

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

Natural Resources Committee
May 02, 2017

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Natural Resources met at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 2, 2017, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on the gubernatorial appointment of Mark Czaplewski to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. Senators present: Dan Hughes, Chairperson; Bruce Bostelman, Vice Chairperson; Joni Albrecht; Rick Kolowski; John McCollister; Dan Quick; and Lynne Walz. Senators absent: Suzanne Geist.

SENATOR HUGHES: Welcome everyone to the Natural Resources Committee. We have with us today an appointment to the Natural Resources Commission. So with that I guess we'll introduce the committee starting on my far left.

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Rick Kolowski, District 31, southwest Omaha.

SENATOR QUICK: Dan Quick, District 35, Grand Island.

SENATOR WALZ: Lynne Walz, District 15, all of Dodge County.

SENATOR HUGHES: And on my right.

SENATOR ALBRECHT: Joni Albrecht, northeast Nebraska, Thurston, Wayne and Dakota Counties. Welcome.

SENATOR MCCOLLISTER: John McCollister, District 20, central Omaha.

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Bruce Bostelman, District 23, Saunders, Butler, and most of Colfax County.

SENATOR HUGHES: And I'm Dan Hughes, District 44, Chairman of the committee. We have our staff with us--Laurie Lage, our committee counsel; and Mandy Mizerski, the committee clerk. We also have Alex Brechbil, from Aurora, going into...going to Wesleyan...attending Wesleyan. So thank you, Alex. So with that we have a limited agenda today. We have Mark Czaplewski who wants to be on the Natural Resources Commission. So if you would like to have a seat and give us a little background about yourself and probably why you'd like to be on this.

[CONFIRMATION]

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

Natural Resources Committee
May 02, 2017

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: (Exhibit 1) Thank you. First of all, thanks a lot for all of you being here. I know you have busy, busy schedule all. And maybe I should start, some of you might...I don't think were here when I disclosed the fact, in the interest of complete disclosure that Dan is my brother-in-law. (Laughter) So get that out there. I'm a native Nebraskan; I was born and raised in Loup City. If you know where Loup City is. With Loup City public high, went from there to Kearney State College, back in the day, before it was UNK. Graduated with a degree in biology and environmental studies from UNK. Went on to marry my lovely wife and we have three kids: one in Omaha, one in Grand Island, and one in Phoenix. I started my professional career working for the Nebraska Public Power District out of their headquarters in Columbus and began working there in the environmental affairs department as a technician, then a specialist, a supervisor, a manager, and eventually ended up working not in the environmental affairs group, but in the water resources division of NPPD. My last job there, before I took a different position, was in their federal energy regulatory commission manager's job. I handled...I managed their FERC relicensing, their federal licensing of their hydroelectric projects. So I've been that part of my career involved a lot of natural resource issues and water issues as well. In 1997, so almost 20 years, it will be 20 years this summer, I took a job with the Central Platte NRD out of Grand Island where I work as a staff biologist; do a lot of Platte River stuff, a lot of endangered species work, what I would characterize as kind of general environmental planning kinds of activities. But I work with...I continue to work with a lot of water issues and natural resource issues and I think...so virtually my entire professional career has dealt with natural resource issues. My formal education did. I think those experiences, those professional activities have given me a very broad background in natural resources, kind of, across the board in some ways. And I think I can serve the Natural Resource Commission well. I emphasize the word "serve" there; kind of at a point in my life now where with my children all grown and gone, kind of, that got time on my hands, these natural resource issues, water issues, in particular, are ones that I think I know well. I think I'm versed in what's current issues are and how to deal with them. And I think I can serve the commission, and most of all, serve the people of Nebraska in that regard. That's my intention, that's where I see my service is to the state population, especially these water resources issues are really key to both economic growth and protection of the environment. I think they're both critical and impact everybody's lives everyday. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Are there questions from the committee? Yeah, Rick...Senator Kolowski. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: (Inaudible) Mark, thank you very much for being here and for your background, very extensive, what you've been involved in. What do you see as the big advantage in natural resources districts in our state, all 23 of them, as they operate? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: I think there are several, but the one that comes to mind most importantly is local control. I know there can be debates on both sides of that issue, but I think

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

Natural Resources Committee
May 02, 2017

the biggest advantage for the NRDs, they're so varied, I mean, from Papio on the east to the Upper Loup, you know, the interests, the concerns, the issues are quite varied and local control is the best way to address all of those I think. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: After this morning, I hope we can get back to that.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Other questions? John...Senator McCollister, I'm sorry.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What do you think about a cross basin version of water? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: I think it has its place, but I think going in that direction needs to be done very, very cautiously; studied extensively, evaluate all the pros and cons. Where there are excess water in certain basins from time to time and, you know, wet cycles, dry cycles, and all, I think to manage water effectively, you can't ignore the possibility of trans-basin diversions. But again, that needs to be looked at very, very carefully, because there's...especially in the more arid west where water is scarce and is becoming more valuable every day. To move it from, particularly, from an overappropriated or fully appropriated basin to a different basin just need to be very careful about that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Should it be considered relatively soon? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: I think it will be, whether we want it to be or not. There's some projects being discussed in the central and western part of the state that we'll be looking at that. It will be on our doorstep here soon enough. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Okay. Thank you very much. And I'm grateful that you're willing to do this work. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Thanks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Senator Bostelman. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Senator Hughes. Looking at your employment and the boards you're on, do you feel...how do you think that would influence or work at being on this

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

Natural Resources Committee
May 02, 2017

commission? It seems to be there may be some conflicts of interest in that. How would you...how do you propose to deal with that? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: There certainly could be at times, and I appreciate that, but my appointment here is not on behalf of Central Platte NRD or any NRD. I was appointed to represent wildlife conservation issues...or interests, I mean, and I take that very seriously. I totally appreciate the fact, for example, as Central Platte NRD might have a water sustainability fund application, there will be times when I just need to abstain, and that's exactly what I'll do. But I think that's, in my opinion, that's very doable. I seriously approach those kind of issues and I will abstain when I have to. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Any other questions? I've just got one. I see you're currently on the Environmental Quality Council. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Your terms will overlap. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Yep. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: So will you maintain both or...? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Yep. My...I should know this, but I think my term on the Environmental Quality Council like expires this June. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: And I've applied for reappointment. My position on the EQC is as biologist, and I've held that position since it was initiated when Senator...oh gosh, I lost his name, since that position on the EQC was established I've held that position going on 12 years now. And if I...if I'm reappointed for that position, I think I would hope to serve in both capacities. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: And you are filling a specific slot on Natural Resources?
[CONFIRMATION]

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

Natural Resources Committee
May 02, 2017

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Right, wildlife conservation interest. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Okay. Any other questions. Seeing none, thank you for your willingness to serve. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Is there anyone wishing to testify in a proponent of Mr. Czaplewski? Anyone wishing to testify in...as an opponent? Anyone wishing to testify in the neutral position? Seeing none, that will close our confirmation hearing of Mark Czaplewski. [CONFIRMATION]