Borreson, Toby Churchill, Jason Smith.

Chairman Ken Svoboda welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:05PM. Svoboda asked the commissioners and DED staff to introduce themselves. Svoboda introduced and welcomed the Kathy McKillip as the NIZC Executive Director.

Kathy McKillip then took the Commission roll call at 7:07PM.

Chairman Svoboda ask the Commission to consider an agenda change to allow the public comment period to be placed briefly at the beginning and at the scheduled end of the agenda to accommodate citizen input for those with time constraints.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Svoboda asked if there are any changes that need to be made to the minutes as distributed from the November meeting. There being none, ***Motion by Oltmans and seconded by Boyd to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion approved by consent.***

Public Comment Period

Senator Pam Brown presented information regarding LB1121 that was introduced to the Legislature on 1/17/06. This bill was distributed to the Commissioners and relates a potential study to consider the impact of placement of a hydroelectric dam on the Platte River near the Interstate 80 corridor. There is no hearing date at this time, and LB1121 has been moved to the Natural Resources Committee.

The Commission moved forward with the scheduled agenda items and presentations.

Zach Schroeder, with DED, presented a power point presentation of an overview of the I-80 corridor and how from an aerial perspective, the land is laid out. Each Commissioner was given a copy of this presentation on a CD. Input was made as the program progressed along the corridor. As informative and enjoyable the presentation was,

Commissioner Gunn requested that some form of a bus tour be coordinated in the future, to better assist Commissioners and others regarding a view of the I-80 landscape. Commissioner Boyd stated that the Pflug Road interchange was being provided by Sarpy County. Chairman Svoboda added that by Fall 2006, hopefully the Commission would define a scope and radius for the corridor. If there is enough interest, a bus tour could be coordinated.

Toby Churchill, Executive Director with the Sarpy County Economic Development Corp, presented and handout information defining Sarpy County. Information provided in this presentation included, but was not limited to development opportunities with availability of land. Key points to development for the corridor are infrastructure (water/sewer) and interchanges. Most industrial development comes to Sarpy County because of the availability of land. More than 3.5 million in Federal dollars have been committed for the Pflug Road development with Sarpy County budgeting 10 million for new roads and development. Toby mentioned that Iowa is very competitive with their tax incentives for development.

Dave Nielsen, NIZC Commissioner, distributed information for Ken Riddle, with Cass County Dept of Zoning and Inspections. The main issue from discussion in Cass County is water supply. At this time, Toby Churchill and Dave Nielsen suggested to invite John Winkler from Cass County, to present at the Feb. Commission meeting it hopes of providing additional information about Cass County development.

George Borreson, Saunders County Zoning Administrator, updated the Commission on the current development within Saunders County. Specifically related to Mead Cattle Company and a new ethanol plant, as well as, a lakeside housing development. Chairman Svoboda asked Borreson about his thoughts and suggestions for the Commission to consider, Borreson believes that the Commission is a good idea, even though Saunders County may not be too effected by the I-80 corridor due to the agricultural focus and landscape of the County, stating that Saunders County is more into preserving the land and zoning is geared to agricultural development.

Chairman Svoboda stated at this time the importance of developing partnerships and counties not directly bordering the corridor need to be included in discussions.

Jason Smith, Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development presented and overview and distributed information regarding current development or projects within Lancaster County, specifically relating to the I-80 corridor and Stevens Creek area. Jason commented that though Lancaster County has more level land to entice developers, large parcels are not readily available. Development relationships between Omaha and Lincoln are much stronger and with the support of Richard Baier, DED, Jason Smith and Toby Churchill, a video was created by the Omaha Chamber of Commerce and Sarpy County Economic Dev. Corp. to better promote the potential collaborative efforts along the corridor. A copy of this tape is on file.

Chairman Svoboda asked Smith and Churchill, what do they perceive as the largest hurdle or challenge for the corridor. Both responded that it is access points from interchanges, and no real design standards. Churchill then commented that Commissioner Gunn could provide the Commission with insight about quality development projects with sound design standards; another great example is the city of La-Vista.

Commissioner Bussing commented that the Commissioner should step back and slow the review process down, especially when it comes to the Platte River Basin. Busing encouraged fellow Commissioners to consider the highest and best use for this area and the already established recreational attributes when the Commission considers an overall vision for the corridor.

Chairman Svoboda commented that Commissioner Bussing's point brings to light, what is the scope of the Commission and the importance to balance current attributes along the corridor with the Commissions scope. It is also not the goal of the Commission to interfere with local zoning jurisdictions – but rather to work together on design standards.

Commissioner Oltmans distributed a Growth Strategy Scope for consideration. Oltmans reminded Commissioners to review LB546, and to what means this Commission was created. This Commission was developed to create a model and vision for the corridor that can be replicated as a concise package. Oltmans requested feedback from the scopes draft that will be distributed in full length to Commissioners before the next meeting and further discussion will occur at the Commissions Feb. meeting.

Public Comment Period

Ronna Wiig, Mayor of Ashland, requested that the City of Ashland be placed on the NIZC mailing list and stated that Ashland is growing and striving to bring development to the corridor. Bob Christo, Ashland City Council, also expressed an interest in being added to the NIZC mailing list. One individual, who did not state their name, requested that the NIZC consider in the future scope of the corridor, the topic of public facilities.

There was no further comment or response from the public.

Motion to adjourn by Oltmans, second by Melbye. Motion Approved by consent.

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy McKillip,
Executive Director
Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission