

Wesely cites police force expansion as a goal met

BY JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

One hundred days into his first term as Lincoln's mayor, Don Wesely is satisfied with his accomplishments. "So many things have fallen together and come into focus," Wesely said. "I couldn't really ask for it to be much better."

At a Thursday morning press conference, Wesely outlined his key accomplishments since taking office May 17.

Some of Wesely's goals were met after the passage of the city budget by the city council Monday.

Wesely said the budget included the addition of six police officers to Lincoln's force, money for the construction of a professional baseball stadium in Lincoln and several bond issues approved by voters last fall.

The expansion of Lincoln's police force, Wesely said, was one of his original priorities. Wesely said he had originally asked for funding for eight additional positions.

The arrival of a professional baseball team in Lincoln has been a goal of mayors and city leaders for several years. Wesely said \$12 million was approved to help build a baseball stadium in Lincoln capable of housing a professional team.

"It's great entertainment for a family in the summer, and it's a good thing for our image," Wesely said.

With the exception of the planning director position, Wesely has appointed directors to all of the city's departments. Wesely said he hoped to fill the planning director position by Sept. 9.

City Council member Jerry Shoecraft said former Mayor Mike Johanns and Wesely differed greatly in their styles of leadership.

Whereas Johanns' style of leadership was based on building consensus, Shoecraft said, Wesely's was more "administrative."

Shoecraft declined to comment further on what he meant by administrative.

Shoecraft is one of three veteran city council members to have worked with former Mayor Mike Johanns.

Improved communication would aid Wesely's relationship with the city council, Shoecraft said.

"I think there's room for more communication on both sides," Shoecraft said.

Shoecraft said the relationship between the mayor's office and the city council was in transition and that he hoped consensus could be built in the future.

"But it really is too early to tell," Shoecraft said.

UNL parking plans attacked

BY ERIC RINEER
Staff writer

Parking Advisory Committee members criticized UNL's future parking plans during their first meeting of the academic year Thursday.

James Main, assistant vice chancellor for business and finance, gave a brief presentation to the committee on parking changes proposed in the campus master plan.

Tom Myers, representing the Academic Senate, said parking problems would only get worse if the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's master plan were enforced.

The master plan calls for adding four garages to UNL's two campuses, but one of its downsides is that it reduces UNL's parking spaces by about 10 percent, said Myers, an anthropology and museum professor.

Last year, former parking director Tad McDowell estimated about 7,300 parking stalls could eventually be lost to scheduled and unscheduled construction projects on City and East campuses.

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The crisis Jones was referring to was the overselling of student passes by Parking Services earlier this week.

"We don't have that many spaces available," said Jones, referring to the 10,000 permits sold.

"We have the largest waiting list for reserved parking that we've ever had in the history of the university," he said.

In order for the garages to be installed, student and faculty permit prices would continue to escalate over the next several years, Main said.

Sandy Lineberry, committee member, said the burden of paying for the parking garages should not lie entirely on students, staff and

faculty members. "I think the university is taking advantage of us," said Lineberry, who represents the University of Nebraska Office Personnel Association.

Some members suggested looking to other funding sources, such as the University of Nebraska Foundation.

"I agree with you," Main said in response to members' criticism. "But my job is to build garages."

The goal of building garages on campus, Main said, was to create a more pedestrian-friendly campus and to move vehicles away from the core of the two campuses.

"You have to have allowances for utilities, campus visitors, deliveries and other things," Main said.

"But heavy traffic should be eliminated," he said.

City crime rates down in 1999

Overall, Lincoln's numbers have declined since '91

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The Lincoln City Council approved funding for an additional six officers on Monday.

Lincoln ranks 35th nationally among cities with populations between 160,000 and 260,000 for the highest number of police per capita. Statistics provided by Casady give Lincoln 1.4 officers per 1,000 people.

Overall crime rates for the city of Lincoln have declined since hitting a high point in 1991.

Property crime rates in 1991 were at 71.4 reported crimes per 100,000 people. Crimes against property are projected to be at 55.4 per 100,000 people in 1999, down from 60.4 per 100,000 people in 1998.

Violent crimes also have declined, down from 6.3 per 100,000 population in 1992 and 1995 to 1999's projected total of 5.3 per 100,000.

Burglaries decreased 2.4 percent, from 877 to 856.

Projected statistics for 1999 may not prove accurate by year's end. Casady said crime rates are historically

higher in the second half of each year than in the first.

Casady credited several local organizations for helping to lower crime in Lincoln.

Recognized at Thursday's conference were Mad Dads, Youth Violence Alternative Project, the Family Violence Council and the YMCA.

James Jones represented the Youth Violence Alternative Project, part of the Lincoln Action Program. The project puts juvenile offenders through a one-year program to give the offenders a perspective on how crime affects a community.

"Our juvenile offenders must see the consequences of crime," Jones said.

The Family Violence Council works to stop domestic violence and provide support for victims of domestic violence in Lincoln, Family Violence Council representative Bob Moyer said.

"We're hoping our combined efforts are helping make Lincoln safer for victims," Moyer said.

Casady said domestic violence was one of the most frequent violent crimes

in Lincoln. Casady credited community policing techniques put into action by Lincoln police in recent years for lowering the city's crime statistics.

Community policing techniques involve identifying problem areas and allocating increased police resources to tackle those specific problems, Casady said.

A project undertaken this summer around Cooper Park in Lincoln involving cooperation with local residents and undercover officers yielded, Casady said, a significant decrease in vandalism in the area.

Other police details have tried to combat such problems as traffic on O Street, speeding in school zones and large, uncontrollable parties.

Casady said the source of most details were citizen complaints. Others came from the analysis of crime information.

"This isn't entirely brand new. It's just that we're getting better at it," Casady said. "We're going to do well over 600 problem-oriented policing projects this year."

Capitol observatory deck closes

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"The workers could only work so long," he said. "When you get outside and close to the building, it doesn't take long for you to start baking."

Despite the closing of the observatory deck, visitors will still be able to enjoy the Memorial Chamber on the 14th floor.

"(Visitors) can do virtually everything they had been doing except go outside to look at the city of Lincoln,"

Rindone said.

Rindone said the problem of people throwing objects off the deck will continue to be addressed in later construction phases.

Dave Gates, director of security of the Capitol, said it is a difficult problem to manage because it is hard to catch people throwing things.

"We've seen evidence of things being thrown," he said. "It's not a big problem, but anything falling through the air that can hurt somebody is a

safety concern."

Gates said the punishment for throwing objects off the observation deck could vary according to the circumstance.

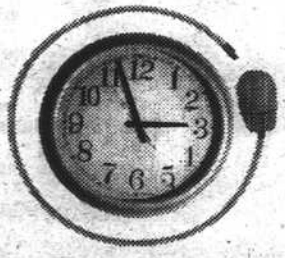
Rindone said he was disappointed that the decks had to be closed early.

"It's unfortunate that someone had to get their jollies by throwing things off of (the Capitol)," he said. "Would you want objects falling on you from hundreds of feet? I wish people would think about that."

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