

Talk CNY S1E18 Transcript

Andrew Fish 0:06

Welcome to CenterState CEO's semi monthly podcast, Talk CNY, presented by NBT Bank.

Kate Hammer 0:12

On Talk CNY you get an inside look at the people projects and planning moving Central New York forward.

Andrew Fish 0:18

I'm Andrew Fish, Senior Vice President of member and business experience at CenterState CEO, Central New York's leading business leadership and economic development organization.

Kate Hammer 0:27

And I'm Kate Hammer, business coach and member at CenterState CEO, we are your hosts for Talk CNY. Take a moment right now to subscribe in your listening app for new episodes every other Wednesday.

Joe Nehme 0:37

And I feel that's really lucky as a resident of Central New York both to work for the company, but also that this is the company that is coming to make this investment here. It's not only going to be a chip plant that's going to lead the world in memory technology. But we want to be a community partner.

Andrew Fish 0:55

On this episode of Talk CNY we talk with Joe Nehme, Senior Manager of External Affairs for Micron Technology on the anniversary of the company's historic announcement of building a mega fab in central New York. Welcome, Joe. Thanks so much for joining us today.

Joe Nehme 1:09

Thanks, Andrew and Kate, I'm excited to be here.

Kate Hammer 1:11

Joe, you are Micron's first hire here in central New York. Now I know you're not new to the project. But tell us a little bit about yourself.

Joe Nehme 1:19

Well, that makes me sound a little bit more important than I am. But yeah, I am one of the first employees on the ground, the first employee on the ground from Micron. I'm a lifelong Central New Yorker, I grew up in Utica, New York, went to Syracuse University, and then stayed here for an opportunity to work with Senator Schumer, which led me to this opportunity. But I'm so excited about the ability to advocate for Central New York with micron. There's a lot of work to do. But I'm excited and proud of the region and looking forward to seeing this project come to fruition.

Kate Hammer 1:49

Yeah. Now, I know there's been a little bit of a skepticism or maybe a lot in the community about, you know, the timeline, how long it's been taking, is this project really happening? And so we'd love if you could speak to us a little bit about what milestones have happened that maybe people aren't aware of.

Joe Nehme 2:07

Yeah, you know, and as I said, in the opening, I am a lifelong Central New Yorker and skepticism, sometimes it's in our DNA. And it's, you know, it's warranted though I, you, you, you know, we are former manufacturing and economic might we read about it in the history books, we hear about it. When we talk to older generations, we see it when we drive by abandoned factories. So it's warranted and I think it's incumbent on the company and Micron to kind of continue to take actions that chip away at that skepticism. And, and we're doing that, you know, recently we've submitted our chips and science act application for funding, that process is going really well. We're going to continue to work with the CHIPS Program Office on on that process on the environmental reviews and site preparation, a lot of things are happening. The Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency, recently declared lead agency, we obviously very publicly, folks have seen the actions on the Community Engagement Committee, which will help guide our \$500 million community investment, we're in the process of doing focus groups across the community to get feedback on where that goes. And obviously on workforce, we've set up two committees future ready workforce consortium that focuses on non traditional pathways, as well as the Northeast semiconductor network that focuses on traditional pathways. So as I say to people, it's like the, you know, the the duck furiously, pedaling their legs underneath the water, but come on top, there's a lot of work going on. And we hope, you know, every single step of the process, people are gonna see this is the real deal.

Andrew Fish 3:40

It's great. You know, Joe, it's, it's it's very obvious to me, but maybe not to others that since the beginning, this, this isn't just a project in you know, that is happening to Central New York micron is not just looking at this and saying, all right, you guys figure out the rest. We're coming in. And we're going to, we're going to set this up. You mentioned the \$500 million Community Investment Framework and the Community Engagement Committee, this is a huge commitment. Can you tell us a little bit about what's happening there? How that investments playing out, you mentioned, the focus group, what else is happening to ensure that that work continues?

Joe Nehme 4:12

Yeah. So very early on in the process before I ever worked for micron, Rob Simpson and CenterState CEO, in one of our conversations said, throughout the recruitment process, this is the company we want, this is the deal we want these are the folks we want to be here. And that had a lot to do with their values and aligning with our community values on diversity and inclusion and opportunity and sustainability on the environment and things of like so as part of the agreement, and it really is an unprecedented thing first. Yeah, first of its kind. So I always

we're we're building an airplane in midair, but really a \$500 million investment that will ensure you know, outside of what's the investment that's happening at the site, ensure that the community is going to benefit and that micron is doing its part you can't solve all the problems in central New York. But it's doing its part to chip away and focus on things like workforce housing, childcare, and other community focused investments to ensure that this project lifts every part of the community. We have a really, I think there's 15, members of the Community Engagement Committee, I'm an ex officio member on behalf of Micron because I'm here and I'm local, and I could come to the meetings. But it's led by Melanie Little John and Tim Penicks, as well, a whole host of other community leaders. And the goal really is to for the community members to help tell us where we should prioritize that investment. Where are the needs, and then it throughout the process, as the members sort of be ambassadors in the community to go and reach into deep into the community and hear from folks so that when we do decide where this money goes, that we know that the community had a say in that and helped guide that and that their input mattered. So, you know, I would encourage everyone listening to go out and fill out the survey that's on the website, put your inputs in, it's not we're not at the stage right now, where folks are applying for projects. But get your get your inputs in there, come to our public meetings, come to the focus groups, and share your feedback, because we're really looking for it.

Andrew Fish 6:13

That's great. Yeah, I was gonna make sure to mention that survey, still open looking for that input, understanding, making sure we know where those challenges are. So

Kate Hammer 6:21

yeah, let's put those in the show notes. So we can make make sure people can find the link easily. Get it done. Love that. For those not keeping track. We are exactly a year, a year from the historic announcement. That micron is, in fact, coming. And this is a thing and you were very heavily involved in the whole recruiting process. Can you tell us a little bit about what that was like? And then also what it felt like when it was finally official?

Joe Nehme 6:47

Yeah. Well, there was a lot of people that worked a lot harder and a lot longer than I but I was very involved throughout the process, there from the very beginning. It actually started for me around three years ago, around this time, in conversations with county executive Ryan McMan, we were speaking a lot at the time in my role with Senator Schumer, we're at the height of the pandemic. So speaking frequently to kind of solve problems around the pandemic, but at the time, the lack or over reliance on semiconductors of foreign supply sort of was thrust into the forefront of national dialogue. And Senator Schumer, at the time, a long priority of his started talking publicly for the first time about a national investment around semiconductors. So in conversations with Ryan, he said, you know, that bill, your boss is pushing, you know, it can help us and I said, Oh, tell me more. So from there, there were so many critical moments in the process, you know, obviously, the county's work in getting making the site what it was that it can attract a large scale semiconductor manufacturer, Governor Hochul, the green chips legislation, as well as Senator Schumer and the chips and science legislation and the work with our

partners at center state to really put our best foot forward as a community. But there's really one moment that really stands out to me throughout the process as a moment that we didn't necessarily know that it was going to be us, but that we knew we really had a shot. And that was a trip from senior level executives from micron that came to Central New York on a visit to learn about the community. And with the help of Senator state and some of our partners in the community, we really knew we had one opportunity to show micron, hey, we are the partners you need. This is going to be a long, hard process. And this is unprecedented. But we are the partners that are going to help you get this across the finish line. And quite frankly, we knocked it out of the park, there was a moment. Obviously, there's a lot, just a lot of different things. One of the things that that really was a great moment that day was and I remember it vividly in my mind, we had all the leaders, leaders from every key higher education institution, from upstate New York, sitting at a table together at Syracuse University, sharing how the networks and the infrastructure that we had here in New York that can help micron fill its workforce and be a partner that they knew they could rely on. And there are so many other moments from that, that those few days that really stuck out. But that was the moment I think we all knew, you know, we showed how hungry we were. We showed how reliable we can be. And again, I said it before we really knocked it out of the park that day.

Andrew Fish 9:27

Yeah, it was phenomenal to see and to help set up that day. And culminating of course in the in the now infamous dinner with the executives and the governor and and you know, people just kind of leaving they're thinking to themselves, wow, this this is real. This is an opportunity that that could hit. You know, obviously you'd mentioned that the chips and science act critical to this project. What about that legislation is so groundbreaking and why was it so critical to this project?

Joe Nehme 9:53

I you know, I worked I got a chance obviously in my time with Senator Schumer that had been a priority of his for very long In time, and as I said, the pandemic kind of exposed the need for it, both to reassure domestic semiconductor manufacturing as well as protect our national security supply chains. And you know, we have Mike Brown really believe we are the poster child for the for the legislation. And we wouldn't be here today. Without it. It was critical in order for not only micron, but other semiconductor companies across the country frequently said, in order for the US to really reassert its dominance in the semiconductor industry, and shore up our national security, this legislation was needed. So we're really excited about it. It's going to be a continuing process that we're working through at the federal level, and we're hopeful that we're going to, we're going to be able to reap the benefits of it.

Andrew Fish 10:46

That's great. Well, we'll be right back to continue our conversation with Joe Nehme, Senior Manager of External Affairs at micron technology. But first, here's a note from our presenting sponsor of Talk CNY NBT Bank.

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Kate Hammer 11:28

This is Talk CNY. And we are continuing our conversation with Joe Nehme Senior Manager of External Affairs for micron technology.

Andrew Fish 11:37

So Joe, you recently were a speaker for CenterState CEO at our leadership lessons event, which you did a fantastic job. And thank you what a lineup we had there. For those that maybe haven't seen it yet, you can find it on our website and watch the recording so they can go see your wonderful lessons that you've bestowed upon us. But how has this project shaped your leadership values?

Joe Nehme 11:58

Yeah, you know, I think that, you know, first of all, it was an amazing event, I think it provides a glimpse into you know people open themselves up a little bit when they talk about those things, and you learn about their values and what makes them tick. And it was a reminder, not obviously, the lineup was amazing, but the talent and the leadership that we have throughout our entire community. And, you know, my sort of message at all of us really, that spoke that day the message was a lot, every one touched on others, right, because you could only be as good of a leader is the feeling that you're instilling in others and how you're getting others to follow you. And I think that you know my own perspective of, of not necessarily having to be a senior member of an organization, but really just showing people how much you care about your own responsibilities and role. And I think that has I'm using that principle every day with this project. In many respects, I'm a voice on the ground for the project. And I want people to know how important it is to me personally. But I also see how important it is to the community. And that gives me the sort of the energy and the inspiration to get up every day. And because look, there this project as well as everyone's jobs in their personal and professional life stuff's hard. Right? The challenges are hard stakes are high, all that stuff. And so when you know that everyone else cares as much as you do, it kind of gives you the motivation to keep going in this project specifically, it really is going to take every ounce of this community to be successful. So we need to draw inspiration from one another. And we can do that by just really working hard at our own roles, and taking it really seriously treating other with treating others with respect and compassion and empowering others. I think we're up for the challenge. I know we're up for the challenge.

Andrew Fish 13:46

You know, it really is so significant. And and I know just from interacting with you and working with you how much you care. And it is such an amazing thing for me to see. I've been doing

economic development now for over 14 years in this in this community. And this is unique, this is different, not just because of the size and scale, it really is being approached in a different manner. You're seeing that on the inside, too, I presume? What can you share kind of about that part of the experience for you?

Joe Nehme 14:15

Yeah, I mean, I obviously have been a part of the project for a long time and believed in the project. But I feel most confident I feel as confident as I've ever felt about it. Since I've been sort of working with the company that you assume you hear micron technology. It's a technology company, they manufacture semiconductors, leading edge, some of the most advanced products in the world. We're a leader in this in the memory space. But I've been just heartened to see everything else at the company that's happening parallel to the technology side of things. For example, you know, Dr. Robert Simmons, who I'm sure many people in the community have known. He's a head of social impact at micron. And you know, we've been going across the community doing the chip camps, yeah, because we want people in the kids in the community, particularly young children to know to be passionate about the technology, to know its importance, and to believe that there's a career out there for them in it. And so like those type of social impact actions that we are taking, are so exciting. And I feel that really lucky as a resident of Central New York, both to work for the company, but also that this is the company that is coming to make this investment here, it's not only going to be a chip plant, that's going to lead the world in memory technology, but we want to be a community partner, we want to make lift, you know, lift everyone up along with us. And those actions and those commitments to community have been happening over the past year. And they're gonna continue to happen, as long as as long as we're around. So

Kate Hammer 15:50

Joe we just have one last question for you. And that is, what's next for Micron in central New York.

Joe Nehme 15:57

Yeah, so we're a year in. As I said, a lot of the focus now is around chips in science Act funding from the federal government, as well as site preparation and environmental reviews. So I think if there's one message message that I want to leave with folks is if you don't see things happening, that doesn't mean that it's we're not working diligently, we have an amazing team that that's, that's working on site development and site preparation, that is working, that are working 12 hour days, and making sure that the site is ready for this massive investment. So there's a lot of work to be done on that side of things that folks might not see. But that, that really making strides and moving forward, and then obviously, another, you know, continuing to engage the community, particularly through the Community Engagement Committee, we really want people to come out and tell us how they, you know, their thoughts and feelings, you know, we really want to encourage people to use the community engagement process to give their feedback to tell us their priorities, and to help guide where we go with our investments here in central New York. And then definitely on the workforce piece, you know, we have some great partners in higher education, in K through 12, school districts at CenterState, CEO at Makhni,

that are going to really help us ensure that we're creating a talent pipeline. So for those that are interested in opportunities, please stay engaged, reach out to me directly answer your questions. The other thing I want to highlight on that we haven't talked about today, as micron has a strong commitment to diverse suppliers and contractors, we have a 30% commitment for socially economic disadvantaged groups for our contracting for the project. So you know, stay engaged, we're very early in the process right now in terms of making decisions on suppliers of that nature. But we have a portal on our website, that suppliers who are interested in doing business with the company can get their information into and will be notified of updates coming forward. So, you know, there's a lot of work to be done. But as I said, Back previously, back to that meeting, you know, where the senior executives came here in 2022. I feel passionately that we are the community and we are the partners that can help get this project across the finish line. And I know from being on the inside with micron, that they feel the same way. So stay engaged and keep keep keep up the faith.

Kate Hammer 18:18

Yeah, that feels good to hear.

Andrew Fish 18:23

I love that. And to put a finer point, I love that you brought up the opportunity for procurement for socially economically disadvantaged individuals and businesses and wbe, we're talking about billions of dollars of opportunity there with that 30% commitment. Billions of dollars of opportunity there and in you know, what I love about that, too, is it's not just the commitment to making that spin happened during the build, but it's the ongoing commitment to ensure that operational spends year over year are set aside and dedicated for that, and that that's the piece for me that really separated micron, because, you know, people may not know this, but we were having conversations with other semiconductor manufacturers for that site. That's what made micron the project that we wanted in central New York. And I think our commitment to those same things is also what had micron looking at Central New York and saying this is where we want to

Kate Hammer 19:08

It was a match

Joe Nehme 19:10

100% Andrew. I couldn't have said it better myself.

Andrew Fish 19:12

Well, Joe, we really appreciate you being on today. More than that. We appreciate the partnership, long standing with you and with micron now in your role, and we were thrilled to have you get that opportunity to partner not only with this great company, but with the community that you love. And we look forward to having this conversation maybe again in another year to see where we're at.

Joe Nehme 19:33

I will come back anytime. This was fun, and I appreciate the both of you.

Kate Hammer 19:37

Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Andrew Fish 19:38

Thanks Joe

Kate Hammer 19:39

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Andrew Fish 19:46

After each episode you can join us on click where we will continue to chat about this topic and provide additional resources and links

Kate Hammer 19:53

In click you can also listen to or watch every episode in this series of Talk CNY

Andrew Fish 19:58

click is CenterState CEOs Interactive Digital chamber platform where our members connect, learn and receive support from our staff.

Kate Hammer 20:05

On our next episode, we will have our final quarterly chat with CenterState CEO's President Rob Simpson, and He will answer questions submitted by our listeners.

Andrew Fish 20:14

Be on the lookout for your opportunity to submit your questions on CenterState CEO social media platforms for new episode reminders every other Wednesday. Be sure to subscribe in your favorite podcast listening app.

Kate Hammer 20:25

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