

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

General Affairs Committee
March 28, 2012

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on General Affairs met at 1:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Russ Karpisek, Chairperson; Bob Krist, Vice Chairperson; Dave Bloomfield; Lydia Brasch; R. Paul Lambert; and Amanda McGill. Senators absent: Colby Coash; and Tyson Larson.

SENATOR KARPISEK: (Exhibit 1) Okay, welcome to the General Affairs hearing. For the record, my name is Senator Russ Karpisek of Wilber and I chair the committee. Committee members, to my right are Senator Brasch from Bancroft, Senator Krist of Omaha, legal counsel Josh Eickmeier from Seward. To my far left is Christina Case, living in Lincoln. We have Senator Lambert from Plattsmouth, and Senator McGill from Lincoln, but originally from Omaha. Today we have a gubernatorial appointment of Timothy Hart for the Nebraska Arts Council. Tim, if you'd want to come up please. Tell us a little bit about yourself or why you want to be on the Arts Council or whatever you want us to know, please. And welcome. Please spell your name for us.

TIMOTHY HART: My name is Timothy Hart, T-i-m-o-t-h-y H-a-r-t. I live in Omaha, Nebraska. I'm the senior vice president and treasurer of First National of Nebraska which owns the First National Bank of Omaha, and I'm starting my twenty-eighth year there; I'm kind of in a rut there. I'm also in my thirty-second year of marriage, so I'm in a rut on that, so, kind of predictable. (Laughter) But life is good. I've had a chance since college to serve on a number of community programs. I get great satisfaction out of it. And I think that it's a two-way street. I've had a chance in the past to be appointed by Governor Nelson to the Welfare Reform Commission and Mayor Fahey to the committee to study city-county merger, when the city of Omaha and Douglas County were talking about merging. I've also had a chance to serve eight years on the Salvation Army. Left there and have just rejoined it and they've assigned me to the North Corps which is focused on at-risk youth, primarily African-American, at about 24th and Pratt. I've served on United Way, eight years with the Nebraska Bankers Association, three years with the State Chamber. I am the immediate past chairman of Opera Omaha, and so when the position on the Nebraska Arts Council came up, I think with my financial background and really spending the time on Opera Omaha's board and seeing kind of how the processes all had to come together, being involved in discussions on planning, we did a program this last year, "Hansel and Gretel," and it was sung in English with Spanish subtitles. The Nebraska Arts Council provided the bus transportation to bring in nine different performances and we packed the rows. That's pretty fun, and you see a direct benefit. And I think that, you know, with the skills that I have and the Nebraska Arts Council's mission, I think it's a good fit, and very interested in pursuing that.

[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Very good, thank you. Do we have any questions? Senator

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Krist. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Does the bank encourage senior officers to go out and do these kinds of things? Is it kind of a mandatory thing or no? [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: It is not. They're supportive, but not encouraging. So I've put myself in a position to go into Opera Omaha. And I did that because I thought that it was going to be very difficult. And I was correct, it's been very difficult to raise money for Opera Omaha during the recession. But I would rather I try to do it than someone else. I told the bank I wanted to do that and they...and it goes along with a \$5,000 board fee, and they said, we'll clearly pay the board fee. But it's not a recruitment, it is a support, which I really kind of like. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Yeah. Kim Kucera was on our board at Madonna for awhile. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: And my son is actually with the bank. And I would encourage you to encourage him to give back, because he's now buying new houses and new cars and all the rest of it. He needs to give back to the community. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Senator, it's a small world. When Mark and Marsha Wright agreed to be the general chairs of the Madonna fund-raiser, after the first meeting they had no idea what they were doing. And so it was my wife, Debbie, and I that actually ran the fund-raiser at Madonna and have been involved a couple of times. So we're very...it's a great program. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Yeah, thanks for what you do. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: You bet. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Thank you, Senator Krist. Senator Lambert. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LAMBERT: My only question is, what do you do in your free time?
(Laughter) Gee, you're very involved and that's great to see. And thank you for all that you give back. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MCGILL: I'll ask a question while we're hanging out. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Senator McGill. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR MCGILL: Was Opera Omaha your first real interaction with the arts or do you love them otherwise? [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: No, before that I was involved...I actually got involved in the arts through...a friend asked me to help raise money for the Nebraska Choral Art Society. That has since disbanded. It had...it was focused on children. They went everywhere from prekindergarten to kindergarten up to a youth group and there was nine. The premier one was Bel Conto, which actually won many international awards. It's kind of too bad, they were more popular in England than they were in Omaha. Very good kids. But, Senator, I'm sitting in a presentation, in a concert at Straus Hall and I'm flipping through the book like we all do, and I see that if you are like the platinum giver it was 250 bucks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MCGILL: That was the high level? [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: That was the high. And so we organized the first couple of fund-raisers, Jane Olson (phonetic) chaired it, I chaired number two and three. I got the bank to use Boys Town the first time and the tower the second time. And we raised about \$70,000 a year. And when I left that group it was \$5,000 was the plutonium level. And it was easy, it was really easy. They were just a disorganized group of well-intended parents, quite frankly. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MCGILL: Yeah, that's great because the arts are so important. So I appreciate it. Not everyone likes fund-raising, and so I appreciate people who are willing to do that. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: It's not...it's work. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MCGILL: It is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LAMBERT: You made a difference though, that's the neat part. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Thank you, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPSEK: Thank you, Senator McGill. Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman Karpisek. And thank you, Mr. Hart, for your contributions and willingness to serve. You had made mention of challenges due to the recession. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: Do you believe the recession also creates any opportunities? And if so, what would be the silver lining here? [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: This is really a philosophic question and I'll give you a philosophic answer. You know, you find out who are the thoroughbreds and who are the plow horses when you go through this. When you really have to cut back, you find out who is really pulling the weight and value-added and who's not. You know, the same thing happened at Opera Omaha is you had to sit there and say, let's start thinking of "nice to have" instead of "need to have." And there's two different budgets for that. What's hopeful is that that "need to have" kind of continues on and you kind of leave some the trimmings on the ground. So some good ought to come out of that. You know, our company had a lot of people that we let go. You know, the banking industry had a very difficult time. And the ones that are there are dedicated and valued and committed. So if we get any kind of a turn in the economy, we got a whole bunch of tigers that are going to go out and try to whoop everybody. So I think that, you know, we all went on an involuntary weight loss program, you know. And I think we're better for it. It does not mean it was fun. It wasn't fun at all. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Thank you, Senator Brasch. Any other questions? You seem...you know what the Arts Council does and been probably not involved with it as much, but around it. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: That's good. I think sometimes people get appointed and they're a little shocked at what they've gotten themselves into. But I don't think that you'll have any problem there. Any other questions or comments? Do you have anything else for us? [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: No, sir. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: All right, seeing none, thank you very much. Do we have anyone that would be here in favor, to support Mr. Hart? Seeing none, anyone in opposition? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral? Again, seeing none, that will end our hearing on Timothy Hart for the Nebraska Arts Council. Thank you very much for coming in. [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: And we'll have a quick Exec Session here and see what we

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think about you. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

TIMOTHY HART: Thank you, sir. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]