

Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission*
***(Authorized in Revised Statutes of Nebraska 72-724 ff)**

**Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission
Meeting
Friday, November 16, 2012 – 2:00PM**

Nebraska State Capitol
Hearing Room 1113, 1145 K Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

Minutes

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

Call to Order and Welcome Guests.

Chairman Harold Andersen called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Introductions.

Commission members provided self introductions.

Formal Roll Call of Commission Members. Roll call showed the following members present: Harold Andersen, Dr. Sara Crook, Dr. Ron Hull, Dr. Dennis Mihelich, Dr. Ron Naugle, JoAnn Smith, and Michael J. Smith. Absent: Ex-officio member Governor Dave Heineman. Nebraska State Historical Society staff member Deb McWilliams was present.

Acknowledgement of Notice to the Press. Secretary Michael J. Smith confirmed that notice to the press had been given. Press member Christine Scalora of the Omaha World-Herald was in attendance.

Nebraska Open Meetings Act (posted/available). Michael Smith stated that the Open Meetings Act was posted and available.

Approval of the Wednesday, September 12, 2012 minutes. MOTION to approve the Wednesday September 12, 2012 minutes by Hull seconded by Crook. Voting yes: Andersen, Crook, Hull, Mihelich, Naugle, J. Smith, and M. Smith. Voting yes: 7, Voting no: 0. Unanimously approved.

Procedure for the meeting. Chairman Andersen commented that no public testimony will be taken at today's meeting, as testimony occurred during each hearing in the three congressional districts. He added that the selection of the Hall of Fame candidate will be made today in open session.

General discussion concerning nine nominees (alphabetical). Andersen announced that a total of twelve nominations were submitted to the Commission, with the Commission reducing the number of finalists to nine nominations that the Commission will deliberate today. Andersen asked for comments from the Commission, if desired, on each of the remaining nine nominees.

Big Elk. No comments from the Commission.

Edith Schwartz Clements. Mihelich indicated that both Edith and Frederic Clements were nominated and according to the statute the Commission is unable to induct both Clementses. Although they may be a stellar team and both had significant contributions individually to their scientific fields. M. Smith pointed out that their careers were intertwined, with Andersen adding that they were nationally and internationally known in the field of ecology. M. Smith noted that the nominator indicated that the discussion of both Edith and Frederic Clements had brought their careers back to light and revealed all they had done for the scientific community.

Frederic Edward Clements. No additional comments from the Commission.

Leta Stetter Hollingworth. Crook stated that she found the nomination timely because of standards based education. Hollingworth identified and understood the need for gifted education. M. Smith noted that a number of emails and written comments were received recently and distributed to the Commission from supporters of the nomination. The items received came from across the country. Andersen added that information received in recent days enhanced the importance of academia. Mihelich commented that he was somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of material that arrived after the three public hearings, and noted that perhaps the Commission should set a cut-off date for materials to be received by the Commission, so that the Commission has enough time to properly absorb the materials. Andersen concurred with Mihelich's comment and referred it for future discussion.

Alvin Saunders Johnson. Hull, started by commenting on a conversation he had this week with a colleague, about the number of U.S. presidents that have come from small towns across the country, and the strength of people coming from a one-room school that do well as adults. Hull continued, by stating that Johnson was a true son of Nebraska and distinguished himself nationally, but internationally he was a very important individual, in his opinion. Johnson was a farm boy from Homer, Nebraska. When Johnson began his career he had the ability to look ahead, and understood what might happen to the Jewish people during the war, and as a result Johnson brought 150 Jewish intellectuals and their families to the United States and saved them from death. Those individuals that were brought to the United States made many contributions. For those reasons, Hull noted that Johnson makes a wonderful candidate. Andersen added that he agreed with Hull's comments. Johnson's parents were determined that their children would become Americans, and grow up as Americans. Johnson was raised not to speak Danish, but English. His parents named their son Alvin Saunders Johnson after Alvin Saunders, who was the territorial governor of Nebraska. The family came here to be Nebraskans and Americans. Johnson graduated from the University of Nebraska, and the

feeling he had about his Nebraska roots, were great, as he spoke affectionately of “My Nebraska.” He was the co-founder of the New School in New York.

Clyde W. Malone. Andersen noted that Malone was from Lincoln, and was born into and grew up in an environment that did not offer opportunities for blacks. Malone persisted in bettering himself, and the welfare of the black community in Lincoln. Mihelich added that Malone was the founder of what is now the Malone Center in Lincoln.

Louise Pound. Crook commented on being amazed and dismayed that there was not more effort of support for Pound. Pound comes from an era of University students that have gone on to do state, national, and international work. Crook feels that Pound stood out with her athletic ability, but it is not about athletics, but about breaking barriers which has a huge social impact. Pound was the first woman to be elected to the MLA. She is a well-known name in Nebraska. Andersen, seconded Crook’s comments, and added that he took two semesters of classes at UN-L from Louise Pound, and that Pound was truly the creator of what became known as American English, the way the United States modified our way of speaking. She lived all of her life in Lincoln, except the one year that she spent working on her Ph.D. in Germany. Her writings won the approval of Henry Menken, who wrote for the *Baltimore Sun*, and Menken, uncharacteristic for him, wrote some very complimentary words about Louise Pound. Pound was an international scholar, author, and remarkable woman.

John Milton Thayer. Andersen began by commenting that Thayer could be called Governor, General, and Senator. J. Smith added that Thayer’s nomination got her attention as his name has been widely used in Nebraska, as well as his positive views toward the Black population and having so much to do with the Civil Rights nationally. Thayer was very important as Nebraska became a state. Andersen interjected that Thayer came to Nebraska from Massachusetts and distinguished himself in the war due to the fall of Vicksburg. He was first a senator, then a governor, and when he died he was buried in Lincoln’s Wyuka Cemetery, and not buried in Ohio. Thayer served in the territorial legislature, and Thayer voted to outlaw slavery, even though the people in the Nebraska territory at the time didn’t want to. Crook then commented that it was Thayer that pushed to ensure that black men had the right to vote. It was noted that not every governor and senator will be considered for the Hall of Fame, but Thayer did things beyond being a U.S. Senator, Nebraska Governor, and General. M. Smith added that Nebraska’s 150th anniversary of the Civil War is fast approaching, and would echo J. Smith, Andersen, and Crook’s comments. Thayer is the only Nebraskan who was a General in the army. This is a timely nomination and Thayer is a person who has been overlooked in some ways. He had a lot of persuasive power and early in his career when he was the head of the militia, he was asked to meet with the Pawnee for the purpose to get things settled down with their young men who were raiding, and Thayer was able to accomplish that task. Andersen added that architect Thomas Kimball, Daniel Freeman, and Susan LaFlesche, the first female Native American doctor, are also candidates that have perhaps been overlooked along with Thayer.

Malcolm X. Andersen noted that Malcolm X is well known. M. Smith commented that Malcolm X was a significant leader in a national movement. Crook commented that the nomination was

one that she struggled with, as Malcolm X was born in Nebraska, but did not spend a long period of his life in Nebraska, and his writings did not speak of Nebraska, or that Nebraska influenced him, which is what Crook felt was missing. She continued, but adding that she would find it hard to vote for former President Gerald Ford, for the same reason. Ford and Malcolm X would be better suited to be recognized in another way. Technically Malcolm X qualifies for nomination because he was born in Nebraska. Andersen concurred with Crook's statements, and added Malcolm X's interest in creating a Muslim nation in the United States. Hull weighed in by commenting that he has respect for Malcolm X in a number of ways, in particular as a symbol to many disenfranchised young people, and that people can change their lives. From that point of view, Malcolm X is a good legacy. Hull also agreed with Crook's comments about President Ford. Andersen added that President Ford lived in Nebraska thirteen days.

Selection of a 2014 Nominee. After deliberating the candidates, Andersen asked if the Commission wished to entertain a motion for approval a single nominee. **MOTION. Mihelich made a motion for Alvin Saunders Johnson**, seconded by Hull. Voting yes: Andersen, Hull, Mihelich, Naugle, M. Smith. Voting no: Crook and J. Smith. Voting yes: 7; Voting no: 2.

Andersen commented that it is customary to make the vote unanimous for a single candidate. **MOTION. Crook made a motion to call for a unanimous vote for Alvin Saunders Johnson**, seconded by J. Smith. Voting yes: Andersen, Crook, Hull, Mihelich, Naugle, J. Smith, M. Smith. Voting yes: 7. Voting no: 0. Unanimously carried.

Andersen noted concerns with the process and current Hall of Fame legislation. In 2005 the legislation was changed required the nomination process to take place over a five-year period, and for individuals to be deceased thirty-five years. Crook commented that thirty-five years for someone to be deceased seems somewhat long, and she would be comfortable with twenty to twenty-five years, as it ties into generational effects. Andersen concurred with Crook's comments, and the need to seek public input to propose legislative changes, which could be done in a number of different ways, including a hearing. M. Smith added that the selection process with a proper balance makes the honor of being inducted all that more important. Crook noted that in 1976 the Commission nominated several individuals, and 2017 will be the 150th anniversary of Nebraska, and perhaps that may be a time to induct more individuals in the Hall of Fame. Over the next year, the Hall of Fame Commission will seek comments from the public on the current legislation and work to propose legislative changes in 2014.

Thank you for participation in the process. Andersen thanked those in attendance for their research, participation, and presentation of candidates to the Commission during the current five-year nomination process.

Description of the Process of Raising Funds, Preparing a suitable Bust for display in the Capitol; Scheduling an Induction Ceremony in 2014.

M. Smith informed those in attendance that an induction does not automatically provide a bust, as the Hall of Fame does not receive legislative appropriations to do its work. Current legislation does provide for the Capitol Commission to provide a pedestal, plaque and placement of busts in the Capitol. The nominators of Alvin Saunders Johnson will need to lead the charge to select a sculptor and provide the financial support for the production of a bust that would likely be unveiled in 2014 during a formal ceremony. The Commission will work with the Johnson nominator to move forward with selecting a sculptor and planning the induction ceremony.

J. Smith commented that more attention needs to be brought to Hall of Fame inductees, and inquired about the possibility of a television production, especially with Nebraska's 150th celebration in 2017. The more the Commission can make Nebraskans aware of the Hall of Fame and its inductees, the prouder Nebraskans will be of their state and those individuals. M. Smith added that perhaps Nebraska Educational Telecommunications could be approached about a production to enhance the Hall of Fame. Hull added that perhaps a brochure could be developed to provide to each Nebraska student studying Nebraska history. Mihelich noted that teachers are always looking for materials about Nebraska history. M. Smith commented that the Department of Education is working to produce ebooks, and doing distance learning, which could include Hall of Fame inductees. Mihelich injected that the "Nebraska Stories" segment, could also be a way to promote the Hall of Fame inductees.

Other Business.

Update of Matters Concerning the William J. Bryan and J. Sterling Morton busts and Medal of Honor plaque.

M. Smith reported that under the current Hall of Fame statute, individuals that have been awarded the Medal of Honor are also members of the Nebraska Hall of Fame and are honored with their name on a plaque at the Capitol. The current plaque is difficult to read and needs updating, and the Commission has been working with historian Jim Potter, and Bob Ripley and his staff at the Office of the Capitol Commission to revise and update the plaque, with anticipated plans for a rededication of the plaque with a ceremony on Veterans Day 2013.

Bob Ripley of the Capitol Commission was asked to report to the Commission on the status of the pedestals, plaques, and ongoing care of the Hall of Fame busts in the Capitol. Ripley reported that his office is responsible for the ongoing care and conservation of the Hall of Fame busts, and from time to time over the past 30 years, conservaton work has been done on four occasions. The earring of the Standing Bear bust has disappeared from time to time.

Ripley continued by noting that four limestone pedestals have been order, one each for the J. Sterling Morton and William Jennings Bryan busts, one for the bust of Alvin Saunders Johnson who was selected for induction today, and one pedestal for the future, as it is more economical to order more than one pedestal at a time. Ripley added that the Commission may want to consider in their legislative work the shrinking space for placement of busts in the Capitol.

M. Smith added, of the Bryan and Morton busts, that the Bryan bust is in Lincoln and can be installed as soon as the pedestal is ready. The Morton bust is now in Nebraska City, and the Arbor Day Foundation has made arrangements to have a reproduction of the bust from the original mold that is held at the Nebraska History Museum, so the Arbor Day Foundation can continue to have a bust of Morton in Nebraska City. The work for the reproduction of the Morton bust is being done by Littleton Alston, who also sculpted the Charles Bessey bust. The reproduction of the Morton bust is expected to be complete in the Spring of 2013. Smith thanked Ripley for his work on the Medal of Honor plaque and pedestals and plaques for the Morton and Bryan busts.

Andersen asked if there was any other business, with there being none, he called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Adjourn. MOTION. Mihelich made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by J. Smith. Voting yes: Andersen, Crook, Hull, Mihelich, Naugle, J. Smith., and M. Smith. Voting yes: 7. Voting no, 0. Unanimously carried. The meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Michael J. Smith
Secretary, Hall of Fame Commission