

NEON Minutes
March 9, 2017, Biotechnology Advancement Center

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

Kurt Lintelman, Julie Foote and Keith Stubbe presented information on the history of the 60/90 Corridor Initiative Regional Collaborative. Their original mission was to umbrella marketing to promote the area between Highway 60, Interstate 90 and Highway 71. This marketing was centered on broadband and initiatives centered on technology. They have since expanded their mission to include Cottonwood, Jackson and Nobles County with marketing centered on connectivity to international shipping routes, broadband and other similarities.

The Wave is a consortium of cutting-edge communities boasting the latest in communication infrastructure and Internet connectivity. For business and industry, The Wave promises low overhead costs and a staggering number of rich incentive programs. For the individual, The Wave promises sky-high opportunity and an unmatched quality of life. For more information, please contact Drew Hage, Economic Development Authority of Windom at dhage@windom-mn.com, Kurt Lintelman or Julie Foote.

With the help of grants, they have promoted their website (www.ridethewave6090mn.com), fiber capabilities, industry and families to relocate here, marketing tools for business, social media breakfasts and have set up media centers in various locations to offer technological training. The Wave is now considered an Alumni group and the Blandin Foundation continues to rely on them as a resource and continues to assist with other grant opportunities for non-profit organizations.

Robert Demuth Jr. and Darlene Macklin advised that Highway 60 had been nicknamed "Agri Alley" and there was a traffic count performed in the past and data available as to how many bushels of beans, corn, etc. were transported. Darlene Macklin advised that she will check with WREDC for this data.

Around the Table:

- Gene Metz/Nobles County—gave a projected timeline for the construction of the new wind project and an update that a Federal Tax Credit is still available with 20% of those funds go to the township and 80% to the county; TESLA batteries could come into play with solar energy but it takes approximately 20 acres of solar panels to create the energy of one wind turbine and there are certain criteria on where the panels can be placed as solar must be built by transmission lines.
- Ron Janssen/Seward Township—next Tuesday, March 14th is Township day. Seward Township holds their annual meeting but has their election in November. The Township has voted against mail ballots as it is an opportunity for all in the township to come together. The group discussed that the election equipment is getting dated and the cost of judges fees. Cheryl Janssen shared that although voting on the internet creates an opportunity for Military overseas, she believes it would take away the hands on purpose.
- Amy Ernst/City of Worthington—City Engineering is working on the Oxford Street designs after input meeting and there will be public participation meetings for social and economic opportunities for an art based community development grant. Tom Johnson added that Nobles County is also working with the art based community development grant (Art Place) to include art on the 10th Street entrance redesign as it no longer meets ADA standards and the landscape is not good. Darlene Macklin added that this would present an opportunity for 10th Street all the way to 1st Avenue. Darlene is working with Brad Chapulis for a change to the façade and she will suggest that the retail committee of the Chamber be added to the group for review.
- Linden Olson/District 518—In February 2017, a company did a survey of the School District and the bond issue; there would be an average of \$10.00/month increase only (on an average property); the 40% buy down of agricultural land tax credit is framed as a rural vs. urban issue and it is really a property rich vs. a property poor issue. If agricultural land gets a buy down, commercial will want the same; House File 1944 was introduced which would create vocational post-secondary option to give a head start on vocational training. Kurt Lintelman added that Southwest Minnesota University would be a good pilot program for this with the Private Industry Council (PIC) from Marshall and Worthington with the School Districts. Linden continued that there would be a \$2,000 tax credit to participating businesses from 2018 to 2020 but would be on

a first come first serve on per student basis. The number of students from our school district that go on to a four year college is low; centralized services are needed - not all programs available are known by all so we need one, central location where all entities can post their programs/services, where it is available and their contact information. Tom Johnson added this would be a good marketing piece for "Ride the Wave." Julie Foote questioned why this information would not be with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). Tom Johnson responded that it is important to keep the focus on our area for these services.

- Darlene Macklin/Chamber of Commerce–In the paper, Worthington was recognized in the top 10 for being a community of most livable in nation.
- Rod Sankey/Citizen-take out medians on Oxford Street as they do not help business. Tom Johnson and Amy Ernst added that it is a safety zone and the medians promote safer driving. Darlene Macklin added that a majority of businesses were invited to open forums to voice their opinion and business owners do not want the medians; the Nobles County Historical Society is always looking for new items to be donated from families (no appliances please).
- Robert Demuth Jr./Nobles County—we are an agriculture friendly county and there was a letter to the editor on March 8th referencing an article from February 28th about donating land to the DNR. The March 8th letter used accurate numbers but the full effect on townships depends on future assessments of the land.
- Larry Janssen/City of Worthington-discussed 10 ton roads, medians and the milling that will be performed on Oxford Street now but the Department of Transportation will be coming back 2022-2025 and maybe medians could be removed at that time.
- Doug Knuth/Round Lake-Round Lake is getting a new fire truck in June; there is one new member on the fire department and two new applications have been received; Tom Johnson added that the Farley Sather building is now under new ownership and Doug explained that the number of employees have not expanded yet. Gene Metz inquired if grant dollars were acquired for the fire truck purchase and Doug explained that it was both a grant and low interest loan; FEMA used to have a grant for fire halls, but that has been discontinued and small towns are having a hard time.
- Julie Foote/MVTV Wireless–more users on free community hot spots; a Market Smarter event will be held again Wednesday, June 21st, 2017, 8:00 a.m. at the Worthington Event Center; District 518 Community Education is continuing their succession planning sessions.
- Gary Ewert/Heron Lake Watershed District-the watershed is in buffer implementation. Counties need to make a decision on enforcement; the County hired a Drainage System Coordinator; benefits are being redetermined on Nobles/Jackson Ditch 13; there is a drainage conference on March 27th; Judicial Ditch 12 water retention is being reviewed as to how it incorporates with the Oxford Street improvements.
- Donald Linssen/Nobles County–attended the local Legislative Breakfast; at the March 7th Board of Commissioners meeting the Board approved the Capital Improvement Plan bonds and are working on moving projects forward; a tax-forfeited property sale will be held in April. Eight out of nine parcels are buildable and the County has put \$100,000 in the budget over the last couple of years for demolitions. Rod Sankey commented that the tax-forfeited lot in Adrian was favorable.
- Tom Johnson/Nobles County-the demolition of non-repairable structures on tax-forfeited properties takes the liability off the county and gives people an opportunity to start fresh; the low bidder for the road bond projects came in under budget and 70 miles of overlay is being scheduled for county roads; the tax-forfeited property sale will be held at 9am on Wednesday, April 19th; Representative Walz was here at the BioTechnology Advancement Center on Saturday afternoon, March 4th, discussing local issues.

Next Meeting:

April 13, 2017 5:30 – 7:00 pm
BioTechnology Advancement Center
1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington, MN 56187

The meeting adjourned.