

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

Agriculture Committee  
May 09, 2017

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Agriculture met at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 9, 2017, in Room 2102 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a confirmation hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Lydia Brasch, Chairperson; Carol Blood, Vice Chairperson; Joni Albrecht; Steve Halloran; Burke Harr; and John Lowe. Senators absent: Ernie Chambers and Bob Krist.

SENATOR BRASCH: I think we'll get started here. Welcome to the Agriculture Committee. I'm the Chairman, Lydia Brasch. Before we begin on today's agenda, I would like to introduce the members of the committee who are with us thus far and the staff that will be assisting the committee today. With us is Senator Carol Blood from District 3. She is my Vice Chair. Next to her is Senator Lowe, who is from District 37. Senator Krist is District 10 and he may be later today. And next to him is Senator Harr, District 8. Next to him is Senator Albrecht from District 17. Next to her is Senator Halloran from District 33. To my right is Rick Leonard who is the research analyst for the committee. To my left is the committee clerk, Courtney McClellan. And the page who is serving us today is Joe Gruber. He's from Omaha and he's a student at UNL. Today the committee is meeting to conduct a public hearing and receive testimony, if there is any, on your confirmation, Beth Smith, for the State Fair Board. We ask everyone here on the committee and...to be respectful of each other and keep your conversations to a minimum. Please make sure your mobile devices are silenced. If you have a need for any conversation outside of this hearing, I ask that you hold it outside. I believe we are ready to start the hearing. Ms. Smith, I want to thank you, first of all, for your interest and willingness to serve on the Nebraska State Fair Board. Today, the committee and myself will basically listen to your interest needs. We may have a few questions for you. My first question is your willingness to serve, can you explain how you believe you will fulfill that capacity? [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Sure, I just have a few remarks to start out with, is that okay?  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good, please. [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: (Exhibit 1) Thank you, first of all, Senator Brasch and for all of the committee members, for coming today. I realize I'm the only item on your agenda, so thank you for coming in. I'm honored to be considered as a potential member of the State Fair Board. Just a few words about myself. I'm a native of Lincoln. I live here now with my husband Clay and our three teenage daughters. My parents also grew up in Nebraska. My mom is from Wayne; my dad is from Newman Grove. My husband's parents also were Nebraska natives. His mother, her first job out of college was actually with the State Fair Board in Lincoln. I have a business degree from

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Southern Methodist University. I spent some time working in Washington, D.C. Eventually made my way back here as did my husband. We met each other in Lincoln and we decided to stay put. My focus now is on my three daughters and my husband is fully engaged in his family businesses, Speedway Motors, Speedway Properties. As a Lincoln representative for the State Fair Board I think the greatest thing I can do is draw more Lincolniters out to the fair. It seems like the hard work of moving the fair is done, and it's working well. The facilities are first rate. The city of Grand Island is engaged. The attendance numbers are excellent. Everything is going in the right direction. I hope I can build on this great work. I think bringing high-quality programming and good events to the fair will help bring people out there. If you have a good product, people will come. I think a great thing about the fair is it's one of the unifying events in our state. It's one of those things where you get all people from every corner of the state to come. So I appreciate the opportunity to serve and I'm happy to do it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Very well-given remarks. Are there questions from the committee? Yes, Senator Blood. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: Thank you for stepping up to the plate. I love seeing more women stepping up. Can you talk a little bit about your current employment, what you do currently for employment? [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: I am not employed. I'm a mom and we do...Speedway is a family business so I've done all kinds of different things out there and that's really our focus right now. We also do development in Lincoln. We have a number of properties that we develop in Lincoln. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: You actually helped one of my business clients get a building here in Lincoln, so I've heard nothing but good things. [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Well, thank you. I wish I had an exact title, but I am a jack-of-all-trades. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: That sounds good. I have a second question and this is...this is more of a what-if question. Something I was made familiar with back...about 15 years ago, was that when the State Fair would procure a carnival that there was some money under the table that was given to the people that were working with the carnival and I don't know if it was specifically the State Fair Board's staff. I was never really clear on that, but I was very clear that the story was accurate. If indeed you were to find something like that was happening, how would you handle that? [CONFIRMATION]

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BETH SMITH: I don't think I would tolerate it as a board member. I mean, I don't want to see anything like that going on and I think that's our responsibility is to, as a board member, to, you know, make sure everything is done right. And I feel comfortable speaking out or...  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: Good, that's what I wanted to hear...as a whistle blower.  
[CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: Because I think that should have happened before. Thank you. It's kind of a hard question, I apologize for that. [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Oh, no, not at all. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Senator Halloran. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HALLORAN: Thank you, Senator Brasch. Just a couple of quick questions and I should know the answer to this but I don't. How many members are there on the State Fair Board? [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: I think it's down to 11 now. I think it used to be much larger, like 29 when it was here in Lincoln and now it has been reconfigured. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HALLORAN: Do you know many of them, by chance? [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: I know of them. I do not know them. I just...I know the past couple of board members, Mark Fahleson and Tam Allan. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HALLORAN: More serious question. What's your favorite fair food?  
[CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Oh boy, at least in Lincoln there used to be a pie stand that was really good.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HALLORAN: Yeah, good enough for me. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: Any other questions from the committee? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: I'd like to make a motion that we approve her. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HALLORAN: Second. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay. Very good. I think we typically do that in an Executive Session.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOD: Oops. [CONFIRMATION]

RICK LEONARD: If the motion has been made, we'll deal with that motion.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: If there's no other questions, then we will close this. Thank you for your interest and willingness to serve. Look forward to hearing more. We'll have an Executive Session and we'll take a vote on the floor of the Legislature as well. [CONFIRMATION]

BETH SMITH: Thank you all for coming today. [CONFIRMATION]