

NEON Minutes
October 13, 2016, Biotechnology Advancement Center

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

2017 Legislative Opportunities – The 2016 Legislative Platform had been sent out by email a number of times to NEON for input and discussion. It was questioned why the AMC Platform is connected to the NEON Legislative platform. The specific exhibit included in the 2016 platform directly related to the office of Broadband Development and the priority items to forward to the Transportation & Infrastructure committee as session priorities. The two comments received prior to the meeting included:

1. Essential Element #2 “Infrastructure” should be changed to “Roads and Bridges” for primary focus.
2. Removal of #23 “NEON supports legislation allowing greater flexibility in statutory positions, and proposed language specifically for the Recorder, Auditor and Treasurer positions in County Offices.”

Lynn Wilson, County Recorder, explained she is opposed to #23 as that would mean the position could be appointed rather than holding an election, which is very important for citizens to have a voice. This is essential for checks and balances. Ms. Wilson stated she would like the AMC Policy to be removed from the Legislative Priorities and that the Recorders’ Association voted against legislation to allow County Board to appoint certain county officers. MACO did not give a true reflection when they went to the Legislators. 20+ Counties have now appointed their Recorders. Larry Janssen agreed with Ms. Wilson stating that someone who has to campaign will work harder.

Tom Johnson advised there has been some internal input from the County’s Management Team and that most agencies are putting their priorities together. The Chamber and School District will soon be forwarding their priorities for NEON.

Commissioner Demuth stated he did not have a strong opinion either way on #23 but does not agree with removing broadband out of Essential Element #2 “Infrastructure.” Broadband is a priority we need to keep along with roads and bridges. Kurt Lintelman, Julie Foote and Larry Janssen agreed that Broadband should stay with Infrastructure.

Rod Sankey advised the City had yet to discuss priorities but that he would be contacting Steve Robinson.

Tom Johnson advised he would like to have a better template to provide the Legislators. Mr. Sankey agreed and stated that it needed to be shortened so that the Legislators can easily recognize the intent.

It was questioned what the difference is between #26 “NEON supports continuing and enhancing the Small-city street funding from 2015” and #27 “NEON supports Small-city development assistance programs.” Mr. Johnson advised they have different funding sources; #26 is MNDOT funding and #27 is funded by Economic Development.

The subcommittee, consisting of Tom Johnson, Rod Sankey, Darlene Macklin and Lynn Wilson, will continue working through the priorities. Since there is no NEON meeting in December, the subcommittee will need to focus on the priorities in November and January.

The results of the Doodle Poll for the selection of 2017 meeting dates and times were shared. 5:30PM to 7:00PM on Thursdays and Tuesdays received double the votes. No comments were received through the doodle poll to change the location. The consensus was to leave the NEON schedule the same as the 2nd Thursday of each month from 5:30PM to 7:00PM at the Biotechnology Advancement Center.

Around the Table:

- Jorge Lopez/SW MN Housing Partnership – The Grand Terrace project started this week and 48 units should be available next September/October; working with MN West on an RFP for student housing development; working with Historical Society to gather cost estimates for the Armory.
- Kurt Lintelman/Round Lake mentioned to Mr. Lopez that the SW MN Arts and Humanities may be able to assist with the Historical Society.
- Rod Sankey/City of Worthington-City of Worthington committed \$900,000 to SW MN Housing Partnership request for student housing contribution; the tile drains are down now for the Soccer field; Prairie View golf course sale issue was postponed. Mr. Sankey advised he does not want to sell the property and is not in favor of spending tax payer's dollars to pay expenses to prepare for Pheasants Forever or the DNR. There is no hurry and it will not cost the City to wait. Julie Foote asked who is doing the weed control on the property. Larry Janssen advised that even the DNR does not do weed control as thistles are food for birds. Kurt Lintelman confirmed that the DNR does not spray and in his past employment, he never sprayed on a DNR parcel. Mr. Lintelman agreed with Mr. Sankey hoping there is another use. Mr. Sankey also advised that a permit was granted for 27 townhomes and more projects are in the works.
- Aaron Hagen/Worthington Public Utilities-nothing to update
- Tom Johnson/Nobles County-The 9th Street Entrance Repair project has been delayed due to a combination of complications. It is not going to make this deadline for utility payments; received great feedback and sincere "thank you's" from the Blandin folks that came to the "Strut Your Stuff" at the BAC where the projects approved were reviewed and over \$100,000 was received; expressed appreciation to the City of Worthington for approving the amended lease for the PJC and restatement of the operation of the LEC portion of the PJC; the Commissioners are looking at bonding options for projects, which also includes \$10 million in projects for Roads and Bridges where there is a construction fund that would pay for the principle and a maintenance fund that would pay for the interest. The project interest rates are barely over 1% and the bituminous is a good price; Commissioners are also considering a CIP Bond for five to six million in projects which could be funded without increasing the levy.
- Robert Demuth Jr./Nobles County-Mr. Demuth gave credit to City of Worthington on Buss Field for Soccer Field Project where 40,000 cubic yards of clay were removed and it took 2300 semi-truck loads to haul it. This adds value to the water supply area and am very impressed with the investment. Mr. Demuth also advised on an issue currently before Planning and Zoning with FSA loans being stalled because of North Dakota tribes. If you dig below the plow depth and are using Federal money, your loan could be held up as you have to notify 37 different tribes and give them 90 days to respond if there are burial grounds there.
- Julie Foote/MVTV Wireless – Hot Spots are doing well and working on getting signage up on those spots that aren't highly used; advised that Tom Johnson did a great job representing our area at the Bland Broadband Conference in Duluth.
- Lynn Wilson/Nobles County-The Recorder's office has had high demand for marriage applications, birth certificates and hyphenated names. Ms. Wilson welcomes anyone to come and visit the office.
- Keith Stubbe/Round Lake-no update.
- Larry Janssen/City of Worthington-Marthaler is getting ready to blacktop the parking lot. Mr. Johnson added that it sounds like Marthaler's Chrysler portion is doing well. Unfortunately they have also had some delays waiting for LED Lighting; pouring curbs tonight and working on Grand Terrace Apts; Soccer field is ready to be sodded. If anyone has an opportunity to take part in the Police Academy offered through the Worthington Police Department on Tuesday nights at 7pm, it is well worth your time! Contact Kevin Flynn for details.
- Gary Ewert/Heron Lake Watershed District – Participated as a Ditch Viewer in a Public Hearing for County Ditch No. 11; advised the Heron Lake Watershed District cover crop programs improve drainage.
- Don Linszen/Nobles County-Attended various committee meetings; the County approved Pollinator Program in Midway Park to enhance the habitat for bees; another site at the PJC has been proposed for a Pollinator Program; serving on the Budget Committee, the Not To Exceed was set at 5.98% and if things continue in the same direction, it could lower.

- Doug Knuth/City of Round Lake-Round Lake Bank is up for sale and Doug has been contacted by a realtor; The Pit Stop was sold to the Winery and new pumps have been installed; the County is assisting to clean up a property in Round Lake; AgCo now owns the Farley Sathers building; the City Clerk put together a grant for REA which was approved for a new fire truck.

Next Meeting:

November 10, 2016 5:30 – 7:00 pm
BioTechnology Advancement Center
1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington, MN 56187

The meeting adjourned.