

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

MINUTES

May 7, 2018

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Bruce DeBlieck, Scott Froemming, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Les Nelson, Gregg Price and David Sisser

Excused: Dean Bouta, Brian Mort, Ramsey Schaffnit and Donn Winckler

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:01 p.m. and added to the Agenda under New Business, a letter from TDS to its customers.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY Scott Froemming, to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2018 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Broadband Day at the Capitol. Connie Schmoll reported several members of this committee attended Broadband Day at the Capitol on April 12, 2108. Individuals spoke in support of broadband and they heard bills that are before the Senate and House for broadband funding. Representatives of this committee distributed packets of information. The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition set up meetings with legislators for our representatives. Senator Lang met with the group and listened about issues for Kandiyohi County, including childcare issues, a 2018 goal of the EDC. Donna Boonstra reported the group attended a hearing led by Rep. Pat Garofalo. Chair Boeschen stated Rep. Garafalo is in favor of satellite and no one spoke against adding it to the broadband bill. Attendees were unaware that satellite would be discussed. Rep. Garafalo stated his reasoning for including satellite is that some people can only get satellite and this is an attempt to get broadband to unserved areas. Schmoll reported people asked about satellite after this meeting. A satellite alliance representative spoke during the hearing. Rep. Dave Baker continues to ask questions about wireless. Boeschen informed Rep. Baker that wireless service cannot be mapped because it is so inconsistent, speeds are not up to the state's minimum and the maximum speed is 25/3. It was felt the committee needs to continue to work with Rep. Baker and

keep him informed. The hearing was a special session because of Broadband Day at the Capitol. The broadband bill had support from legislators, but funding is the issue.

Legislative Bills/Updates. Schmoll noted appreciation for the legislative updates distributed by the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and stated the EDC's membership is worthwhile. Schmoll has forwarded updates to the committee. Schmoll stated \$15 million is being requested for the state Border-to-Border grant program, which is far less than what is needed. Rep. Garafolo is asking that \$750,000 be set aside for satellite.

Hiawatha Broadband Communications update. Schmoll reported she spoke with Dan Pecarina of Hiawatha Broadband Communications (HBC) this morning, who stated they are working on a project for Kandiyohi County and intend to apply for a Border-to-Border grant. Pecarina also spoke about working with Great River Energy and he intends to contact Kandi Power Cooperative. HBC is looking at installing fiber along Highway 7 and in the communities along Highway 7. Schmoll recently met with Christianson Systems, which uses MVTV wireless. Schmoll was informed the city of Blomkest cannot get broadband services. The committee discussed whether or not to support projects that include wireless. Dave Sisser stated many areas are going with hybrid services using a combination of wireless and fiber. Chair Boeschen stated there is a difference between supporting a project and supporting funding a project. It was noted the middle mile is where the greatest expense is and hybrid services benefit the end user.

It was reported Frontier Communications and TDS have done fiber to nodes. As copper is replaced, it is replaced with fiber. Service providers may upgrade to fiber as old equipment is replaced. When asked what is the goal, service or technology, Chair Boeschen stated the number one goal is fiber installation where possible and a mix of other services. The county is at the mercy of providers. The committee should do due diligence on any service provider's claims as to service. There is a cost of the committee's reputation if the committee endorses a certain product or service. The committee should cautiously support anything less than fiber. It cannot reasonably guarantee anything less than fiber.

## NEW BUSINESS

USDA RUS Telecommunications Program. Schmoll reported she spoke with Pecarina about RUS (Rural Utilities Service) loan programs. HBC will apply for RUS funds. Schmoll contacted Dominic Henderson, this area's USDA RUS contact about available programs. Henderson directed her to the RUS website. Schmoll will continue to monitor RUS programs and encouraged the committee to look at RUS information. Scott Froemming stated Kandi Power Cooperative is not currently an RUS borrower, but could participate in RUS programs. Froemming will look into RUS programs.

TDS. Chair Boeschen reported TDS is notifying local customers that they can be released from their contracts with TDS and higher speeds will not be available in the near future. Schmoll spoke with Jean Pauk, a TDS representative, who looked into the letter. Pauk stated the letter was notifying its customers that they have other options. Rep. Baker also sent a letter to TDS in response. Schmoll informed a local customer to contact their legislators about their broadband

service and to promote passage of funds for the state Border-to-Border grant program, which she did. Lake Andrew Township also sent a letter to legislators.

Schmoll has been working with TDS and Charter about businesses located at the intersection of Highways 9 and 71. Charter informed Schmoll it would cost \$255,000 to get service from their nearest location four miles away. Customers in that area could obtain service for a monthly fee of \$1,200 that would be paid over seven years. Schmoll commended Charter for being responsive and willing to look at providing services. Froemming stated utilities are not putting in lines during the Highway 71 construction.

Larry Kleindl stated every tall building in Kandiyohi County has been spoken for and is at capacity for transmission towers. Schmoll stated potential residents to Kandiyohi County have been asking about broadband services. Les Nelson stated Meeker County's broadband feasibility study is done and will be presented Wednesday.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:45 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is 12 noon, Monday, June 4, 2018 at Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar.