

NEON Minutes  
February 8, 2018, Biotechnology Advancement Center

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

Introductions were made of all in attendance.

Around the Table:

Abraham Algadi/WREDC-Long awaited private sector investment (Co-founders Al Oberloh and Greg Raymo) signing limited liability partnership papers and recording with Secretary of State. This is a private investment club where target is Nobles County with operative \$25 million in assets and not more than 100 community members. Approximately 70 people interested and will invite mid-range investors from metro to match what we have; updated Market Analysis done by University of Minnesota Extension on behalf of Chamber of Commerce showed an increase in automobile related purchases (dealerships, fuel stations, etc.) 12-13% over three year period; instituting venture network and marketing; without documenting engaged market, can't sell to investors.

Robert Demuth Jr./Commissioner - Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District hired Wenck Engineering for carp study and total maximum daily load on Lake Okabena. Dan Livdahl could give presentation at future meeting. Total population is nearly double what is desirable. Tracking devices can be placed in some. They actually school up in winter time and they could do some lake staining. Watershed reviewing maximum daily load of nutrients getting in and best management practices so hopefully we will have cleaner lakes in our area.

Bree Maki/Senator Smith's office: Previously worked for Senator Franken and does similar work for Senator Smith covering lower 30 counties with office in Rochester, covering all issue areas broadly. Worked for Winona County Soil & Water Conservation District for many years. Also cover Broadband Communications. Helping Senator Smith transition from state role to federal role and to recognize issues in the area. Hearing broadband, daycare and affordable housing issues across the state. Feel free to contact the Nobles County Administration office to share email address. Currently working on a delegation letter for Lewis and Clark and Daycare efforts but still gathering information. On the senate side, child care money in budget proposed as 5.8 billion dollars in block grants for training and reauthorizing children's access resources for parents advancing education.

Larry Janssen/City of Worthington: Getting ready for sales tax to be on referendum. Was absent at the last City Council Mtg.

Doug Knuth/City of Round Lake: Waiting on Road Grant submitted in 2017. Thank you to Abraham for help with this. Still in process of New Fashion Pork hoping they pick Round Lake as location.

Rod Sankey/Citizen: Going to June law maker summit and hoping to develop more interest for SW Minnesota with letters, etc. Sold Church in Wilmont.

Gary Ewert/Heron Lake Watershed District: Heron Lake ethanol plant working on pollutant emissions since reprimanded in 2016 to get within limits. Use 21 million bushels of corn annually, 160 tons of grain distillers, 50+ million gallons of ethanol. Water quality and septic system meeting at Key Largo on Monday 4-7pm to discuss small communities expanding systems and justifying payment. February 15th is Rinke Noonan Drainage Conference. Buffer applications and water quality issues are real active right now.

Linden Olson/ISD 518: Have been in Arizona where they have less than ¼ of an inch of moisture since last October. But have been following the questions and concerns of the referendum; responded to one that said referendum will fall on every resident of Nobles County. That is incorrect, it will only affect residents in 518 district.

John Landgaard/ISD 518: Lots going on besides referendum but remember to vote February 13<sup>th</sup>. As of today, about 1100 absentee votes have been received by the Auditor-Treasurer's office. Sports seasons are wrapping up. Girls' hockey in playoffs. Make sure you get out and support kids' events. Julie Foote added gymnastics is in Jackson and both teams are undefeated.

Andy Johnson/On behalf of Chamber of Commerce: In attendance for Child Care discussion.

Stacie Golombiecki/Nobles County Community Services and City of Bigelow: Bigelow's budget and 5 year plan for needed improvements to electrical system. Here to provide information on the child care discussion as the shortage has been ongoing for a long time.

Mark Krogman/Tim Walz's office: Have been hearing a lot about child care. Touring 21 counties and child care issues in all. Also organizing community vitality summit in Luverne. April focus is on child care.

Cheryl Janssen/Seward Township: Issues with snow removal on township roads.

Don Linssen/Nobles County: Attended a recent Solid Waste meeting on mattress recycling. Nobles County purchased 2 roll off boxes for the landfill and recycling center. Schaap takes the mattresses to Marshall and we pay \$10/mattress but they will not take wet or soiled mattresses. They also recycle car seats. They separate the cotton from the springs, otherwise they are impossible to compact and they take up a lot of room. Another issue is the waste found in tax forfeited properties. Usually when we end up with them, they are full of garbage. One county had a house they received and was full of batteries, etc. Unsafe to send people in these houses.

Julie Foote/MVTV Wireless and 60/90 regional group: Public hotspots are going well with no issues. Now serving on registration committee for Frozen Farm Forum event on Industrial Hemp and Clean Energy Programs. In WWII, there was a huge grow operation in Jackson County and when the war ended, it closed up and jobs were eliminated. Also working on solar but it has not kicked off yet. BioScience conference April 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Attended redesign Worthington meeting last night. Unfortunate that more people weren't there from City and County. SW MN needs to start working together as a region rather than individual towns. If we show chains and industries that we have a standard and those businesses will see us as a thriving option. Abraham Algadi spoke regarding regional marketing 60/90 regional group for Jackson, Cottonwood and Nobles counties (regions for provision of services), industries can put a business in one place in the region as they can't afford to place in each city. Priority lists for City, County, etc. Bree Maki added that southeastern Minnesota has formed a "SEMN Together" group, consisting of 9-11 counties, and they have different committees within. (U of M, DEED, Commissioner, etc.) Bree can put us in contact with them as they have received additional funding grants.

Justin Ahlers/County-Nothing additional to add to other's reports.

Tom Johnson/Nobles County-Schaap Sanitation will take the roll off boxes to other communities to pick up mattresses. Don Linssen added if people aren't able to haul them, Schaap will come get them. Linden Olsen added that Arizona does not have a good recycling program. Each place is only for one thing (ie: plastics, paper, cardboard, etc.). Residents have a burn pit; they don't compost. We don't realize how well off we are. Don Linssen further added that Glass recycling is at a standstill.

Tom Johnson reviewed NEON's 2018 Legislative Platform Essential Elements: Day Care, Special Project Funding, Infrastructure Funding (Roads, Bridges, Broadband, and transportation), Health Care/Insurance, Education and Housing). Recently Nobles County has been working with Reading on a Septic/Sewer issue. Nobles County has 6 ditches out for redeterminations and most of our ditches haven't been redetermined since 1920's and 30's.

Tom Johnson advised Scott Marquardt of the Southwest Initiative Foundation unable to be here. He said couple of companies have done some good regional assessments. 1) Children's finance group and 2) MAX field. Both have done some good work in MN. Gives you a good base line of needs. Regulations

for small, in-home facilities are overwhelming. There have been problems in areas due to training of daycare providers which makes them eligible as Paraprofessionals in schools. Many opt to be hired in the School System. What is the biggest problem in daycare? Daycare capacity?. Keeping siblings together?

Child Care/Community Services Licensing Information: Stacie Golombiecki, Community Services Director, and Danette Bechler, Social Worker and Licensor, presented information in the area of day care licensing. There is childcare assistance available but in that case, the provider is taking a financial hit. The paperwork can be intimidating as a 292 page program is given for regulations and requirements through the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) for training. Providers have to do 16 hours of training per year on top of the required safety training and specific records are kept. Every other month DHS has changes to forms, rules. They added a new emergency plan that is updated yearly. There is a lot of paperwork, which can be intimidating and overwhelming to people who walk into it new. The poverty level of the region was discussed.

There are 3 different classifications: 1) Non-licensed in home can watch 1 family in home and not be regulated, monitored through Eligibility division of County; 2) Licensed in home day cares are regulated by the Nobles County Community Services Licensor; and 3) Child Care Centers are regulated directly through DHS. A couple of churches have looked into opening centers but the liabilities and regulatory controls scare prospective people.

Bree Maki: Harmony Enterprises, Inc. (Harmony MN) an international company couldn't draw more people to work and the owner's wife did daycare and they expanded. CEDA (Community Economic Development Associates) a non-profit corporation helped out.

Mark Krogman: About connecting folks, mayor of Luverne facing similar challenges. Had feasibility study and found prevailing wages in region aren't high enough. They are looking at more public/private partnerships. Rates vs.sustainability. City is looking at filling that role.

Local in Home Child Care Providers/ Nobles County Daycare Association members Debbie Koob, Tammy Larson, Paulette Bass and Darcy Poppema attended the meeting, answered questions and provided additional information for the discussion.

Debbie Koob shared she loves what she does but does not appreciate all the regulations. Paulette Bass shared she has been a daycare provider for 47 years and Debbie Koob for 18 years. Original licensure was for 1 year license, then every 2 years but still a lot of requirements regulated by the State.

Tom Johnson shared comments on behalf of Pam Duffy, Kids-R-It Child Care Center and Preschool Center. Challenges include: Voluntary Pre-K in our district would negatively affect both child care centers and in home day cares with the loss of 4 years olds unless they greatly increase rates for infants and toddlers; voluntary Pre-K would also affect families that utilize it by restricting where their children go on no school days, early outs, breaks, etc.; providers can't hold spots for those short time frames nor occasional full days; children may end up being left home alone before and after school to fend for themselves due to limited places to take them; children need rest during their long days-how will they get their naps?; inappropriateness of transporting 4 year olds on a bus; finding qualified staff to meet the Teacher and Asst. Teacher qualifications for Day Care Centers; the challenge of keeping qualified staff as many leave to work as a Para at the School District with less responsibility and more pay; all the training requirements are expensive and the Child Care Center gets no state supplement for qualified teachers to support a decent wage or benefits.

Darcy Poppema and Tammy Larson advised of the struggles they face setting up the trainings. There are requirements for have the trainings certain months and they have attend trainings in the evenings otherwise they have to close down for the day. Paulette Bass advised they have to go as far as Montevideo to get licensed training and the Nobles County Daycare Association has to pay the trainer. Required trainings include First Aid, SIDS, CPR development and supervision has been added. All 4 providers in attendance stated they don't mind the requirement of renewing CPR, etc. and it is very

important. Online courses are available but many of the daycare providers do not have computer access (aging population) so Darcy has to go register everyone. Then that provider has no access to the certificate for relicensing. This has been an inconvenience for a lot of providers in our county. Many are ready to retire and it is overwhelming for new daycare providers to start. Foresee there will be a shortage. Younger generation does not want to deal with the issues. A lot of it is routine. When adding a new child/family here and new kid there, they fall in to routine. It is difficult to start out and there are providers are limited to 10 children: 6 under preschool and 4 at school age. Most daycare providers couldn't afford to do just 3 kids, etc. The wage charged for child care in our area is lower and Daycare providers can't share wages with each other.

There is a Federal food program available for assistance which some chose to participate others do not. A lot of paperwork. In the long run, it's worth it but you don't get fully reimbursed. They pay out in tiers. Our area is a Tier 1 due to higher poverty level. If we weren't in Tier 1, providers would not bother with paperwork as would not cover costs. The wear and tear on your house and the costs not reimbursed with food makes this business not profitable. They are doing it because they love it.

The question was brought up if there be more daycare models for family based or facility run. Darcy Poppema advised we need both. Different families thrive in different environments. Danette Bechler added there are a lot of questions about overnight and evening daycare shift workers. There is a great need. Darcy advised at one time she had evening kids and switched back and forth between another daycare so that each provider would have a break. The providers receive a lot of calls and feel the need to help.

Stacie Golombiecki advised there are a lot of consequences of the lack of child care which include case loads of inadequate child care due to lack of child care. That is why there are a lot of unlicensed daycares operating. People are desperate to keep their jobs.

There is a story behind every one of those rules and regulations in the packet. There are economic costs to our schools and court system ends up with more if not cared for appropriately.

There are different challenges for both the in home daycares and daycare center. When expenses go up, in home daycares have to raise our rates. When expenses go up for daycare centers, it is for all her staff. If they have turnover, then she has to spend the money to retrain. In home daycares know what it costs in their home and what they can make to make it work. But for a facility, they don't have the same fixed costs.

Daycare providers used to be able to have a backup (trusted family member, staff person) for quick DR appts, etc. but they can no longer. Substitutes and helpers have to have a minimum of 6 hours of training along with CPR, head trauma, other mandated trainings. Daycare providers have to close to go to a DR appt so they plan all their appts in one day when they take off. Regulations also stopped us from doing field trips. Car seat trainings are not held in our area.

Stacie Golombiecki questioned if we need to be doing things more as a region? Other program areas working with DHS and if 13 counties say we need something, it goes farther. Should we have a regional licenser to have the State expertise? There is not a lot of funding for licensure position and it is a lot of busy work. It needs to be regulated for safety.

Tom Johnson questioned if there something at MN West that they can have staff training and Stacie advised there is online through U of M Extension. Specific training for daycare requires the Nobles County Daycare Association has to register each one of individually. Bree Maki advised if someone is at a state level to advocate that they bring a training forward to break through the "rule" of bringing one trainer (from Mankato, Hutchinson) and that way they could watch an online training together. Tom Johnson added everyone could sit here and log in with individual laptops to meet the requirement. Abraham agreed use of the BAC would be free.

John Landgaard advised the school lost 4 teachers this school year due to lack of daycare. The infant/toddler portion is killing them.

Tom Johnson advised he spoke with Hamilton but he could not be here tonight. A lobbyist at legislator is still a lobbyist. A representative from the county/city is a constituent. Your voice means more than a lobbyist! Bree Maki added emails and phone calls are great avenues if you can't be there in person. Linden Olson spoke of the economic viability, regulatory licensing and training. What we do is if there is 1 problem, we change it for everyone. If you start to overregulate, more problems are created.

Tom Johnson announced that the Commissioners will be attending the AMC Legislative Conference February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> and will be advising the legislators of the challenges related to starting a daycare and staffing have created a severe shortage of quality daycare to the point where people have denied job offers for that reason. Licensing is very complex and onerous to a point where we have had potential providers stop the process and walk away.

Stacie Golombiecki advised she will contact DHS to see if the training requirements for the providers can be modeled after the Community Services requirements.

Next Meeting:

March 8, 2018 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm  
BioTechnology Advancement Center  
1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington, MN 56187

The meeting adjourned.