

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

**MINUTES**

**February 4, 2019**

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

**Present:** Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlicek, Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke, Les Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

**Excused:** Scott Froemming and Brian Mort

**Staff:** Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

**Secretarial:** Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:06 p.m. and declared a quorum was present. Chair Boeschen welcomed new committee members Roger Imdieke and Rollie Nissen, Kandiyohi County Commissioners, who will represent the county in place of Larry Kleindl.

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Donn Winckler, to accept the resignation of Larry Kleindl and to add Roger Imdieke and Rollie Nissen to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

**AGENDA**—The agenda was approved.

**MINUTES**—A correction was noted to the January 7, 2019 Minutes under Reports, Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donn Winckler, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the Minutes of the January 7, 2019 meeting with the following correction: Under Reports, Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition, the second sentence should read: Broadband Day on the Hill will be held April 3, 2019. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS**—There was no new business.

## REPORTS

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Connie Schmoll reported the January 30<sup>th</sup> meeting was cancelled due to the weather and the meeting has not yet been rescheduled.

[Ramsey Schaffnit joined the meeting.]

**Arvig.** Schmoll reported there has been no further communication and Arvig is waiting to hear from this committee as to a potential project.

**Meeker County project.** Schmoll reported the January 29<sup>th</sup> meeting with Meeker County was cancelled due to the weather and will be rescheduled. Schmoll is looking forward to the meeting to hear about their project and what could be done in Kandiyohi County. Meeker County has a committee similar to this one and was looking at a project with power lines and determined it was a good time to do a fiber project. Their project is a combination of wireless and fiber. It is unknown if their lines are being buried or if the project is with Great River Energy. Kandiyohi Power Cooperative is not willing to add fiber to its power lines. Roger Imdieke stated a northern Minnesota county added fiber to its power lines. Meeker County is not seeking state grant dollars.

Schmoll stated the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and Blandin Broadband seem to be focusing on funding and not changing the state grant policies as to incumbents. Broadband is in the top 10 bills in each chamber of the Minnesota legislature. The Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) supports funding of \$50 million for broadband and suggests changes to the incumbent language in the state grant. Donn Winckler advised SRDC that this committee is willing to support their language as to incumbents. At present, it is not believed that a bill has any recommended changes to the state grant language. Rep. Dave Baker is the author of the current broadband funding bill, however, he is no longer on the Agriculture, Rural Development and Housing Finance Committee. It was suggested it would be good for this committee to create a position statement to send to state legislators as soon as possible. Senate Committee members are Torrey Westrom, chair; Mark Johnson, vice chair; Kari Dziedzic, Rich Draheim, Kent Eken, Nick Frentz, Michael Goggin, Andrew Lang, Dan Sparks and Bill Weber. The House bill on broadband is House File No. 7, which was co-authored by Rep. Baker. The bill was referred to the Greater Minnesota Jobs and Economic Development Finance Division. The Senate file is No. 9 and was co-authored by Senator Westrom. Committee members felt it is important that language be added relative to the right of first refusal of incumbents and state grant funding of greater than 50% for areas that are less populated. The public does not have an understanding of what broadband is; education is key. Schmoll noted Frontier Communications challenged a project in southern Kandiyohi County, but TDS did not challenge the grant. CTC was the one that kept changing the map to keep the project financially feasible. The committee has an opportunity to say where a project should be done and Arvig will look at it. Schmoll suggested having a conversation with the state Office of Broadband Development about wireless service providers that have come in and what would such service do to a grant application. Rollie Nissen offered to speak with Senators Westrom and Lang.

## **2019 GOALS/PROJECT PLANNING**

**Broadband Coalition.** The committee reviewed the Broadband Coalition notes (see attached). This committee is looking at starting a county coalition to get more support. Schmoll is scheduled to speak before township leaders at their annual meeting on March 4, 2019. The townships will be asked to invite residents to an educational meeting on broadband and a possible coalition. Involving cities is also being considered. Townships may know who would have a broadband story. Imdieke suggested townships could possibly fund a coalition. Schmoll stated some Minnesota townships have added funding for broadband to their tax roll.

Suggested changes to the Broadband Coalition notes were given. The revised information will be emailed to the committee.

### **ADJOURNMENT—**

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:58 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, March 4, 2019** at Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Room 2057, Willmar.

# Broadband Coalition

## Goals and Message

The goal of the Kandiyohi County Rural Broadband Coalition is to unite in efforts to secure and utilize, quality high-speed broadband throughout the County.

The Coalition will deliver a strong voice for the entire county so that the needs will be heard by current providers, potential providers, and state and federal government officials.

Our messages will include:

- ✓ change the laws/policies that create barriers to deployment in rural areas
- ✓ Support rural areas with supplemental funding to make deployment possible
- ✓ Seek information and education to truly understand the importance of high-speed broadband

## What is in it for citizens?

Large community representation will provide a strong voice that high speed internet is both needed and supported throughout Kandiyohi County. We are living in an era of “the internet of everything” therefore, the improvement of our county wide broadband service becomes even more vital for ALL ages, income levels and geographic locations. When we all do well we ALL do well!!!

The voice of the citizens will be included in messages that define the need, calculate what is affordable, and determine what is reliable.

Citizens will work together to build an area that is ready to compete in today’s competitive environment for tax base, jobs, good schools, latest in medical and healthcare resources and precision farming methods, and technology that supports work, live and play environments.

Broadband champions will deliver the latest information to members for a thorough understanding of broadband terminology and technology, so residents will be educated and ready to subscribe when the services become available.