

# Howard area happy for new cellular tower

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Howard—Public Utilities Commission Chair Bob Sahr can remember a time when it wasn't necessary to turn off cell phones in Howard during a meeting, but those days are gone.

Evidence of that fact was present with the occasional ringing of mobile phones during a dedication ceremony for the new Cellular One tower Thursday near Howard, where about 20 officials and area residents were in attendance.

Members of the Howard community met with Sahr to discuss the need for a cellular tower in the Howard area in August 2003. At that time, Sahr said, he was presented with a petition bearing the signatures of more than 300 Howard residents.

That petition, along with letters from Howard dignitaries and the PUC, resulted in Cellular One committing to a tower for Howard late last year. Cellular One also committed to a tower for Parker at the same time.

"We didn't know if we'd be successful, but we knew if we didn't try we'd never know if we would be successful," Sahr said in reference to getting a tower for the Howard area.

"This day should be to thank Cellular One for investing in this area. It says a lot about their commitment to service."

Other Public Utilities Commissioners Jim Burg and Gary Hanson also emphasized the impact of the tower for the Howard area, indicating its enhancement of emergency services, convenience for area residents and the benefits it will provide for economic development.

Phil Pote, Cellular One executive director of sales for the eastern region, agreed.

"This puts our money where our mouth is," he said. "If we don't do this, we aren't 'the next best way to say hello'."

Construction of the Howard tower began in December. It became operational within the past two weeks, Pote said, and is located about a mile west of Howard.

"It was under consideration for quite a while," Pote said,



**MAKING A CALL** -- Randy Parry (left), executive director of Miner County Community Revitalization in Howard, talks to the lieutenant governor via a cellular phone Thursday. The call was made during a dedication ceremony for the new Cellular One tower. The conversation was broadcast to those in attendance. Public Utilities Commission Analyst Steve Wegman (right) assisted with the technical setup. (Photo by Elisa Sand)

indicating the priority of the project was advanced when it received attention from the PUC.

Pote said additional sites are under consideration for 2004, one of which includes Parkston, a rural community south of Mitchell.

"There's still a lot of places where people want to see improved or better service," Pote said. "We're working hard to get there."

Pote said the backing of the PUC on a project like this aids in moving the project forward faster.

"With the support of the PUC and local leaders, things actively get done," he said, adding that a new tower requires permission from the FCC, FAA, local zoning and possibly state zoning.

"An obstacle-free path helps things get done," he said.