

NEON Minutes  
September 10, 2015, Biotechnology Advancement Center

Meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Matt Widboom presided over the meeting. Item 5 Feasibility Study Update was moved to the beginning of the agenda. Introductions were made; Representative Joe Schomacker was in attendance, Representative Rod Hamilton joined the discussion later in the meeting by phone and Senator Bill Weber was unable to participate.

Feasibility Study Update:

1. Commissioner Gene Metz provided updates on the Broadband Border to Border project for Feasibility.
2. Finley Engineering of Slayton MN has been selected to perform the study.
3. Options for the study included 1) 100% fiber to underserved in County; 2) fiber loop into County to serve individual sites; and 3) selection of #1 or #2, but search for a private partner.
4. Administrator Tom Johnson has put in a letter of request to private partners in hopes that there will be dollars allocated in 2016.

Legislator Update:

1. Representative Schomacker provided updates on:
  - a. The transportation bill. Commissioner Widboom shared the Resolutions passed by Nobles and Jackson Counties proposing using surplus fund for improving transportation infrastructure across Minnesota. Rep. Schomacker commented the more counties that pass this resolution, the better. Governor's Task Force said \$1.6 billion dollars needed annually.
  - b. The tax bill was not passed in 2015 and is sitting in conference committee.
  - c. Bigger bonding bill anticipated.
  - d. Broadband went back to Annandale – seeing more public/private partnership.
  - e. Wind Energy Tax on the House side.
  - f. Lewis & Clark Water System Act – need about \$21 million.
2. Representative Hamilton provided updates on:
  - a. The Health Insurance issue. Representative Schomacker was able to pass comprehensive reform pertaining to funding of nursing homes and he commended Representative Schomacker's work.
  - b. Next year is technically a bonding year, short session with bonding focus beginning in March and completion middle of May.
  - c. Last session focused on taxes and transportation – suggested to bring forth resolutions of what is supported as Legislators need guidance as it pertains to transportation.
  - d. Need direction – LGA, property tax relief, business tax relief.
  - e. Able to get additional language in for water funding – very productive.
  - f. Need guidance and direction: specify unmet needs.

Commissioner Widboom shared recent livestock expansion issues and challenges with the MPCA resulting in delayed permits. Hamilton shared that we all need to make sure individuals in Agriculture Department understand the struggles. Hamilton has given the phone number for the Dept. of Agriculture to help producers navigate through issues.

Legislative Priorities:

1. Linden Olson and John Landgaard/District 518 provided the following information:
  - a. 900+ enrollment increase in 10 years projected (on the conservative side); growth as much as school districts in greater MN – not enough space.
  - b. Design capacities for buildings: Prairie Elementary 1150 (currently house 1254), Middle School 850 (currently house 875), High School 800/860 with new addition (currently house 850), Alternative Learning Center 75-80 (currently house 120).
  - c. Online school has 158 students enrolled; K-12 began online 3 years ago. District 518 does not recruit-State advertises.

- d. Need help from a bonding bill to support structure.
  - e. Need incentives for minority teachers/students.
  - f. Reviewed key points from Vision 2030, a list of 5 items developed in a collaborative fashion to address needs to help all kids in region, not just Worthington.
2. Mark Johnson, Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water, provided information on making wellhead protection using RIM dollars a priority and directing RIM payments back to Public Utilities.

Robert Demuth Jr. announced a doodle poll will be sent out to those present for voting on legislative priorities.

Around the Table:

- Cheryl Janssen – Went out to hot spot locations with MVTV and sited specific locations. MVTV is working on a site in Leota, which will be the first placed. The hot spots should all be in place by mid-October.
- Larry Janssen/City of Worthington – Grand Ave extension and 3 new locations for Worthington signs.
- Don Linssen/Nobles County – Attended meetings regarding sentencing guidelines for sex trafficking of minors-sentencing guidelines need to be more aggressive.
- Robert Demuth Jr./Nobles County – Updated on Budgets and Union Negotiations.

The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting:

October 8<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 – 7:00 pm  
BioTechnology Advancement Center  
1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington, MN 56187