

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
General Affairs Committee August 3, 2020

BRIESE: We'll go ahead and get started here. We're gonna open on the hearing on the appointment of Mr. Shane Greckel to the State Racing Commission. With me here today, for the record, why don't each senator introduce themselves quickly? Go ahead.

HUNT: I'm Senator Megan Hunt. I represent District 8 in midtown Omaha.

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37, Kearney.

MOSER: Mike Moser, District 22.

BRANDT: Tom Brandt, District 32.

BLOOD: Carol Blood, District 3, Bellevue and Papillion.

BRIESE: Very good. And do we have Mr. Greckel on the phone now?

SHANE GRECKEL: Yep, I'm here. Thanks, for all joining this morning, and appreciate the opportunity.

BRIESE: You bet. Very good, Mr. Greckel. This is Tom Briese, I'm Chair of the General Affairs Committee. I'm here with my fellow committee members. Welcome to the confirmation hearing on your appointment to the State Racing Commission. And in a minute here, I'll ask you to state and spell your name and then share with us anything that you would like to about yourself and about your appointment to the Racing Commission. And then at that point, we'll open it up to questions from the committee members and any proponent or opponent testimony that might-- might arrive. But anyway, if you want to start by stating and spelling your name, and go ahead and proceed.

SHANE GRECKEL: All right. Shane Greckel, spelled S-h-a-n-e G-r-e-c-k-e-l, from Bloomfield, Nebraska. Been on the Racing Commission already, for just a little bit to fill the vacancy. What I bring to it is a lifetime of knowledge of horses and the equine industry as a whole. And I'm learning quite a bit-- sorry. And as I said, I'm learning quite a bit about the racing industry as a whole. Bringing a different perspective, if you would, from the movement of all different angles that the equine industry and trying to promulgate it all together as a whole [INAUDIBLE] to the industry [INAUDIBLE].

BRIESE: OK. Very, very good. We appreciate that-- those comments and your insight there. At this point, I would open it up to any questions from our committee members. Senator Moser.

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MOSER: What challenges do you find or do you see in the future for the Racing Commission?

SHANE GRECKEL: One of the largest things is-- is to make sure that we have a good quality race by means of having good payback, good [INAUDIBLE] size in order to facilitate individuals wanting to come to the state. So, it's been a real challenge to make sure that we find new ways and removing ways that [INAUDIBLE] to make sure that the racing community is well-funded and well-established. Because our racing industry not only has to support itself, most of these facilities, like Fonner Park in particular, also help the-- [INAUDIBLE], as well as the state fair. So it's very important to keep these things in the community, much like Columbus and AG Park.

MOSER: How's the COVID pandemic affecting racing?

SHANE GRECKEL: It's affecting it quite substantially. There are some workaroud ways that they've been able to do where betting is placed once they go inside, limited amount of people can go in. Whole thing is within the social distancing guidelines of the CDC recommendations to make sure it's safe. And, you know, there are some abilities to do that. But here again, it really hurts us, and we're looking forward to getting back to normal racing, hopefully, once the pandemic is over. Not only for the contestants, keep them around, but for the participants and the horses who depend on this for a livelihood. Make sure their trade is carried on.

MOSER: OK. Thank you.

BRIESE: Anyone else? Seeing no other questions, Mr. Greckel, we appreciate you joining us here today. And at this point, I'll open this up to proponent or opponent testimony. We don't have anyone joining us here for either one. So that should close the hearing on your confirmation. Mr. Greckel. Thank you again for being here with us today, and we will be in touch with you soon.

SHANE GRECKEL: All right. Thank you so much. Thank you all, senators.

BRIESE: Take care. That closes the hearing on Mr. Greckel's appointment. Now we'll open the hearing on Shelby Bakenhus to the-- to the State Racing Commission. He was hard to hear, wasn't he?

MOSER: Hard to understand. Had kind of a-- kind of feed shift thing in the audio.

BRIESE: Hello.

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SHELBY BAKENHUS: Hello.

BRIESE: Yes, Ms. Bakenhus.

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Bakenhus, yes.

BRIESE: Bakenhus. Very good. This is Tom Briese, I'm Chair of the General Affairs Committee, and I'm here with my fellow committee members. Welcome to your confirmation hearing for your appointment to the State Racing Commission. In a little bit--

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Yes.

BRIESE: --in a little bit here, I'll ask you to state and spell your name and then share with us anything that you would like to regarding yourself or your appointment. And after you share those items with us, I'll open it up to any questions from my fellow committee members, and then we'll open it up to any proponent or opponent testimony. And so at this point, would you like to state and spell your name, and go ahead and proceed.

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Shelby K. Bakenhus, S-h-e-l-b-y B-a-k-e-n-h-u-s.

BRIESE: Very, very good. Go ahead and proceed.

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I guess I wasn't-- know I had to really say much. But I am excited to be on the Nebraska Horse Racing Commission.

BRIESE: OK, very good. At this point, I'll open it up to any questions from the committee. Senator Moser.

MOSER: So are you a returning member of this board, or is this your first potential term?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: This will be my first potential term.

MOSER: OK. What do you see as the big challenges?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I currently see the biggest challenge being the casinos, more or less, trying to get into the horse racing building. I see that they, you know, they're really trying to push that and-- excuse me. I look forward to being part of that and hearing all the discussion groups revolving around that.

MOSER: You feel the casinos are a challenge to racing?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I didn't hear you, what's that?

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MOSER: Do you feel that the casino gambling is a-- is a competitor to racing rather than a help?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Yes, I do. I don't feel that they would be part-- I don't feel like they would positively impact the racing industry.

MOSER: Do you own horse-- race horses?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I don't own race horses, I own quarter horses.

MOSER: Quarter horses, OK. All right, thank you. That's all I had.

BRIESE: Anyone else? Senator Hunt.

HUNT: Hi there. Thanks for-- thanks for talking to us today.

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Yes.

HUNT: Can you tell us a little bit about what made you want to apply for this appointment and why this appointment matters to you? What got you interested in this? How did you hear about it, that type of background?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Sure. The first thing that, you know, the how I became aware of it is Shane Greckel had contacted me about it. I worked with him in the past under some different various things. And I've known him for years. And he asked if I would be interested in it. And I told him I definitely would be. It's something that, you know, I really appreciate horse racing. I love-- it's not-- I've never been directly involved with it, but I have always attended them. My uncle, great-uncle was a trainer for years. And I just had the opportunity to be around that side of it a little bit. And I feel like it's definitely a critical part of Nebraska history. I feel like it-- it could grow going forward. And I feel like it's something that-- that needs attention, and I would like to be part of building the industry.

HUNT: OK. Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Anyone else? Ms. Bakenhus, Tom Briese here. You indicated you're a little concerned about the impact that the casinos-- proposed casinos could have on horse racing. Do you see any steps that you, as a member of the State Racing Commission, can take to minimize that perceived negative impact?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I don't understand the question.

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BRIESE: Yeah. In other words, what would you do about it if you're on the commission?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: I will-- I plan to learn more about it and find out how I can-- you know, learn how I can impact that they don't come in. Or, if-- I mean, if it's down the road and, you know, gambling becomes legal in Nebraska, I feel like that's something then that will be a crossroads at that point.

BRIESE: OK. OK, very good. And you're aware that there is a racetrack casino proposal on the ballot or probably will be on the ballot?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Yes.

BRIESE: You're aware of that, correct?

SHELBY BAKENHUS: Yes. Excuse me.

BRIESE: Very good. Seeing no other questions. Appreciate your comments there. And now I'll open up to proponent or opponent testimony, and we have no one here with us today, so that takes care of that. And thank you again for joining us here today and appreciate your willingness to serve. And we will be in touch with you shortly. And that will close the hearing on this appointment. Thank you, again.

SHELBY BAKENHUS: All right. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

BRIESE: You bet. Thank you. And that should close our hearings for today.