

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

Agriculture Committee
February 28, 2012

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Agriculture met at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2012, in Room 2102 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Tom Carlson, Chairman; Norm Wallman, Vice Chairman; Dave Bloomfield; Lydia Brasch; Burke Harr; Russ Karpisek; Tyson Larson; and Steve Lathrop. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, this is a formality and it's really for your benefit, Mr. Marshall, so welcome to the February 28 Agriculture Confirmation Committee hearing. I am Tom Carlson, Chair of the committee. To my right is Rick Leonard, our research analyst, and to my left is Barb DeRiese, our committee clerk, and our page is Paige Schreiber from Columbus. And to my right over here is: Senator Wallman from Cortland; Senator Harr from Omaha; Senator Bloomfield from Hoskins; Senator Larson from O'Neill; Senator Lathrop from Omaha; and Senator Karpisek will be joining us momentarily, so...and Senator Brasch will be joining us as well. So I'd invite you to come to the podium here. And this is a confirmation hearing for William Marshall on the State Fair Board. It is a reappointment, and so before we'd ask you any questions, why don't you give us whatever background you'd like on yourself, as well as any thoughts you have on the State Fair and your responsibilities. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: (Exhibit 1) Yeah, well, I...my name is William Marshall. I was born in Niobrara, Nebraska, which is way up in the northeast part of the state, and I moved to Grand Island when I was 15 years old. And outside of about eight years, I've lived in Grand Island since that time. I was...the mayor of Grand Island asked me if I would be the local representative for the State Fair. Apparently, the host city has a right to appoint or to recommend a member of the State Fair, and so Margaret Hornady asked me if I would do it. I was a little bit dubious about whether it would all come off, frankly, when we started because of the time constraints that we were under. But gee, we got...you know, the State Fair got built and we had a very successful 2010 State Fair, I thought, and a more successful 2011 State Fair. I guess I would characterize my responsibilities as more budgetary and trying to keep us on a firm financial footing and I've enjoyed it very much and I hope that I've contributed some, so I guess that would be... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you, and as we've indicated, this is a reappointment. So do we have questions from the committee for Mr. Marshall? We're not going to have him come all the way from Grand Island with no...I told him we're going to grill him a little bit. Senator Harr? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: And I understand you can't pick--and this is kind of an analogy--you can't pick your son-in-laws, but why do you let them run your banks? (Laughter)
[CONFIRMATION]

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WILLIAM MARSHALL: Well, listen, somebody's got to run it. Don't you think I know? I know, but we recently--for those of you who don't know what he's talking about--I had two fairly active sons-in-law in Omaha who were...who have recently come into the bank and have really contributed greatly and I think they both worked with you in Omaha, didn't they? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: And I don't know if you know my twin brother. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yes, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah, I work with Matt quite a bit, so you have made my life much easier... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: ...by taking Matt back to Grand Island. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Oh, I see, I see. Well, he's, I think he's enjoying what he's doing and... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: Yeah, good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Bloomfield. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: And congratulations on the new bank in Omaha. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Well, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Thank you. How involved were you in the movement of the fair to Grand Island? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Well, I was...I really...you mean in getting it moved?
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: I wasn't appointed until after that decision have been made...
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: After it was done. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: ...and so I wasn't involved in that, but the...I was amazed at how

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that all got done. And it was a little bit...you know, we just didn't know how it was all going to turn out because we didn't know whether we'd have enough money to complete it and... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: It's a vast improvement and you've done the job well.
[CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yes, well, I...we're very proud of it out there and it's...in addition to being a banker, I've got some hotel and motel interests, and the fair facilities have really increased the hospitality business in Grand Island. You may not know, but during the month of June, there's going to be three major cattle shows in Grand Island during the months of June, July, and August, and there's also a major 4-H shooting show there during that whole period of time. And from the standpoint of what that means to Grand Island, I'm not sure that anybody else will be able to get a room there for about a month. And that's what we hoped would happen and it kind of has happened and so...
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Senator Wallman? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Thank you, Chairman Carlson. Yeah, welcome here, and I think you've done a fantastic job as well. As far as the horse racing, how is that coming out for you? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Well, the opening weekend was very good, like a 20 percent increase in handle on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. With the contribution of the horsemen--and the horsemen, I believe, gave \$200,000 to Fonner--they had a positive cash flow last year, so it's hanging on, but I'm not sure how long that will continue. You know, it's the...I...it's not doing very well, but I'm sure it's doing better than the other four tracks and...but it is hanging on, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, any other questions of Mr. Marshall? Yes, Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Marshall. The Nebraska State Fair also has a fair foundation. Has...are you familiar with the foundation? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Since the move from Lincoln to Grand Island, have you seen an increase, decrease, or just the same membership? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: I think it's improved a little. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: Improved, numbers have gone up? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: I think there has been more participation, I think some of it by people in central Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. And then the Nebraska State Fair was also part of a statewide arboretum with many landmarks and flora and it was a wonderful fair but considering it looks like it's pretty bare right now as far as any parklike ambience or atmosphere... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: ...are there plans to develop more or is it going to remain pretty much buildings and...? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Actually--and I believe this is going to start in the children's area--but Earl May has made a contribution to improving the landscaping and developing an overall plan for that. And I think he gave \$10,000 and I think this...the town is in the midst of raising maybe \$20,000 to go along for the first part of that, and that's going to start out in the children's area. And they are actually having a contest--I'm not sure whether it's completed or not--for...that some of the landscape people were to submit plans and then they were going to decide from that point. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you, I have no other questions.
[CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Yeah, okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, any other questions? One of the hopes was--and you addressed it a little bit--that was in the balance of the year, one fair to another. And realistically, I think the facilities are second to none. Has...have other events developed like you hoped they were or better than you'd hoped, and what's the possibility there?
[CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Well, I think they have...they've had...this fall, they had a Johnson Ranch or Johnson Angus big cattle disbursement, a three-day sale out there. They also had a, oh, one of the exotic alpaca. They also had an alpaca, either an alpaca sale or convention out there. They have...let's see, what else have they had? One of the things...when the fair was built, one of the things that hinders--at the present time--hinders the winter activities is the city in all their wisdom didn't initially allow self-draining hydrants. So during the wintertime, if you have something and you heat up the facilities, then you've got to go out and drain the hydrants again. And the city and

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Fonner Park and the State Fair are addressing those. We have to change 30 drains and when we do that, we'll be able to have more in the winter. But right now, you know, we have things in next summer, those cattle shows, and we had a...they also had a harvester convention out there in I guess October or November, which is harvesters from North America. And of course, they come in and J.I. Case is out there, and so J.I. Case is really interested in getting them there and they have about, I think, 1,000 harvesters, a big convention for about four or five days. Again, those people all stay in hotels and we're real happy. So they've been pretty active and frankly, we're working on a kind of a joint marketing program. We haven't worked as well, Fonner and the fair have not maybe worked as well on the overall marketing, but even so, it's been pretty good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Good. Okay, any other questions? Well seeing none, thank you for coming from Grand Island. Now we're going to ask you to leave so we can vote on you. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: And we appreciate you coming. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPSEK: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Will I be notified of the vote? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: You'll be notified. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LATHROP: We'll let you know. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Do I need to wait? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: No. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM MARSHALL: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: Tell Matt hello for me, please. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, do I have a motion to...? (Recording ends)
[CONFIRMATION]