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Natural Resources Committee  
April 04, 2013

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Natural Resources met at 12:45 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, 2013, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on confirmations for the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board. Senators present: Tom Carlson, Chairperson; Lydia Brasch, Vice Chairperson; Annette Dubas; Ken Haar; Jerry Johnson; Rick Kolowski; Ken Schilz; and Jim Smith. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR CARLSON: We'll get started with our hearing this afternoon. I'm Tom Carlson, senator from District 38, Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. Senators that are part of the committee that are here: to my left is Senator Jim Smith from Papillion, District 14 and then Senator Ken Schilz from Ogallala, District 47. To my far right is Barb Koehlmoos, our committee clerk. Next to her is Senator Lydia Brasch from Bancroft, District 16. And then Senator Annette Dubas from Fullerton, District 34. And we should have Senator Rick Kolowski from Omaha joining us; Senator Ken Haar from Malcolm. And Senator Jerry Johnson from Wahoo; he had three events with three grandkids that were close to this hour so he may get here for part of it. Our page today is Tobias Grant, he must be on an errand some place, but if any of you would need him, he's here to serve us. I think that we have the green sheets on each one of you. And, of course, this is a hearing for confirmation to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board. We're going to go in this order: Rick Brandt, Gerry Lauritzen and Sherry Vinton in that order. And I'll ask you, in a minute, Rick, I'll ask you to come and take the hot seat up here and then I'll have each one of you as you do tell us a little bit about yourself. And, Rick, you're a reappointment, so if you want to talk anything about your history on the Environmental Trust Board, that would be fine. And then we'll open it up for questions from the committee. And we appreciate you being here. So, Rick, you want to come forward. You don't have to adjust that microphone; there's a tendency to do that, just leave it alone because it's sensitive enough that, Rick, if you don't want us to hear and you sit back in your chair it's going to pick you up anyway. So we don't do anything with it. But welcome to the committee and tell us a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Thank you. Do I need to say my whole name?  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Thanks for doing something that I was supposed to have done, yes, give us your name and spell it. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: (Exhibit 1) Okay, Henry Rick Brandt, H-e-n-r-y R-i-c-k B-r-a-n-d-t, Rick Brandt. I haven't been on the NET Board before. I'm new, this is the first time. I'm thrilled. I guess personal, I'll start with just a real short story. About 15 years ago, my wife Sharon and I were in Yellowstone riding Buttermilk and Trax, our two mules, and we were up on Cachecalphy (phonetic) Ridge and right in front of us two

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bulls start charging and within 50 to 100 yards of us they had a big to-do, fight, and it was just awesome. The night before in camp we heard elk bugling. And we're riding out and as we turned and ride out after the fight, we stop and overlooking the Lamar Valley there was a huge herd of buffalo down below us; there was a mommy moose with her baby that was probably less than a year old yet. And we just looked at each other and said, you know, this is...we have to do something with our lives to help protect situations and country like this. And exactly ten years later, we're tracking...she's helping me track sheep up at Fort Robinson. And we're in the escarpments and we stopped, looked down, and here is probably 14 mommies with their baby lambs grazing below the escarpment and the lambs are running up and down the sheer cliffs. And we looked down, here's 20 buffalo with their babies in the prairie below us and off to the side a bunch of antelope and we said this here is what it's all about. We have to save and protect this country so that some day a hundred years from now people can enjoy what we're enjoying today. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right, thank you. And I got mixed up. I know Sherry is the one that's been on the board before. But I have to ask you before I open it up to the committee here, what's the outcome of the fight? (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: There was a huge bull down below and the young bull was charging Sharon and I, she was on Buttermilk. Buttermilk is...nothing scares Buttermilk, and I was just going nuts. And out of the valley this huge bull elk hollers, screams, and comes up out of the Lamar Valley and within 50 yards of us, bam, they hit, right there in front of us. Ended up the big boy took the little boy and got all of his harem. There were about 12 or 14 cows that he took over. And the poor young bull had to run off. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. He was able to run off, though. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, he was. Yeah, it was pretty quick. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right. Thank you. Questions of the committee? Senator Dubas. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Thank you, Mr. Brandt. Your passion is very obvious, so I do appreciate that. What do you see as the biggest challenges to preserving all of this that you feel so strongly about? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Every day is a challenge; every issue is a challenge. And to be...I guess my goal in life is to be fair and each project will be treated differently. Each project is important to wildlife. It is important to humanity. I can't really say. I'm a wildlife person, but I'm also conservation. And we need to preserve everything the way it was a hundred years ago today for a hundred years in the future. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR DUBAS: So do you see your role, then, as a member of the NET Board and what the purpose... [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Big picture. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Yeah, the purpose of NET, you see that fitting well with what you want to do? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, yes, very much so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: And the projects and the history of the Environmental Trust to date, do you feel, has been effective in... [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Excellent. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Superb, in fact. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. Thank you so much. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: And I'm glad to be a part of that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right. Senator Haar and Senator Kolowski have joined us. Senator Brasch, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Brandt. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Johnson, excuse me. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: No problem. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: You got to see some of the grandkids. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: I got to see one of them. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right, good for you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: She spoke on natural resources at the FFA convention. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: I knew that that was the subject. I'm sorry. All right, Senator

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Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Brandt, for your willingness to serve. And I do agree. I can see you're worlds away as you're describing your experience. And is that your wife sitting there behind you that was nodding her head about the bulls? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, ma'am. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: She's a brave woman. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, she was. I could tell you some more stories someday. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: And then I also noticed that your occupation, your business here is an owner of a excavation company. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, ma'am. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: So by trade you move earth away... [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: ...and so in your dreams you don't touch it. Isn't that accurate? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: That is correct. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay, very good. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: That is correct. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: And in these dreams or the reality, what would you like to see...are your travels, your experiences geographically in one portion of the state, or do you see it moving statewide? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, it's all over. Yeah, it's out our back door. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: In Roca, did I see it's Roca? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: In the back door. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yeah, Roca, Lincoln, Omaha, I mean, everybody has to have a part to accomplish what we need to accomplish to keep what we have today. And we all know how hard it is and to pass that on to our children's children it's...it's a grave responsibility. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Here I'm getting carried away again. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: No, very good. I appreciate your willingness to serve. Thank you again. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Schilz. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Good afternoon, Mr. Brandt. How are you today? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Welcome and congratulations and thanks for coming in today to speak with us. I understand that this is your first appointment. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, sir. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And it's good to see some new blood. But I also understand that, you know, sometimes to get these confirmation hearings you...have you already been serving on the board up to this point or for a little while anyway? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: I've been to one of the meetings to observe what's happening. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Um-hum. So you're just starting to get into it. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, yeah. I got a long way to...I've got a lot to learn. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. And I guess...you know, everybody asks what you see and it was one of my questions, too, is the issues that are out there. What are the important issues as you see, because I know there's scoring that comes into play and all this, but

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how do you use your influence to affect the types of programs and progress that you want to see as a board member from NET? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Well, I guess experience is a lot. What I destroyed through the years in my business as an excavator and some of the things that we made specific requests to save, oak trees, things like this. My job...I was an outfitter in the Yellowstone North Absaroka area for nine years, had our own company out there. And I saw the overgrazing, number one, in some of the parks that the situations were solved through the years, but there have been a lot of issues like that with wildlife management, with resource management that, hopefully, now I can contribute to because I've seen the good and I've see the bad. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Sure. And when you mentioned those things that you noticed up there, are those some of the same things that you see here? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: In Nebraska? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Let's talk a little bit about...you said overgrazing. Can you explain that concept a little bit more? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: In private lands and public lands, it's not as bad as what it was years ago because...because of the environment, a lot of things have happened over the last ten years from when I first saw it to where the management issues with overgrazing aren't what they used to be at all; especially publicly and they've done a very good job. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: So in that sense, maybe we don't want to go back a hundred years, right? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: That's exactly...well, 20 to 30 years we don't. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I gotcha, I understand. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. I was just going to relate one more thing, you talked about the elk in Yellowstone and things like that and I'm from Ogallala and so out west of us we've got quite a herd of elk around there too. [CONFIRMATION]

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HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Some beauties. And just the other day in talking to some people that live out and around Lake McConaughy, we actually have seen four moose, two bulls and two cows... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Really? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: ...at Lake McConaughy. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: The wolves are chasing them out of Wyoming is what's happening. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. The wildlife is there, yeah. So I just wanted to say that, yeah, it's incredible to see that. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Wow, that's great. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Welcome and congratulations. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Thank you. Good to hear that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Other questions? Senator Johnson. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you, Chairman Carlson. I see your leadership, you've been president and chairman and state chair and various things, so we know you have the leadership skills. What...and you've been involved in these and I'm assuming you still are, what was the main thing that you felt that this should begin your next challenge or your next endeavor, involvement? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Our environment. It's always been our environment and my concerns with the environment and saving it; water, trees, grass, it's all important to us besides wildlife. We have to preserve it. And it's only a step. They're all, basically, the same. If you stand for something you stand for it in whatever situation you are and whatever responsibility you have. It's a responsibility in life. My last fleeting breath when I die I'm going to have a smile knowing that I made a difference. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Any other questions? Well, I'm going to ask you one

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because I look here and very interested, what is the Hartt School of Music?  
[CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, boy. I got my undergraduate degree at the University of Nebraska in music and I started studying my master's and then I went to Hartt School of Music and finished my postgraduate degree. And then I got a postgraduate degree from Juilliard School of Music in New York City. And I sang opera and I started doing it professionally and I'd go back to my hotel at night and instead of pulling out my next score, I was pulling out Outdoor Life and Field and Stream. So I thought I might be in the wrong business. And I worked my way through music school working for Union Pacific Railroad running heavy equipment. So that's how I got in the dirt business.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, very, very interesting. I think singing opera, I'll bet you you could give Senator Chambers a lesson or two. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: I'd sure like to try. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Any other questions? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Yes, Senator Kolowski. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Your New York story just sparked something, I wanted to ask you, please, first of all congratulations and I hope all this works out very, very well for everyone. Talk about your feelings of something like Central Park. I just spent the last 12 years with a son in New York City; he's now moved to Washington, D.C., but we got to know the city very, very well, and talk about green space within urban environments, because we do have the cities... [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: We do. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...and we do have a majority of the state now living in what are called metro areas. And not just to scrape off every hillside, plant more houses, talk about your feelings about the idea of green space. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: The ideal green space for me would be to have a quarter mile in every square mile of prairies and grass and trees and flowers, the natural...have you guys ever ridden the prairie or the mountains in the springtime and seen all the flowers? It's awesome. There are sides of mountains that are purple. And to give the cities...the children that will never be able to see this, and that's why it's so important with Omaha and Lincoln, especially New York, and they did a really good job. I thought they could



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always do better, but I was more of a westerner than a easterner with the flowers and stuff that they had. I like to see the natural. But yeah, I'm very much for green spaces in the city, in urban areas, to give them...to give kids an experience. I mean, we know what it is, but our children and our children's children won't some day. Everybody has to have a little bit of that influence, I feel. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Are you an Arbor Day Foundation member? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: No, I'm not. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, just asking. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right, any other questions? Yes, Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman. And I just have to ask one more. And I believe you testified before us as an outfitter on another... [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: ...committee bill, and then I had asked, you are son of Henry Brandt, correct? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, ma'am, I sure am. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: I'm a big fan of your family, your mother, your sister, and seeing your passion for outdoor spaces, didn't you grow up in the house on the fairgrounds park, that little brick house there...around concrete. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Yes, ma'am. I had my horses back in the horse barns. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: In the horse...you did, and then probably spent some time where Game and Parks had a beautiful arboretum and things like that too. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Um-hum, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: So would you think that maybe just seeing that little piece of country living in the city has taken you to wide open spaces or has it taught nothing? [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: No. I was wide open spaces. I was packing my dairy cow...I had a Holstein 4-H calf and I rigged up a pack saddle on my 4-H calf. I got a purple

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ribbon though, even though...so I didn't screw up her back too bad. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: And that came from growing up at State Fair Park.  
[CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: That was growing up...no, that came from growing up on the farm in Beatrice. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: In Beatrice, very good. Well again, thank you. I had no other questions. I was just seeing two worlds and wondering how they affected each other. Thank you, again. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Well, these have been good questions. I'm going to shut it off right now because we've got two other people. But thank you for coming. We appreciate your testimony. And that will be it for you, Rick, today. [CONFIRMATION]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Oh, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Thank you. Do we have anybody testifying as a proponent? Anyone as an opponent? Go ahead, get out of the way so the opponents can come forward. (Laughter) Anyone in the neutral position? Okay, seeing none, we conclude the confirmation hearing on Rick Brandt. And next would be Gerry. Welcome and tell us a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: (Exhibit 2) Chairman Carlson and members of the Natural Resources Committee, my name is Gerry Lauritzen, G-e-r-r-y L-a-u-r-i-t-z-e-n. My late husband, Tom Morrow, and I met in Omaha in 1971 while both working at Northwestern Bell Telephone Company. He's responsible for reawakening my love for our state parks, forest, waterways, and other natural wonders. For a girl who grew up in the great outdoors of the Midwest, this was an easy thing to do. I absolutely cherish the time spent with family and friends birding, fishing, walking in forest, and just being outside. Together with my family, I have a history of championing the conservation of our natural treasures, promoting a balanced and sustainable use of those resources, and promoting the protection of our dwindling wild areas so that future generations can enjoy the natural riches in much the same way that generations of Nebraskans have. Tom and I raised two sons with the love of the outdoors, whether it was hiking in Fontenelle Forest, exploring the Snake River and the Sandhills, canoeing the Niobrara, or just watching wood ducks mate and pick out the next home in our backyard. As a parent and grandparent, I believe we need to recharge the interest in our natural environment. Families today need more and better reasons to take a break from the technology that dominates our lives and venture outside to explore and understand what's going on in

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this outdoor world. They need to enhance that sense of hearing, touching, smelling, and seeing all the wonders that lay outside of the gadgets and gizmos. I look forward with great excitement and passion to work for the conservation and protection of our natural resources in Nebraska as much as the ranchers and farmers have done for years. I am eager and ready to become more educated on the issues before the NET Board and then I can make a good, solid, balanced decision based on the Nebraska Environmental Trust mission to conserve, enhance, and restore the natural environment of Nebraska. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to serve the people. Thank you.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: All right, thank you for your testimony. Questions of the committee? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: I also want to thank you for your willingness to serve and your passion for our natural wildlife. And is there something that you see undone that we have ahead of us to do? What would be that? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: I think education. And I've always been involved...I've always felt like we need to get to our youth and let them know what the opportunities are, not only in Omaha or Lincoln, but throughout the entire state. I've been very lucky to be able to move around a lot, and my husband, my late husband, we lived in Fremont for awhile, and then we lived in Grand Island, so my children were able to experience the migration. And I think that constant love of the outdoors really grew up from that state in Grand Island. So I really believe that we need to educate our youth on what we're doing here in this state to protect the environment. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you. Thank you again. Thank you, Chairman.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Other questions? Senator Haar. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: And you're still a birder? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Oh, I am. In fact, the last ten days...I live in the...kind of the middle of the city, and I spotted...we have a lot of trees around... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: ...and we have a great horned owl and a nest with two babies in it. So, it's hard to get anything done when you've got your eyes behind binoculars. And to see that, I think, is just wonderful to know that those things are going on. And...but yes, I am. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR HAAR: We...my wife and I live on an acreage and we have some woods at the bottom of the hill and a year ago April two dozen Blue Herons were circling the woods. They landed and now we have 20 nests and they're coming back this spring to the same nests. So we have a heronry in our forest. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Oh, my. That's great. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: So if you know of anybody who would like to see a heronry, let us know and... [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Smith. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Ms. Lauritzen, thank you for being here and thank you for your volunteer activities and your willingness to serve. Kind of going back to a question that was asked of Mr. Brandt, do you see opportunities for NET to satisfy some of the conservation and environmental issues in urban areas as well as just rural areas? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Well, I think, you know, the NET Board has a lot of issues before them. And I think there are challenges on...to make sure that we know all sides of the issues. And also, when it's coming before the board to, basically, definitely educate ourselves to make sure we know both sides of the issue so that everyone has a fair, balanced decision coming from us and we should definitely speak that way. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SMITH: Great. Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: You're welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you. Senator Dubas. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Thank you very much, Ms. Lauritzen, for being here and for your willingness to serve. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: I grew up in Omaha and I can remember as a little girl going to Fontenelle Forest; haven't been there for a long time. Are there still a lot of activities that go on in Fontenelle Forest? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR DUBAS: And is there a lot of usage of the forest? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: We educate almost 40,000 children every year comes through and our education program is really top notch. And we got wonderful reviews from the schools surrounding, and even in Council Bluffs, they come over for our education. Let me tell you that Tom and I had been gone from Omaha for like almost 20 years. And when we started at the forest, Chris was just a baby. And when we came back in 2006, one of the first places we went to was the forest. And the forest has always been, I think, a hidden jewel...to have...this is the largest metropolitan forest in the country. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Really, wow. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: We have 2,500 acres. We also own Neal Woods. And this is our centennial year. And so we have a lot of programs going on. And we're...but I have to tell you when we came back, I feel like the forest is kind of one of those sleepy nonprofits that we haven't done a very good job of getting our message out. So we have really concentrated on the last about 16 months to raise funds and do a job for marketing and get the word out, what we need...what we can do with our children. I think it's so vitally important to give them an out away from the technology. And I have a son that is very involved in technology and I have 11 grandchildren, but, you know, I think it's just important that they get outside. And I think that's where education has always been very important to me. And I...what's...you know, the excitement that children get when they see a bird fly by or...and someone is able to recognize it, or just to be able to walk in the forest and listen. And, you know, I just think that's invaluable. So the forest is definitely something that's very, very important to me. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Kolowski. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gerry, thank you for your volunteering and your service in this capacity. Would you like to tell us about Lauritzen Gardens as well? Any favoritism there you'd like to... [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Well, you know, one time Bruce and I were interviewed and I made this quip that he saves the flowers and I save the trees, so we've got it all covered at our home. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Great combination. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: But Lauritzen Gardens is a...and I went and visited the site where we have a pending grant and just to bring myself up to speed. And, again, it goes back to education. This is another attraction that we can give our children; talking to them about wild flowers from all over the state and flowers that are in jeopardy. And so I just think it's another avenue that we're going to use our resources to educate the youth. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Second question, you live in a beautiful part of town and in the construction of Omaha and historically in Omaha, the way the parks were arranged, they are like a string of jewels all the way around the city as it had its early boundaries. Now we have pushed farther west, north, and south with our multi-counties and all that we're doing. The NRD is very active in building reservoirs. They're providing a lot of different places like Fontenelle Forest for kids to walk in and jog in and play in and get to know the nature of those areas. We have...I was on the NRD board for years, and we've had many different contracts with you to do many different things in a multi-county area. Any particular feelings you'd like to describe or talk about from the NRD side, combining efforts and resources? [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Well, I probably don't really have any good ideas. But I am a very big proponent of working with partners with either the community or the government or other entities or nonprofits to accomplish a goal that everyone is trying to get to. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Excellent. Will do, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: You're welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Haar. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: I'm fine, thanks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Senator Schilz. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. Congratulations, Ms. Lauritzen. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: And I've heard in your talk a few times, you talked about the very important term of balance. And, you know, that can mean a lot of things to anybody...or a lot of different things to a lot of different people. And I was just wondering, when you talk about balance, what are your thoughts? What are you balancing and what...where

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does that come out? Explain that a little bit for me if you could. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Well, I think balance is...I think if you have an issue before you, you need to look at both sides of the issue and you need to know what both sides of the issue are? I do the same thing with my interest in politics and any service that I do or volunteer work or...that you look at all problems or concerns or...and try to strike a balance that everyone can walk away from the table feeling like, you know, they got a piece of the pie too. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: So for you personally, if I understand you correctly, you're saying that when you go into anything, you want to keep an open mind... [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: ...to make sure that the best decision is made in the end. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Exactly. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: You're welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. [CONFIRMATION]

GERRY LAURITZEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Are there any one...anyone wishing to testify as a proponent? Anyone as an opponent? Or anyone in the neutral position? And seeing none, then that concludes the confirmation hearing for Gerry Lauritzen. And, Sherry, you're next. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: (Exhibit 3) Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Sherry Vinton, S-h-e-r-r-y V-i-n-t-o-n. I live at 80687 Haney Lane, Whitman, Nebraska. So as to not to give you a false impression, Haney Lane is just a dirt trail road. (Laughter) We maintain that ourself and it's 30 miles from a town with a bank, a bar, a school and a church, and it's 80 miles to a hospital. But it is a special place. We have whitetail and mule deer and prong-horned antelope. And until Mr. Schilz said that he saw some elk north of Ogallala, I once saw an elk in a valley at Arthur. So they're moving north. But right now we have the prairie chickens that are booming in the low ground, and we have Sharp-tailed Grouse that are booming in the high ground. I have trumpeter swans that fly over the meadow that serves as my backyard to nest in Sandhills lakes that sit on top of the

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Ogallala Aquifer at the headwaters of the Dismal River. We have bobcats and badgers and coyotes and snakes and lizards and bugs of all sorts. I just saw two pairs of curlews last week which I was excited to see because they're fair weather friends. They only come for the good times in the summer. And pretty soon we'll have giant prehistoric-looking snapping turtles crawling out of the ditches and the lakes to lay their eggs. So for the last 30 years I have made my living on the land. My husband and I ranch. One of the benefits of well-managed agricultural land is flourishing wildlife. Another one I found is abundant grandchildren. And maybe they fall in the same category, I don't know. (Laughter) But the Sandhills are one of the rangeland resources in the world that are actually in better shape today than they were when they were first discovered. Originally, the Sandhills were called "the great American desert." And now we're known as a sea of grass, or as Joel Sartore, a nationally and internationally known wildlife photographer with National Geographic calls us a vision of paradise. He actually included a photo of our ranch in one of his National Geographic books. And that's where he named it a "vision of paradise" and where he likes to go to clean up. So, I believe that this is due in part to generations of stewardship on the part of families and private land's ownership, the management decisions that are provided by that incentive. Before I moved to the ranch, I grew up in North Platte. My father was a small businessman. He had some customers that came to him that had invented one of the first guidance control systems and asked him for help. They were Mennonites and couldn't do many of the business dealings. And so he helped them and together they put together a manufacturing distribution and marketing firm located in Madrid and in North Platte. So I went to the university here in Lincoln and I studied accounting. And that's where I met a truly rare breed, a Sandhills cowboy. So, because of my background, because of my love of nature, my love of business, and my love of ranching, it's that interface between natural resources, modern production agriculture, and the good use of funds, public or private, that really intrigues me. My first term on the Environmental Trust has been a learning experience. I have seen projects and met people...very interesting projects and people from all across the state. Demand or grant requests has always exceeded supply for available funding. But it is interesting to note, in this era of budget challenges and constraints, our funding has grown. When I was here six years ago and spoke before the committee, we approved approximately \$10 million in grants that afternoon. And this afternoon we're set to approve \$24 million. So with that, thank you for your time and consideration. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you for your testimony. Questions of the committee? Senator Johnson. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Thanks, Sherry, for coming in. You commented that the applications always exceed the funds available. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Yes. In my six years they have. And I think before that, probably. [CONFIRMATION]



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SENATOR JOHNSON: I think that's probably where we're at in most things today. Our wants exceed our needs and definitely our desires. If you were to categorize, and I don't know...I wouldn't list them all, but, you know, preservation, conservation, habitat, what would be, the, maybe, the top two priorities that you see that funding should be used for? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Well, we actually have five categories that we're allowed to fund in: habitat, soil, water management which would include groundwater and surface water, waste management, and air quality. And I'm not sure that I can prioritize one of those areas over another. We have a five-year roundtable that we hold every year where we get input from people on those issues, but I will tell you that...I can tell you some of my favorite projects. And they're in all of those categories. We did one with compressed natural gas in metro Omaha relating to infrastructure there. And I believe that that will help them, or is a step, a unique project that the Trust is looking for to help them attain their air quality standards that we all know that they're coming from. I don't know if Senator Kolowski knows this, but several years ago when the Pigeon Jones Creek... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Absolutely. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: ...which is now Kramper Lake... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I was there with you. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: ...I was actually the board member that advocated for more funding...or funding fully that project. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Great job. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I like multiple-use projects. I like projects that advocate for accesses, provided flood control. I also enjoy working with the NRDs because I find them to be high-quality grants. I find them to be well thought out. And I...there's a lot of local input and support on those projects. Yet, you know, we give \$10,000 to the Boy Scouts to plant trees up in Fort Robinson. I mean how do you diminish that effort either? I was supposed to go up there and accept their thanks at a banquet and we actually had a snowstorm and my husband commented that he hoped those Boy Scouts were really tough. (Laughter) So, you know, we have such a huge variety of projects from the \$10,000 grant to over \$2 million in some cases. They're all worthy. We need, you know... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: You don't need to apologize to me for looking at all of them, because I think that's very important. [CONFIRMATION]

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SHERRY VINTON: There's approximately...if you're on the grants committee, they do the yeoman's work and then give us recommendations. And, you know, roughly there would be about 10,000 pages of material to review. So it's a big job for a citizen.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Haar. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Thank you for being here. It's fun to see the passion of those of you on the board. Two weeks ago, my wife and I were at the Calamus Outfitters where they're now, you know, part of their business, at least, is ecotourism and we met people from Connecticut and New Mexico and so on, are you doing anything like that?  
[CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We don't have a for-profit venture... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: ...as far as ecotourism, but I have hosted Joel Satore and I've posted many of the pictures in NEBRASKAland magazine. If you've seen that picture of Whitman Road, Michael Forsberg stayed with us on and off for a year and so...Elsa and Emme, before he had his daughters, and so ours tends to be more of a private nature when we do that. I have a group from the university that's coming in a month. Pretty much several times a year, yeah, last year, I don't know if you know Walter Schacht, he's a rangeland ecologist with the university. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Don't know him, no. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: He brought his church group out. It was a group of about 50 people and we have a small country church at the headwaters of the Dismal River. It's nondenominational. And I think they were Presbyterians; maybe the First Presbyterian or Plymouth Church or something like that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Plymouth, maybe, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: And I didn't know the organ still worked. We've used the piano at our Christmas candlelight service, but they were rocking the church, so. We host groups frequently, but not in a for-profit nature. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Do you see that as a potential for ranchers and so on?  
[CONFIRMATION]

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SHERRY VINTON: I do. I think it's very...ever more important as we've talked about the disconnect between youth and the real natural environment. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: And just people in general, and agriculture, modern production agriculture, I think it's an important thing to have people there. As far as an economic replacement for our traditional form in the Sandhills, I'm not sure that I could replace the income from my Angus steers with that. We support three families. My son is home and our oldest daughter and her husband are home and we have a daughter that is going to the university now. But that would be difficult. And I think that's why...the nature...the Environmental Trust has actually given a grant to Switzers to supplement that. So I think...you know, I think those things can be supported. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Yeah, with just a supplementary end. One of the very interesting things we learned in talking to them is they have three generations living, but only the natural children can be a part of that, the in-laws have to work somewhere else. (Laugh) And I thought that was probably a good arrangement. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We're fortunate. My son-in-law grew up on a dairy in Kansas and my husband loves having...he's got a great work ethic. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Good. That's it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, thank you. Senator Schilz. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Sherry, congratulations and welcome today. I just...this isn't, necessarily, per the Environmental Trust Board, but as you talked about all the wildlife and things that you see within the Sandhills, is that just on your ranch alone? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Really? Because, you know, as you go out there and you see them, you talk about this... [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We have... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Go ahead. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We have burrowing owls too. We talked about the great...we have the great horned and we have burrowing owls too. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: And as you talk about this, and I know that, obviously, you care about the environment very much and you've taken care, so most of these animals that you're talking about probably once you get off your ranch they start to disappear, is that right? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Not at all. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Really? So...so what you're telling me is that as part of the disconnect I will see is the understanding of private ownership and the understanding that that is what helps us, and in a lot of ways maintains the environment as we would like to see it, not only a hundred years in the past, but for generations upon generations to come after us. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I've heard...I read a conservation...or an environmentalist author, and his theory is that part of the environmental crisis is an absence of love, he equates it with that. And I guess I would maintain that the bond between a mother and her child is a biological bond like no other. I mean we have a limited period of time, you men don't. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Depends on who you ask. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: And the love that you have for that child, you will do anything to see them succeed. And when you have generations of families, my husband's family has been there for five generations, our children are the sixth, you will do anything to help them succeed. And part of that is taking care of our environment. Part of that is making sure that it's not overgrazed. As I said, the Sandhills...you know, Jim Stubbendieck, the rangeland ecologist, says the Sandhills are in better shape today. And they say that's because of the rapid way that Sandhills ranchers have been able to respond to conditions because of private land ownership. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Smith. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Vinton, thank you for your past service on the NET Board. And listening to you and the other two new board members, I'm very impressed with the character and the experience that you all bring to the board. And I just want to ask you...since you've been on there for awhile already, do you feel that there's a adequate consideration and attention given to balancing the projects between rural and urban needs? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I do. If anything, and I'm probably biased, but when I go to Omaha, I

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do see more need. I do think that there...the bulk of our population is there. When I look at the Sandhills and I look at Joel's picture, it's clean, we're in good shape. On the other hand, there are projects that we do need done, supporting the Switzers is one of them; or there are times for infrastructure, water sources, or things that need to be developed. There's also modeling that I think is hugely important that our NRDs have asked for money to do, because if anything, if I had to prioritize those five categories, water seems to be the issue for the world in the future. So that's a tough one. But no, I don't see an urban/rural, necessarily, conflict at all. And I think we need to look at each individual project based on its merit. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. So you do feel like there's good attention, adequate attention being provided, even though, maybe, the board makeup represents a, you know, other rural areas that there's a recognition that there's just as many urban needs and there's adequate attention being given to those? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SMITH: Great. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Haar. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: First of all, is that famous Michael Forsberg picture of the burrowing owl, was that taken on your ranch? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: It wasn't. It was taken in South Dakota. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Oh, that's okay, that's okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: But I do have those very same owls and their little babies are so cute when they poke out. They're really cute. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. And then finally, you mentioned a Senator Al Davis. Was he in the past Legislature or something? I'm just...(laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I can tell you a few Al stories if you'd like. (Laughter)  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HAAR: We now call him the "red cedar king", by the way, so. (Laughter)  
[CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I'll remember that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay, any other questions? Yes, Senator Dubas.

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[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you, Senator Carlson. Thank you, Ms. Vinton, for being here today. You mentioned early something about a five-year roundtable. What is that?

[CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Yes. It's in our...I don't know if it's statute...it's in statute that every five years we are supposed to look at the funding categories. And we will have a meeting and public input can be given at that meeting. I've gone through that process once, so we should have another one coming up soon. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: So you're evaluating what those categories are? Or you're looking at making changes to them? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I suppose the categories could be changed. Interesting...I've looking back several years and the categories haven't really changed at all. It's pretty basic: fire, water, the elements. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Along that same line... [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: But we do hear...people from the NRDs come and Game and Parks and various stakeholders all come; at least this is the way we did it last time, we met in Kearney. And we had a great conversation on projects people were interested in and areas where they might want to be going. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. When you're looking at those categories, do you look at, maybe, reviewing the grant criteria or the scoring at all... [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: No, we have not. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Have you ever looked at any of that? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We have not looked at that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. I had another question and it just slipped my mind. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: We do do...they're called bonus points and they're awarded every year and that has a possibility of changing. And actually I voted...I recommended to give more bonus points to Omaha because they needed more money and it passed last year. Now that we do annually. They're called GEO points. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

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SHERRY VINTON: And in areas where...but it's geographically based in areas where we think perhaps we haven't done enough work. So...or there might be more need. And then those grants automatically get ten, 20 bonus points. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. When I looked through the grant criteria, one of the areas that you look at is, I think it's economic impact... [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Are you looking at the kind of money that the project would generate or what...what are you looking at when you're looking at the economic impact? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I guess myself personally, economic impact...and I can't say...I mean, when you're on the grants committee scoring those grants, those areas aren't elaborated on. Economic impact to me would have two sides to that coin. One would be, is it...will it bring in ecotourism? Will it bring in hunting revenue? Will there be specialists that will be hired to work in that area? And will that have a positive economic impact on the community? The other flip side of that, is there any economic harm that can go both ways? Will property taxes be reduced? Will land be taken out of productivity? Will small businesses be impacted? So for me personally, I look at both those sides. But I can't say that's true with everyone. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. You mentioned the grant committee, so you have a certain number of you as board members who serve on the grant committee and then it comes to the full board? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Correct. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: And then how much input do you have if you're not on the committee as a board member to that recommendation? [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: The committee votes in February to accept the recommendations that the...of the grants committee. And then today at our April meeting we will have the opportunity to vote on each individual grant. So you could vote yes, no or abstain. And we're all given a copy...a summary copy of the grants, and if you would like a full copy of the grant, you can request that. So you can give input to members of the grants committee. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. All right, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Schilz. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. And, Sherry, just one more question. And I guess the reason I'm asking you is because you've had the opportunity to serve already and the other two here haven't. But yet throughout their testimony, and yours as well when you talk about the disconnect or somebody talks about access or education and things like that, is that given any weight within the grant process as far as, you know, if you do a project, is it open to the public? Can the public go and enjoy what's happening out there? It's just a question that I have, because all three of you seem to think that that was hugely important. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I think it's given consideration, but it's not a requirement. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: I see. So there's no actual points that are given for... [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: I can't tell you...there's about 20 different areas that we score. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: And I don't know that public access is one. Is it, Mark? [CONFIRMATION]

MARK BROHMAN: Not directly. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: No. So it isn't. But, you know, the idea may be kicked around and visited about, but no, no points extras for that, no. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: There's nothing given for that? Okay. And I know and as I sit here and I've worked on a few issues, including one this year to pass a bill to reduce the liability on landowners to garner more access for...as Senator Haar was talking about, those ecotourism, hunting, things like that and I was just wondering if there was anything that you guys are doing to help to promote that as well? So thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SHERRY VINTON: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Any other questions? Okay, seeing none, thank you for your testimony. And that concludes your part with us. Do we have anybody to testify as a proponent? Would you please state your name and spell it. (Laughter)  
[CONFIRMATION]



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SENATOR DAVIS: I figured you might know who I was. (Laughter) Al Davis, A-I D-a-v-i-s. I really didn't intend to testify today, but I just thought I would tell you what I know about Sherry. I've known her for many, many years. She actually lives in a more remote place than I do. And she and I have been through a lot of different things together in the many years that she's been in Hyannis, including school issues and a number of other things. She's very hard working, very dedicated, will put a lot of time into something she believes in, stands up for what she believes in, isn't afraid of people. A great constituent for...and a great representative for the people out in our part of the district. And I just can't recommend anybody more highly than Sherry. That's really all I have to say. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. All right. Thank you. Any questions? Good, thank you for your testimony. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DAVIS: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Any other proponents? [CONFIRMATION]

PETE McClymont: I'll make it quick. Committee, Senator Carlson... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Your name and spell it. [CONFIRMATION]

PETE McClymont: Pete McClymont, P-e-t-e M-c-C-l-y-m-o-n-t, vice president for legislative affairs. Just briefly, Sherry and her family have been longtime members and I'm here to support her. Obviously, her service and experience is valuable, as you have two other qualified applicants here today, so just hope that the committee would reappoint Sherry to the NET Board. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Thank you. Any questions of Pete? Seeing none, thanks. Any other proponents? Anyone as an opponent? Or anyone testifying in the neutral position? Seeing none, then that closes the confirmation hearing on Sherry Vinton. It closes our hearing. Thank you for coming. I'm going to ask the public to leave because we're going to go into Executive Session as a committee. [CONFIRMATION]