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Date: January 12, 2017
Time: 5:30 to 7:00 PM
Place: BioTechnology Advancement Center, 1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington MN 56187

AGENDA

- 1) Meeting starting promptly at 5:30 p.m.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Future meeting topics you want NEON to discuss
- 4) Legislative Priorities
- 5) Blandin Broadband Communities Recognition
- 6) "Around the Table"
- 7) Other
- 8) Next Meeting:
February 9, 2017
5:30 to 7:00 PM
BioTechnology Advancement Center, 1527 Prairie Drive, Worthington MN 56187



Vision Statement: Intentional Collaboration with Purpose

Nobles Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) is a collaborative effort of local governmental and quasi-governmental agencies and taxing authorities working together to improve the region.

Mission Statement

NEON is a regional platform for communication and collaboration among local taxing authorities to provide the best value service delivery to their constituents.

The NEON group consists of:

Townships of Bigelow, Bloom, Dewald, Elk, Graham Lakes, Grand Prairie, Hersey, Indian Lake, Larkin, Leota, Lismore, Little Rock, Lorain, Olney, Ransom, Seward, Summit Lake, Westside, Wilmont, and Worthington.

The Cities of; Adrian, Bigelow, Brewster, Dundee, Ellsworth, Kinbrae, Lismore, Round Lake, Rushmore, Wilmont and Worthington.

The School Districts of Adrian #511, Ellsworth #514, Worthington #518, and Round Lake/Brewster #2907

Minnesota West

Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water

Heron Lake, Kanaranzi-Little Rock, and Okabena-Ocheda Watershed Districts

Nobles County Soil and Water Conservation District

Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce

Worthington Public Utilities

Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation (WREDC)

Nobles County

Regular invitees include Senator Weber, Representatives Hamilton and Schomacker, Senators Klobuchar and Franken staff, Representative Walz staff, Lewis & Clark Rural Water Systems and others.

NEON holds a monthly meeting to better understand each other's programs and needs, bring up ideas, share information, address opportunities and build relationships.

Our first major success is the recognition and award from the Blandin Foundation as a Blandin Broadband Community in which our application was selected with 9 other communities across greater Minnesota to participate in their program and improve broadband access for all citizens. The group has garnered several small grants to positively impact training and knowledge of broadband and will be completing a county-wide feasibility study due to the efforts of this group.

This document demonstrates success as the development of this legislative platform and the consensus to bring forth the top priorities for our county area.



2017 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #1: Lewis & Clark Water System Completion to Worthington, MN

Worthington being the final city to be connected to the Lewis & Clark Water System in Minnesota, the continued lack of federal funding and the potential for future growth make this NEON's **top priority** and it is supported to be included in the next MN State Bond. (Exhibits ____)

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #2 Infrastructure funding, including roads, bridges, broadband and transportation

Our primary infrastructure of roads and bridges is aging and significant investment is needed across the entire state. The quality of life and economic development of many rural Minnesotans' is compromised severely by the lack of fast reliable broadband. NEON strongly supports a transportation bill with a reliable funding source, and increased funding of broadband. (Exhibits ____)

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #3 Health Care/ Insurance

The cost for health insurance in rural Minnesota is surpassing the cost of housing for many homeowners and renters and is having a negative effect on business. Significant change in policy needs to be made to reduce the very large increases in health care premiums and deductible amounts many Minnesota residents are experiencing needs to be a priority.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #4 Housing

Shortages across all housing sectors threaten the economic and community viabilities of SW Minnesota. NEON supports the adoption of tools allowing local government flexibility to address local housing challenges and to encourage market rate and targeted housing starts as critical for sustained and healthy growth. (Exhibits ____)

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #5 Education

We believe that for Minnesota to continue to be known for its quality of public education numerous items must be addressed in order to continue meeting the high expectations. NEON fully supports efforts to make schools and children a top priority by making funding equitable for buildings and students across the state.



Summary of All Legislative Priorities

Lewis & Clark Regional Water System

- 1) NEON supports the State include final funding to complete construction for the critical Lewis & Clark water system connection to Worthington. (Exhibit A)

Infrastructure and Transportation

- 2) NEON supports completion of the final section of the Highway 60 project from Windom to Mt. Lake and opposes any effort to divert those funds as currently appropriated. (Exhibits E & G)
- 3) NEON supports continued trail development funding to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors and encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- 4) NEON supports state aid in bringing critical services of gas and water to small communities and bringing economic development opportunities to these communities.
- 5) NEON supports increased percentages of biofuels be mandated in the summer months to improve air quality, keep jobs in Minnesota refining the bio fuels and supporting a sustainable commodity of corn and soybeans produced in Minnesota.
- 6) NEON supports increased funding for broadband to encourage more public private partnerships and ensuring the unserved and underserved areas across the state are not left behind.

Economic Development

- 7) NEON supports Greater Minnesota Economic development initiative to enhance the ability of especially border counties to remain competitive. (Exhibits C, E & G)
- 8) NEON supports bonding funds be allocated to complete the Biotechnology Advancement Center in the City of Worthington to enhance the ability of the community to bring new technology and industry to the region.



- 9) NEON supports appropriate tax incentives be offered to investors to continue their investments in renewable energy, and the revenues from that infrastructure not be included in any tax levy limits imposed on local government.
- 10) NEON support changes in the tax abatement process requirements to simplify the effort it takes to consider each request and proposal.
- 11) NEON supports the use of the Detailed Occupation Data as gathered by the Minnesota State Department of Employment and Economic Development in determining the Prevailing Wage Rate to be used for projects requiring the use of Prevailing Wage.

Education

- 12) NEON supports an appropriate equitable funding increase for education and increasing local control including a 3% increase in the basic education formula. (Exhibit D)
- 13) NEON supports equivalent funding for school districts related to immigrants and minority populations. (Exhibits D & E)
- 14) NEON supports equivalent and equitable taxation for rural districts and providing an equitable solution in the area of bond funding for all districts, permitting schools to qualify for state bonding dollars. (Exhibits D & E)
- 15) NEON supports providing an avenue for students between the ages of 17 and 20 that creates a career ready option due to credit deficiency or other factors prohibiting reaching graduation requirements and supporting other needed learning skills. (Exhibits D & E)
- 16) NEON supports reduction and/or elimination of unfunded mandates such as starting date, evaluation requirements, and special education requirements above the federal level and so on. (Exhibits D & E)
- 17) NEON supports addressing teacher licensure issues (barriers) and the shortage of teachers.

Funding

- 18) NEON supports funding aid to all local governmental agencies be brought to a level where essential services provided to the citizenry can be accomplished in an efficient and effective manner and to aid in meeting the requirements of the many unfunded mandates local government must follow.
- 19) NEON supports increased funding for Community Corrections in a consistent model to ensure adequate resources for the supervision of offenders and services provided by corrections departments across Minnesota.



- 20) NEON supports maintaining the wind and solar production tax as it currently exists and to remove the potential of levy limits being placed on the monies returned to Counties.
- 21) NEON supports increases in funding for older adults to ensure a high quality of life for all seniors, regardless of needs related to long term care. (Exhibit E)

General Government

- 22) NEON supports legislation to allow rural volunteer public safety service people a simpler means of meeting training and education needed to be a first responder especially in the areas of fire-fighting and ambulance services.
- 23) NEON does not support the 2013 law stating all Assessors are required to be at least AMA certified by 2019. This will create a hardship for townships and counties already challenged to contract or hire assessors.
- 24) NEON supports legislation making it easier for individuals to obtain health insurance through local insurance agents.
- 25) NEON supports reform in immigration to include timely and affordable transitions for immigrants to become documented legal participants in our society. (Exhibit E)
- 26) NEON supports simplifications, removal of unnecessary data exchange regulations, modernize technology systems and improvements in handicapped and elder care.
- 27) NEON supports continuing and enhancing the Small-city street funding from 2015.
- 28) NEON supports Small-city development assistance programs.

Natural Resources and Agriculture

- 29) NEON supports strengthening animal agriculture from livestock, dairy and crop producers to input dealers and processors which will create a strong rural economy that is interdependent with the entire state economy. (Exhibit E)
- 30) NEON supports encouragement of “Animal Agriculture” in Minnesota, similar to the Nebraska Livestock Friendly County program and opposes adopting a federal program which will be a state by state ‘patchwork’ system. (Exhibit E)

Thanks for engaging in NEON!

