

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Natural Resources Committee September 14, 2021

BOSTELMAN: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Natural Resource Committee. I'm Senator Bruce Bostelman and I'm from Brainard and I represent Legislative District 23. I serve as the Chairman of this committee. The committee will take up the order of confirmations as posted on the agenda. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. I will ask each confirmation to come up. They will then be asked to give a brief summary of their qualifications or interest in the position. Once they are done, the Senators will be given a chance to ask questions. If you are planning to testify for a specific confirmation, please pick up a green sign-in sheet that is on the table, the back of the room and please fill out the green sign-in sheet before you testify. Please print and complete the form on its entirety. When it is your turn to testify, give the sign-in sheet to the page or commentator. Morning, Mr. Hall, Senator Bostelman.

ROBERT HALL: Good morning, sir. How are you?

BOSTELMAN: I'm fine. Could you hold on just a minute? I'm finishing the-- the introduction. We'll be with you in just a minute.

ROBERT HALL: Oh, sure, yep.

BOSTELMAN: OK. So when it is your turn to testify, I give the sign-in sheet to a page or to the committee clerk. This will help us to make a more accurate public record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone and you may remove your mask. That helps us to hear you a little clearer. Tell us your name and please spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. We will be using the light system for all testifiers. Anyone who comes up to testify in proponent, opponent or neutral, and we'll give you three minutes to make your initial remarks to the committee. When you see the yellow light come on, that means you have one minute remaining and the red light indicates your time has ended. Questions from the committee may follow. The committee members will-- with us today will introduce themselves starting on my left.

GRAGERT: Thank you. Good morning. Tim Gragert, LD40, northeast Nebraska.

AGUILAR: Good morning. Ray Aguilar, District 35, Grand Island.

BOSTELMAN: And on my right--

J. CAVANAUGH: John Cavanaugh, District 9, midtown Omaha.

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

BOSTELMAN: And Senator Moser also serves as the Vice Chair of the committee. To my left is the committee legal counsel, Cyndi Lamm, and to my far right is committee clerk, Katie Bohlmeier. Our page today-- thank you for being with us, Claudia. With that, we will have our first confirmation for us, and that will be a reappointment of Mr. Robert C. Hall. Mr. Hall, you're welcome to give us some information. Tell us about yourself, your position and your interest to remain on the committee.

ROBERT HALL: All right, thank you, gentlemen. It's a simple story. I grew up in Saunders County, Nebraska. I've lived here my entire life. My grandfather-- great-grandfather, homesteaded in 1869 and we still have the farm, my brother and I. And I've worked for 46 years. I'm getting a bad export, is it something I'm doing?

BOSTELMAN: Oh, you're fine. We can hear you fine.

ROBERT HALL: OK, I just get such a bad echo, I wanted to make sure. But I've worked for 46 years as an asbestos work as a member of Local 39, which covers the state of Nebraska. And that time I worked in the field, I served as business manager of the union from 1996 to the January of 2008, which at that time I was appointed to the International. I served as an International representative [INAUDIBLE]

BOSTELMAN: Mr. Hall, you're breaking up for us a little bit. I don't know if it's our-- I don't know if there's anything we do to help that, but go ahead.

ROBERT HALL: Well, let me try this then. Does this sound better?

BOSTELMAN: There you go. That's much better, yes.

ROBERT HALL: OK, I don't know how much you heard, but I can repeat anything you'd like me to.

BOSTELMAN: You're fine. It was just the last bit I think you're talking about your involvement on the national labor board, was it?

ROBERT HALL: Yes, I was international representative for the heat and frost insulators asbestos workers international, and I traveled all across the United States and Canada on representing the members. So in that time as business manager in Omaha, I also served as chairman and coordinator of our asbestos training program, which was certified by

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the state of Nebraska. Early on the regs, I believe, started in Nebraska in 1986, and we had our training program since then. And I took care of all that, the asbestos training and was involved with the regulations and so forth. And I believe it was around 2002 or 2003 when the Secretary of Agriculture, Johanns, was our Governor at that time, and he appointed me to the EEQ Council. So I've served on it for, gosh, probably 18 years somewhere, you know, 17, 18, 19 years I've been on the board and I'm still interested in the-- oh, the stewardship, I guess, is the word I would use of our air and our water in Nebraska. And so I enjoy sitting on the board, keeping up with some of the regulations and following along as we progress through some tough times with our air and our water quality. So I look to continue to do that. And that's about all I have to say.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you, Mr. Hall. Are there any questions from the committee members? I do have one. I would like to thank you, Mr. Hall, for your willingness to serve, continue to serve in this capacity. And as you talked, as you're one of the 17 members representing a number and you're representing the labor union, is that your portion of the board?

ROBERT HALL: I represent labor on the committee, yes.

BOSTELMAN: Great. So representing a number of-- that are knowledgeable about the potential impact or may be aware of interests that may be affected by the rules and regulations adopted by the council, would you please tell me which of your past or present experiences you believe will be the most helpful for you in forming those rules? And maybe what are some things that you've experienced on the-- on the-- on the board that you feel are positive? So a two-part question.

ROBERT HALL: Well, the-- I guess the-- the memories I have of positive are the grants that we allot for the small union municipalities to continue serving their communities with clean water for drinking water and also the air quality. I'm always involved or trying to be involved with the air quality regulations, because I know that impacts the labor market for the power plants for truckers, for [INAUDIBLE] FCR units and so on. I try to stay on top of that part of it. And as far as [INAUDIBLE].

BOSTELMAN: We lost you.

ROBERT HALL: Oh, it's not really accomplishment but there was a spillage in there with Shell Creek up by Columbus that was killing off the water. Where it was killing off fish and other wildlife in the

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stream and there was a young group of advocates for the-- for cleaning up Shell Creek that came to one of our meetings and testified. They were young high school students, as I remember. And they took a great interest in our resources, especially our water resource here in Nebraska. And with their help and-- and the work of the the DEQ, they were able to clean the creek up and-- and maintain current levels, I believe, that the fish are back and the waterways are flowing properly and there's the village and runoff has been controlled. So that was probably a good feeling in my-- in my career there on the council.

BOSTELMAN: Yeah, I would agree. I was there at the announcement on Shell Creek. That's in my district, obviously, as you know. That was-- that is a great project that's going on, especially involving high school students. Was that part of a subcommittee of the 17 that worked with that? Are you part of a subcommittee or-- or not?

ROBERT HALL: No, no, that was-- that was done through just a regular board meetings or the DEQ Council meetings. And then I believe the president and then the-- the great-- the great staff and the great people at the DEQ did most of the legwork and did most of the work.

BOSTELMAN: Understand. Is there anything that you see you think could be changed with how the board functions or other aspects of the board?

ROBERT HALL: Well, I'll tell you what-- what concerns me, Senator Bostelman, is the-- the ethanol plant at Mead, Nebraska and I've studied a little bit on it. I haven't studied it like I should. I've been busy with finishing up my career and some other issues in my personal life. So I haven't really paid attention like I should. I hope to get more involved with that. But I was very concerned with the spilling there and burning of those-- that seed corn with all the pesticides in it. And I actually was down at our farm, our family farm is north of Memphis, Nebraska, and that was spilling was run in, I believe Highway 66, the old Highway 63 now when I grew up, so if I say 63, I'm referring to Highway 66 but they were down there with this [INAUDIBLE] dumping into a dump truck going down the road with-- with spilling seed all over the highway. The highways were covered with it. It covered my car. I had to go to the car wash, but it got within a mile and a half of our family farm. And so that was concerning to me and-- and I don't know-- I know you have some legislation that you're proposing and I thank you for that, because it's just obvious that we can't allow them to burn those pesticide infected, you know, seed. That just goes beyond my comprehension that could happen. I know that DEQ was out there. I read the report. They went with the Department of Agriculture, but there doesn't seem to be the team to stop it. And so,

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look at what we got now. We've got a huge cleanup and I think the seed companies have stepped forward the last I read and are going to pay for that cleanup. But here was this company going scot-free and the taxpayers in Nebraska were going to get stuck with the cleanup, add that dollars. So that's one thing I-- I hope we can all work together, get something accomplished there so that we can do something a little different, so if we see a violator, there's some type of mechanism to where some enforcement can be done and can be stopped. They can't go on for four, three, two, five years and create a big mess like we have. So that's an example of something I think we need to all work on and we're going to have to work on our air and water, it's all, you know, without the air and the water here in Nebraska [INAUDIBLE] across the country, we're in trouble. So I think it's something we need to really look at and address.

BOSTELMAN: Sure, thank you. And that's-- we have an LR. I have an LR on that that I think Senator Cavanaugh and I are working on part of that. We're looking at exactly some of the things you're talking about, so we appreciate that. Are there other questions from committee members? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Hall, for calling in. I do have one more question. How many times do you meet as a board?

ROBERT HALL: We meet-- it's been-- we've done some Zoom meetings like everybody, but we meet at least twice and sometimes three times a year, if my recollection is correct. I think the statute said we had to meet in two different quarters, maybe three different quarters. I know we meet-- usually we meet three times a year that I recall, but sometimes if we can't get all of our business done, or something comes up where we need to get approved, we'll have a special meeting to address that, something that slipped through the cracks because of statutory regulations we need to get it taken care of by a certain time.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you. Again, thank you for your willingness to continue to serve and appreciate your time this morning and have a good day.

ROBERT HALL: Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen.

BOSTELMAN: All right. Goodbye. Is there anyone who would like to testify as a proponent for Mr. Hall's reappointment? Any testifier as a proponent? Anyone would like to testify as an opponent? Anyone like to testify in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close our hearing on the reappointment for Mr. Robert Hall to the Environmental Quality Council. Our next hearing we'll have will be on-- for Mr.-- a

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reappointment for Mr. Joseph Citta, Mr. Citta. Good morning, and remember-- have you spell your names.

JOSEPH CITTA: Certainly, good morning. My first name is Joseph, J-o-s-e-p-h, last name is Citta, C-i-t-t-a. I live in Columbus, Nebraska. I'm seeking reappointment to the Environmental Quality Council. If confirmed, this would be my fifth term, so I've been on it for four terms. I represent the power-- the power generating area. A little bit about myself. I'm married, have three grown children. I've lived in Columbus for 45 years. I'm a Nebraska native, originally from Bellevue, Nebraska. I graduated from Hastings College, bachelor of arts degree in biology. I currently work for Nebraska Public Power District. I'm the director of Corporate Environmental and Water Resources. I've worked for the district for 45 years. Also other capacities, I'm chairman of the board of the Lower Loop NRD. I've been on the NRD board for over 30 years. I've been, like I mentioned, on the council. I'm also on the Platte River Recovery Program. In fact, when I leave here today, I have to go to Kearney for a 2-day meeting on the Platte River recovery. On a national level, I've served as-- as chair of the Environmental Task Force for the Large Public Power Council and for Chair of the Environmental Task Force, the KPPA. I am a registered environmental manager and a certified hazardous material manager. So just a little bit about my background, sir.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you, Mr. Citta-- Citta.

JOSEPH CITTA: Citta, yes. Thank you, Chair.

BOSTELMAN: Are there any questions from the-- from the committee board? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Bostelman. Thank you, Mr. Citta, for being here. I apologize if I'm going to ask you more questions than I asked the last guy, but that was a little difficult.

JOSEPH CITTA: All right. I look forward to them, sir.

J. CAVANAUGH: Well, our first question is just generally, can you give me an overview of what the Environmental Quality Board does?

JOSEPH CITTA: Well, predominantly two things. The council, as the Chair Bostelman mentioned, is a 17-member council from basically all walks of life across Nebraska. A couple of things. We primarily would approve the environmental regulations for the state of Nebraska. So we went public hearings, where the public can come and testify. The NDE has to propose regulations that are advertised and they have-- they

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have outreach. And then we hold a hearing, public hearings, take testimony similar to, you know, to what you all do. We take testimony and then we would rule on whether to approve the regulations or disapprove and ask for revisions. The other thing was, we would administer like what Mr. Hall mentioned earlier, there's a couple of funds, a drinking water fund that we administer for cities and taxable entity-- entities to look at drinking water and wastewater treatment, but they have some very low interest-- interest funds that-- on loan situations where they can do for clean water and wastewater. But those are primarily the two. Also we can serve as a sounding board for the public. Naturally, we don't have any enforcement responsibilities, however, being with all walks of the public, we are a sounding board where we can then-- where the public can contact us and we can take those issues to the appropriate regulatory agencies. I know I've been talked to on several occasions from the public regarding some environmental concerns and then I could pass those on, take those up and pass them on and have a little oversight. So that's primarily it, in summary.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you. So--

JOSEPH CITTA: Certainly.

J. CAVANAUGH: In terms of the 17 members, obviously you represent power generators and Mr. Hall represents labor unions, which I assume, people who are employed in the fields. Is there ever a time in which there's a conflict between your employer's interests and the proposals in terms of regulatory constraints that might come before the--

JOSEPH CITTA: I've really not noted-- notice that, you know, because well, luckily where I work, I mean, we're very environmental sensitive and very environmentally proactive. So, no, I've not noticed any conflict. And on the council, even though I do represent the power industry, I'd like to feel I pretty much represent the people in Nebraska and try to make decisions best on on what-- what I believe is best for the-- for the state and the people in Nebraska. And in turn, that falls right in line with public power.

J. CAVANAUGH: Well, I agree with that perspective too.

JOSEPH CITTA: OK.

J. CAVANAUGH: I think that your purpose there is to bring the perspective, but to represent the people of Nebraska.

JOSEPH CITTA: Yes, sir.

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J. CAVANAUGH: I would agree with you on that. Thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: I'm very passionate about that.

J. CAVANAUGH: You've got a-- I'm blown away by your credentials. So I appreciate your willingness to serve. Thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: Thank you, sir.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Moser.

MOSEER: Do you know of the other members of the council how many of those seats are reserved for people from certain entities like public power or labor or, you know, or are some of-- some of the seats just for the general public?

JOSEPH CITTA: Pretty much not, I mean, for example, there's-- as you can imagine, there's-- there's different levels of industry, agriculture. There's county government, city government is representative, minorities. There's biologists, there's biologist's, there's a physician. So I mean it try to hits all the walks of life but as far as just, let's say, an ad hoc or a member of the public, no, I don't believe so. They're typically associated with representing a--

MOSEER: So each of the 17 seats has some background in some perspective of environmental quality?

JOSEPH CITTA: Environmental or public health, yes. For example, the physician, the physicians there are naturally to help us-- to help get information and evaluate, you know, public health scenarios. We have a biologist that's there that looks at, you know, the biological-- biological piece. We try-- they try to hit-- it's really been successful. I'm just amazed at the ability of this group to work together.

MOSEER: Do you elect your own chairman of your board?

JOSEPH CITTA: We do. We elect our own chairman and luckily enough, I'm chairman-- presently chairman of the board of the council.

MOSEER: Are there requirements that certain numbers of the members be affiliated with a particular political party?

JOSEPH CITTA: No, not to my knowledge, sir.

MOSEER: OK, thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: Certainly. Thank you, Senator.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for your testimony.

JOSEPH CITTA: Certainly.

GRAGERT: I'm-- I'm interested in your perspective on the nitrate issue in parts of Nebraska. And how do you see us moving forward on the water quality with specific-- specifically nitrates?

JOSEPH CITTA: OK, of course. The groundwater, you know, once again, typically the groundwater quality, it's a combination of, you know, what the NDE would require. Also with the NRDs. The NRDs also have a-- have a significant interest in nitrates. In fact, I know I could-- I could speak for the NRD that I'm on, that I know we are looking at some special water quality areas in the Lower Loop where we're looking at regulating the amount of nitrogen and that's being placed in the different hotspots. But also-- and they work-- we work in conjunction with the NDDE, for example, for the CAFO, you know, the confined-- confined feeding operations and the manure, the amount of manure that could be put out on the-- on the ground. So to me, it's a combination of both with which would be the environmental regulations for the state, but then also more specific the local control for the NRDs. I don't-- I hope I addressed that, but it is a significant issue and needs-- needs continued focus.

GRAGERT: OK, that's what I was really after the last part of your sentence.

JOSEPH CITTA: Oh, it is. I mean, it's--

GRAGERT: Is that how you feel the nitrate issue is in Nebraska?

JOSEPH CITTA: I do. I mean, there's-- there's many areas that are-- that are quite a bit above the drinking water standards and they're doing studies more and more. In fact, we just had a presentation from the university to find out there-- there seemed to be more and more health effects than-- than was originally expected from the amount of nitrates. It's in the water, especially to certain classes, children, and women-- pregnant women. So it does need focus. And I believe that-- I know in certain areas it is being focused on more, but it needs to be aggressively looked at. I see it as a as a-- as an issue.

GRAGERT: Thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: Definitely. I hope I addressed your question.

GRAGERT: Yeah. Thanks.

JOSEPH CITTA: Thank you, Senator.

BOSTELMAN: I would have a follow-up question. I think the-- what Senator Cavanaugh asked on the regs or those type of things, are-- do you-- do you only review what's brought to you or do you have the ability to form or change regs from the council?

JOSEPH CITTA: We can't-- we have the ability, although because of the public notice requirements, any change has to go back and be public noticed and then we would have to hold a hearing on. So when we-- when we actually have, and when we're hearing a regulation itself, we don't have the ability to change it there at that time and vote. Basically, if there's a change, we-- we request a change or ask the NDEE to look at it. Then they go back and have to follow the public rulemaking.

BOSTELMAN: All right. Thank you. I think you answered that and my question should have been better. The-- you got to the end was, you know, can you as a body request? Can the council make a request or statement to DEE for a specific change?

JOSEPH CITTA: Yes, sir. I'm sorry if I took the long road there, I'm sorry.

BOSTELMAN: No, you're fine. You answered my question. I just should a-- should articulate a little bit better.

JOSEPH CITTA: That's OK.

BOSTELMAN: Knowing what this council's does, are you particularly interested in seeing any rules made in any specific area? Is there any, like I asked Mr. Hall, if there any changes you would like to see made?

JOSEPH CITTA: Oh, not really. I think it's a very effective, you know, and once again, it's an example of the local control that Nebraska is famous for. But no, I think it's a pretty workable. Sometimes the ability to change the regulation gets a little clumsy. But following the public process is understandable and the public rulemaking process. But but no, actually, I think it works fairly well. I do not have any-- any issue.

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BOSTELMAN: Other-- thank you. And other than maybe what Senator Gragert was talking about, is there any other areas in particular that you think should be addressed or could be addressed?

JOSEPH CITTA: Well, I think, you know, once again, everybody's-- everybody's concerned about climate change and the balance. You know, just like with all due respect, just like the issues, you know, that you wrestle with you. It's a-- it's an evaluation of balance on-- on what and what we need for environmental sustainability, but also reasonableness and affordability. But I believe one of the big areas that-- that we're probably going to see a lot of focus on in the future is regulation, probably on carbon and in climate change. I see that as an upcoming issue.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you. Are there any other questions? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Bostelman. I just want to follow up, is-- so in terms of, do you think regulating carbon is something that the-- that you would-- the board would consider in the future?

JOSEPH CITTA: No, I believe that's some upcoming. I believe-- I know on a federal level we're hearing, in fact, I think right now with the-- you probably heard there's a lot of debate going on with the budget reconciliation process, trying to get a clean energy standard or carbon standard in. I-- and once again, once there's a federal regulation, it follows the states to implement that and then our council would be addressing those on a state level. So I believe that's just an upcoming-- some upcoming regulations that we will-- that we will anticipate to see.

J. CAVANAUGH: And do you think you're prepared for that conversation?

JOSEPH CITTA: Well, sir, it's-- that'll be hard to say. It'll depend on how impactful the proposed regulations are. But it's-- with the diverse group that we have and the experience, it'll-- it'll be an interesting conversation, but will be challenging. It's certainly not an easy-- it's not an easy-- easy thing to try to address, but I think it's coming.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: I don't-- I don't know. I-- probably a bit. It's hard to say. We'll just have to wait and see what happens, but it's a pretty diverse group.

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BOSTELMAN: OK, seeing no other questions, thank you, Mr. Citta for your willingness to continue to serve on the Quality Council, so thank you.

JOSEPH CITTA: Well, you're welcome. Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you for coming in this morning. Would ask anyone who would like to testify as a proponent for the confirmation of the reappointment for Mr. Joseph Citta to please step forward. Anyone to testify as a proponent? Anyone would like to testify as an opponent to the reappointment of Mr. Citta? Anyone who would like to testify in the neutral capacity on the reappointment of Mr. Citta? Seeing none, that will close our hearing for the reappointment of Mr. Joseph Citta to the Environmental Quality Council. Our next confirmation hearing will be for Marty Stange, would you please step forward. Good morning and please state and spell your name for us to begin with.

MARTY STANGE: Yes. Yeah, my name is Marty Stange. It's spelled M-a-r-t-y S-t-a-n-g-e. And just a little bit about me, I grew up, was born and raised at Cairo, Nebraska, near Grand Island. So, yeah, Cairo by some folks. I'm an UNL graduate. I've been employed with the City of Hastings at Hastings utilities since 1989. And currently I'm the environmental director. I'm a professional engineer, been-- also several professional licenses, such as a grade-one water operator. I'm also an asbestos construction supervisor. Just multiple duties you have to do with the City of Hastings. I work with water, sewer, solid waste, air emissions. If it says environmental, they usually throw it on my desk. With the city, I'm also a civil engineer by training, so I'm the senior design engineer for the community. I've been working on Superfund sites for the city. In fact, I'd like to say that the reason I got my job with the city was I answered the question, do I know what an aquifer was? And I got that job, so. And principally with the Superfund activities, I've been responsible and making sure that we understand the impact of the municipal water supply system and really the financial stability of a community, certainly as a team of a lot of people. I've worked with the local NRDs, NDEE, UNL, Wellhead Protection. We've certainly done a lot of work over the years regarding the nitrates and the uranium that's coming into the community. I've been the project leader for the Hastings Aquifer Storage and Restoration Project, and that's going very well. We've seen a lot of of good communication with the rural and urban folks to see if we can move that forward. I've served on several regulatory committees and often asked by my peers to provide training and so forth. So with that, I guess to answer the question, why do I want to be on the committee? First of all, it was brought to my attention

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there was an opening and so I asked a few of my peers what they thought. They thought I'd make an excellent choice to be in there just because of my years of experience and working with the NDEE. And I-- and I believe that the one thing that I think has been very positive in working with the NDEE and obviously the EQ for a lot of those years is that, you know, they've always stressed compliance for education. And I think that's the one thing that I really found was a positive experience working with the-- with those folks. There's, you know, like myself, there's a lot of different things we have to do. We're not experts at everything. But to be able to go to these folks and, you know, get the assistance you need and work through those without need to go to enforcement, I think it's just-- it's-- it's a good thing for the state of Nebraska. And when I talk to peers outside of the state, they're very envious of what we have. So I think we have something very positive.

BOSTELMAN: OK. Thank you.

MARTY STANGE: Answer any questions.

BOSTELMAN: Are there questions from committee members? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Bostelman, and thank you, Mr.-- I'm sorry, is it Sangey?

MARTY STANGE: Stange.

J. CAVANAUGH: Stange. I'm sorry I wrote-- my handwriting is horrible. Stange. So would you be filling a specific position on the board for municipal?

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, it's a small committee in municipal government.

J. CAVANAUGH: And you listed off a lot of interaction with entities. Have you had any specific interactions with the Environmental Quality Council that come to mind, I guess.

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, not specifically with the council itself, but, you know, obviously when we deal with rules and regulations, we've had a lot of peer groups and, you know, we work with some of those members on that committee. So, yeah, full aware of some of those folks.

J. CAVANAUGH: And so you talked about, I guess, the positives about NDEE being in compliance through education, which I kind of like that saying. But I think you probably heard Mr. Hall talk earlier about the

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issue at Mead and to me, obviously, that seems like maybe a failure and lack of actual direct action by NDEE. Does that--

MARTY STANGE: Well--

J. CAVANAUGH: Like I said, just throwing that out for comment.

MARTY STANGE: Yeah. I'm not sure that I know enough about the entire Mead issues out there, but just knowing how spills can occur and how things take place, it's always a little bit of tyranny of small decisions and things kind of happen as they go. You know, certainly working with the Superfund issues, it's complex. So, I, you know, I understand that. But, yes, it needs to be addressed. I think it's going to be a legacy that Mead is going to have to deal with for a long time.

J. CAVANAUGH: Right. Well, I guess my-- my point or question is more like I-- I like the idea of just the ideal is compliance through education. But obviously, I guess my question is, do you recognize that there is a necessity for maybe a more pointed approach by some of the regulat-- by regulatory agencies?

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, I think-- I think the-- the-- my response would be that there are people that are willing to take education. I mean, you can lead a horse to water, but it may not drink. That doesn't mean that these folks would have taken on a role of saying, I want to work with you. So, you know, I just-- I don't know those folks. You know, I deal with folks that just say, yeah, I'm going to do what I do and I'm not going to take any advice on doing a better job, so.

J. CAVANAUGH: And my question is for-- from a regulatory standpoint, what do you do in that situation when they don't take that ideal?

MARTY STANGE: You know, there's always a place for enforcement. You know, you do the best you can. I kind of like to say it's, you know, three strikes, you're out, type thing. But, you know, they're all, obviously, going to be some people that you're just not going to get to-- you're just going to have to go through that path.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Other questions? Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. Uh, you have quite an extensive background of water, sounds like and I'm going to go to water and again, nitrate issue. What is your perspective on

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local and state government as far as working the issue of nitrates in Nebraska?

MARTY STANGE: You know, the NRDS have been a tremendous asset for the community of Hastings. And I'll-- I'll say this. A lot of times I'll go to an NRD meeting and the first thing they'll ask us, how much money do you need. It's usually that-- that's what people come to me and ask. And what I've said is, it's not that we wouldn't like always more money to help deal with the issues of nitrates and uranium that we're dealing with, but a lot of times we just need the technical side of it. And I know working with the Upper Big Blue and the Little Blue NRDs, they have been very great and gracious in giving us staff time to help us figure out where the problem is, how best to try to address those-- those issues that are out there and sometimes just the the educational part of it. And then coming to, you know, meetings where we're dealing with both the urban and rural folks, knowing that we're working together and doing that and, you know, we leave the-- the financial stuff to our council and our boards and, you know, let them deal with it. So again, education is probably 90 percent of what it's going to take to resolve these issues that we have out there.

GRAGERT: I understand Hastings has got a reverse osmosis plant?

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, we do that as part of the aquifer restoration project. That is just a focused treatment so we can inject clean water back in the aquifer, and, you know, protect our municipal wells.

GRAGERT: So your solution to the pollution is dilution?

MARTY STANGE: Not necessarily. We're doing both the short-term and a long-term project. The short-term was by 2016, we weren't going to have enough water without some kind of treatment so we needed to deal with that. And that's what the aquifer storage and restoration project is about. But we're actively involved in the long-term in working with the NRDs to try to get, you know, better control of the nitrates out there. Unfortunately, it's a nitrate legacy because as we worked with the university on, you know, we've got anywhere from 500 to 2,000 pounds of nitrogen in the vadose zone. It's going to continue to go down into the aquifer. We certainly want to stop it. I mean, that's our future in here. We'd like to say that we don't have to replace that RO plant, but I think that-- that would be kind of pie in the sky. But our-- our-- our view is we've got to address both the issue. We cannot keep polluting and we've got to figure out how we can manage the pollution that's out there as well as we got to protect the city's water supply.

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GRAGERT: So do you have a couple of examples you could give me on how you're going to attempt going about the nitrate issue?

MARTY STANGE: Yeah. One of the things that we're really pushing on is trying to do more incentives through the community. We do provide financing to some of the rural folks that are out there for like soil testing, those kind of things. We're-- we're actively sampling wells every year so we can monitor what's going on out there. We provide it to the NRDs. We are on about a five-year-- five, six-year program to go out and take the vadose of the sampling. We're financing that so that the NRDs can make good decisions on that. I'd like to-- I would like to say that we're doing a good job, but the answer is, we still have a lot of work to be done out there. But I really think some of it is going to be a change in the-- the age of the farmer that's out there. Certainly sometimes we can get to the younger, you know, younger ones. We're working right now with the high school and the community college with those folks. And it's just-- it took a long time to occur. It's going to probably take a long time to happen. And I was one of those guys that put fertilizer on when I was a kid, so. And in the Platte Valley, we were injecting it pretty close the aquifer. So I understand the problem, but we-- we're just going to have to continue to try to do better that's out there.

GRAGERT: Thank you.

MARTY STANGE: Yeah.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Moser.

MOSER: I don't know if you're familiar with what I'm asking for, but the aquifer travels from the northwest to the southeast?

MARTY STANGE: In Hastings, that's correct.

MOSER: In kind of a slow migration. And, are the nitrate rates too high everywhere, or as you get farther east, they're worse or how do you--

MARTY STANGE: We've actually sampled an area of 200-square miles for the City of Hastings. And so we've done a pretty good job of mapping it and we went clear to the northwest to intercept the Platte River. And what you find is that there's a lot of nitrates along the Platte River and it's just because it's a very shallow aquifer. So that very sandy soil up there is a source of nitrates, but there's also pockets of nitrates between the Platte River and the City of Hastings in that farm ground out there. Like I said, we've sampled the vadose zone and

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it's 500, 200-- or 2,000 pounds of nitrogen that's out there. We've also sampled the urban, the parks, you know, residential homes. We see it there as well. There's areas that are downgrading of the City of Hastings that has a large amount of nitrates as well. So it's throughout. As our goal-- our-- our logo says, it's everyone's responsibility, so.

MOSER: Are some forms of fertilizer more prone to leaching into the aquifer?

MARTY STANGE: You know, we've actually done work with the university where we did radioactive isotope testing because there was a lot of concerns about, well, where was that source. We obviously have a very large feedlot, 45,000 head, that's in our well and protection area and a grading of the City of Hastings. What we found was, yeah, there was some runoff that was occurring from that livestock, but in the groundwater, it's anhydrous ammonia.

MOSER: So you think-- now, are some fertilizer supply granna-- granularly, or is that a lot more expensive than--

MARTY STANGE: Well, yeah, and that's a good point because right now with CPI, they're actually going to more granular type of fertilizer application. We've got a large facility that they just erected in Hastings for the second time. It burned down with a lightning strike. But we would like to see less anhydrous put on in the fall because that's where leaching is occurring. We see a lot more liquid that's being put on. We are certainly proponents of fertigation. Put it on when you need it. It's certainly helping a lot.

MOSER: Injecting it into the irrigation system.

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, through the irrigation system. Yeah. One of the things and this is a little bit more my personal thing, but we have some problems where we have, you know, we'll get a hail storm come through. If you put all your fertilizer on it in the beginning, through either the fall application or spring application, you get a hail storm, everything gets wiped out. And all that fertilizer is still sitting here. Certainly the folks that ferti-- fertigating, they can stop fertigating. So we've got to address some of that. And, you know, cover crops is one of the things we're really promoting for those areas that may have gotten damaged. Doesn't take a lot of fertilizer to damage a lot of water. So we got-- we got to get there. But when it comes to nitrates, it's both the amount of fertilizer put

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on and the amount of water you put on. We know that if you're not driving it down with over irrigation, that's the other side of it, so.

MOSER: The theory with the anhydrous was that it was supposed to bond with the moisture in the soil or something and stay close to where the roots are going to be.

MARTY STANGE: It just didn't do that.

MOSER: In real life that doesn't happen?

MARTY STANGE: No, I mean, like I said, we're-- we're 500 to 2,000 pounds of fertilizer that's past the red zone, and per acre. And I know my grandfather would say that was a loss of income and he was not happy about that. And there's just no way to really give it back. It's just going to continue to leak into the aquifer. But if we can slow it down so we can manage it, that's really why we're promoting water conservation, doing, you know, scheduling of irrigation to do a better job. But not everybody's doing it. You know, we can educate where we can, but there are some people who are just going to continue to put a lot of water on it, but way too much fertilizer on, but.

MOSER: You see some of that in smaller ponds and lakes where they have too much nitrogen and then they get way too much algae and too much box weed or whatever that is that coats some of that green scum.

MARTY STANGE: Yeah. Yeah, we see that in Hastings as well. I mean, Lake Hastings and Heartwell Lake, you know, deal with that same thing. It's again, how much fertilizer people put on their lawns. We're really trying to promote, you know, better application, you know, do mulching of-- of your grass clippings instead of haul them off, you know, cut down on the amount of fertilizer you're putting on, those kinds of things, so.

MOSER: Are there certain fertilizers that are less likely that cause nitrate problems?

MARTY STANGE: I mean, when you say fertilizers--

MOSER: Well, you know, like they have some that have more phosphorus in them and other other types of-- I mean, or do you need nitrogen to make crops grow?

MARTY STANGE: You need nitrogen to make crops grow. There are some additives like N-Serve and some of those that people can use that will help bind it up, that kind of thing. As far as the homeowner, yeah,

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you can buy, you know, you know, three different chemicals in there, phosphorous and-- and nitrates, but we don't really need a lot of phosphorus, just need nitrogen. I will say this. We do permit our lawn care companies, if they-- they put it on-- wanted to make sure that they were following good, you know, best practice and what we found was a lot of them are putting on less fertilizer than what we had thought because they actually add iron sulfate to their mix. It makes the grass look greener and most of the public doesn't see a reduction in fertilizer as long as the grass is green. The good news is when we've done our vadose on sampling within the residential and urban areas, we've actually seen a 32 percent decrease in nitrates below the red zone. So we've done some-- some benefit.

MOSER: How about the concentration of herbicides in the groundwater?

MARTY STANGE: We-- we show small amounts of atrazine showing up. But given the depth, we're about 120 feet down. We just haven't seen a lot of that. But we did see it in the vadose zone, so it's there. Just so far, we haven't seen very high levels. It's detectable but not--

MOSER: Atrazine, is that-- what's the brand name?

MARTY STANGE: It's a herbicide and it's been around a long time.

MOSER: But like Roundup, you don't have excessive amounts--

MARTY STANGE: Yeah, we haven't seen that and we do extensive testing with all of those pesticides and we do random sampling out at our well protection area as well for those, Our bigger issue has been that the nitrates that enter the vadose center was causing biological activity and it's causing a mobilizations, uranium and selenium. So we're seeing contamination of heavy metals into our our system because of that.

MOSER: And what's causing that?

MARTY STANGE: As the nitrates enter the vadose center, there's bacteria is naturally occurring in the soil. It's actually mobilizing uranium. And so we see not only an increase in nitrates, but we're seeing an increase in uranium. It also impacts selenium, chrome and those. But selenium and uranium are the two that we're watching very closely right now. And part of our OR plan is to address that uranium that's coming through the system. So we have to take that out before we can inject the water back into the aquifer.

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MOSER: What do you do with radium after you filtered it out of the water?

MARTY STANGE: Well, because it's naturally occurring, we're able to at this point, the levels are low now. We're able to send it to wastewater treatment and it just goes through with our biosolids. But we have a plan in place that we kept put in uranium removal, very similar to what the City of Grand Island has for their system out there. And then, we'd have to then manage that waste stream that occurs.

MOSER: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you, Chairman. Just one quick question. Title 130, I'm sure you're familiar with it. Do you feel that there's anything within Title 130 that needs to be addressed that will close the gap between DEE and the NRDs as far as groundwater and surface water issues? Let me-- let me be a little more specific for you, that certain activities that take place in an already high nitrate area, that one looks at surface water, the other one looks at groundwater and the can is being kicked left and right.

MARTY STANGE: You know, I think that we can do better in bringing more people together. But I also remember something a professor taught me when I was in college is that we don't want one person responsible for all water issues. I think having multiple views that are out there, it's good. It might be a little slow, but I would prefer that over having one group just dominate that. I would say that, you know, we've come a long ways when there was definitely a distinction between groundwater and surface water. Just looking at what we see along the Platte River, we understand that whatever's on that-- that surface out there and it leaches into the aquifer, I mean, there's-- there's the connection. So I think we've come a ways on that, but I don't know that I have anything specifically to say other than we just need to keep talking.

GRAGERT: Thank you. I like your knowledge in all you talk today.

MARTY STANGE: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Have you had the opportunity to attend any of the-- call the council meetings?

MARTY STANGE: No, I have not. So this is going to be definitely a learning experience for me. But I think there's some good folks on there that will guide me.

BOSTELMAN: Sure, I'm sure. Sure. OK, I think that is all we have for this morning. Thank you for your willingness to serve on the Environmental Quality Council. Thank you for driving in this morning and being with us, Mr. Stange. Thank you. Anyone like to testify as a proponent for the appointment of Mr. Stange? Anyone would like to testify in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Stange? Is there anyone that would like to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close our hearing for the appointment to Environmental Council for Mr. Marty Stange. Our next appointment hearing will be for Jessica Kolterman. Morning, Jessica.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Good morning.

BOSTELMAN: If you would please state and spell your name for us when you're ready.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Sure, of course. Jessica Kolterman, J-e-s-s-i-c-a K-o-l-t-e-r-m-a-n. I am a native of Seward, Nebraska, born and raised. I had the opportunity to attend college in Missouri at William Jewell and then came back here and received my master's from the University of Nebraska and then had the privilege to serve as a Legislative Aide to Senator Elaine Stuhr, who actually was involved with many of these issues that you're talking about. She served on natural resources. Following my time at the Legislature as a staff person, I did governmental relations for Farm Bureau for around 10 years, so I was in front of this committee on a regular basis. I then took an opportunity after I helped recruit Costco and Lincoln Premium Poultry's facility to Nebraska, I ended up going to work for them. So for the last five years, that's what I've been doing. And in my spare time, I am on the city council in Seward. So I have municipal background to the extent that city council person is involved in those things as well. I wanted to answer Senator Moser, your question. You specifically asked all the different types of things that were represented on the Environmental Quality Council. There is a person that represents ag crop production, ag processing industry, which I understand is like feed mills and those types of things. Automotive, petroleum. There's a biologist, chemical industry, city government, conservation, county government, food products manufacturing, which is the role that I was appointed to, heavy industry, labor, livestock industry, minority populations, municipal government, a physician, power generating industry and a professional engineer. So you asked if

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there were some normal citizens, I guess to the extent that people in county and city government and all these other roles are normal members of the public, they are represented. They don't all bring tremendous amounts of expertise, but they all have some role in environmental in some way. So to answer another question about the nitrates, just thought I'd bring up something that we did as a company when we started Lincoln Premium Poultry here in Nebraska. Of course, when you go through the 200-plus public hearings that we went through for our facility, you get a lot of questions about environment. Costco's philosophy is, number one, always obey the law. So everything we do is, you know, falls in line with obey the laws as they-- as they are. Occasionally, we find opportunities to go above and beyond. And when we were looking at all the chicken litter that was going to be coming out of these poultry barns around the entire region, one of the things that people, of course, get concerned about is groundwater and protecting the aquifer. Knowing that that was going to be a concern before it was even brought up in any public hearings, Lincoln Premium Poultry and Costco sat down with the Department of Environment and Energy, at the time it was DEQ, and said, you know, we want to understand all your regulations. We want to understand what this looks like so we make sure that we're all in full compliance on the farms. So we would put in our contract with the farmers, these are the guidelines. These are things we expect you to do. And if you break these rules, then we will terminate the contract. What we found out is because chicken litter is a dry form of fertilizer, it did not have the same regulations that you would for perhaps cow manure or pig manure. So we asked the state to develop some. So for us, we have our people who ever contracted with us, apply for what is referred to as a state operating permit and that is issued by the state and then they become inspected just like others. And it's required to do that in order to grow poultry for us. So we saw a place where we wanted to have more regulation for our people that were associated with us and we asked the state to put it in and they did. So it was our, I guess, little part we could do to help make sure that whatever we were doing was not going to harm any water in any way.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Yeah. I'll open it up for questions.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you, Ms. Kolterman, for being here this morning. Are there questions from committee members? Senator Gragert.

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GRAGERT: Thank you. Thank you specifically for addressing right away what you knew I was going to probably come with you in nitrates. Do you have monitoring wells then on-- are you-- are they required on--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: So in order to grow with us, the grower has to adhere to what is called a state operating permit. That's the environment and energy portion of it, they look at. But we also require something called a nutrient management plan. And so what they will do is before they grow, they submit the permit and they get the permit approved. And what they have to do in that permit is say I have X number of acres where we know this fertilizer can be applied and we require it through the nutrient management plan to be prescribed-- applied in a prescriptive manner. So you can't just go out and dump fertilizer on your fields willy nilly, it's very specific. Then we have a continued grid testing and making sure that everything is as it should be.

GRAGERT: And DEE requires this nutrient management plan before any operation takes place and I'm familiar with that--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: With ours, yes.

GRAGERT: --however, do you also work with the NRDs on the groundwater? Are you in--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well if they have a well, every NRD is different. That's one thing I've had to navigate in the role that I sit in with the company is some NRDs have us go through a well process that's very complex, multiple hearings, lots of data, lots of-- lots of specifics. Different entities require different things. So it really depends on where the farmer is and what their area looks like.

GRAGERT: Do you-- are you currently now or any of your facilities in high nitrate area-- let me-- above 10 parts per million?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: I can't answer that, I don't know for sure. I can tell you that, you know, and I'm from Seward County. That's where I live and, you know, growing up, traditionally, that area has had some high nitrates, maybe not Seward, but out towards Beaver Crossing, Goehner, the area where our family farm was or is. And so we do have farmers in that area, but that's one of the reasons that was so important to us to have these requirements so that we knew that everything they were doing was protecting the groundwater. Do-- we have to make sure we do test the water that goes to the poultry so we are testing that well as part of our quality control in terms of

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raising-- them raising the poultry for us. So I can't specifically say-- I can tell you we haven't had any issues, but I can't tell you the specifics because I haven't gotten into the details of-- of parts per million and so forth.

GRAGERT: OK, thank you.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Sure.

GRAGERT: And I like your knowledge on the whole issue of nitrates.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well, surprisingly, I learned a lot in the last five years when I started learning about chickens, so.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Bostelman. Thank you, Ms. Kolterman, for your willingness to serve and being here. You went through the list pretty quick and I kind of missed which slot you're going--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: I am going to be in the food products manufacturing area.

J. CAVANAUGH: Well, outside-- I had that kind of tour of your facility in-- it's in Fremont or outside of Fremont.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: It's in Fremont, yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah, and if anybody hasn't toured it, you should go. It's really impressive. So I was very impressed and I've talked about it a lot to other people, so--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Thank you.

J. CAVANAUGH: --I'm proud of the work you guys have done there. In terms of-- I appreciate the story about going out and seeking that specific regulation and, you know, one of the things about regulation is provide certainty, which I think is what Costco is looking for there. Do you see any potentiality for further regulation suggestions coming before the Environmental Quality Council or NDEE here that maybe would go counter to the business interests of Costco? I mean, obviously they want to comply with the law, but is there-- I don't know, other places in the country that have maybe more strict regulation would potentially adversely affect the business?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well, I mean, I was just out at Costco headquarters last week in Seattle and one of the conversations that we had, we were actually talking about safety, environmental, all these different things, risk management and those types of topics. You know, I think the thing that I'm really excited about in being a partner with Costco in this, is that they look at the law as it is and they, you know, work with what's there. And because other places have more stringent restrictions, they often adhere to the most stringent restrictions they're aware of. So I'm going to use safety as an example. If you look at safety regulations in California, for example, which might have like a higher or a more stringent specific to a certain kind of safety procedure, then that's typically what they do. My understanding is kind of what they do universally to reach the highest level that they can find. So I-- I-- you know, we are very-- we've enjoyed the partnership with DEE as we've looked at building this facility. Obviously, it brought a lot of economic energy and excitement to this part of the state, but it also brought a lot of technology and a lot of opportunity to, for lack of a better word, kind of raised the bar in some ways at places that, you know, haven't been operating with that much technology and that much innovation. And so I think in order to, you know, continue to keep that bar high, we're always going to be looking for new ways to do things that improve all aspects of the business, including how we protect the environment.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Senator Moser.

MOSER: Do the floors of most of the-- I suppose all of them, of those chicken barns have concrete in them or--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: No, they do not.

MOSER: --or are they dirt floors?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: They're like a clay-based floor.

MOSER: So do you have to take that dirt out and replace it after it's been--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well, it's as-- we refer to it as litter. So what you do is you put bedding in. Typically it's wood chips. We actually test the wood chips for quality to make sure that it's a-- it's a good quality base for the filtration.

MOSER: Make sure they don't have chemicals in them already.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Correct. And then we place the poultry. The poultry are there and as you know, poultry will defecate around the-- the-- and then what happens is after the poultry is harvested, they come in and they do what is referred to as windrowing. So they pull all the poultry, wood chips and everything and feathers, whatever is in there, they pull it into a windrow and it heats up. And once it gets to a certain temperature, it starts to break down any bacteria, anything that's in it.

MOSER: Kind of like the composting.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Yep, composting, exactly. And then-- then after a while, once we reach a certain temperature and the breakdown has occurred, the temperature will start to drop. And so then they turn it again, let it heat up again, and then they will spread it out again before the next load of poultry is delivered. And then at-- usually about once a year, the farmer will go in and they'll remove a layer of it. They won't remove at all because it makes it really great insulation and bedding for the poultry as they go into the winter. So typically in the fall, they remove a portion of it and then they apply that directly to the field in a prescriptive manner.

MOSER: How thick would the typical coating of chips be?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: You mean what would be applied to a field, or--

MOSER: No, what's-- what's on the floor?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: It varies from barn to barn. It really depends on the birds. But it can get six inches deep. Would be, you know, maybe a little bit more depending on how they spread it out themselves.

MOSER: Yeah, just for my own information, it's not--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: The neat thing--

MOSER: --doesn't affect how we look at your nomination, but I--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: I know-- well, it's-- it's an interesting topic and certainly one that you--

MOSER: Well, not everybody probably finds it interesting. [LAUGHTER]

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: I know more about it than I ever thought I would.

MOSER: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.

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BOSTELMAN: So what drew you to apply for an appointment to the Environmental?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well, I know you might find this a bit humorous, but I get the lists from the Governor's Office regularly. And because we-- we have an area of Seward and York and Polk County that my dad represents, I review it regularly to see if there's openings that might be a good fit for people that live in the district. And sometimes I do see those, but in this case I saw one that looked-- well, that-- that-- I could do that. So because of all the work we've done with the directors, all the different people and all the different agencies at DEQ, I called and asked a little bit about the position and they said, oh, you would be good at that. So I decided to apply.

BOSTELMAN: Sure. Great. Um, can you explain a little bit more who all-- who all-- what does food products manufacturing include?

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: My understanding is it's-- it's the packing plants, food processing and--

BOSTELMAN: Larger functions.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Right. We I mean, so that would be, you know, all the food processing facilities in our state. I believe there's 214 or 15 of them across. I know Senator Aguilar, you have some in your district and I believe you do too, Senator Bostelman. I think Senator Moser, you do as well. I don't know, Senator Cavanaugh, if you have any specific to your district, but I know there's some in Omaha.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah, not anymore. The old district 9, now the current district 9.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: So, you know, I-- when I sat in this chair when I was a lobbyist representing agriculture, and never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be sitting here talking about food processors and chicken because it wasn't something that I had on my list of what I wanted to be when I grow up. But I found this industry to be very key in keeping our communities in the rural areas alive. And what we've been able to do, not just in Fremont with the plant, but with all the fingers that have gone out, like as an example, there's a company called Fremont Automation that ended up developing a piece of machinery that we had asked developers all over the world to work on who couldn't figure it out. But a company in Fremont, Nebraska, did. And so we have put that in our facility and they have a company with

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25 people and now they're expanding to other states, other poultry companies in other states. And like for me, that's just really exciting to see that kind of innovation come out of something like this in a small town. And then the farmers. Probably the thing that I'm most-- get most excited about when I talk about the farmers are the kids and I say kids, because I'm over 40 now so I'm allowed to say that. But, you know, the 21- or 22-year-olds they get to come back to the farm where they would not have had that opportunity otherwise. And they get to come back to the family farm and stay there because of the opportunity that they've had to raise poultry with us.

BOSTELMAN: So with your-- and this is kind of like a Senator Moser curiosity question, once your working with Costco in the poultry and in the manufacturing of this, do you have-- have you happen to have the opportunity or is there the opportunity for all the other manufacturers that we talked about throughout, do you all get together or talk, or--

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Well, we-- yes, we-- we started that during COVID. I mean, perhaps they did before. I-- we had just opened only about six months before COVID happened. And so one of the things that we ended up doing right off the bat is in Fremont specifically, we started meeting weekly during COVID by Zoom and, you know, talking about how we can work together, how we could share best practices, what we-- you know, it was to the point of like, hey, I have extra hand sanitizer. Do you guys need hand sanitizer? And hey, where are you finding this? You know, the sanitation stations because we can't find them. You know, those kinds of things and dialogues. But then later, as it went on, it expanded to things like, how do we continue to grow opportunities for people to recognize manufacturing as a great place to work and have a career? And how do we start to engage our communities in the benefits of having manufacturing in our communities? And so the conversations have grown from, where do I get hand sanitizer to more global conversations, or, as an example, we're working through this environmental regulation. You know, who did you guys use as your engineering firm when you went through that? You know, those kinds of conversations. It's just really great partnerships and resources that-- I don't know, I mean, maybe if COVID hadn't happened, we wouldn't have had those same relationships. But I guess as a silver lining, we've developed a deeper relationship with-- with other companies across our state.

BOSTELMAN: OK, very good. Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing no other questions, thank you, Ms. Kolterman, for coming in today and for your willingness to serve on the Environmental Quality Council.

JESSICA KOLTERMAN: Thank you.

BOSTELMAN: Would anyone like to testify as a proponent for the appointment of Jessica Kolterman to the Environmental-- Environmental Quality Council? Anyone like to testify as an opponent to Jessica Kolterman to the appointment of Environmental Quality Council? Anyone like to testify in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, this will close our hearing on the appointment of Jessica Kolterman to the Environmental Quality Council. That will end our committee hearing for today. Thank you all for attending and we'll see you tomorrow.