

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Natural Resources Committee February 25, 2026
Rough Draft

BRANDT: Welcome to your Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Tom Brandt from Plymouth, Nebraska. I represent the 32nd District and I serve as chair of the committee-- as I am skipping over about five paragraphs. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name, spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. I will now have the committee members that are present introduce themselves starting on my right.

JUAREZ: Hi, I'm Senator Juarez from Omaha, District 5.

HUGHES: Jana Hughes, District 24.

RAYBOULD: Jane Raybould, Legislative District 28: central Lincoln.

DeKAY: Barry DeKay, District 40.

BRANDT: Also assisting the committee today to my right is our legal counsel, Cyndi Lamm. On my far left is our committee clerk, Sally Schultz. And our pages would-- will introduce themselves.

TERESA WILSON: Hello, my name is Teresa Wilson, I am a PR major at UNL.

MADDIE BANKS: Hi, my name is Maddie Banks. I'm a sophomore at UNL and I'm studying political science.

BRANDT: OK, and with that-- who is first up? Is, is this Lynn, Lynn? Yeah, Lynn, come on up. Lynn Mayhew. Yep. Welcome. We are so glad you could show up in person today.

LYNN MAYHEW: Well, I'm glad to be here.

BRANDT: Yep. Please go ahead.

LYNN MAYHEW: Lynn Mayhew, L-y-n-n M-a-y-h-e-w. I'm with the city of Grand Island Utilities. I've been with the Grand Island Utilities for 18 years. I'm also a professional civil engineer. And my job is basically overseeing the generation for the city of Grand Island and the city water system. And I have spent six years in the U.S. Navy as a nuclear submariner. This will be my second term on the Environmental Quality Council, and I only served the first two years because the previous one was-- he passed away. And I'm, I'm hoping to fill his shoes, as he was very good at what he did, so. I guess as far as being

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on the Environmental Quality Council, I guess the last two years, it was the biggest challenge was the combination of the DNR and the NDWEE now. So it really wasn't, you know, we didn't have-- you know, we went from having the responsibility to select the new director to that getting passed on to the Governor, so.

BRANDT: OK.

LYNN MAYHEW: I'll take any questions.

BRANDT: Senator Hughes.

HUGHES: Oh, thank you, Chair Brandt. Thanks for coming in Mr. Mayhew. Do you fulfill a certain spot on the EQC? Like is it assigned for-- or maybe you said it and I missed it?

LYNN MAYHEW: Yes, it's-- the spot I'm filling is for power generation.

HUGHES: OK. And then, where'd you get your engineering degree?

LYNN MAYHEW: UNO.

HUGHES: Not quite as good as Texas A&M engineering, but close. I'm just kidding. OK, thanks. Thanks for coming in. Thank you for your service.

BRANDT: Was there a question in that?

HUGHES: I asked where he got his degree.

BRANDT: Oh. Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: Yes, thank you for coming. I am really curious about your work on a nuclear sub, and then how long would a tour, a typical tour be? Because for the majority of the tour aren't you below the surface?

LYNN MAYHEW: So I spent six years in the Navy, and basically the first two years I spent going to nuclear power school and nuclear prototype school, the A schools. And then I got stationed on a new construction submarine, the USS Annapolis. And during that time period it was under construction, we did all the initial inspections and initial criticality for the reactor and taking it out on sea trials. And then the final two years basically, or about two and a half years, I was

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underway on the submarine. And the longest I ever spent out on--
underwater was like two months.

RAYBOULD: Two months. OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Senator Juarez.

JUAREZ: Thank you, so I'd like to know do you have any opinions about
the data centers that have an interest in our state? What do you think
about that?

LYNN MAYHEW: Well, the data centers are very power-hungry and, you
know, there's a lot of talk about them. Right now, generation, we
recently went out for bids on some-- or again, a cost-estimate to
build some generation in Grand Island. And, you know, and just a few
years ago, you know, it's probably almost tripled the cost of the new
generation for natural gas. That's about the only type of generation
you can really go out and get right now because, you know, there's
been some great things done with nuclear power but, you know, there's
still a lot of work to be done to get it to where it's commercially
viable. I know there's a lot to talk about data centers and
hyperscalers coming out and wanting to build generation, and that's
basically what's driving up the cost for utilities like NPPD and OPPD
too, for them to build generation to meet their capacity requirements.

BRANDT: Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Thank you for being here today. Were you stationed
out of San Diego, or where were you stationed out of?

LYNN MAYHEW: No sir, I was stationed out of Groton, Connecticut.

DeKAY: OK. And then second question, when we're talking about
generation in Grand Island, how many megawatts does-- megavolts does
Grand Island use on a typical, on an average day?

LYNN MAYHEW: So, our normal day is about 100 to 110 megawatts. Our
peak ever was 174 megawatts. And normal winter is, you know, around
100 megawatts. And the total capacity we have for Grand Island is we
have a 100-megawatt coal plant. And then we have about 97 megawatts of
natural gas, fire generation. And then we installed 10 megawatts of
solar, and then we have some wind generation up in Prairie Hills,

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about 26 megawatts up there. And then we're also part owners in Nebraska City too, and Whelan Energy, too, in Hastings.

DeKAY: Has there ever been any talks within the city of Grand Island to convert from coal to natural gas?

LYNN MAYHEW: I've looked at that. The cost to bring a natural gas line into the plant site would be about the same cost as when that facility was built back in 1980. So I looked at it, and it was going to be \$85 million to bring a natural gas up from the Rocky Mountain Express line.

DeKAY: So there's not natural gas running through Grand Island at this time?

LYNN MAYHEW: Yeah, there is natural gas that feeds, but it doesn't go to the plant site.

DeKAY: OK.

BRANDT: Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: Yes, thank you again. Another Navy question. So, Senator Rick Holdcroft, former naval officer, was he an admiral?

BRANDT: No.

RAYBOULD: No, high-ranking naval officer. I'll give him that.

BRANDT: Captain.

RAYBOULD: Captain. But he's always bemoaning like, well, you know, we got nuclear on a submarine and like, why can't we do-- replicate that same small modular reactor on the surface, you know, in smaller communities like Grand Island where they could use that additional power generation from a small modular reactor? And since you've had experience on a nuclear sub, is it that easy?

LYNN MAYHEW: That's kind of loaded.

HUGHES: That's a loaded question.

LYNN MAYHEW: You know, the Navy has a strict program. You know, they train every single person that's going to operate that reactor. You

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know, they can go through extensive training. Matter of fact, it's kind of interesting that the fact that for every one person that actually makes it through the Navy nuclear program, there's four that sign up. So it's about a 25% success rate, you know, in, in personnel that sign up to, hey, I want to be on a-- run a nuclear power plant for the Navy. Only 25% of them come through. So, you know, part of it's training, part of it is regulations, you know? You know, you have to have security, you know, on a submarine, you know, you got to secure-- you got the security there. On a site that's on land you have to have the same sort of security. And I find it interesting that there's more security that runs the site at Cooper Nuclear than there is actual operators and engineers that are maintaining and operating the facility.

RAYBOULD: OK. Thank you.

BRANDT: Any other questions? Do you have any more questions?

DeKAY: I was just going to ask do you, do you know the CEO of NPPD, Tom Kent?

LYNN MAYHEW: Yes, I've met Tom once.

DeKAY: OK, so you, you met him once, so probably never-- he was a nuclear Navy instructor. That's why I was asking about San Diego.

LYNN MAYHEW: Oh, OK.

DeKAY: I just wonder if you ever had any conversations with him about that.

LYNN MAYHEW: No, he's-- I'm not at that director level, you know, where I get to meet with the other utility directors. I'm meeting more with the generation facility operators and things like that.

BRANDT: So you've served on this committee for two years, right?

LYNN MAYHEW: Yes, sir.

BRANDT: And you've enjoyed it?

LYNN MAYHEW: It's been interesting, you know, it's not as challenging as I thought it was going to be. But I was expecting to have to deal more with the regulations. There haven't been as many new regulations

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come out. The regulations for power plants is kind of getting deregulated right now, which is good because, you know, that makes it less complicated, you know, when, when they're coming out and doing inspections and understanding what we're doing to maintain low-cost energy for, for everybody.

BRANDT: OK. I see no other questions. Thank you.

LYNN MAYHEW: All right.

BRANDT: You can return to your seat and we'll go through the process here. Any proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? And we had no online comments. And with that, we will close the hearing for Mr. Mayhew. Thank you for driving in today. The next hearing will be for Ms. Amy Staples, and this will be online. And while they are setting that up, Ms. Staples is going for an appointment on the Environmental Quality Council for the position on the Council of Biologists, length of term June 25 to June of 2029, a four-year term. She's from Custer, Nebraska and is currently director of regulatory compliance at Adams Land and Cattle. And there were no online comments. Ms. Staples, are you there?

AMY STAPLES: Yes. Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

BRANDT: Yes we can hear you just fine.

AMY STAPLES: OK.

BRANDT: I'm going to have the committee introduce themselves again real quick, so that you know who's here. I am Tom Brandt. I the Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee from Plymouth.

DeKAY: You didn't say far-- I'm Barry DeKay, I represent District 40 out of northeast Nebraska which consists of Holt, Knox, Cedar, Antelope, northern part of Pierce, southern part of Dixon County.

RAYBOULD: Senator Jane Raybould, Legislative District 28: central Lincoln.

HUGHES: Jana Hughes, District 24: Seward, York, Polk, and a little bit of Butler County.

JUAREZ: Hello, I'm Senator Margo Juarez, District 5: Omaha.

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BRANDT: All right, Ms. Staples, if you could say and spell your name and then tell us a little bit about yourself.

AMY STAPLES: Sure. My name is Amy Staples, A-m-y S-t-a-p-l-e-s, and I serve as a director at Adams Land and Cattle in Broken Bow, Nebraska. Adams Land and Cattle is a family-owned cattle feeding operation with several acres of cropland as well. I've been with the company for almost 18 years, and I've had the opportunity to lead a variety of areas. Currently, regulatory compliance, research and development, sales, marketing, and logistics, supply chain, and most recently, our PM and repair shop. I graduated from Doane College, which is now Doane University, in 1998 with a bachelor of science in biology. And before joining Adams Land and Cattle, I spent nine years in the pharmaceutical and medical device industries, both in Nebraska and Minnesota. And I feel like that background gave me a strong regulatory compliance, quality systems, and operational oversight when I stepped into my position at Adams Land and Cattle. In my role as regulatory compliance director, I do stay closely engaged with a lot of state and federal regulations. I work closely with our environmental consultants, also with state agencies such as the Department of Water and Environment and Energy, Health and Human Services, and then our local NRD. Throughout my career, I've also, in working with those groups, I guess, really seen the value of being transparent and having a partnership with them. We reach out to them on many, many different questions, and so I, I guess that that's, that's really where I see a lot of value is working hand-in-hand with the different agencies in running our business. I'm interested in continuing to serve. I have served four years previously on the Environmental Quality Council, but I believe my background-- although I'm serving as biologist, I also have a strong ag background-- I believe that, as well as my compliance in operations and leadership, allows me to bring a different perspective to the council. And with that, I would welcome any questions.

BRANDT: OK, let's see what we've got for questions. Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Thank you for being here today, just kidding.

AMY STAPLES: I wish I could have been there, it is a little jaunt.

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DeKAY: Not a problem. I was just going to ask is this a new appointment or a reappointment for you?

AMY STAPLES: It's a reappointment. Yep, I've served four years prior.

DeKAY: OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Other questions? So in your first four years on the committee, what kind of experience was that for you?

AMY STAPLES: It was good. I have found it interesting, just the change in, in the department. Just within the last couple years, you know, right away when I got on the committee is when there was the structure change to have all the engineers together, all the compliance people together, not necessarily by industry. So while I think that there was good thought put to that and there was reason for that, I think there were a lot in efficiencies with that structure. And so then within the last couple years, I've seen a change back to more industry and area-specific in having some of those like the engineering and compliance fall within an area, which I think brings a lot stronger efficiencies, if that makes sense.

BRANDT: Yep, it does. Any other questions? Well, I think you're going to get off easy today. I want to thank you for being available today.

AMY STAPLES: Yes, thank you. I appreciate the opportunity.

BRANDT: OK, we've got a couple more things to go through here real quick. Are there any proponents for this nominee? Are there any opponents for this nominee? Is there anyone in the neutral capacity? With that, we will close our hearing for Ms. Amy Staples. Thank you.

AMY STAPLES: Thank you. Would you like me to stay on?

BRANDT: No.

AMY STAPLES: OK.

BRANDT: We've got to do another one on the phone after you. But thank you.

AMY STAPLES: OK, great. Thank you all.

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BRANDT: Right. So is our next one-- are we good to go? Mr. Jules?

DALLEN JUELF'S: Yes. Can you hear me?

BRANDT: You're online. I'm going to read your bio here. You're going for an appointment to the Nebraska Oil and Gas Commission, length of term, September 25th to September of '29, a four-year term. You are from Scottbluff and currently employed at Banner Capital Bank in Cheyenne, Wyoming. And we had no online comments and no ADA testimony today. And we're going to have the committee reintroduce itself so you kind of get a feel for who's here, starting on my left.

DeKAY: Hi, I'm Barry DeKay. I represent District 40 in northeast Nebraska.

RAYBOULD: Senator Jane Raybould, Legislative District 28: central Lincoln.

HUGHES: Jana Hughes, District 24: Seward, York, Polk, and a little bit of Butler County.

JUAREZ: Hi, I'm Senator Juarez. Omaha, District 5.

BRANDT: And I'm Senator Tom Brandt, I'm the chair of the committee. So if you could say and spell your name, and then tell us a little bit about yourself, that would help us out.

DALLEN JUELF'S: All right, Dallen Juelfs, D-a-l-l-e-n, last name is J-u-e-l-f-s. 72 years old, I born and raised in Nebraska. I was born in Sydney, kind of a full circle back to the Oil and Gas Commission. Lived most of my life in Kimball, born and raised, went to school there. Went to college at the University of Wyoming, graduated in accounting. I moved to Casper, Wyoming, where I worked for a CPA firm for 3 years. And lo and behold, in 1978, if any of you can remember that far back, my dad, Stan Juelfs ran for governor of the state of Nebraska. I came back and helped him and stayed with the family business, which at that time was mainly oil production, oil field retail, oil field construction, banking and insurance. So I learned more from him and the family business than I probably did in college and then at the CP-- CPA firm. My dad passed away in 1990, and I proceeded to liquidate the company to settle the estate for the family and pay off creditors. And then I got into banking, moved to Casper, Wyoming and banked for 11 years, primarily in oil and gas-related

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finance. For five years, my wife and I owned and operated a Days Inn motel in Pierre, South Dakota. We sold that, and I think 2016 I moved to Lincoln and became board--, got, got involved in banking with some people I knew out western Nebraska. They asked me to join the board, buy some stock, [INAUDIBLE] Capital Bank. I actually started in Harrisburg, Nebraska. We currently have seven locations, four in Nebraska: Beaver City, Alma, Kimball and Harrisburg. And 3 in Wyoming: Cheyenne, Guernsey, and Lusk. Cheyenne is considered our headquarters, so that's why it shows I'm employed by a company out of Cheyenne. I've served on the Oil and Gas Commission since 2019. I served two years to fill the position of Bob GIBLIN who passed away with cancer, and I was reappointed in 2021 to last year. And hopefully will be reappointed for the next four years. The-- a little bit, 2019, I was appointed. 2020, you know, COVID hit. It was kind of a, a strange year because we didn't do a whole lot. It was all a few meetings remote, but very few in person because of COVID. So that's kind of a, a little bit about my background. I'd be glad to answer any questions.

BRANDT: All right, let's see what we've got for questions. Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: I just get-- this is too easy, I got to ask, are you a first-time caller, long-time listener?

HUGHES: Never-listener.

DeKAY: Just kidding. So what is your objectives with being on the Oil and Gas Commission? What are your, I guess, priorities, and what are you interested in?

DALLEN JUELFES: Well, with my background in oil and gas, I have a passion for the industry. I, you know, operated under the regulatory authority of the Oil and Gas Commission for 20 years, so I kind of know the other side of the fence. It's been interesting because really there's not a whole lot of oil and gas activity in the state of Nebraska. Unfortunately, we have very little activity. The oil production is on a decline. But since 2019, it's interesting that we've taken on some different roles. One of them is right now, if the ethanol industry decides to drill a well to dispose of their carbon emissions, we have staffed an oversight of that to protect the groundwater and to also make sure that whatever formation that they want to inject the emissions into will hold large volumes. And then

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under the Biden administration, we were granted \$25 million to plug orphan wells. And my initial thought was we would never be able to use that much money. But lo and behold, we've worked with operators, we've found a lot of wells that have been orphaned with operators that have left the state. And I will say that a few months ago we were actually under a federal audit, and with all the fraud and all the news we hear about fraud, I was pleasantly surprised that we had an audit number one. And number two, we haven't got the final written response, but we had verbal-- a verbal message that everything was done very well, and I'm very proud of our staff for what they've done. And the oversight has been fairly easy because we've had a good director and good staff.

DeKAY: Do you-- is there any drilling going on for either oil or gas in the western part of the state now, or do you see that escalating anytime in the near future?

DALLEN JUELFES: There's been very little in western Nebraska. Pretty much the only activity we're seeing is down in south central Nebraska, around McCook and that area along the Kansas border.

DeKAY: OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Let's see if we have any other questions. I do not see any. I want to thank you for calling in today.

DALLEN JUELFES: Well, I wish I could have been there in person. I, I usually make it in person, but I'm at the age where I chase grandkids in warm weather quite a bit, and it's been hard to find a date that I could've made it. So, sorry about that.

BRANDT: Yeah, maybe four years from now you can drive back out here. So thank you. Thank you Mr. Juelfs.

DALLEN JUELFES: Thank you.

BRANDT: Are there any proponents? Seeing none, are there any opponents? Seeing none, anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, there were no online comments. And that will close our hearing for Mr. Juelfs, and we will go into a quick executive session.