

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

General Affairs Committee
March 07, 2011

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on General Affairs met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 7, 2011, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Russ Karpisek, Chairperson; Bob Krist, Vice Chairperson; Dave Bloomfield; Lydia Brasch; Colby Coash; Tyson Larson; Amanda McGill; and Paul Schumacher. Senators absent: None.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: We have one gubernatorial appointment hearing to hear today, Ms. Lynn Roper, Nebraska Arts Council. And it's a new appointment, right?
[CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: (Exhibit 1) Yes, sir, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Well, let's start by just introducing ourselves so you know, unless they have already? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: We left that up to you. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Senator Brasch, I can pronounce... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Okay, well, I'm Bob Krist, hi. Please. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Yes. Sorry, you had the rest of the group, I think, last Monday. I was out of town. And this is my first appointment to the Nebraska Arts Council. And I will tell you I'm not knowledgeable, 100 percent, about their past, their present, their future or their, to some extent, their mission. I have served on the Environmental Trust from the very beginning of it in 1992 and, for ten years, and served as its Chair as well. I was born and raised in Rushville, Nebraska, Sheridan County, and was fortunate enough to come to the University of Nebraska. But the good news is that I get to go to the western part of the state a lot, in my view that's good news, and work throughout the state as president of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Sandoz, one of our most prolific authors, has...we have through the society established a center at Chadron State College. And we're very proud of that. We spend a lot of time in our nonprofit board promoting that, raising money for it and continuing her legacy for people to know and understand the heritage of the Great Plains and its history. And that's very near and dear to me. I don't have any family still in the western part of the state, only in the cemetery. And so I visit there as well. But I'm fortunate in that I had that start in life and have, I think, a pretty good sense of the border to border, north, south, east, and west part of Nebraska. Lucky to have that. So many folks only know one end of the state. But I came here to the university, graduated in 1970. And I have been in Lincoln as a resident since then. Professionally, I am and still am, have been, with Merrill Lynch as a financial advisor for

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the last 35 years, advising private clients, helping them grow their wealth, send their kids to college, pay their taxes next month and do all of those sorts of things for folks to be where they want to be in their lives. My arts background would be only limited to the literary arts, which is what I said when they called and asked me if I'd do this. But I certainly have an appreciation of the humanities and arts and know what it does in those communities, both small and large. It does employ people and I know that's a big concern of this body and the people that receive grants pay taxes back to us. And that's always good. But the way you retain people in many communities and, I guess, I would focus on the smaller, not the metropolitan communities as much, is the quality of life, of their experiences. You keep good teachers when they can have help providing those sorts of experiences to their students. So I could argue or make a better argument than I just have that arts are economic development in some small communities. I understand the job and probably the maybe skill set that I bring to it is obviously granting very precious public dollars to activities throughout the state. And I've been in many grant-making organizations. I've also...I also serve currently on the board of the University of Nebraska Foundation. And I have spent nine years on the board of the Woods Charitable Fund, which is a Lincoln-based organization, a grant-making organization which also supports humanities and social services and various many, many, many community boards as well, healthcare boards for about 20-some years as well. So I have had the opportunity to learn in all of those experiences. And I'm sure I will learn from this one as well. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Any questions for Ms. Roper? I have a couple. You grew up in Rushville? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Did you know the Batterman (phonetic) family? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Sure. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Is that right? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Yeah, um-hum, Laurie (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: I met Bob Batterman (phonetic) when I started flying with...was on active duty and I was here with the Guard. And Bob still flies with us for the Corps of Engineers. Yeah, Rushville turned out a couple of good people. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: That's great, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Yeah. I have one serious question for you. We're in an economic tough time. And it always seems that the arts seem to be a cut. You said you've been

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involved with or you are involved with other nonprofits. How do you see that balance? I mean, do we need for the 501s to kick up at a time when government can't and then potentially look at it down...how would you balance that out? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Private-public partnerships are the best. And you can look at public schools foundation, oh, I'm also on the Library Foundation which is another example of that, the Lincoln Public Libraries, which taxpayers think they support. But the fact of the matter is we also need an endowment that kicks off enough money to do things that public dollars can't do. And that public-private, to me, is by far the best. That's how we built Haymarket Park here in Lincoln. There is just untold examples of public-private partnerships. So I do believe there is a place for public dollars. Often it attracts private and in my view, in the case of the libraries, the public dollars are paying the rent, opening the door, keeping the lights on. But to get that summer reading program for kids, that's private dollars. Understandable the constraints and the issues in front of you are, I would say, overwhelming. But you will rise to the challenge, I'm sure. Yet I would also say that that quality, that that arts program or humanities program brings into communities may save that high school teacher to stay in Curtis, Nebraska, and not leave and go to another area. I mean, I could make probably a stronger argument if I would put my thoughts to it for more than ten minutes that you do get some economic kickback from these arts programs. A penny wise, pound foolish, I would argue that a little bit, too, in terms of the size of the funding that goes there and what I think is a return on your investment. But clearly, I would be an advocate, understanding the constraints you have. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Sure. Any other questions for Ms. Roper? Senator Schumacher. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHUMACHER: This question may not be fair but I'm going to be ornery and ask it anyway. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: I'm used to that. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHUMACHER: Have you ever stayed in the Mari Sandoz Room at Jeanne's Olde Main? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Yes. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHUMACHER: Chadron, well, you win the prize. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Yes, yes, I have. (Laugh) Yes, I think the whole place is haunted with ghosts. And Ron Holm (phonetic) made me stay there one night and I said, I don't want that room anymore. (Laugh) Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SCHUMACHER: And what is the fur hanging on the wall?
[CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Oh, I don't know, beaver, I can't recall. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHUMACHER: Fox or something. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Fox or something, yes, yes, yes. No, her heritage, to me, is really special to the state. And again, we do see a lot of resources, and aptly so, and academic resources to Cather. But I'm a Sandoz person so that's my heritage.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you so much. Any other questions? [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: I don't want to stand between you and the Executive Session. I'm sure you have much more critical issues. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MCGILL: But thank you for your service in Lincoln and all the boards and I hear your name a lot so. [CONFIRMATION]

LYNN ROPER: Sure. Well, I think, as you do in public service, you get more than you give sometimes. And that's really fantastic. We're fortunate. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Okay. Thanks for your service. Okay, motion to go into Exec.
[CONFIRMATION]