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Taiwanese visit Lincoln to wrap up grain deal

Some 7 million bushels of Nebraska corn and wheat will soon be on its way to Taiwan.

This is good news for Nebraska farmers, and for Nebraska's economy, say officials from the state Department of Agriculture.

Taiwan is on a \$500 million shopping spree in the United States. Besides grain crops, they also will purchase communications and transportation equipment.

Today they will stop at Gov. Charles Thone's office to tie the loose ends of a grain deal initiated about six weeks ago by Bernie Rowley, director of marketing at the state Agriculture Department, and Joe Chu, director of international marketing at the department.

Rowley and Chu traveled to Taiwan in July. They invited the country's trade mission to buy Nebraska grain when they came to the United States. Nebraska had not

been on their shopping agenda before that.

Taiwan has agreed to buy about 5 million bushels of corn and 2 million bushels of wheat from Nebraska, Rowley said.

The trip was part of an overall U.S. effort to improve relations with Taiwan, as Taiwan has not been pleased with U.S. policy toward mainland China, he said.

After Japan, Taiwan is the most important U.S. trading partner in Asia, according to U.S. Department of Commerce statistics.

What does the sale mean to Nebraska farmers?

Bill Dobbs, assistant statistician at the state Department of Agriculture, said the sale will only amount to about 1 percent of the total amount of corn (some 476 million bushels) and about 3 percent of the wheat (some 67,500 bushels) Nebraska has in storage. These figures

do not include this year's harvest.

Even though it sounds like only a drop in the bucket, Dobbs said the sale is a positive step in dealing with the states' huge grain surpluses.

"Even though it's not the answer to relieve all of our troubles," Dobbs said, "the sale is a positive step. Now we just need to keep on making deals like this."

Today, several U.S. grain companies will meet with Taiwan's trade mission officials. The companies who will contract grain from farmers will submit their bids to the Taiwanese officials for the price they would be willing to accept on the grain.

The Taiwan mission will accept the lowest bid on a prearranged amount of 5 million bushels of corn and 2 million bushels of wheat. Contract letting ceremonies will be at noon, with Thone signing as a witness to the deal.

Trendwood residents oppose group home in neighborhood

By Chris Welsch

A Kansas City consulting firm may be hired to conduct a study on the impact of group homes for the mentally retarded on real estate values in Lincoln. The Lancaster County Board will negotiate with the firm today.

County Commissioner Joe Edwards said the firm of Touche-Ross will be in Lincoln to work out details of possible contract.

Edwards made a motion to delay a decision on the proposed Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation group home in Trendwood. The delay will last as long as it takes to complete a study on the impact the other 26 LOMR group homes have had on real estate values in Lincoln.

Edwards said he hopes the study can be completed within 30 days.

The proposed group home would be located at 1425 S. 77th St.

Mike Rierden, an attorney hired by some of the Trendwood residents, presented a petition to the County Board Aug. 24 with signatures of 400 Lincoln residents opposed to the group home.

Rierden said the developer who built the Trendwood subdivision never intended the houses to be used for anything but single-family dwellings.

A protective covenant cited by Rierden and the Trendwood residents was drawn up by the developer. The covenant stipulates that no dwelling should be used as anything other than a single-family residence.

Rierden said the covenant represents sufficient legal grounds to prevent placement of the group home in Trendwood.

County Attorney Mike Heavican said "nobody knows for sure" if Trendwood's protective covenant is legally feasible to prevent placement of the group home.

"No similar case that I have heard of has come up in Nebraska," he said.

"In cases in other jurisdictions, protective covenants have held up sometimes, and haven't other times."

Edwards said the question about the protective covenant goes far beyond Trendwood.

"The city zoning law and state ordinances say we can have a group home in Trendwood," he said. "Can a covenant supercede state law?"

"This is a communitywide issue — what happens here will affect other group homes," he said.

Dorothy Barnes, a Trendwood resident opposed to group home, said the rights of the home owners are being neglected.

"This neighborhood was originally zoned as R-1 (residential class 1)," Barnes said. "We have a legal right to retain this neighborhood as a single-family area."

Barnes said the study being conducted won't change her mind about the group home.

"Our main concern is the covenant," she said. "The study won't have an impact on that."

Gerald Mueller, LOMR director, said not all Trendwood residents are opposed to the group home.

"I think that once the clients (who would be living in the group home with a host family) have a chance to prove themselves, the idea might not appear as a bad one to Trendwood residents," he said.

Mueller responded to charges of government wastefulness in recent letters to the editor in both the Lincoln Journal and The Lincoln Star by saying the clients pay their own room and board.

"All our clients receive Social Security income, and many who live in group homes also have regular jobs," Mueller said. "If they (the clients) can afford this quality of living, they should."

Jan Gauger, county commissioner, said that studies concerning the impact of group homes on real estate values in such places as Illinois and Lansing, Mich., showed little or no impact on such values.

"Lincoln is not all that different from those areas where studies were made," Gauger said.

Mueller agreed that the group home shouldn't have an effect on real estate values, according to studies he has read.

Rierden said the property values would diminish in proportion to the distance from the group home.

"The house next door would take the greatest loss, then the effect would diminish in proportion to the distance from the group home."

Realtor Joan Tews was quoted in the Aug. 25 Lincoln Journal as saying the "values of houses next door and across the street would drop 25 percent." Tews spoke to the county board Aug. 24.

County Commissioner Bob Colin said, "Those people (the Trendwood residents) have a right to be concerned, they have bought a home with a protective covenant that they thought would protect them."

"A lot of people are afraid of the mentally retarded," he said. "They aren't sure what they (the mentally retarded) will do next."

Colin said there have been problems with other group homes.

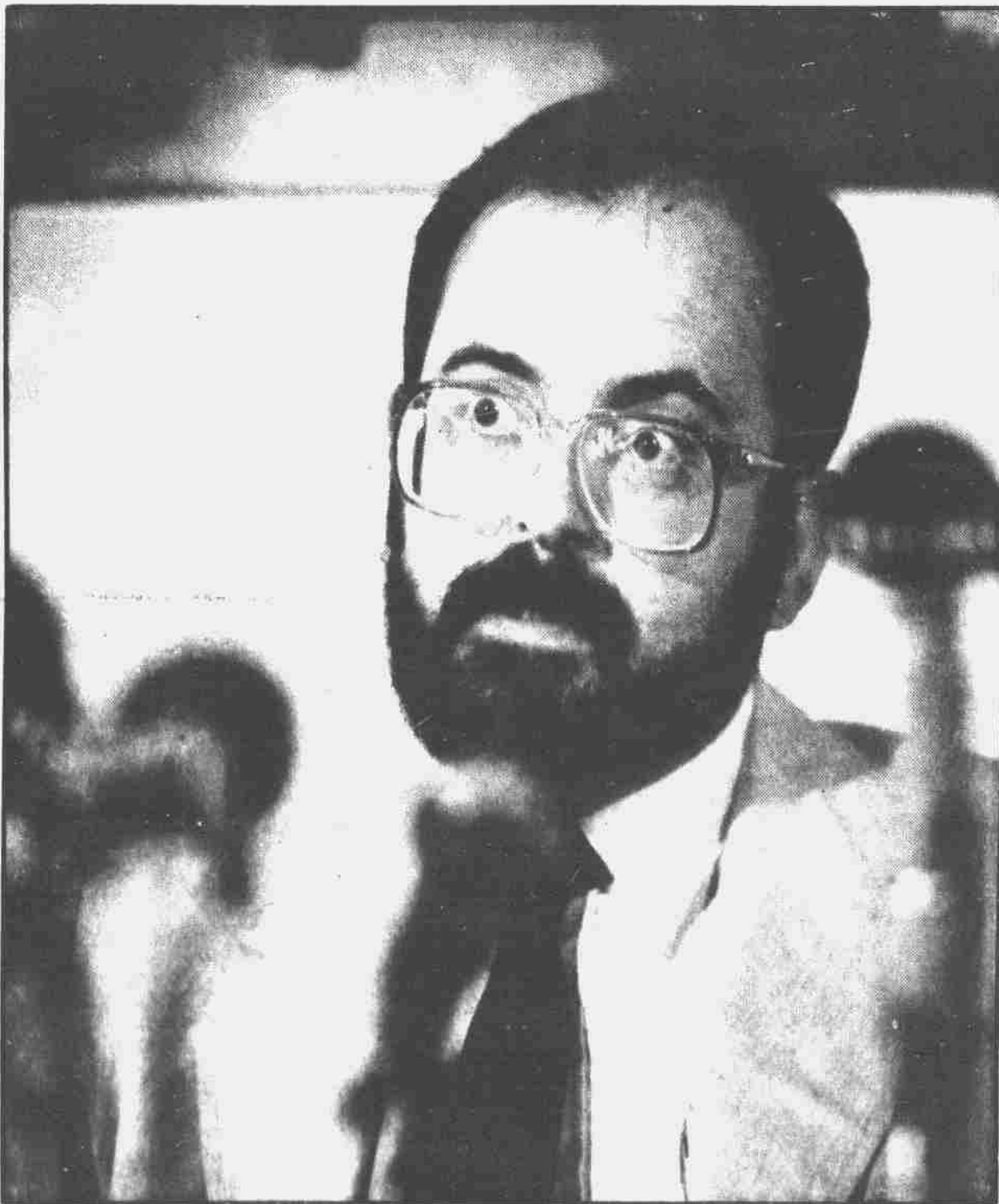
"Some of the clients have become confused and knocked on doors wanting in; that kind of thing scares people," he said.

Colin said the County Board shouldn't try to force the Trendwood group home issues.

"If that particular neighborhood doesn't want the group home, then we shouldn't try to force it on them," he said. "LOMR will have to be able to deal with the neighbors — to force the issue would be a black eye on LOMR, so to speak."

Mueller said if the home was eventually placed in Trendwood, it wouldn't be easy going.

"It would be tough for a while," he said. "I think the idea would take some getting used to."



Dick Kurtenbach

Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

Resisters offered legal aid

By Linda Howard

Legal assistance to Nebraskans who have refused to register for the draft will be provided by the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union, said Dick Kurtenbach, executive director of the NCLU, Thursday.

The union's board of directors unanimously voted to offer legal assistance in cases that present an opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of the registration system, he announced.

"I want to make it clear at the outset that our policy should in no way be interpreted as advocating that young men in Nebraska refuse to register for the draft. To be sure, such a decision is strictly a personal one. Young men considering this option should seek assistance from organizations involved in draft counseling," Kurtenbach said.

"With regard to procedural rights, there are none available under the current draft registration law. The law simply provides that upon his 18th birthday, a young man must register," Kurtenbach said.

Kurtenbach raised the question of young men who for religious beliefs or reasons of conscience do not feel they can

make themselves available for military service.

There are no provisions for the conscientious objector (when he registers), Kurtenbach said.

The NCLU maintains that these rights should be recognized at the point when a man is asked to make himself available for military service and not await the draft itself.

With the registration compliance rate in Nebraska at 95.4 percent, there are those who questioned the importance of providing legal assistance for the remaining 4.7 percent. Kurtenbach said this small percentage represents thousands of young men, and that it is important for young men facing prosecution to have access to legal council.

"That is why we are offering our assistance to young Nebraskans who may face prosecution for refusing to comply with the draft registration law," Kurtenbach said.

Kurtenbach said they would rely on volunteers, since there are no attorneys on the NCLU staff. He said national help would be available to local lawyers since they might not have faced this problem before.