

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
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Natural Resources Committee
February 08, 2018

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Natural Resources met at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 8, 2018, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Dan Hughes, Chairperson; Bruce Bostelman, Vice Chairperson; Joni Albrecht; Suzanne Geist; Dan Quick; and Lynne Walz. Senators absent: Rick Kolowski, and John McCollister.

SENATOR HUGHES: (Recorder malfunction)...so we will call the Natural Resources Committee to order. We do not have any bills today. All we have is a appointment and a presentation, so we're not going to go through the formal process. I am Senator Dan Hughes, Chairman of the committee. I represent the 44th Legislative District, which is ten counties in southwest Nebraska. I will ask my other colleagues to introduce themselves, beginning on my left.

SENATOR GEIST: Hello. I'm Suzanne Geist. I represent Lincoln, the 25th District, the east side of Lincoln and including the towns of Walton and Waverly.

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

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

SENATOR HUGHES: To my right.

SENATOR ALBRECHT: Senator Joni Albrecht, District 17, Thurston, Wayne, and Dakota Counties.

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: And Bruce Bostelman, District 23, Saunders, Butler, and majority of Colfax Counties.

SENATOR HUGHES: And we also have committee staff: Laurie Lage, who's the committee counsel; and Mandy Mizerski on my far right who is the committee clerk. I think we have LeAnn Rimes around, there she comes. She is our...I'm sorry, Lee-Ann Sims. LeAnn Rimes (inaudible). (Laughter)

_____ : We have a famous page.

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SENATOR HUGHES: I bet she could sing if we asked her to, but I apologize, Lee-Ann. Lee-Ann Sims from Lincoln, she's a student at the UNL. So with that, we will begin with Mr. Mark Czaplewski. He wants to be reappointed to the Environmental Quality Council. So if you'd like to come up and have a seat and tell us a little bit about yourself and your role on the Environmental Quality Council, if you would, please. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: (Exhibit 1) Thank you all for being here. I know this is a short agenda day and appreciate you coming. And to start with, I think in the interest of full disclosure here, the first thing I should say is that Senator Quick is my brother-in-law. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Oh, wait. (Inaudible) (Laughter) You're not eligible, so... [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: I know. We were, both of us, are very fortunate to have married sisters. Again, my name is Mark Czaplewski, a native Nebraskan. I was born and raised in Loup City, if you know where that is, kind of in the central part of the state, and attended Loup City Public High School, went to college before it was UNK at Kearney State College with...have a bachelor's, a comprehensive degree in biology and a minor in environmental studies. After college I started working for Nebraska Public Power District. I worked there for about 20 years, starting off in their Environmental Department as an environmental technician, specialist, supervisor, manager, and eventually transferred over to their Water Resources Department where I oversaw their Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of their hydroelectric projects. After that I made a little career change, took a job with the Central Platte Natural Resources District out of Grand Island where I am employed as a biologist, so an appropriate slot on the EQC maybe as the EQC's biologist. I mostly work on endangered species and water issues, a lot of Platte River stuff and thoroughly enjoyed that. I've been there about 20 years. On the personal side, my wife, Rita, is a registered nurse, recently retired in Grand Island. And I have three great kids: Rachel in Omaha, she's a nurse practitioner; Bridget in Grand Island, she's a high school teacher; and John, my son John is in Phoenix, Arizona, working on a doctorate in psychology. So anyway, that's a little bit about me, so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: So could you give us a little bit of information about what the Environmental Quality Council does and what role you play in that position? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Yes. Again, the biologist slot on the EQC is fairly recent. Senator Preister added that as a position on the council here about...I think it was in 2005 or '06. I don't remember. I think he was looking for someone, you know, the council, in my opinion, does a lot of good things, but one of them is something...to act as something of a sounding board for

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regulations, environmental regulations as they come through the pipeline. And I think he was looking for, to consider the role I play, something of representing all Nebraskans and trying to bring good science, a biological perspective to the often very complicated air, water, solid waste regulations that we take a look at. All of the regs come through a very involved process. I think the DEQ does a great job in vetting that stuff in lots of different ways. In some ways we're one step in that regard, but I think a very good and appropriate one. And I think we do bring some kind of broad and commonsensical background to the stuff we see. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Are there any additional questions? Senator Quick.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR QUICK: Thank you, Chairman. I just had to thank Mark for his service and I appreciate what you...how you help, so. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Thanks. It's been a real education for me. I've been on there quite a while. I'm currently the vice chair of the EQC and it's been a great experience seeing other parts of the state, working with some really excellent people, both on the council and with DEQ and it's been fun for me too. Hopefully, I've helped. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Senator Bostelman. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Chairman Hughes. I have a question for you. It's more of a question on your other opportunities you have with the coalitions and the Platte Recovery Implementation Program, the Nebraska Habitat Conservation Coalition, South Platte River Compact Coalition. Are there any duplication ties? How do you handle this position and if you're so involved with those how does that...? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Yeah. I am involved in quite a few things, long enough in the tooth maybe to...and blessed enough to be able to help in a lot of ways. And I think they actually play off each other fairly well. I mean my background helps a lot with regard to the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. It deals principally with endangered species and the Platte River. But it deals principally with people and how our very valuable water resources are managed and taken care of, both the people out there, the farmer, farm community, the industrial and business community, as well as wildlife and the biology of the river, if you will.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Great. Sure. Do you see any potential conflicts between those?
[CONFIRMATION]

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MARK CZAPLEWSKI: No. I really don't. I've thought about that because I serve in a lot of different capacities, but I think they work in concert much more than create conflicts of interest. If I ever felt one did exist or one did occur, I would be quick to step back from that. I serve on the Natural Resources Commission and as my employer has submitted applications there, I make a point of it to not...to abstain on those sorts of things, so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: Thank you. I appreciate your input on that. Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ALBRECHT: I'm good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. No other questions? Okay, seeing none, thank you for coming up. [CONFIRMATION]

MARK CZAPLEWSKI: Thanks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Is there anyone who wishes to give testimony in support of Mr. Czaplewski? Anyone wishing to give testimony in opposition to Mr. Czaplewski? Anyone wanting to give neutral testimony? Seeing none, that will conclude Mr. Mark Czaplewski day at the Natural Resources Committee. (Laughter) Okay. [CONFIRMATION]