

MINUTES OF THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Ben Vidricksen at 9:05 a.m. on February 8, 2000 in Room 245-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Hank Avila, Legislative Research Department
Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes
Marian F. Holeman, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Marion Cott, Dir. Ks. Humanities Council
Victoria Sherry, Associate Dir. Humanities Council
Joan Cales, Winfield Public Library

Others attending: See attached list

Tourism presentation

Marion Cott, Director Kansas Humanities Council informed members that the Council "promotes understanding of the history, traditions, and ideas that shape our lives and the communities in which we live." Those interested in learning more or joining the Council can contact them by writing to 112 SW 6th Ave., Ste. 210, Topeka, KS 66603-3095; phoning 785-357-0359 or online at KSHUMCOUN@aol.com or www.ukans.edu/kansas/khc/. Ms. Cott introduced Victoria Sherry, Associate Director of the Humanities Council and Joan Cales, Winfield Public Library and Director of the Traveling Smithsonian BARN AGAIN exhibit when it was in Winfield.

Victoria Sherry spoke to members about the Council's role in facilitating and promoting the statewide traveling exhibition created by the Smithsonian Institution to celebrate the role of the barn in American history and culture (Attachment 1).

Joan Cales, Winfield Public Library and Director of the exhibit in Winfield reported on the wonderful impact of the exhibit on Winfield and surrounding communities (Attachment 2).

Members expressed their appreciation for the presentation. It was brought up that many barns are being destroyed because of the property tax structure which penalizes farmers who maintain these relics of the past when they no longer meet the needs of modern farms. There was some discussion regarding the need to protect these historic barn structures throughout the state as a vital tourism resource.

Approval of minutes

Senator Tyson moved to approve minutes of the February 1 and February 2, 2000 meetings. Senator Harry Stephens seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 9, 2000.

**"The Kansas Barn Again! Tour:
Promoting History and Cultural Tourism Through Partnerships"**

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Tourism
Victoria Foth Sherry, Associate Director
Kansas Humanities Council
February 8, 2000

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the Kansas Humanities Council's role in facilitating and promoting the statewide tour of **Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon**. This traveling exhibition was created by the Smithsonian Institution and celebrates the role of the barn in American history and culture. During the past eight months, **Barn Again!** has toured Kansas under sponsorship of the Kansas Humanities Council, bringing record numbers of visitors to small communities across our state.

One family en route from Utah to Florida picked up our **Barn Again!** brochure at the Goodland Travel Center. As a result, they made a special detour to visit the exhibition in Fredonia. Experiences like these convinced Fredonia's **Barn Again!** coordinator, Cassie Edson, that "with enough publicity and promotion, Fredonia can compete in the tourism arena." Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, whose town hosted **Barn Again!** for seven weeks early this fall, notes that, "**Barn Again!** was the kind of special event that draws travelers off I-70 to visit Colby, lots of them for the first time. That's what every Kansas community is looking for."

In my testimony, I will highlight some of the reasons why this exhibition has been so successful in enhancing tourism for Kansas communities. First of all, let's consider the exhibition theme itself. What topic could be better suited to Kansas than the proud agricultural heritage and history represented by the barn? Our nation's

SENATE TRANSPORTATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE -DATE: 2-08-00
ATTACHMENT: 1

rapid urbanization has done nothing to diminish the appeal of barns to young and old—indeed, barns are more visible today than ever as they star in calendars and quilts, games and toys, advertising and movies.

Barns epitomize the values that Americans associate with Kansas and the heartland: hard work, independence, fairness, trustworthiness, purity. They are rich in nostalgia; they are tangible ties to the labor of our parents and grandparents.

But it takes more than barns to bring tourists to Kansas—otherwise, the state would have been overrun by visitors long ago. The secret to **Barn Again!**'s success is a unique national/state/local partnership, with the Kansas Humanities Council providing the crucial link between the prestigious Smithsonian and the communities that welcome a major attraction to showcase their assets to visitors.

The National-State Partnership

Let's look first of all at the partnership between the Kansas Humanities Council and the Smithsonian. In 1997, the Smithsonian announced the selection of Kansas as one of only three states to tour **Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon** in 1999-2000. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian created the traveling exhibition specifically to serve museums and libraries in communities with populations of less than 20,000

Most small institutions outside of major metropolitan areas are unable to muster the financial resources to host a "blockbuster" exhibition with the cachet and name recognition of the Smithsonian. Shipping and rental costs alone are prohibitive. Here's where the Kansas Humanities Council comes in. As the state partner, our job is to provide the financial, programming, and promotional support that allows local communities to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The State-Local Partnership

As state sponsor of **Barn Again!**, the Kansas Humanities Council's first responsibility was to select the host communities for the yearlong tour, which we advertised through a general call for applications. Twenty-six communities from every region of the state responded.

We chose communities that were geographically dispersed, that had not hosted major touring exhibits in the past, and that offered impressive plans for how they would make the exhibition a centerpiece for community activities. In two of the six sites, we allowed a pair of neighboring towns to share the exhibition, thus bringing the actual number of participating communities to eight: Lindsborg, Colby, Fredonia, Arkansas City/Winfield, Highland/Hiawatha, and Elkhart.

With the help of the 1999 Kansas Legislature, KHC provided the major financial underwriting for the Kansas tour. Our state FY99 appropriation enabled us to cover the exhibition rental fee of \$12,000 and all instate shipping costs (around \$2,100). State funds also provide each community with \$2,500 in programming support for special events, marketing, and the mounting of companion exhibitions.

KHC used its own programming expertise to develop speakers and book discussions programs on the **Barn Again!** theme and made them available to host towns at no cost. Equally important was KHC's role as facilitator, bringing community coordinators together for hands-on training and sharing of resources and ideas.

Marketing and Visibility

KHC was also positioned to take the lead in developing statewide visibility for the **Barn Again!** tour. We partnered with the state Division of Travel and Tourism to

produce a brochure that markets **Barn Again!** statewide. Designed by KHC and printed by Travel and Tourism, the brochure has been distributed at travel centers throughout the state, as well as by CVBs and visitor centers in the regions of the exhibition.

KHC helped *KANSAS* Magazine develop a feature story on barns and the **Barn Again!** tour for its September 1999 issue, which has drawn many inquiries from visitors. That article in turn generated a listing in the January 2000 issue of *National Geographic Traveler*. Joan Cales of the Winfield Public Library, which hosted the exhibition last month, will comment in her testimony on the response to that article.

KHC has helped coordinate media coverage of the **Barn Again!** in the *Wichita Eagle* and *Kansas City Star*. Radio coverage has included WIBW, KFRM Radio, and a host of local stations. All of these efforts combined to give the exhibition a much higher profile than any individual community on the tour could have achieved on its own.

Benefits of Barn Again!: Tourism and Visibility

The fruits of the **Barn Again!** partnership can best be examined through a look at the impact on the individual communities that have presented the exhibition to date.

Visitorship. KHC originally projected that the exhibition would draw 25,000 visitors during its 11-month tour of the state from June 1999 through May 2000—an average of 4,000 visitors per site. Our estimate was low. With four months remaining in the tour, total visitation has already topped 20,000.

Lindsborg. The first community to host the exhibition was Lindsborg, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Kansas for out-of-state visitors. **Barn Again!** opened at the McPherson County Old Mill Museum in Lindsborg on June 18, the first day of the annual Midsummer's Celebration, closing on August 1. During those seven

weeks, the museum had 5,067 visitors, more than double the visitorship of 2,182 during that same period in 1998. The museum gift shop, featuring many special barn-related items, saw sales surge to \$^{4,}498, 232% of sales during the same period last year.

Museum Director Lorna Batterson reports that the museum attracted a large number of bus tours during the **Barn Again!** exhibition, with many groups traveling significantly farther than the 100-mile radius used as a measuring stick by the travel industry. For the out-of-town visitors, the exhibit offered a new perspective on Lindsborg and the surrounding agricultural community, enhancing their experience of a locale known primarily for its Swedish heritage.

Equally important was the exceptional ability of the exhibition to draw visitors from the county and region who had not previously come to the Old Mill. The museum appealed to these visitors with a companion display of 75 photographs of area barns, plus three notebooks, compiled by volunteers, which documented 240 barns in McPherson County.

Other Lindsborg institutions partnering in **Barn Again!** also extended their audience. The Sandzen Memorial Gallery's exhibition of barn paintings by Kansas artists attracted visitors from every walk of life, many of whom had not visited the gallery before. At a gallery talk by one of the artists, the Gallery's meeting room was packed with 130 people whose dress ranged from bib overalls to business suits.

Colby. The Prairie Museum of History and Art hosted the exhibition in August and September. There, **Barn Again!** drew 5,654 visitors in seven weeks. To understand the impact of the exhibition on attendance, compare that number to the Museum's total of 10,000 visitors for all of 1998.

The Museum conducted a formal survey of visitors to determine the role of the **Barn Again!** exhibition in boosting attendance. The results showed that

- 63% of the visitors came to the museum specifically to see **Barn Again!**;
- 75% were making their first visit ever to the museum;
- 90% indicated that they would visit the museum again to see a special exhibition.

The survey also revealed that a large number of visitors had traveled significant distances. Of those surveyed,

- 53% had traveled more than 100 miles to the museum; and
- 31% had traveled more than 500 miles

Fredonia. The third town on the tour, Fredonia made barns the theme for its annual Homecoming, as well as for arts, school, and community activities throughout the year. The exhibition opening was timed to coincide with Homecoming weekend, with more than 10,000 spectators on hand to enjoy food, crafts, and a parade of barn-related floats.

The Stonehouse Gallery, operated by the Fredonia Arts Council, saw regular attendance increase 15-fold during the seven-week **Barn Again!** exhibition. Among the 3,000 visitors were 50 tour groups, including bus companies who scheduled tours for passengers en route to Branson, MO. The Fredonia community was so pleased by the overwhelming response to **Barn Again!** that they hope to develop another yearlong historical theme and exhibition to attract visitors in 2000.

Arkansas City/Winfield. **Barn Again!** officially opened in Cowley County on December 3, but throughout the fall sponsoring organizations offered an array of barn bus tours, art competitions, chautauquas, and "barn parties" featuring live music, barn talks, and barbecue. Again, I'll wait for Joan Cales comment directly on the response to **Barn Again!** in her community.

Highland. Barn tours have already proven successful for Highland, the smallest town on the tour with a population of 873. The Doniphan County Historical Society

sponsored a "Dusty Lanes Barn Tour" in October, filling two buses with 90 participants who paid \$18 each to tour the County's historic bluff-and-byre barns and enjoy lunch at a local bed and breakfast. Over half of the tour participants were from Missouri. This trend was again in evidence at this weekend's exhibition grand opening, where more than a third of the visitors came across the state line in order to attend the talks, demonstrations, and "mini barn tours."

The Museum will offer its all day "Dusty Lanes" tour again this Saturday, February 12. (See flyer enclosed with testimony.) A few seats are left, but anyone who wants to attend should sign up soon! Highland will also run custom barn tours this month for groups from Lawrence and Emporia. These experiences are helping move the County toward its long-range goal of contracting barn tours with a professional coach tour company on a regular basis.

Conclusions

Barn Again! ranks one of the most successful initiatives hosted by KHC in our 27-year history. Some of the factors in its success include:

- the universal appeal of barns to young and old, and the close connection of Kansans and Americans to our agricultural heritage;
- the appeal of barns and agriculture to visitors from outside the state, who want to experience the "real Kansas";
- the reputation of the Smithsonian and the highly professional quality of the national touring exhibition, which has in turn made visitors aware of the treasures at their local museums;
- the opportunity for partnerships with Travel and Tourism and other statewide groups.

Above all, **Barn Again!** demonstrates that cultural organizations such as museums and libraries—and state humanities councils—can play a crucial role in tourism development. The success of **Barn Again!** in Kansas is very much a reflection of these local organizations' leadership, commitment, and genius. Many of our communities are looking for an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do in the field of tourism—and a partnership like **Barn Again!** offers the perfect match of resources, state promotion, and state coordination to let them shine.

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Tourism

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the wonderful impact of the "Barn Again!" tour on my community of Winfield.

Winfield, home of the Walnut Valley Bluegrass Festival embraces cultural tourism and understands the impact it can have on the local community so from the beginning, "Barn Again!" created an excitement in the community. It is unusual for a small rural community of our size to have the opportunity to host such a prestigious exhibit. Everyone wanted to participate. More than 10 separate events promoting "Barn Again" were held in Winfield alone, including and combining Barn Parties, Carnivals, special speakers (including a speaker on barn preservation), book discussions, art shows, quilt shows, and concerts. A small barn building to be given away was built by area businesses and painted by a local mural artist. Members of the Cowley County Historical Museum recreated a barn interior in the Library. Throughout the community pictures of barns and related artwork were displayed. An art contest and bus tours were held county wide. Our local newspaper ran a year long series on area barns, promoting interest. Local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce showed their support through promotions and exhibitions. We came to understand that the rural uniqueness of our heritage is not only of interest to us, but to outsiders as well. Over 20,000 people participated in "Barn Again" events throughout the county over a 5 month period.

Winfield was the first community to receive the full benefit of national advertising. With the September issue of *Kansas* magazine emphasizing the Barn Again! tour, we were listed for January events in several travel publications, including *National Geographic Traveler*. Throughout the summer I received calls about the upcoming tour and programs from several national and regional publications, and in December the Library began to receive calls of inquiry about the exhibit from individuals as far south as Mexico and as far northeast as New York City. This national exposure coupled with the support of state and local media resources helped make our part of the tour very successful.

In Cowley County, a partnership was formed between the Arkansas City Art Center, the Cherokee Strip Land Rush Museum, the Winfield Public Library and the Winfield Arts & Humanities Council. During the month of December, when the exhibit was at the Cherokee Strip Museum in Arkansas City, they doubled their usual visitors, with a substantial number of them visiting from out of the area. We opened the exhibit at the Winfield Public Library on January 4th. In the 27 days "Barn Again" was exhibited, we had over 5400 visitors. Of those surveyed, 40% were from out of town, 8% traveled over 100 miles to see the exhibit and 5% were from out of state. Ten states were represented, including Arkansas,

Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Oklahoma, Massachussetts, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

For rural communities like ours, state-wide support is crucial. Without the efforts of the KHC and other participating agencies, including the Kansas Division of Tourism & Travel, we would never have been able to afford to bring an exhibit of this magnitude to our communities, let alone offer the public special events, or provide adequate publicity.

One of the greatest benefits to come out of this wonderful opportunity was the partnerships that were formed. This project was not only a local project, but a county wide and state wide project as well. With the training provided by the Smithsonian Institute and the KHC, all of the exhibit sites were able to work together to share program and marketing ideas. In Kansas where so many small towns are somewhat isolated, being able to network with others in your profession is a rare gift.

For Winfield Public Library this was a fantastic experience. Libraries are often the center of the community, open more hours than most local businesses. Although very community focused, being a part of "Barn Again" allowed us to serve our community in a new way, promoting local tourism and supporting area businesses. It also allowed local businesses to promote themselves while supporting the arts. We would welcome the opportunity to do so again.