

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING  
**MINUTES**  
March 2, 2020  
EDC Office, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlieck, Tim Furr, Michelle Marotzke, Les Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Ramsey Schaffnit and David Sisser

Excused: Roger Imdieke, Glenn Otteson and Gregg Price

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chair Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:05 p.m.

**AGENDA—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**MINUTES—**The minutes of February 3, 2020 were corrected to reflect that Donna Boonstra was excused and the date of the Minutes that were approved was corrected to January 6, 2020.

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Dave Sisser, to approve the corrected Minutes of the February 3, 2020 meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Township projects.** Connie Schmoll reported St. Johns Township is sending an informational flyer (see attached) today along with ballots to those in the township who are unserved or under served. Mamre Township is mailing its flyers to all its residents and will mail its ballots later and will count any unreturned as a no vote. Joel Johnson will hand deliver some of the flyers and speak with individuals. The EDC printed the flyers and ballots for the townships and each township will pay their postage. Mamre and St. Johns Townships will hold a joint educational meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup> at the Pennock Civic Center. A subgroup will hold a planning session tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. to go over educational information for the township meeting. Dean Bouta stated the residents need to understand they will never receive fiber because of the providers that are here; they will need to invest in a project. Schmoll will try to attend the township meetings this month as they are all holding annual meetings. Chair Boeschen reported a small group attended the three township meetings to find out their status and answer any questions. Dovre Township did not make a decision, but Mamre and St. Johns Townships were both interested in education and having their constituents vote on the project. Each township board has a couple members in favor

and a majority against the project; the project is not being given a fair effort when all supervisors are not in favor or supportive of the project. Each township has some challenges; constituents want better broadband, but do not want to pay for the service. Arvig will only contribute 10%, if Dovre Township does not participate in the project. If Dovre Township joins, then Arvig will contribute 15%. Tim Furr wrote a letter of support that was signed by Dr. Johnson of Ridgewater College that will be used during the education. Carris Health will be asked for a letter as to telemedicine. Dave Sisser will speak on the difference between fiber and wireless. Michelle Marotzke will contact Dr. Holm, Superintendent of Willmar Public Schools, as to K-12 e-learning. Sisser questioned if any letters of support obtained for the CTC project could be used.

Rollie Nissen stated the Association of Minnesota Counties hosted a legislative meeting that included a broadband hearing; they are looking to add \$30 million for broadband this year. Governor Walz introduced \$30 million this year because of the surplus and others have said it should be \$30 million each year. Schmoll will speak before the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners tomorrow morning and inform them of the difficulty this committee is having.

Schmoll is trying to get on the agenda for the Kandiyohi Power Cooperative board to request some financial support. Kandiyohi Power Cooperative committed \$100,000 to the CTC project and Great River Energy is supportive of broadband projects, which Schmoll will remind them of.

Bouta indicated Glenn Otteson believed the project estimate was closer than he first thought. Schmoll stated if the project fails, it will be new data to provide to the state and the grant process. Arctander Township wants to be included in the project, but they did not make a decision and had more questions. Schmoll will attend the next meeting of Arctander Township. If they wish to be included, they need to act quickly. Compass Consultants has indicated it can include Arctander Township, if a decision is made right away.

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

## **REPORTS**

**Digital Inclusion Task Force.** Schmoll reported nothing will be done unless a grant is applied for.

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Schmoll reported a new chair was voted in at the last meeting, Vince Robinson of Lincoln County. Nathan Zacharias is the lobbyist and has done a good job. Zacharias has spoken with senators and legislators to authors the bill for more funding. Each asked for \$30 million for this year on top of the \$20 million and \$30 million each year until everyone in Minnesota has broadband. It is a non-partisan issue. Zacharias reported on the hearing by the Association of Minnesota Counties. The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition has a budget of \$60,000 and the EDC paid the annual membership fee of \$500. Broadband Day on the Hill is March 12<sup>th</sup> and in addition to Schmoll, Ramsey Schaffnit, Roger Imdieke, Marotzke, Nissen and possibly Chair Boeschon will attend. The EDC will pay the \$25 registration fee for any member interested in attending Broadband Day on the Hill. A handout was done by the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition (see attached) for Broadband Day on the Hill. Meetings will be held with legislators and possibly Steve Grove, the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of

Employment and Economic Development. The handout includes a list of Coalition members, but not all are paid members, which Schmoll has questioned. Schmoll approved \$100 toward items that will be used to identify Coalition members.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:41 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, April 6, 2020**, via ZOOM.

## Dear Residents of St. Johns Township, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

*"When we are able to deploy broadband ubiquitously, think of all the things we will be able to design, harvest, and develop . . . Broadband in rural America will be as transformative in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as rural electrification was in the last century."*  
U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue

According to Secretary Perdue and his Taskforce on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, e-connectivity, or high-speed broadband, has been recognized as not simply an amenity, but rather an essential infrastructure. High-speed broadband is fundamental for economic development, innovation, advancements in technology (precision farming), workforce readiness, education including K-12, college courses and snow days at home, telemedicine, and improved quality of life. In fact, reliable, affordable, high-speed internet connectivity can transform rural America as a key catalyst for prosperity.

Are you ready for broadband with speeds that are essential for today's way of life? The following partners want to help make that happen.

### Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

Border-to-border high-speed internet access is the goal throughout Minnesota. The Office of Broadband Development is willing to match up to 50% of the cost of upgrading internet in rural areas.



**Making High-Speed a High Priority** - At the office, on the farm or in the classroom. Internet at life-speed.

The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development offers Border-to-Border grants for shovel-ready projects in areas that are unserved or underserved in a competitive application process.



Compass Consultants conducted a study to check interest and cost for a potential project in St. Johns Township.



Arvig will install fiber to every home and business that is currently unserved or underserved and will manage the broadband services if township members vote in favor. For broadband services at speeds of 100 mbps download and 100 mbps upload, monthly fees will be \$60.

The **St. Johns Township Board** of Supervisors has studied the broadband possibilities. They will further assess constituents to find out if creating a shovel-ready broadband project that has potential to bring fiber broadband services to every house and business in the township is desired.



The EDC staff will educate township board members and township constituents, coordinate project planning and assist Arvig or another provider with a grant application if townships decide to pursue a shovel-ready project.

# Universal Access and High-Speed Goal

It is a Minnesota state goal that:

(1) no later than 2022, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to high-speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of at least three megabits per second; the definition for "underserved", and

(2) no later than 2026, all Minnesota businesses and homes have access to at least one provider of broadband with download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and upload speeds of at least 20 megabits per second. The definition for "served".

- **According to State broadband maps, at least 76% of St. Johns Township does not meet Minnesota's internet speed goals.**
- **Compass Consultants' study determined that 44 structures are served, 32 structures are underserved and 105 structures are unserved.**
- **Compass Consultants' study reveals that 71% of those surveyed in St. Johns Township want higher speeds and up to 85% would subscribe if better service was available.**

A fiber broadband install for the 137 structures (44.39 miles) that are considered unserved or underserved has a project cost of approximately \$1,397,016. With a state grant and provider investment of up to 65% of the cost, the township portion to install will be approximately \$488,956 (\$3,569 per structure). This cost can be reduced if businesses invest and/or other contributions are secured.

## Your Investment

In today's world, broadband is a necessity, just as rural electricity was in years past. Are you willing to help St. Johns Township meet current broadband needs, increase your home's value, and utilize high-speed broadband in your home or business? The Township Board needs your input in order to decide if the township should invest in this important infrastructure. The Township's portion of the project cost will require bonding and a fee on your taxes of approximately \$360 each year for 10 years (\$30 per month) for the infrastructure. The high-speed broadband service would then be available to you for around \$60 per month.

### Two important matters to consider

- **Informational Meeting:** Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m. at the Pennock Civic Center, 305 Dakota Avenue. EDC staff will be there to educate/answer questions.
- **Your ballot on this issue is enclosed.** After considering all information available, please return your completed ballot in the enclosed envelope by March 20, 2020.

Your Township Board of Supervisors:

Darrell Peterson, Melvin Schwart, Duane Hultgren, Dean Gunderson and Randy Kveene



# Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition Fact Sheet 2020

**Goal:** The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and its supporters request the 2020 Legislature to fund the Border- to-Border Broadband Development Grant program with \$30 million base funding in the 2020 supplemental budget to achieve the state's 2026 broadband speed goal of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload. Consistent and stable funding of the grant program is important to allow economic development agencies, local governments and others to be creative and collaborative in their approach to providing broadband services to these areas.

**Background:** The Legislature funded the Grant Program at \$40 million in the 2020-21 biennial budget, the largest multi-year investment in the state's history. However, the Office of Broadband Development received grant applications totaling \$70 million in requests for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the state. That leaves a \$30 million gap between need and available funds.

The Governor's Task Force on Broadband Report in 2018 recommended \$70 million per biennium in on-going funding. This level of funding will provide minimum broadband internet speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps to the households and businesses that currently lack such service—and will help Minnesota achieve its statutory broadband speed goal of connecting all Minnesotans with broadband internet speeds of 100 Mbps/20 Mbps by 2026.

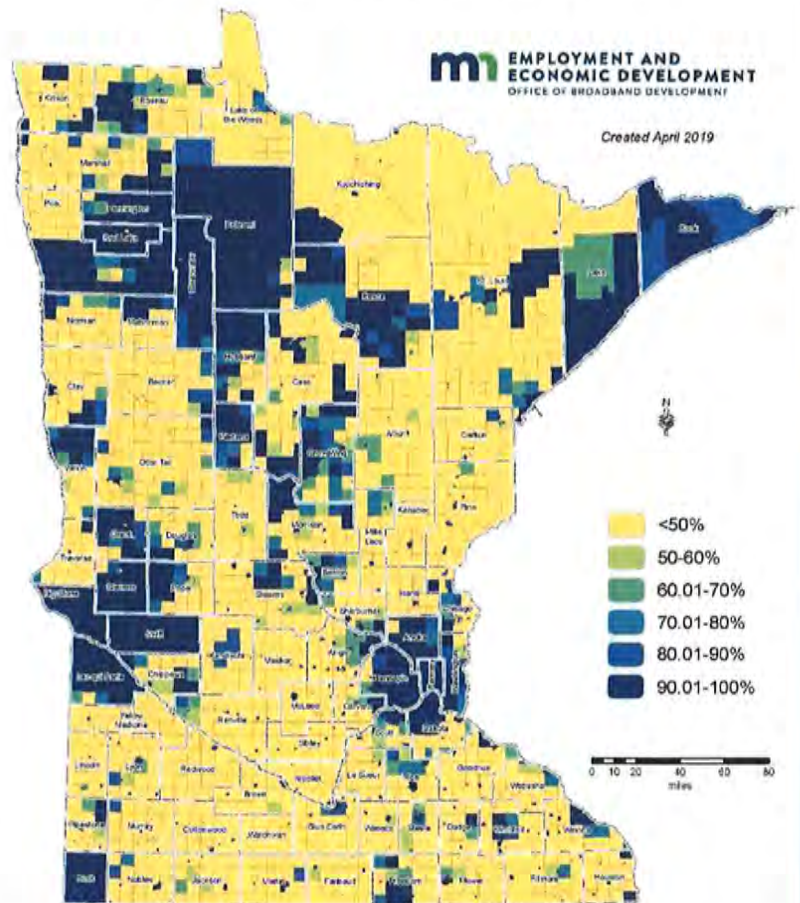
Broadband and internet speeds are improving across Minnesota. What we've achieved is a patchwork of highly successful areas, leaving behind many rural areas that are underserved and will have difficult time reaching the goal without state assistance grants. Many states across the country look to Minnesota as a national leader on rural broadband development. Despite all the good work that we've done, there is still much more to be done to ensure everyone has access.

"Everyone in Minnesota will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities and across the globe."

-The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition's vision

## 2019 Broadband Availability in the State of Minnesota

Percentage of Households Served by Wireline Broadband Service by City/Township  
At Least 100 Mbps Download/20 Mbps Upload Speeds  
Statewide Availability: 85.98%, Rural: 68.43%



This map was prepared by Connected Nation under contract with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. The map represents areas of broadband service availability based on provider data submitted to and analyzed by Connected Nation. This data is current as of December 31, 2018.

Additional maps and data are available at <http://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/maps>  
Upon request, this information can be made available in alternate formats for people with disabilities by contacting the DEED Office of Broadband Development at 651-259-7610.

Submit questions or recommended changes to:  
DEED [broadband@state.mn.us](mailto:broadband@state.mn.us)

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## Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition Members

- Arrowhead Health
- Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Barbara Dröher
- Chisago County HRA/EDA
- Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota
- City of Winthrop
- Clay County
- Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities
- CoBank
- Community of Minnesota Resorts
- Community Technology Advisors Corp
- Consolidated Telephone Company
- Cooperative Lights
- Cooperative Network
- Cooperative Network Services
- Development Services, Inc.
- East Central MN Educational Cable Cooperative
- East Central Regional Development Commission
- Economic Development Association of Minnesota
- EssentiaHealth
- Finley Engineering
- Fond du Lac Tribal Communications
- GPS 45:93
- Great River Energy
- Greater Minnesota Partnership
- Growth and Justice
- Hay Creek Township
- Headwaters Regional Development Commission
- Hiawatha Broadband Communications
- IMPACT 20/20
- Institute for Local SelfReliance
- Iron Range Economic Alliance
- Isanti County
- ISD 317 Deer River
- Jody Kramer, CPA
- Kanabec County EDA
- Kandiyohi County Economic Development
- League of Minnesota Cities
- Leech Lake Tribal Telecommunications
- Le Sueur County Broadband Coalition
- Lincoln County EDC
- Meeker Cooperative
- Meeker County EDA
- MidMinnesota Development Commission
- MiEnergy Cooperative
- Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers
- Minnesota Association of Small Cities
- Minnesota Association of Townships
- Minnesota Corn Growers Association
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Library Association
- Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association
- Minnesota Public Broadband Alliance
- Minnesota Rural Education Association
- Minnesota Rural Electric Association
- Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
- MN Association of Community Telecommunications and Administrators
- MN River Valley Education District
- MN Rural Counties Caucus
- MN Telecom Alliance
- MVTV Wireless
- Neighborhood National Bank
- Nemadji Research Corporation
- Nobles County Economic Opportunity Network
- North Region Health Alliance
- North Star Township
- Northeast Service Cooperative
- Northland Foundation
- Northwest Minnesota Foundation
- NW Regional Development Commission
- PCs for People
- Project FINE
- Range Association of Municipalities and Schools
- Redwing Ignite
- Redwood County
- Region 5 Regional Development Commission
- Region Nine Development Commission
- Schools for Equity in Education
- Sherburne County EDA
- Sourcewell
- Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative
- Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
- Southwest Initiative Foundation
- Southwest Regional Development Commission
- SPIRE Credit Union
- Treacy Information Services
- Turtle Island Communications
- Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
- West Central Initiative
- Winthrop EDA