

To: Members of the House State and Local Government Committee  
From: Senator Vernon Sykes  
Date: November 17, 2020  
Re: Sponsor Testimony: John Heisman Land Conveyance

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 259, which authorizes the governor to convey the University of Akron property called the John Heisman Lodge to the City of Akron for \$1.00.

Just a brief history on the John Heisman property: in 1988, the City of Akron agreed to transfer a property to the University Akron, referred to as the John Heisman Lodge. The property is adjacent to the site of the former Rubber Bowl Stadium, which at the time was owned by the University of Akron and used for its athletic contests.

The University paid \$1.00 as consideration for the transfer of the Heisman Lodge from the City of Akron. The agreement granted the City a reversionary interest in the Heisman Lodge, should the University ever seek to sell all or part of the property or should the University determine that it no longer desired ownership. The Agreement was approved by both the Akron City Council and the University's Board of Trustees.

Unfortunately, when the Warranty Deed transferring the property was prepared and filed, the reversion was not included in the Deed, despite the stated intent of both parties in the Agreement.

During the time that the Rubber Bowl was in use, the Heisman Lodge was used by the University of Akron for educational, cultural and recreational purposes. Since the University's move to a new stadium in 2009 and its sale of the Rubber Bowl in 2013, the University has had no need for the Heisman Lodge.

The City of Akron and the University have discussed the return of the Heisman Lodge to the City and the City is interested in receiving back the property. This legislation will enable the transfer to occur. The legislation also requires the Director of Administrative Services to offer the 3.2 acres of land to the city of Akron through a real estate purchase agreement. Thereafter, the City can decide on the best way to repurpose the property. The conveyance will include all improvements and personal property situated on the parcels.

There is a constituent who is hoping to relocate her growing business to the Lodge by the end of this summer. Any efforts to expedite this legislation would be greatly appreciated and extremely helpful for a potential buyer who intends to put the property to good use.

In closing, this land conveyance legislation authorizes the transfer of the Heisman Lodge from the University of Akron to the City of Akron, which would allow the City to sell or repurpose the property.

Thank you Mr. Wiggam and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you and I am happy to answer any questions at this time.