

NEON Minutes
October 11, 2018, BioTechnology Advancement Center

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

Around the Table:

Larry Janssen/City of Worthington: Attended the Candidate Forum at the High School, well attended and was a very good forum. Legislative priorities: housing-a lot of houses with for rent or for sale signs; definitely supports Education.

Don Linssen/Nobles County: We need to move forward on the possible Mental Health Facility, need to really push for it as it is needed, good for everyone involved. Have been attending a lot of meetings.

Amy Ernst/City of Worthington: ½ cent sales tax on the ballot this year. The last 10 year ½ cent sales tax generated \$8 million: soccer fields, Memorial Auditorium, Event Center. Proposals for the next ½ cent sales tax: aquatic center located beside the ymca outdoor pool; field house at the blue building; indoor soccer field, mini golf, park/recreation area; expansion of Ehlers park area-possible restaurant; 10th Street Pavilion; Lake Water Quality improvements; Ice arena. Statistics show 40% of money spent in Worthington comes from non-residents that are not paying taxes. ½ cent sales tax would be for \$25 million or 15 years, whichever comes first. Town Hall meeting on October 25 for the general public to come and hear about the ½ cent sales tax project.

Linden Olson/District 518: Gymnastics/ALC Building project has been delayed due to weather thus is behind schedule. After next Tuesday nights school board meeting, they will start talking about long range building plans again, referendum talk, enrollment projections keep going up along with cost estimates. Education legislative priority: how do you make equitable school funding? Bond referendums are failing more in the out state areas than the metro areas but they do not expect school funding to become more equitable.

Gene Metz/Nobles County: NEON started with the project of better internet service-Lismore Telephone finished this project last week a little under budget, SDN networks, connect to schools network. Hooking people up as they go, people that are on it love it! They also added a voice over phone system which wasn't originally planned. Daycare project could come out of this committee also!

Gary Ewert/Heron Lake Watershed District: Cover crop research project-studies what effects do cover crops have on all aspects? Five year time period, almost done with second year. In January they will host a workshop presenting results thus far. Drainage ditches are being worked on, JD 19 is coming along, awarded a \$20,000 grant. Hired and retained an engineer. Discussion on wind generators and property owners.

Rod Sankey/Citizen: Since June 15 has been volunteering and repairing a lot at Pioneer Village, next year is the 50th Anniversary. Hockey kids came and scraped and painted, did a very good job!

Darlene Macklin/Chamber of Commerce: Very busy with candidate forums, every Tuesday night, come on out and meet and listen to the candidates.

Abraham Algadi/WREDC: Thanks to the County and NEON for \$850,000 in equity funds for WREDC to use for economic development; we are able to work with public and private sector. Working on the goals of WREDC to breakdown the mission. Working on heightening Worthington's profile in international trade. First allocation of the State program Emerging Entrepreneurs resulted in 3 new businesses: World Mart, Kempz Poultry Services, and the Microbrewery. Approved for another \$75,000 in funds. Daycare has been an issue and a challenge for everyone. Possible daycare opening in Brewster. How can public and private partner to make daycares work? Will a location in Brewster work? Working on conditional use permits, etc, for the brewery; will have 2200 sq feet available for rent when complete, will be a nice

transformation of an empty building. Need traffic generating business. Purnet was acquired by an International company and the LDO loan was paid off. When the Sailor Plastics LDO loan is paid off, that portion of the money in the LDO fund will have fewer restrictions on it. Need to look at job creation followed by retention. Purnet went from 10 employees to 44 employees and they have 5 openings. Meeting needs in entertainment, shopping. Tax abatement program worked to help with housing. Budget: final budgets haven't been adopted by any entities until December.

World's Best Workforce Plan: Internships, job shadowing. Lorna Kruger, High School Careers teacher, is reaching out to businesses. Businesses want the soft skills. Get businesses involved to help students understand that academics is important, but soft skills are needed.

Tom Johnson/Nobles County: FEMA is in Rushmore tomorrow for their second visit from the storms June 15-July 11. County levy is continuing to be worked on; we are under 5% right now. Mental health center-state had a webinar yesterday presenting the RFP followed up with a Q&A session. Received a lot of answers to questions; cannot have adults and children together so our proposed facility would just be for adults. Avera is writing the grant and providing the architect. Southwest Mental Health Center/Avera would be the manager of the program. Bathrooms will need to be rebuilt, no match is required for the grant, can get up to \$5 million. Would like to get enough money to pay the county bond off so there will only be the state bond. Grant response is due November 15; Avera doesn't see a problem with meeting the deadline. March timeframe for a decision. Sustainability program is part of the RFP. Transport and operational costs would be minimal with having the facility located here. The next 4 weeks will be busy pulling it together. We will be requesting letters of support from area entities.

Question was asked about the City settlement agreement: It was the most fiscally responsible decision by settling for \$60,000, court costs would have been much higher. Not admitting any fault but it was the most fiscally responsible decision.

Legislative Priorities:

Daycare. Roads-consistent, dependable, reliable. Equitability-teacher shortage. Levy authority. Entities are still putting their priorities together, due by November 8th. Special Ed paperwork in the school system is tremendous.

Child Care Updates:

No updates.

Other:

Sunday, October 21, everyone is invited to take a bus tour to Fairmont to view their Historical Museum. See what a museum can look like and see what we can do in Worthington.

The Ludlow \$1 million contribution has been met with \$500,000 from the City of Worthington and \$500,000 from Nobles County.

Next Meeting:

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

The meeting adjourned.