

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

March 6, 2017

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlieck, Kathy Dillon, Scott Froemming, Larry Kleindl, Les Nelson, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Larry Handlin, Michelle Marotzke and Brian Mort

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Dean Bouta called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Donn Winckler, SECONDED BY Mark Boeschen, to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2017 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

CTC Border-to-Border Grant project. Connie Schmoll reported CTC (Consolidated Telecommunications Company) has not yet signed the grant agreement as it is not convinced it will obtain the take rates proposed in the grant application. CTC is interested in this committee assisting with marketing to obtain a 50% take rate before it will commit to the project. The committee questioned why the EDC is receiving contacts from interested subscribers and not CTC and why hasn't CTC already been marketing to potential subscribers? Schmoll is working with CTC to hold meet and greet events between CTC and those within the grant project. Larry Kleindl stated CTC committed to holding three public meetings. Possible locations for the meet and greet events were discussed and it was recommended all of the events be held at the same location to eliminate any confusion. Schmoll will see if the Dethlefs Community Center in Spicer is available. The meet and greet events will include a presentation by CTC about what they are doing, who they are and the cost for subscribing. CTC will provide time and opportunity to obtain pledges from subscribers. Schmoll has requested the GIS layers from Kandiyohi County for CTC.

Schmoll stated that per CTC, there are 1,600 premises in the grant area. The database Schmoll has covers 2,800 names and an updated list for the grant area has not been received from CTC. CTC is requesting a commitment from 50% of the premises in the project area by mid-April before it will financially commit to the project. Schmoll stated her research of other grant projects showed approximate take rates of 35% in the first year, 40% in the second year and 50% in the third year. The committee questioned such a high take rate for Kandiyohi County when compared to these statistics. Kleindl stated bond interest rates have risen since September 2016 and may go up again in May. As a

result, CTC is stating the project will cost them another \$700,000 in interest. Kleindl is working with CTC on the bonds.

As CTC has not yet started marketing to potential subscribers, this committee feels it is imperative to assist in moving the project forward and discussed how to market the project. The committee would like marketing materials to assist them in contacting potential subscribers to ensure everyone is receiving the same information. Marketing options discussed included going door-to-door; leaving a door hanger if no one is found at home; having a two-part form where the individual can checkoff their commitment and send one part to CTC and retain one part with information on the project and services; mail postcards; provide information to area churches as a bulletin insert and include in area newsletters. Dependent on the time line, Scott Froemming offered to put information in Kandiyohi Power Cooperative's newsletter, however a newsletter was just mailed, and add a link on its website. It was determined it was not feasible to do radio announcements as the project is not open to everyone. The committee determined the best way to reach subscribers is through the meet and greet events, but there is still a need to communicate the events to the right people to get them to attend. It was suggested that when CTC provides an updated database, the committee review it and select individuals to call and ask those individuals, such as Jean Spaulding and Pat Solheid, to help in recruiting their neighborhoods. Schmoll indicated CTC is willing to create a pre-sales website, which this committee can advertise and to which subscribers can be directed. It was noted this committee must have a clearer map showing the project area. If CTC created a postcard and provides the database of addresses, this committee can get them mailed through General Mailing.

Schmoll requested assistance from committee members to sign-in attendees at the meet and greet events. Schmoll has provided CTC with the following possible dates for the meet and greet events: March 20 5:00-7:00 p.m.; March 23 5:00-7:00 p.m. and April 4 5:00-7:00 p.m. Kleindl provided the bonding schedule that will take place in April and indicated the interest rate will be known on April 7. Schmoll will email the committee with the final dates and times of the meet and greet events. Schmoll has a conference call with CTC today on its marketing plans. It was noted the project is very tight fiscally and CTC has stated it will not go over the amount given in the grant application, however, the State of Minnesota has indicated that CTC is fiscally able to do the project. Kevin Beyer of Federated Telephone Cooperatives states they do not do projects such as this for the money—it is about providing a service. The cost guideline CTC submitted in the grant application must be maintained for five years.

The committee reiterated the need for the database before neighborhood champions can be identified and contact can be made. Schmoll will obtain the database from CTC. Committee members will call individuals on the database and invite them to the meet and greet events and encourage sign up for services. Committee members asked if there is a private entity willing to put money into the project, if the 50% take rate is not met? Committee members believe obtaining 800 individuals to commit to future services in such a short time, is unrealistic. If CTC does not move forward with the project, the funds would return to the state's broadband grant fund. Schmoll will put together a calling list and get it to the committee.

WildFire 5G, LLC. Dave Sisser stated WildFire 5G really wants to do a project in Kandiyohi County. Committee members questioned if WildFire can do what it says it can do? It was noted it has a good internet speed. WildFire 5G wants to tap into a fiber ring for its backbone. WildFire 5G could also be a CTC customer. WildFire 5G wants to do a test project and is looking for structures in Willmar and

needs a fiber connectivity pipe. It is looking at towers that are county or city owned as cell towers are too expensive. WildFire 5G is requesting this committee to help in finding a location/tower it can use. It is believed their potential is tremendous. Donna Boonstra indicated WildFire 5G is willing to provide references from Georgia. Boonstra requested information from Kody Aasen, but has not yet heard from him.

NEW BUSINESS

Broadband Day at the Capitol. Chairperson Bouta stated the first-ever rural Broadband Day on the Hill is March 15. Donna Boonstra, Chairperson Bouta, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke and Connie Schmoll will attend. They will meet with local legislators and try to obtain more information from other areas of the state.

Other. Chairperson Bouta announced he will be gone for the April 3, 2017 committee meeting. Boonstra agreed to chair the April 3 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, April 3, 2017**, at the Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar.