

Talk of widening O Street creates concern

Store owners worried that their businesses will be negatively affected by the change

By SARAH FOX
Staff writer

Lincoln residents filled the City Council chambers Monday night to argue about 1.3 miles of road construction.

But those 1.3 miles pass by Guitars & Cadillacs, Gateway Mall and a number of other high-traffic businesses on East O Street.

The City Council and a Nebraska Highway commissioner listened to Lincoln residents' comments about a \$15.2 million plan to widen East O Street to three lanes in each direction.

Construction would start in 2002 and last two years.

An average of 31,700 vehicles travel on O Street each day, said Linda Weaver Beacham, deputy vice president of The Schemmer Associates.

Schemmer is Lincoln's engineering consultant for the project.

William Saffris, who owns the property of Subway on 53rd and O streets, said the construction would hurt business at the restaurant.

The Subway has the best sales in the state because of high traffic, he said.

A restaurant could have good owners and a good product but bad business without an accessible building, Saffris said.

"It boils down to location, location, location and access," he said. "The access problem is extremely detrimental but not only during construction."

"Our sales may go down after the road is completed."

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WILLIAM SAFFRIS
property owner

The Subway would also lose sales because it is on a section of O Street that would lose left-turn lanes.

Kerri and Bryan Peterson have owned the Subway since July 1998. Kerri Peterson said most of Subway's lunch traffic entered through a left-turn lane from westbound East O Street to 53rd Street. This left-turn lane would be closed.

"If you take this away from us, we will have to close, and there will be another empty building on O Street," Kerri Peterson said.

The plan would take out left-turn lanes on O Street between 56th Street and Cotner Boulevard.

Both 56th Street and Cotner Boulevard would be one-way streets to P Street on the north and N Street on the south.

John Weinberg, vice president of real estate for Ameritas Life Insurance Corp. at Cotner Boulevard and O Street, said he didn't think making Cotner Boulevard one-way would work.

"We think it's confusing and problematic," Weinberg said.

"We've asked for months for examples of where one-way pairs (of streets) have

worked."

First Federal Lincoln Bank, 1235 N St., wasn't told that O Street would be changed, said Ed Swotek, first vice president.

"The only way I learned about this project was when I read about it in the newspaper about a year ago," Swotek said.

Swotek was also opposed to the one-way streets.

"The East O Street plan is absolutely devastating to the accessibility of First Federal Lincoln Bank," Swotek said.

Schemmer mailed fliers to the businesses along East O Street in March 1998, Deputy Vice President Beacham said.

She said Schemmer also bought newspaper ads and a television commercial to tell Lincoln residents what would happen.

Duane Acklie, a Nebraska Highway commissioner, may make recommendations to the Nebraska State Highway Commission at its Dec. 17 meeting.

Saffris said he hoped his Subway property would still be profitable if the highway commission and the council approve a plan.

"I just got this horrible feeling that we're not going to win," he said.

City contract extension OK'd

From staff reports

The City Council voted 7-0 Monday to extend a contract with a Colorado company to continue working on telecommunications and wireless ordinances.

River Oaks Communications Co. in Colorado Springs, Colo., had started a project last April with the city of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

The company is advising the city and county to write ordinances that are compliant with federal laws.

River Oaks agreed to consult the city and county about telecommunications laws for six months at the cost of about \$59,000, said Steve Huggenberger, assistant city attorney.

"Over the last couple years, there's been a lot of activity in the telecommunications area," Huggenberger said.

"Communications law on the federal level is moving fast."

The ordinances weren't finished in six months, so the council approved an extension for \$24,000. The city and the county will split the cost.

Telecommunications laws refer to lines in the ground, and wireless laws refer to towers.

City Councilman Jerry Shoecraft said he voted for the resolution because the council recommended it.

"It was no big deal," he said. "It appeared to be something the city was supporting."

Sculpture damaged near Sheldon

By JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

Vandals damaged a cast-iron sculpture on display in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery's Sculpture Garden early Sunday morning, university police said.

The damaged sculpture is a set of 10 black balustrades, designed by Louis H. Sullivan, that were originally part of the Carson Pierie Scott building, built in Chicago in 1899.

The top half of one of the balustrades was broken off by vandals at about 1:30 a.m. Sunday. The bottom half of the same balustrade was bent in.

"It's a pretty hefty chunk that was ripped off," said Dan Siedell, curator of the Sheldon.

University Police Sgt. Mylo Bushing said the missing pieces have not been found.

The cost of the attack has not been estimated, Siedell said, adding that the sculpture could probably be repaired.

"There are a lot of variables that have still yet to be determined," Siedell said.

"We just have to understand we have to work in the public domain, and things are going to happen now and then."

DAN SIEDELL
Sheldon curator

The balustrades were a gift made through the Art Institute of Chicago to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from Carson Pierie Scott and Co. in 1970.

Sullivan (1856-1924) is best known for his work on American skyscrapers around the turn of the century. He posthumously received a gold medal award from the American Institute of Architects.

The vandalism is the third incident in two years when art in the sculpture garden has been damaged.

On Oct. 12, vandals smeared pizza sauce on the "Fallen Dreamer," a sculpture of a large bronze head lying on its side, causing the sculpture's protective outer layer to rot.

Another sculpture, "Man in the Open Air," was ripped off its base and later recovered on East Campus after Nebraska's victory in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 2, 1998.

Siedell said he has met with university administrators to find ways to better protect art in the sculpture garden, but because it is a public area, increased security would be difficult to maintain.

"We've been talking about it with UNL administration and police for a couple of years," Siedell said. "We just have to understand we have to work in the public domain, and things are going to happen now and then."

Civilian Y2K tips given at meeting

By KIMBERLY SWEET
Senior staff writer

What do a bottle of Clorox, a whistle and a 2-liter pop bottle have in common?

According to cooperative extension agents, all three items should hold a place in disaster kits put together before the calendar is set to switch to Jan. 1, 2000.

The 2-liter pop bottle will hold water. Four drops of bleach will purify it.

And the whistle can be used to attract attention or gather people together during an emergency.

Extension agents from the Lancaster County Extension Office passed on these and other tips during a Y2K workshop on Monday night.

The workshop was the last in a two-part series on emergency preparedness.

"It doesn't really matter what the source of a disaster is, it's a good idea to be prepared," said Tom Dorn, extension educator.

Being prepared means bottling water ahead of time, knowing ways to dispose of human waste, securing food and having alternate heat and light sources.

Instead of stocking up on expensive bottled water, people should collect 2-liter pop bottles, Dorn said.

The plastic in the bottles is food grade. Unlike plastic milk jugs, it won't degrade. It is also important not to use milk jugs because they can't be cleaned out as well as pop bottles, Dorn said.

Once the water is in the bottle, four drops of unscented, chlorine bleach should be added to disinfect it, Dorn said. After shaking the water and letting it sit for 30 minutes, the chlorine scent should still be present. If it isn't, four

more drops should be added.

The water should be replaced after six months.

When deciding how much water to store, people should keep in mind that one adult requires a half-gallon of water for drinking and a half-gallon for cooking each day, Dorn said.

When thinking about what food to stock up on, people should consider foods that have a lower salt content so they won't be thirsty, said Alice Henneman, extension agent.

Most Lincolinites shouldn't have to worry about disposing human waste, Dorn said. But for those who live in places where the sewer isn't controlled by gravity flow, portable toilets used for camping can be purchased at area stores, Dorn said.

For those who don't want to invest the money, some holding tank deodorant can be added to a 5-gallon bucket to make a portable toilet, he said.

Other supplies people will want to invest in for Y2K or any emergency include lanterns and kerosene heaters.

There are a number of other items that should make up a disaster kit:

■ A first-aid kit that includes basic first-aid items.

■ Non-prescription drugs such as aspirin, antacid and laxatives.

■ Tools and supplies along with extra batteries, matches and a fire extinguisher.

■ Sanitation items such as toilet paper, plastic garbage bags and personal hygiene items.

■ A waterproof container that contains important family documents.

Along with having these items, each family should have a disaster plan, said Lorene Bartos, extension agent.

"These are things that are common sense, but they are things you need to have," she said.

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