

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Natural Resources Committee March 5, 2020

HUGHES: Welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Dan Hughes. I am from Venango, Nebraska. I represent the 44th Legislative District. We have the three confirmation hearings for appointments to different boards and commissions that are part of the committee's jurisdiction. I don't think anybody is going to cause a ruckus today and we do have to be back on the floor in 30 minutes so we will expedite things. I will allow my committee members to introduce themselves beginning on my left.

MOSER: Mike Moser from District 22: Platte County, Stanton County, and a little bit of Colfax County,.

GEIST: Suzanne Geist, District 25, which is the east side of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

HUGHES: And on my right.

GRAGERT: Tim Gragert, District, 40, northeast Nebraska.

HUGHES: And we also have committee staff here. To my left is Andrew Vinton. He is the committee counsel and the committee clerk is Ms. Mandy Mizerski. We do have a page with us today, John Otto [SIC]. There he is, right on cue. So with that, we will begin with the first item on the agenda, the reappointment of Dennis Grams to the Environmental Quality Council. So, Mr. Grams, if you would like to come up and have a seat? Give us just a little bit of background on your past experience and tell us why you'd like to be reappointed to the Environmental Quality Council and please spell your first and last name.

DENNIS GRAMS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and senators. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and, and chat with you a little bit. I'm really interested in this because I used to be with the department and I've spent about 40-some years in the environmental business now, I guess. And it's at the local Lancaster County, State DEQ, and EPA. Yes, sir.

HUGHES: Could I get you to spell your name for us?

DENNIS GRAMS: Oh, that's right. Dennis Grams, G-r-a-m-s.

HUGHES: Thank you.

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DENNIS GRAMS: You bet. And so I've got-- I have some experience at the federal, state, and local levels. And probably the most interesting has been at the state level because you actually do things at the state. Federal level, you know what they do. And it's been real-- I've been on the council now for four years and it's been very interesting. I haven't had-- we haven't had any contentious issues yet, but there occasionally are some within that department. Jim Macy is-- I've known him for a long time and he's, he's doing a real good job over there. He didn't tell me to say that either.

[LAUGHTER]

DENNIS GRAMS: So I, I appreciate the-- I feel like the state has given me a lot of things over the years, getting me into the environmental business, giving me-- helping me spend 40 years, basically, in that and I just feel like I owe something back. And that's why I originally, four years ago, wanted to get on the council. And at least I can give back a little, little bit there with my experiences. So that's where I'm coming from.

HUGHES: Very good, Mr. Grams. Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Geist.

GEIST: Just-- thank you-- just one quick question. It appears you're a constituent of mine and I'm curious if you've had some involvement, environmentally, with the approving of the South Beltway. Have you had any dealings with that?

DENNIS GRAMS: No, I haven't had a thing to do with that.

GEIST: OK.

DENNIS GRAMS: I live fairly close.

GEIST: Um-hum.

DENNIS GRAMS: That's the only thing, but--

GEIST: OK.

DENNIS GRAMS: --no, I haven't.

GEIST: OK, that's it.

HUGHES: OK, very good. Senator Moser.

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MOSER: You know, I don't know if this question is anything you know anything about either, but in the spring, Kansas burns all kinds of pastures and that smoke blows up into Nebraska. Do we have any authority to try to stop them from ruining our air quality with their-- burning pastures or whatever they're burning?

DENNIS GRAMS: I don't know. I have the same problems about it as you do. I know Jim and the department are in communication with the Kansas-- KDHE, Health and Environment and they-- I know last year did-- had a lot of discussions and with the EPA. You would think somebody could take care of that, but--

MOSER: Well, and all these days of worrying about carbon dioxide and, and releasing carbon into the atmosphere and all this that--

DENNIS GRAMS: Yeah.

MOSER: --you know, somebody would address that. Well, anyway--

DENNIS GRAMS: It's an interstate issue. That's, that's one of the big problems.

MOSER: Maybe we need to trade them some water for the Republican River.

HUGHES: Hey, hey.

[LAUGHTER]

DENNIS GRAMS: Send them up through here.

MOSER: Throw some beavers in there--

HUGHES: Any real questions?

DENNIS GRAMS: Yeah.

MOSER: Pertinent questions.

HUGHES: Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Grams.

DENNIS GRAMS: Thank you for--

HUGHES: We appreciate your willingness to serve the state of Nebraska.

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DENNIS GRAMS: --letting me come in.

HUGHES: Is there anyone wishing to speak as a proponent of Mr. Grams's appointment? Anyone wishing to speak in opposition to his reappointment to the Environmental Quality Council? Anyone wishing to give neutral testimony? Seeing none, that will close our hearing on the reappointment of Dennis Grams to the Environmental Quality Council and we will open up the appointment of Dallen Juelfs to the Nebraska Oil and Gas Commission. So, Mr. Juelfs, if you would come up, please, and give us a brief background about yourself?

DALLEN JUELFS: First of all, very good job of pronouncing my name.

HUGHES: Thank you. Spell it, spell it, please.

DALLEN JUELFS: Dallen, D-a-l-l-e-n, Juelfs, J-u-e-l-f-s. I was born-- and thank you, first of all, for allowing me to come here and my two-hour speech will be cut down considerably after [INAUDIBLE]. So first of all, born and raised in Washington, Nebraska. I actually was born in Sidney. So kind of a 67 years-- kind of a full circle because that's where the Oil and Gas Commission is, of course. I've lived most of my life in Kimball, Nebraska. I went to school, sorry, at University of Wyoming. I went to Casper with an accounting degree, worked for a CPA up there. I moved back to Nebraska in 1977 when my father, Stan Juelfs, ran for Governor against Charlie Thone. And, of course, you probably realize he didn't win; Charlie Thone did. And after that, my father became very involved in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. I visited a little bit about that earlier. I was planning on going back to Casper, but it didn't work [SIC] out, so I stayed with the family business in Kimball, which is primarily oil and gas. I was an oil and gas operator for 20 years, involved in banking insurance, but all facets of the oil and gas industry. And after my father passed away in 1990, I spent about eight years liquidating the company and got into banking. I moved to Casper, Wyoming and was in banking up there for 11 years and handled oil and gas finance for two different banks in Casper. Then my wife of 38 years, Dode, back here, and I had a hotel in Pierce, South Dakota, so I left a great banking job to clean toilets for my wife at a hotel in Pierce and really enjoyed that.

[LAUGHTER]

DALLEN JUELFS: We sold out about three years ago and decided to come back to Nebraska to retire and chose Lincoln because of all the sports

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activities and other activities. And we love this community and love Nebraska. So that's kind of my-- my big background is oil and gas. I've stayed in touch with it most my life. Bob Goodwin was the predecessor who resigned and then passed away from this position. I knew Bob very well. He handled my mother's estate and we talked a lot about the commission. I was involved, years ago, with selecting Bill Sydow, at the time, the director. And I know Stan Belieu and most of the staff at the commission right now. And so I guess that's it in a nutshell.

HUGHES: OK, very good. Thank you, Mr. Juelfs. Are there any questions from the committee? Do you have oil and gas production now?

DALLEN JUELFS: I have some minor royalty interest in a few wells.

HUGHES: OK, in Nebraska?

DALLEN JUELFS: Yes.

HUGHES: OK, very good. So you are very familiar with the duties associated with being on the Oil and Gas Commission?

DALLEN JUELFS: Yes.

HUGHES: OK, very good. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for coming to us today and your willingness to serve the state of Nebraska.

DALLEN JUELFS: Thank you.

HUGHES: Is there anyone wishing to testify as a proponent of Mr. Juelfs? Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to Mr. Juelfs? Anyone wishing to testify in the neutral capacity for Mr. Juelfs? Seeing none, that will close our hearing on the appointment of Dallen Juelfs to the Nebraska Oil and Gas Commission. And we will open up the appointment of Felix Davidson to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board. Mr. Davidson, if you'd like to come up, give us a little background? I do want to point out that we are being-- we have been joined by Senator Albrecht and Senator Halloran so thank you all for coming. Mr. Davidson, spell your name, please.

FELIX DAVIDSON: F-e-l-i-x D-a-v-i-d-s-o-n.

HUGHES: Very good.

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FELIX DAVIDSON: My name is Felix Davidson. I grew up in rural southeast South Dakota. I went to school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I was an officer in the Marines for six years after college and returned to Nebraska, where I lived in Omaha for about 20 years. I worked for TD Ameritrade as an executive in their operations area. I worked for the Governor for a year after that, the current Governor. And I went to work for J.P.Morgan and their wealth management operations division, prior to returning to Nebraska about a year ago; current employment with Bridges Trust in, in Omaha. My personal interests are the outdoors. You know, I grew up in a family of rural landowners. I'm a rural landowner and, you know, I look forward to the opportunity to serve my community, especially in an area of personal interest.

HUGHES: Very good. Are there questions for Mr. Davidson? So have you been able to attend any Environmental Trust Board meetings yet?

FELIX DAVIDSON: I have not; the one in April will be my first one.

HUGHES: OK, very good. I guess that's it. Any questions? You evidently did a really good job. Thank you for coming. Thank you for, thank you for your service to our country. Senator Moser.

MOSER: Since we're getting done so quick, I was just going to ask you if the stock market is going to go up or down?

[LAUGHTER]

FELIX DAVIDSON: It will go up and down.

MOSER: He's honest. I'd say he gets the job.

HUGHES: Very good. Thank you for your service to our country and your willingness to serve the state of Nebraska.

FELIX DAVIDSON: You're welcome.

HUGHES: Is there anyone wishing to testify as a proponent of Mr. Davidson? Anyone wishing to testify in opposition? Anyone wishing to testify in the neutral position? Seeing none, that will close our last hearing on the appointment of Felix Davidson to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board. And that will close our hearing for today. Thank you, everybody, for coming.