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Dignitaries help light up the night

EVENT CELEBRATES
 STREET LIGHT
 CONVERSION PROJECT

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SUPERIOR — Around two dozen people gathered in front of the Vestey Center here Friday evening for a celebration of the recent installation of new energy-saving LED street lights.

The crowd began arriving around 6 p.m. to visit with each other, Gov. Dave Heineman and representatives of General Electric Co. in anticipation of a 6:30 p.m. "ribbon cutting" ceremony.

Superior Utilities, managed by Larry Brittenham, organized the

event.

Mayor Sonia Schmidt gave a welcoming address, thanking Heineman for taking time to attend the celebration. Nuckolls County Commissioner Mike Combs and City Councilman Steve Fox also were on hand.

Schmidt acknowledged the high school football game going on Friday evening as a factor in the low attendance at the event.

Heineman said he was pleased to be in Superior and appreciates small-town America.

"In a town like Superior, we

know and support each other, which makes a strong contribution to our effectiveness because we are more involved with each other," Heineman said, "and if you get in trouble in school, your parents probably know about it before you get home."

The line brought laughter and applause from the audience.

Heineman said Superior should be complimented on its decision to improve the night visibility in the downtown area.

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The LED light project began in October 2010 when the city contracted with Dutton-Lainson Co. of Hastings to install new poles and the new lights. The city acquired a grant of \$250,000 from the federal Department of Energy. In addition, matching funds totaling \$67,800 were drawn on the city from an account reserved for municipal projects.

The LED initiative won the "project of the year" award from the Nebraska Municipal Power Pool at its annual meeting in Nebraska City in April.

Lights on Bloom Street between Third and Ninth streets, which is a stretch of state highway, did not receive the new lights due to the objection of the Nebraska Department of Roads.

More than 500 street lights have been installed in the main part of town and some of the surrounding streets.

Vince Scarfo, director of government relations and senior sales development manager for GE appliances and lighting from Washington, D.C., also offered comments at Friday's event.

"Our lights are lighting up the world," Scarfo said, recognizing the involvement of GE, which was the provider of the LED street lights Superior has installed.

He complimented the City Council for recognizing the potential savings in the LED lights. He said they provide better quality, with a brighter light that illuminates the whole street from curb to curb.

The Department of Energy is convinced this type of light is the best, Scarfo said.

"In participating communities, they have seen a 40-50

percent savings in electric usage, which will provide funds to be used elsewhere in the city's budget," Scarfo said.

After Scarfo spoke, he stood with Schmidt and Heineman as they each placed a hand on the lever of the sham electrical box, set up for that purpose, and threw the switch. The street lights then came on to the cheers of the audience.

Other non-local attendees were Greg Schraeder, Nebraska GE sales representative, and Brendel Maier, representing Dutton-Lainson in local GE sales.