

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

May 18, 1999

LB 870

at first I tended to agree with that, and then the more I got to thinking about it the more I thought that that is not the way it should be and it would not be the way it would be if everybody took the public hearings seriously. And I would recall for you the series of public hearings that we had with the Natural Resources Committee over the space of two years. Now at the very first one that we had, it was all people who were both intelligent and knowledgeable and emotional on one side. But then after a while, people saw that it was a legitimate forum for discussion and, by the time we were halfway through and certainly by the time we were finished, it was people on both sides, lots of people on both sides talking about the issue and it was very informative and in several respects it was very helpful. Yes, there was a lot that was irrelevant; yes, there was some emotional content to it. But I think that those hearings can be very valuable. I think there's a difference between a county zoning hearing and a hearing before DEQ. They deal with different kinds of issues. The advantage of a hearing before DEQ is that local people can come in and inform DEQ on particular elements that are unique to their locale that may play upon the permitting process. If there are certain types of soils they should watch out for that have certain characteristics with regard to leaching or certain characteristics of the surface water configuration that should be considered, a whole number of things that local people would know that DEQ might miss, and it might cause DEQ to emphasize one or another of the different aspects of the permitting...of the permit that they grant in the end. Now you say that can be done under the committee amendment by submitting written comments, and that's true and I'm glad the committee amendments included that. But I ask you to think about the people out in your district. Aren't they most communicative, isn't their manner of communication the coffee shop talk, chatting in the church and the community center and talking? It's talking. That's how they relate and communicate by talking, not by writing. They aren't lawyers, they aren't people who articulate themselves very well in writing generally simply because they're not practiced at it. But they are good at talking and quite interesting and sometimes quite informative. So I don't think it's a small matter the difference between writing and being able to come and discuss, not to mention the fact that if there are people on both sides there you can respond to what you hear