

Meeting Minutes

Comprehensive Plan Community Committee
June 25, 2020, 3:00 p.m., Zoom Video Conference

Attendees: David Cary, Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf, Kellee Van Bruggen, Allan Zafft and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Dept.; Scott Holmes of Lincoln-Lancaster Co. Health Dept.; Ben Higgins and Donna Garden of Lincoln Transportation & Utilities; Vish Reddi, Cristy Joy, Deane Finnegan, DaNay Kalkowski, Stephanie Fisher, Kim Morrow, Dennis Scheer, Tracy Edgerton, Susan Larson Rodenburg, Tom Beckius, Burdette Piening, Heidi H, Meghan Sittler, Dick Campbell, Bryan Seck, Marilyn McNabb, Dave Johnson, Marco Barker, Sheila Dorsey Vinton and Grant Daily; and other interested parties via Zoom.

Paul Barnes welcomed everyone.

Kim Morrow wanted to talk about the Climate Action Plan. She believes we should care about climate resilience because there have been rising temperatures, heat waves, drought and other issues. These demand our attention and response. There are various health issues that go along with these issues such as allergies, asthma, heat related illness and even mental health issues. Communities of color are generally more impacted by climate change, just as they are by Covid-19. It is important to look at the entire population when it comes to impacts. The definition of resilience is the capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain systems' essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation. It is the ability to bounce back from changes. Lincoln's Climate Action Plan is part of Resilient Lincoln Initiative. Lincoln is projected to experience several important climate impacts such as warming temperatures, extreme heat, more precipitation, drought and a longer growing season. Extreme heat has all kinds of impacts. More precipitation is a concern. We have had some intense downpours and they seem to happen more often. This brings the risk of additional flooding. Drought has a whole range of effects from crops, water supply and the ground cracking. A longer growing season may have some positives, but some of the dangers of climate change can offset this. Additional stressors can be things such as poverty, health issues, non-English speaking populations, aging baby boomers, job automation, climate migration and food supply variability. When we took all those impacts, we came up with climate vulnerabilities. We have a single water source and are at a risk of flooding. There are other vulnerabilities as well. The flood plain can show us areas that need particular attention. Some strategies we are working on is a transition to low carbon energy, build a resilient economy, encourage decarbonized transportation infrastructure, expand the local food system, improve protections for vulnerable populations, maximize natural climate solutions, reduce waste and engage residents. The end result is that we have a vision for 2050 in which there is affordable, sustainable housing for all, carbon neutral energy, equitable workforce infrastructure, utility redundancy and conservation, flood risk reduction, healthy and well, innovative transportation system, everyone belongs and interconnected greenspace. We are currently finalizing the text of our Climate Action Plan. It will be released in September. We will be asking for public engagement and feedback.

Scott Holmes stated that today's focus is on a healthy and resilient community. Covid-19 was a sudden shock and for most people it wasn't on the radar until March. We knew it was not going to be good. Some other examples of sudden shocks are protests and riots. That was unusual for Lincoln. We've had natural disasters and flooding. We've also had economic downturns. There are chronic stressors such as social, physical, economic and environmental. Climate change is definitely a chronic stressor. What makes up a resilient community? They are flexible, resourceful, they meet community needs and they ensure conditions essential for optimal health. The question is can we design a safer, healthier, more resilient community? He believes we can. He thinks Lincoln has had great success with this. The direction you build has an impact on many things. There is the Water Plan, Waste Plan, Environmental Action Plan, Wastewater Plan and Transportation Plan. He believes public health, planning and resiliency have similar core bases. These are all affected by the Long Range Plan. Transportation planning is an interconnected piece to the plan, as is air quality, housing and, culture and community. We take pretty good efforts to monitor our air quality and overall, it is good. The Health Dept. is involved in water quality. We inspect about 100 industries. The Health Dept. coordinates the hazardous waste collection. We need to do more on lead poisoning. We are working on that area. He believes we can design a safer, healthier community.

Donna Garden wants to talk about the safety and resiliency of Lincoln's utilities. We are always looking to the future, master planning efforts and changing with the community. We do feasibility studies and models. There were events that changed Lincoln and made us challenge our resiliency. There was the drought of 2012, historical rainfall in 2014 and 2015, and flooding of 2019. There were mandatory water restrictions in 2012 from the drought. We created a water management manual. We included an increasing block rate structure. Two new horizontal collector wells were added. We started to seriously think about a second source for water. We looked at a number of different things. The leading problem solver was a second source from the Missouri River. It would include a water treatment plant, wellfield, and transmission main that runs to Lincoln. In 2045 dollars it would cost \$1.5 billion dollars. We also started looking around the region. We talked with MUD (Metropolitan Utilities District) and started thinking about if MUD and Lincoln interconnected. We did a feasibility study. This would be a lower cost with no treatment plan or wellfield being built. After all that, the flood of 2019 made us think on this again. First, the cold weather and thick river ice, and a bomb cyclone all happened. The Platte River was huge at the time. We had to do water restrictions in accordance with the Water Management Manual. We tried to maintain our reservoirs. Now we are working on restoration and mitigation. We still have five wells out of service. Our goal in order to be a water system is to maintain a safe, high quality drinking water. We need to protect the safety and wellbeing of our employees and maintain water pressure. Future challenges are flood restoration and mitigation with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). We hope to be back to full capacity by next season. We want to continue with infrastructure renewal. We want to work on the second water supply. We want to keep our rates affordable for everyone throughout town. The historic rainfall of 2014 and 2015 caused excessive flow and backups. There are two water resource recovery facilities. Those storms taught us how to handle the forecast. We lower the level of the system down before a storm hits. We are expanding our inflow and infiltration programs. One area we know we've had problems with in the past are sump pumps. We've worked with Building and Safety to modify the building code. For landfill, we are fortunate that we have purchased more property for the next step. In order to maximize the life, we work on waste diversion. We would like to reduce packing materials. Reuse products if you can. The recycling program is part of the diversion. We are consolidating some of the recycling sites. They will be enlarged. We hope everyone will still use the sites. We are planning to update the Solid Waste Plan 2040. Capacity modeling and the landfill is something we do regularly. We do disaster planning.

Liners are not simple. We are also looking if another transfer station in the southern part of the city might be something we need. She would like this group to talk about their preference for a second water source, what are the issues, what additional information does the public need and when should we move forward? With recycling costs, what are thoughts on waste diversion? We want to continue to divert waste. How do we become more resilient?

Ben Higgins stated that Lincoln floodplain standards exceed state and federal floodplain standards. We have the best rating in Nebraska. A lot of this is due to our projects and programs. We have a lot of open space. Everyone who has flood insurance in Lincoln gets a 25% reduction. There are no adverse impact standards for new growth areas. There are minimum corridor standards. Our stormwater quality standards are fairly new, but they follow state and federal guidelines. The Salt Creek Resiliency Study looks at what we can do to make that area more resilient. We are working on a Comprehensive Watershed and Floodplain Master Plan. There is a Drainage Criteria Manual in process. We are updating the floodplain maps. The Salt Creek Resiliency Study is in draft form at this point. It takes a hard look at climate changes. With current rainfall patterns, we are projecting a 0.8 foot average increase. We are projecting a 2.2 foot average increase with projected future conditions. We want to show what the future flood inundation could be. For overall flood protection goals, we want to know what we have, protect future development and implement programs for existing structures in the floodplain. Dead Man's Run project will move residences and businesses out of the floodplain.

Andrew Thierolf stated that everyone will break up into discussion groups. The following are the discussion questions and responses from all groups.

1. What would a resilient Lincoln of 2050 look like?

- Resilient Lincoln in 2050 will be able to respond better to existing and yet to be known issues that will happen
- Things that are in front of us today may look different than those tomorrow.
- Careful with terminology – methane is a large part of our emissions and not just carbon emissions
 - o Madison, WI framing
- Working on species extinction – using native plants to help with insect population which may affect birds
- Carbon neutral goal, including lifestyle changes to make us less energy intensive
- Second water source, and protection of existing water sources
- Strong public health component is needed, build on what we have today
- Take a look at flood storage area requirements, especially relevant given our increased potential for infill
- There's always a cost to additional regulations that could take away productive development land
- We should target specific areas for opening up development land
- Recovery from disruptions and events is key; it's not really about fully preventing them, but instead being able to react to them better.
- Hopeful that our daily lives today don't look all that different in the future. That should be the goal.

- We need to improve our diversity and equity in the community to address the disparities in how severe certain populations are impacted by events and disruptions.
- Second water source/stability is necessary. Can't grow without second water source. Water rates need to remain affordable. The entire community needs to remain resilient. Address the critical need and vulnerable populations.
- Communities that Thrive: What does this look like? Our community should be able to respond in a way where vulnerable populations are able to thrive after an event. Remedies may not apply to everyone. Some communities need additional resources. Solutions should be equitable. Our entire community needs to operate and move forward, especially vulnerable populations.
- We should be prepared and looking to the future. Donna's matrix shows events and how to plan accordingly – Disaster planning. We should have a response for when different things happen.
- Pipeline areas – we should create a better guidelines for separation. No net rise and flooding mitigation seem to be done well in our community.
- Ability to deal with changing weather
- To be truly resilient, a plan that is clearly communicated and there is a buy-in, showing the role and responsibilities of individuals

2. What are Lincoln's most important climate vulnerabilities, in your opinion?

- Rain issues, heavy downpours that overwhelm well developed flood program
- Temperature issues, change how we complete snow removal, heat, crops may be affected, urban landscape plantings
- Energy use, looking into programs to reduce individual energy use
 - o Assistance for low income families, many housing choices for low income families are extremely energy inefficient
 - o Re-Energize program in Omaha, some in Lincoln
 - o PACE is another avenue, but it has some restrictions for individual users
- Food security, socioeconomic differences
- How does drought affect us?
- More extremes is a concern: dry or wet
- Salt Creek levees aren't certified for a 100-year flood event
 - o 60-70% of South Salt Creek Area would be at risk
 - o Cost of raising the levees would be significant
- Having access to a second water source. Need to figure out how we need/want to achieve the second water source. Assume it is either treatment plant at the Missouri or an agreement with MUD.
- Water resource – not just water source. Lincoln is collecting point for multiple watersheds. Natural disasters and man-made disasters. Infill vs. edge growth.
- Extreme weather events – these appear to be larger climate issues. What does this mean for Lincoln?
- Drought and flooding – be aware of both scenarios.
- Stormwater (flat in areas such as Waverly)

- The amount of concrete put down. Mixture of areas, green space
- Need balance with transportation of modes, more parks
- Benefit of green space for quality of life and economic driver

3. What are your ideas for strategies that would help to reduce emissions and increase Lincoln's climate resilience?

- Work that Watershed Management is currently doing – expanded the ability to handle heavy downpours and work needs to continue in the future
- Expand public transportation opportunities
- Individuals collectively can change emissions and can decrease demand on individual transportation; work from home; get closer to carbon neutral
- Continue the development of solar and wind energy opportunities
- Bicycling as a viable option for commute
- Strategies that can utilize the floodplain/floodway
 - o Gardens, orchards, etc.
 - o Airpark as an example
- What are the largest sources of emissions in Lincoln?
- We're losing a lot of ash trees... how do we address that? Is something next? How do we increase our plant diversity?
- The experience of teleworking during the pandemic was informative to show how we can reduce our travel and therefore emissions if we want to or must. This provides an opportunity to see if continued work from home allows us to spread out our peak travel periods in the morning and evening and therefore limit the speed of needed roadway improvements. This would save taxpayer dollars and would slow down emissions. Part of this should involve asking the questions about the future of offices and how much should they impact our future land use.
- Food supply risk was also exposed during the pandemic and we should be looking into our supply chains and see how we can become more resilient in this manner as well for future climate-related disruptions. How can we become more locally or regionally independent for our food? At what percentage of our food needs can we gain benefits from being more independent?
- Growth of the City – how can we be more green? How can we reduce emissions?
- Does the City have a policy for low-emission vehicles?
- Teleworking cuts down on traffic and emissions. Embrace new normal.
- Continue to look at growth comprehensively. There are ways to promote multi-modal transportation. Alternative fuel vehicles in the City are important – create policies to encourage this and public private partnerships. Lincoln's attempt to retain natural resources help air and water quality. Continue the Greenway Plan.
- Electric charging stations along roadways
- Better job for incorporating other modes, complete streets, transit
- Better connectivity for trails to cross streets
- Development towards the incorporation of other modes
- See what other countries are doing (Europe)

- Better trails system from Lincoln to surrounding communities

- 4. Assuming that a second source of water requires either a new Lincoln facility at the Missouri River or an interconnection with MUD...**

- **Which is preferable?**
 - o Cost and long-term availability
 - o What are other examples of major cities sharing water sources?
 - o Connection w/ MUD is lowest hanging fruit. They already have a split between Platte and MO River. Governance structure is a challenge.
 - o MUD from Waverly perspective. They would be interested in purchasing the water.
 - o It makes sense if we are growing this direction already

- **What are the issues with each?**
 - o Determining how long we would be able to use the new source and have it as an effective option
 - o Cost for new well field seems really daunting and how do we determine the funding and political will?
 - o Challenges with dealing with another municipality that will also be growing and trying to meet with that demand
 - o Gov. structure. Administrative hurdles to get MO River water from another basin to ours. The amount of infrastructure needed, and the property owners along the transmission route.
 - o Who receives the water? Would MUD have first right? Legal issues to discuss.
 - o Cost is pretty big and important in the decision making

- **What additional information does the public need?**
 - o Once a determination has been developed, how did the process come to that conclusion and what are the recommended methods to pay for it
 - o A clear understanding of how the system works. Where does the water come from? Understand the source. Education around effective water usage should tie to resiliency. Equip people with this information so they can make different choices.
 - o Determine what the public needs to know
 - o The public should be educated about the subject (Water 101)

- **When should we move forward?**
 - o Be moving forward as soon as possible; just going to get more expensive and the issues that happened in Ashland with 2019 floods
 - o Sooner the better because all the planning that is entailed

- The form of governance over the water production and distribution is a key issue. Will Lincoln become a regional water provider? Will Lincoln become a customer of MUD?

Under any future scenario, we should be measuring our success based on providing the most benefit to as many people as possible in order limits costs.

- Secondary question about if a second independent facility, whether owned by Lincoln or MUD, is in itself a more resilient strategy simply to provide redundancy in the system.

5. How do we economically deal with:

a. Wastewater inflow and infiltration long term?

- i. Build a plant SW as an additional plant or build a pump station to move to an expanded NE plant are possibilities that have been discussed
- ii. Continually upgraded to handle infill development

b. Recycling costs?

- i. Built in incentives for residents/citizens to consider curbside efforts
- ii. Apartment complexes more proactive in recycling for residents
- iii. Continue to educate and expand the program

6. How do you see health and resiliency connected.

- Need to look at physical and mental health. How does climate change impact overall health, both physical and mental?
 - a. How to discuss this with our minority populations and help provide access
- The social determinants of health and striving for health equity are key components of trying to answer this. We will be a much more resilient community if we improve everyone's health status, and from there we will be more productive and competitive.
- Sheila said she could provide a lot of information on this topic for our use.
- When we discuss multi-family housing, how do we deal with the need for open space for those in apartments? The airflow systems are an issue when dealing with airborne particles during this pandemic.
- Concerned citizens need to be able to go and see the issues that people face on a day to day basis. Perhaps not fieldtrips for everyone, but this could be something like a documentary that shows "how the other half live" so to speak.
- The equity piece – don't forget those that aren't easy to connect with (homeless, low-income, those with less resources). We are living in an example currently – impacts of global pandemic. Who is being impacted most by the virus? Vulnerable populations. Health needs to be considered in the entire ecosystem.

7. Given our experience so far with the COVID-19 Pandemic, what about Lincoln do you think will allow us to rebound more quickly than other communities?

- At this point, there has been good attention to public distancing and mask wearing in Lincoln, if we can continue with that, we will see Lincoln's numbers stay lower than other communities

- As a worry, how will the University students return affect the infection rate in the community
 - o One public school system should be helpful in this regard – LPS, follow that lead with private schools
- The fact we are one large city with one large public school district, and with this a history of feeling like one community, has helped us have a “we’re in this together” attitude. This helps with policy development and implementation.

8. Resiliency to chronic stressors is a much different concept than rebounding after a flood. What would you recommend be included in Plan Forward 2050 to better enable Lincoln to continuously improve its resiliency to chronic stressors and achieve optimal health for all residents?

- Really need to focus on the children with any efforts and policies. If we work with and for our young members of the community, we will have the most impact on the future. They will be the ones living and working and leading our community in 2050.
- Two-year budget cycle allowed departments to review performance. This allows more time for studies/planning efforts to prepare better. Allows for more disaster planning.
- The plans are essential – plans that ensure there are community connections. Plans need to have involvement from community agencies. This is vital for implementation. Community agencies will be key.

Allan Zafft gave a progress report on the update of the LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan). He stated that last time, he showed a preview of the website. It has since gone live: <https://lrtplincolnmpo.com/>. FHU (Felsburg Holt & Ullevig) is the consultant. They are working on a Needs Assessment Report right now. It covers travel patterns, trends, conditions of roadways and bridges, safety, grade crossings and a number of other items. Right now, they are developing a Travel Demand Model. It shows the roadway congestion for the region. We are looking at having the first public involvement in September. The focus will be issues and trends. Prior to that, we will be back to the Community Committee to get input on a number of things.

Thierolf stated that there are some really exciting things coming up. There are a few big activities in July related to growth scenarios. We are releasing our growth scenarios summary report on July 7, 2020. It ques up the public discussion on growth scenarios. There will be a few different scenarios on how much land we think we need to add. Tied to that report will be a virtual public event. There will be different stations and activities. That will be available until the end of August. Tied to that will be public survey number two. Survey number one had over 600 responses. The developer proposals will be released on July 7 as well. The August Community Committee meeting will discuss all this information that staff receives. This fall, we will publish the complete Growth Scenarios Report. This will have a recommended growth scenario, draft land use plan and more information about costs and infill opportunities. The next meeting for this group will be July 30. At that time, we want to talk about parks and open space. We also want to launch some focus groups. Probably later this summer, we will have the rural groups meet, maybe in person. We are working on strategies to reach the groups that normally don't participate in these discussions. We will be doing some virtual events as well. The big public event will be in September. He believes we are still in a good place, schedule wise. The rest of the year, staff will develop goals and strategies. At the end of this year or early next year will be public

event number four. This will be a big event for the LRTP as well. 2021 will be mostly writing the plan with approval at the end of 2021.

David Cary encouraged anyone to contact staff if they have a question. He wanted to thank everyone for their continued engagement. He is very proud that we have been able to progress through this during a pandemic. This is a critical part of our process. We need to have this discussion with the community about how and where we want to grow. This will help staff develop the new plan. We want to hear from you as individuals. We want you to use your networks to push this information out. We want to have a good response to the next survey.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.