

MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

September 7-8, 2006

Four County Tour (Butler, Greenwood, Elk, and Chatauqua)

Members Present

Senator Peggy Palmer, Chairperson
Representative Deena Horst, Vice-Chairperson
Senator Marci Francisco
Senator Jean Schodorf
Senator Dennis Wilson
Representative Lana Gordon
Representative Jo Ann Pottorff

Members Absent

Senator Chris Steineger
Representative Delia Garcia
Representative Candy Ruff

Area Legislators Present

Representative John Grange
Representative Forrest Knox

Staff

Melissa Calderwood, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Daniel Nibarger, Legislative Fellow, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes Office

Thursday, September 7 El Dorado and Butler County

The Joint Committee began its tour at El Dorado, Kansas, at an 8:00 a.m. breakfast and tour at the Kansas Oil Museum/ Butler County History Center. Tour Butler County President Lou Clennan welcomed the Committee members to the two-day four county tour. El Dorado City Commissioner Steve Pershall provided a welcome to the City of El Dorado and Chairperson Palmer introduced a number of representatives of El Dorado and Butler County businesses, government, and economic development ([Attachment 1](#)). After a brief tour of the indoor exhibit area, the Committee ventured outdoors to view a portion of the history center's ten-acre outdoor exhibit area. Museum Executive Director Deborah Amend talked to the group about the history of oil in Kansas and its connection with El Dorado. A major strike of oil in 1915 with the drilling of Stapleton #1, the discovery oil well for the El Dorado Field, impacted Kansas history and the production of oil. Committee members also were able to operate some of the full-size oil equipment, including an oil rig. Committee notebooks were distributed at this time to the Committee and staff. A copy is available at the Kansas Legislative Research Department.

The tour next brought the Committee members and local tourism officials to downtown El Dorado by way of a tram. Committee members were able to see the Main Street neighborhood, which included speciality shops, restaurants, professional offices, and other retail space. Along the way, Jean Plummer, volunteer tour coordinator for Tour Butler County Inc., and Representative John Grange provided information to the group about various attractions. The Committee also viewed the restored train depot and the Main Street art scape, 14 sculptures throughout the area. The Committee learned that as of June 2006, the city, designated as a "main street" in 1998, had received 65 facade grants totaling \$217,911 for improvements with \$29,447 of that amount funded by El Dorado Main Street. There also were 11 Incentive Without Walls loans and grants totaling \$820,329 with \$125,187 of that amount funded by Kansas Main Street. The tram stopped at the historic Butler County Courthouse for a brief tour of the grounds and the Freedom Memorial. Former legislator Bill Mason spoke to the group about how the memorial was developed and brought to this space. Following the tour, the group returned to the Oil Museum for a brief stop and then went on a van ride around El Dorado to see additional items of interest in the area, with speakers including Jim Stump of Frontier Refining and Kori Gregg of Butler County Community College.

The Committee next traveled to Burns, Kansas to visit Walters' Pumpkin Patch. The Committee was treated to a sampling of pumpkin patch salsa, pumpkin juice, and other pumpkin items. The Committee heard about the various grants available for agritourism businesses, like the Pumpkin Patch. In 2006, for example, the Walters secured a USDA federal VAP Grant (approximately \$25,000) and a SARE North Central Region Grant (approximately \$6,000). Other grants received include a 2005 Kansas attractions \$24,665 grant funded through the Kansas Lottery. Following the visit to the pumpkin patch, the group traveled to El Dorado State Lake.

The group was greeted by Randy Just, Natural Resource Officer, who talked to the group about one of the major projects undertaken by the Friends of El Dorado Lake, a nonprofit organization. The group toured lake cabins and campground facilities built by the Friends of the Lake organization. One of the issues discussed during this presentation was a concern about the issue of lower visitation, likely due to fee increases, concerns about Zebra mussels, gas prices, and no available protection during inclement weather.

Eureka, Kansas

The tour then brought the Committee to Eureka in Greenwood County for a visit to Eureka Downs, Kansas' Oldest Race Track. The Committee was greeted by Eureka City and Greenwood County officials, as well as economic development representatives, track officials, and Kansas Quarter Horse Racing Association members. The Committee was treated to lunch at the race track, a presentation on the history of the race track and its benefits to the Flint Hills region, a poster and pictorial display of Greenwood County landmarks arranged by the Greenwood Preservation Society, and a Power Point presentation on Greenwood County.

Elk Falls, Kansas

The Committee visited Elk Falls Pottery and received a demonstration of pottery making from Steve Fry, President, of the Friends of Elk Falls. The Committee also heard from artist Jane Fry who displayed some of her work, a line of porcelain pins and earrings using quilt patterns, as well as other custom designs. Along the way to its next stop, the Committee was shown decorated outhouses, which were decorated as part of the Outhouse Festival. The Committee then viewed an 1893 Iron Truss Bridge near the waterfalls on Elk River. The Committee learned of a cooperative effort between the Friends of Elk Falls, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Americorp, and the Heritage Trust Fund that replaced the rotting wood deck with new treated lumber.

Sedan, Kansas

The group arrived in the late afternoon and received greetings from tour guide Nita Jones and other Sedan and county dignitaries. Ms. Jones then led the group on a walking tour of the downtown district of Sedan. Area attractions and stops along the way included a stroll down the "World's Longest Yellow Brick Road" while viewing restored historic buildings that house various gift shops, antiques shops, and art galleries. The Committee proceeded to the Emmett Kelly Museum, the Red Buffalo Gift Shop and coffee bar for a root beer float, and the Tallgrass Beef Headquarters. The Committee learned that among the grants received by the City of Sedan was a Kansas Department of Transportation grant and a Kansas Department of Commerce grant to the Sedan Area Foundation for the Bradford Hotel.

Fall River, Kansas

The Committee traveled to its overnight destination, the Flint Oaks Hunting Resort in Elk County. Committee members enjoyed an evening meal together and also heard a presentation from Raymond Walton, owner of the Flint Oaks Hunting Resort ([Attachments 2 and 3](#)). The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Friday, September 8 Fall River, Kansas

The next morning, the Committee was treated to a guided tour of the grounds at the Flint Oaks Hunting Resort. Committee members watched a demonstration by the resorts' bird hunting dogs. The Committee walked to the trap shooting range where some of the Committee members shot

at several different targets.

Otter Creek Ranch Headquarters (Greenwood County)

The Committee departed Fall River, Kansas and traveled to the Otter Creek Ranch. The group was given a brief history of the Flint Hills and told of some of the environmental challenges that face the hills in the future by Jeff Davidson and Dr. Harold Garner along the way. Upon arriving at Otter Creek Ranch the Committee was greeted by Harold and Patsy Garner, Tony and Jennifer Garner, and Vicki Hornbuckle. The Committee witnessed a demonstration of team penning by the award winning 7L Ranch all-women rodeo team. The Committee was then treated to a lunch of pit barbecue. During the lunch, the Committee listened to music by Elmer Hatcher with the Prairie Gold Band and viewed paintings by members of The Prairie Artists Group.

Augusta, Kansas

After lunch, the Committee traveled to Augusta, Kansas. The first stop in Augusta was the Augusta Historical Museum. While there, the Committee viewed the C.N. James Log Cabin. The cabin, built in 1868, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of the oldest landmarks in Butler County. After viewing the cabin, the Committee was transported by horse and buggy to the Augusta Historic Theater. At the theater, the Committee was treated to popcorn and sodas while viewing short films from the past. After viewing the films, the Committee heard from several speakers concerning Augusta's Main Street project and its efforts to continue the restoration of the theater. The Committee traveled to Henry's Sculpture Hill and was greeted by the artist/owner, Frank Jensen. The Committee viewed the artist's workshop and several metal sculptures designed and built by the artist. In all, the "Hill" features more than 30 sculptures, a number of which are based on classic literature. Mr. Jensen held a drawing for a four-foot tall sunflower sculpture that was won by Senator Wilson.

Beaumont, Kansas

After viewing the sculpture works, the Committee traveled to the Elk River Wind Farm, just outside of Beaumont, Kansas. The farm manager, Paul Sanders, gave a brief overview of the farm's operations and capacity. Material provided in the Committee notebook indicates that the Elk River Wind Project is a 150 megawatt wind project on 7,907 acres and it is estimated that the Empire District Electric Company will purchase approximately 550,000 megawatt hours of energy annually to meet the annual energy needs of about 42,000 homes. The Committee was then able to view a wind turbine blade that was removed for maintenance. From the wind farm, the Committee traveled to the Beaumont Hotel. The Committee then received farewell remarks from the tour organizers and took the opportunity to view artwork by El Dorado artist Bill Walton. The final presentation was entertainment from Wanda Dugeon on the deck at the Beaumont Hotel.

The Committee tour adjourned.

Prepared by Melissa Calderwood and Daniel Nibarger

Approved by the Committee on:

November 30, 2006

(date)