

## Ribbon cutting ceremony held for new cell phone tower near Howard

By: Staff

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Area residents, PUC Commissioners and a Cellular One official gathered at The Business Center on Howard's Main Street for a ribbon cutting Thursday, March 4th for the new cell phone tower west of Howard.

Construction of the tower began in December and became operational about a month ago.

A group of about 25 were greeted by Mike Knutson of Miner County Community Revitalization (MCCR) and Larry Guager, Mayor of Howard.

Bob Sahr, PUC Chairman, spoke about the commitment Howard's residents had about getting this tower built. A petition with 300 signatures got his attention along with letters and phone calls.

"The people of Howard spoke with one voice, were heard and actions were taken," said Sahr.

Sahr thanked Cellular One for responding to areas with his need like Howard and Parker which also got a tower built recently. Parkston and Arlington are additional sites under consideration.

PUC members Jim Burg and Vice President Gary Hanson emphasized the impact of this tower with enhancement of emergency services, economic development and improving convenience and quality of life. "Farmers are becoming more and more dependent on cell phones," said Burg.

MCCR Executive Director Randy Parry spoke to South Dakota Lieutenant Governor Dennis Daugaard during the ceremony. The conversation was broadcast to those in attendance. Steve Wegman of the PUC assisted with the technical setup.



A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Cellular One tower was recently held at The Business Center. Having the honor of cutting the ribbon were PUC Commissioners Gary Hanson and Bob Sahr, Western Wireless Rep. Phil Pote and PUC Commissioner Jim Burg.

"We've had people in town from places like Martha's Vineyard and the United Kingdom that can now use their cell phones," said Parry. Wireless communications are important in efforts of rural communities to attract economic development, Parry noted.

Phil Pote, Cellular One executive director of sales agreed about the importance cellular service has on rural areas.

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

Pote said the backing of the PUC aids in getting this service to rural communities faster.

Also in attendance were Dakota Wireless local dealers Chris Brink and Rob Andersen.