

NEON Minutes  
February 11, 2016, Biotechnology Advancement Center

Meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and County Administrator, Tom Johnson, presided over the meeting.

Distribution of Fiber to the BioTechnology Advancement Center – Jeff McCabe, Frontier Communications, advised there is fiber to Highway 59/Prairie Drive and has given the County/City a proposal to bring the fiber into the BAC. Discussion was held that a long term plan would need to be developed for after the Broadband Grant. As the BAC is a City owned building, the City would need to be the entity signing the contract.

Shared Services with Townships – At a previous meeting, the need for gravel on township roads was discussed. Tom Johnson inquired if there are sites we can check with Geologists that could be used as gravel pits. Discussion took place on areas with gravel or red rock but the transfer costs are high. Crushed concrete was discussed as an alternative but is very dusty.

Tom Johnson reminded the group of the State Contract website, where many things can be purchased at state bid such as road graders, culverts and vehicles. The group discussed the long term management of roads and how the townships may consider entering into partnerships.

Broadband Endorsement of Vision Statement – Tom Johnson shared that a case study had been completed and that every community who allowed fiber in the community grew in population and those who did not allow fiber in their communities decreased in population. Discussion was held how Farmers now need fiber to their homes to keep up on yields, etc. Tom Johnson informed the group the County adopted a resolution endorsing the Broadband Vision Statement and called for a vote of those present for NEON to endorse *“Everyone in Minnesota will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities and across the globe.”* The Vision Statement was adopted by NEON by unanimous vote and Tom Johnson confirmed he will notify Blandin.

Alliance for Innovation (The Next Big Thing) – Tom Johnson reviewed 44 trends impacting communities in the next twenty years and the four forces that will likely mark a significant shift in how citizens act, engage and respond to each other and to their government. Tom asked if the group would like to take an hour the next meeting to do a tabletop exercise. Gene Metz suggested the exercise be spread out over a couple of meetings to narrow down the key points. It was agreed that it would be helpful to get the cards with each trend and definition ahead of time via email so that they could be reviewed prior to the meeting. Then the trends could be ranked by their likelihood and impact on our community.

Around the Table:

- Sharon Johnson/Community Ed.- New Community Ed. Catalog is in the mail. Community Ed. received a BBC grant related to online access to all families with children birth to 5 yrs old, pertaining to the Library and preschool. Staff is currently being trained before rolling this online library out.
- Donald Linssen/Nobles County – April 5<sup>th</sup> is the fourth annual Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service and is an opportunity for us to thank those who serve and inspire more residents to volunteer in our community. The County will discuss passing a resolution in support.
- Ethel Rogers & JoAnn Burkard/Summit Lake Township – Discussed the need for sewer and a road grader.
- Roxann Polzine/Hersey Township – Township elections will be held on Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. A few of the townships changed their elections to November, such as Seward Township. The Nobles County Township Association Annual Meeting will be coming up soon.
- Larry Janssen/City of Worthington – The mall has sold and now waiting to see bids on the demolition. The new owner must have their business up and running by September 1, 2016.
- Brad Meester/City of Bigelow – Still working on the habitat project. Pam Dobson resigned from the Southwestern Minnesota Habitat for Humanity so they are working through this transition.

- Julie Foote/MVTV Wireless – MVTV has formally launched the free sites and has noted usage on Bigelow, Leota and Seward township. No usage has been noted on Little Rock, Reading or Rushmore. There is no suitable location in Ellsworth yet. The group discussed doing a press release in the Daily Globe and Tom Johnson volunteered but requested any additional comments be forwarded to him. Julie discussed the Pioneer Public TV piece on the hot spots that will air on Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. Compass is the name of the series but the time it will air is unknown.
- Linden Olson/ISD 518 – Due to 3 snow days, there are 3 makeup days scheduled for students. What if kids could make up the work from home online rather than attending the makeup days? The School District had an Open House and public meeting for the new addition of the High School. The School District will have a few ideas for a new building site soon. Along with the long range plan for the schools and buildings, the School District is considering the housing of gymnastics. A committee “World’s Best Workforce” has been established and meets once a month to look at what businesses are looking for in hiring their workforce. Gone are the days where a student will have a long term career or lifetime employer. Linden discussed the impact on our schools, communities, Boards and specialized trades over the next 15-20 years.
- Jeff McCabe/Frontier Communications – Schools need to encourage and incorporate specialized trades. A Connect America transport now goes through Bigelow. Jeff commented that safety and security directly through the School District website should be administered if kids were able to make up snow days from home.
- Rod Sankey/City of Worthington – The Heron Lake Watershed District is welcoming a new manager. Rod viewed a webinar related to the watersheds and another on Blandin Great River Energy. They are in need of Data Centers so Rod made a point of contact. The Daily Globe showcased the bridge in Chataqua Park that matches one in Crailsheim. Rod would like to see the Art Commission put something extravagant along the highway to bring interest to the Community.
- Gene Metz/Nobles County - County reviewed a list of priorities and picked the top 5 and reviewed the long term capital improvement plan trying to determine areas neglected. Discussed staffing, retirements and getting the immigrant population to become involved in Boards and Committees.
- Tom Johnson/Nobles County – Tom asked if the Townships would be willing to bring the Vision Statement to their meetings for endorsement. The Minnesota broadband vision was created and adopted by over 170 participants in November by Statewide Advocacy Organizations, Government Officials, Educational Institutions, Telecommunications Organizations, Place-based Development Organizations and Units of Government, Regional Development Commissions, Counties, Cities, Utility Companies, Nonprofit Organizations and Community Groups. County Administration will send out the resolution template with the minutes.  
The Nobles Home Initiative sunsets at the end of 2017. Does NEON find value in the program? Over 30 new homes have been built and approximately 3-4 of those have been replacements. The program has not attracted the multi-family dwellings as hoped. Discussions are taking place with the FCC as no cell companies have put towers along state lines and residents are without coverage. A dual proposal with Rock County is being submitted. An update on the Armory project included a feasibility process and meeting with the individual parties of interest such as the Historical Society and Art Center. The architect will present the findings to the Board and at another public meeting.

Volunteers are still needed to assist in the Feasibility Study Survey. Please contact the County Administration office to assist with this critical piece of the project.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting:

March 17, 2016 5:30 – 7:00 pm  
BioTechnology Advancement Center  
1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington, MN 56187