

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

**MINUTES**

**July 11, 2022**

**Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference**

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra, Bruce DeBlieck, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Rollie Nissen and David Sisser

Excused: Dean Bouta and Goldie Smith

Absent: Tony Kirby and Ryan Nelson

Guest: Brian Zawierucha, Technology Specialist of Live Production, Jennie-O Turkey Store

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:06 a.m.

**AGENDA**—The agenda was approved as emailed.

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the Minutes of the June 6, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS**—

**Introduction and election of new committee member.** Brian Zawierucha has been with Jennie-O Turkey Store for three years. His role includes everything from helping people with cell phone apps to environmental systems, which keep the turkey barns cool. Zawierucha will be part of the broadband panel at the Partners in Ag Innovation Conference.

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to accept Brian Zawierucha as a member of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

**Border-to-Border Grant and Subcommittee Organization.** Chair Boeschen reported the Border-to-Border grant application period is open with a deadline of August 4, 2022. The broadband subcommittees will be replaced by two task forces. The first will help update details needed for the grant, such as verifying the number of residences and businesses in each township. The second task force will provide a list of ideas for educational activities, specifically to teach people about broadband, how to use it and how to use related devices. Flyers and brochures will be created, however, they will not satisfy the grant requirements. It encourages activities, such as classes or a broadband planning fair similar to what was held in LeSueur,

Minnesota. The activities do not need to take place within the grant area as long as they happen in Kandiyohi County. Marotzke reported the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and the EDC have been holding sessions to aid people applying for frontline worker pay, and asked if this could be used as part of the education requirement. It will be considered. Chair Boeschon asked for volunteers for the two task forces. The following committee members volunteered:

Grant Task Force—Donna Boonstra and Jason Hulstein. Anyone else deciding to volunteer will email Swedburg

Education Task Force—Rollie Nissen, David Sisser, Marotzke and Bruce DeBlick

**Budget Review.** Swedburg reported this committee's 2022 budget has funds available for attending conferences, seminars, training, marketing, meals, meeting refreshments and mileage reimbursement. Anyone travelling on behalf of the Broadband Committee is encouraged to turn in their mileage for reimbursement. Swedburg requested feedback on the 2023 proposed budget, which shows increases in marketing, postage, printing and general administrative services. Nissen asked for clarification of the 2022 postage expense; Swedburg will check on it. [Note: this expense was to mail postcards via General Mailing.]

**Tri-fold Educational Piece.** Marotzke reported a tri-fold brochure is in the draft stage. It focuses on education and will be mentioned in the grant application. The draft will be forwarded to the committee for feedback. The finished product will be distributed at events being held at Norway Lake and Lake Andrew Townships. The Education Task Force will consider having a broadband education booth at the county fair, where the brochures will be available.

**Broadband Events.** The Education Task Force will determine what events will be held. One possibility is an event patterned after the broadband planning fair held in LeSueur, where each broadband service provider had a booth and gave a 10-minute presentation promoting their service. Sisser plans to contact Barbara Droher-Kline, Broadband Initiative Coordinator for LeSueur County, for details on organizing the fair.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Vibrant Broadband (Including USDA ReConnect Grant).** Chair Boeschon reported Vibrant Broadband is close to completing installation in Hawick, and is working on the south side of Long Lake. Service will be activated in the fall. Swedburg requested ideas for community champions in Roseville Township, as it has not yet approved funds for broadband. Roger Imdieke clarified Roseville Township has approved funds contingent on the cost of gravel road maintenance.

**Charter.** Chair Boeschon reported Charter is awaiting an environmental review to complete the 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue project. Installation on 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue has begun, with no update on its progress. New London Township needs community champions for the remaining unserved areas of the township, which Charter will handle upon approval. The township plans to meet with a lawyer to discuss funding options. Swedburg will contact Doug Dietz, New London Township Supervisor, to encourage action as it is necessary for the township to commit the funds before the project can move forward. The project will encompass all of New London Township that is not currently served or under installation.

**Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC).** The estimated cost of the West Project has risen from \$10 million to \$13 million. Kevin Beyer from FTC is working on solutions to keep the project under \$10 million to capitalize on the state Border-to-Border Grant. The cuts will likely happen in Dovre Township, because the other three townships plan to impose a levy. The Broadband Committee will be involved in these decisions and will consider removing expensive runs and areas where many voted against the project. The ultimate

goal is to drive the cost down while affecting the least number of residents. Inquiries have been made to Diane Wells at the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development in regard to the low-density pilot program, which could be used to fund the Northwest Project. This project had a cost of \$15 million prior to the price increases. Township leaders remain committed to the project. In a manner similar to Vibrant Broadband's approach with the ReConnect Grant, FTC will service the low-density areas first and fill in high-density areas later. The timeline could be lengthy, as the low-density pilot program is tied to additional funds that need to be approved by the U.S. Treasury.

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).** Marotzke and Chair Boeschen will meet with NTIA on July 12, 2022 to find out why the grant application submitted earlier this year was denied.

**Arvig.** As of June 16, 2022, Arvig has installed 70 percent of the mainline ducts and vaults, and plans to finish in approximately two weeks. The main cables on County Road 1, Kandiyohi Avenue and Third Street were completed in mid-June.

Chair Boeschen clarified the resident's cost responsibilities with the various projects. FTC, with the Border-to-Border grant, has to serve every location in its given area at no cost to the resident. That is not the case with the other projects. While Vibrant Broadband is paying for the main line, it is requiring a three-year agreement with free installation, if the resident is located within 800 feet of the main line. Those located more than 800 feet away will have two years to request service at no additional cost. After the two years the resident will share the cost of installation. Charter has a \$100 installation fee, waived if a three-year agreement is signed. Residents need to understand fiber will not be installed to their home free of charge if they don't sign up for service. Discussions regarding this issue will continue in subsequent meetings.

**Kandiyohi County Line Extension Grant.** Discussion was held on whether to initiate the Kandiyohi County Line Extension Grant program or wait for implementation of the State of Minnesota Line Extension Program. The committee's consensus was to move forward with the county's version of the program to ensure applicants receive a timely response while the provider is installing fiber in their area. The matter will be revisited when the state program becomes available.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY David Sisser, that the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee recommends to Kandiyohi County that it approve using \$300,000 of its American Rescue Plan Act funds for the Kandiyohi County Line Extension Grant. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **REPORTS—**

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Swedburg reported the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition's next meeting will take place in August.

**ADJOURNMENT—**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, August 1, 2022** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.