

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**October 7, 2019**

**Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar**

Present: Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Michelle Marotzke, Les Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Bruce DeBlieck, Scott Froemming and Brian Mort

Absent: Mark Boeschen and Roger Imdieke

Guests: Jared Britten, Compass Consultants; Curtney Carlson, Joel Johnson and Phil Laughlin, Mamre Township Board Supervisors

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Dean Bouta called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. followed by self introductions.

**AGENDA**—There were no changes to the Agenda.

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the Minutes of the September 9, 2019 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Township projects/Engineering study.** Bouta introduced Jared Britten of Compass Consultants, which is doing a study of Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns Townships. It was noted Arvig owns Windstream’s fiber in the Willmar area, which will help in leveraging fiber for a build out. Britten distributed a handout (see attached) that he reviewed with the committee. The plan is to have a Passive Optical Network from Arvig’s hut in Willmar. Compass Consultants looked at all 1,273 structures (residential and businesses) in the three townships as to whether or not they were served, unserved or underserved. The only areas served are along the lakes north of Willmar, which is served by CenturyLink. Their technicians came out and reviewed the areas and redesigned a network. It is anticipated there will be approximately 150

miles of fiber to cover everyone in the three townships—it does not include drop footage, but includes all optical network terminations. The total cost is approximately \$3.7 million for fiber and putting it into the ground. The estimated cost for Dovre Township is about twice as much as the other townships as it has more structures. The committee informed Britten that Compass Consultants will need to add in the distance to bring fiber to the premise. Britten stated a market study will help narrow down the numbers and figure out the costs of the drops. Britten stated the green shaded areas on the maps are served; pink is under served and the remainder is unserved; the blue lines are the actual fiber lines. Compass Consultants has more information on its maps, including the location of structures.

Compass Consultants has created a list of questions to use for the market study to be mailed to all residents of the three townships, including what service would they like, what speeds, what would they be willing to pay, what speeds do they want—Compass is not asking for a commitment or deposit from the residents. Connie Schmoll indicated this committee would like to make the residents aware that a survey will be mailed and to make sure they complete it. Britten indicated the mailer could be tracked to follow up with those who do not respond. This committee would like the EDC's branding included on any marketing materials sent to the county's residents. Committee members indicated it would be important to include information in the marketing, such as the survey is not for service; the resale value of their property, if they had broadband and there is no cost to fill out the survey. The survey could be marketed on the EDC's website and Facebook page. Britten stated they are hoping for a 20-30% response to the market study and would like it sent within a couple of weeks. Joel Johnson asked how will the total cost be determined? Schmoll stated the service estimate should be narrowed down to the unserved residents as served areas cannot be included in a state grant application. Britten indicated it will not be difficult to remove the areas that are served as Compass Consultants has the addresses broken out by served and unserved. Britten stated pedestal and hookups are included in the project number, but getting it down the driveway is not. It was noted the state grant requires the project be fiber to the premise so the cost of installing to the premise would need to be included. Glenn Otteson believes service drops will be add another \$2 million to the project so it is important to remove the served areas as the cost will rise.

It was noted Arctander Township is interested in a project as well. Schmoll noted the current townships are a pilot project and it is hoped that other townships can be included in future projects.

The township board members present at the meeting indicated residents will want to know the cost as most believe they are paying too much in taxes. Bouta stated the provider will pay some money toward the project and matching funds will be needed for the state grant application. Johnson felt the township residents will need vote on whether or not the cost should be added to their taxes or the project will not happen. Johnson voiced concern that the other two townships are not represented at today's meeting.

[Britten, Carlson, Johnson and Laughlin were excused from the meeting.]

Schmoll recommended the EDC send a separate mailer before the survey from Compass Consultants is sent. Schmoll will ask Compass Consultants for the mailing list. It was recommended that a letter be sent rather than a postcard and addressed individually to the residents rather than "Resident/Occupant."

IT WAS MOVED BY Ramsey Schaffnit, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to send a letter to residents in the broadband project area at a cost of approximately \$600. MOTION CARRIED.

Schmoll will send the committee a draft of the survey that will be sent by Compass Consultants.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Meeting with Brad Finstad, Minnesota Rural Development.** Schmoll indicated she, Mark Boeschen and Rollie Nissen, will meet with Brad Finstad of Minnesota Rural Development in the next couple of weeks. This meeting is in response to Nissen's trip to Washington, D.C. Finstad will provide information on available USDA programs. Marotzke asked if Ag Country has funding available for a project. Schmoll spoke with Jacki Anderson, who is part of a broadband committee and the chair is Kevin Beyer of Federated, which passed funding. Bouta encouraged the EDC keep in contact with Beyer. Otteson encouraged speaking with Mark Hanson of Hanson Communications about a project for the Pennock area. Marotzke mentioned a LiFi network, which Otteson indicated is a stop gap. Wireless routers can have links now.

**Application for Governor's Broadband Task Force.** Nissen received a letter of recommendation from this committee signed by Chair Boeschen for his application for the Governor's Broadband Task Force. He also submitted his resume. The state acknowledged receiving his application. Nissen stated he attended the open house for VIBRANT Broadband in Meeker County at which Governor Walz was present. He was introduced to the Governor and let him know that Kandiyohi County could use the state's assistance on broadband. Schmoll encouraged committee members to read about Meeker Cooperative's project online.

## **REPORTS**

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Schmoll reported there is no update. The stated received 70 applications for the Governor's Broadband Task Force. The Coalition is encouraging the state to allocate additional funding for broadband. Schmoll reported Nathaniel Zacharias of Conservation Strategies took the lobbyist position.

Donn Winckler stated Blandin sent out information on broadband service in Kandiyohi County and other Minnesota counties and Kandiyohi County is ranked low. Schmoll reported she and

Donna Boonstra will be attending a Blandin broadband conference in Nisswa tomorrow and traveling to Washington, D.C. to meet with legislative staff about USDA broadband programs.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business,

IT WAS MOVED, SECONDED AND CARRIED to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:50 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, November 4, 2019** at the Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar.