

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

October 2, 2023

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

Present: Duane Anderson, Kelsey Baker, Mark Boeschen, Jesse Gislason, Jason Hulstein, Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson (via Zoom), Rollie Nissen and David Sisser

Excused: Paul Bolle, Bruce DeBlieck, Roger Imdieke and Chuck Stranberg

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:03 a.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to approve the Minutes of the September 11, 2023 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

GRANTS—

Grant Update. The Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program is anticipated to open sometime in October and applications will be due at least 60 days following that date.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. No action has been taken since the previous meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Updates on Additional Potential Projects. Potential projects include Colfax and Lake Andrew Townships, which will be served by Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC), and Genessee, Fahlun, Kandiyohi and Lake Lillian Townships, handled by Vibrant Broadband. Discussions have taken place at all of these townships and all have shown interest in the projects. A firm commitment on the number of passings and township funding are the next steps. If the Border-to-Border Broadband Development grants are awarded, these projects will exhaust the ARPA funding earmarked for broadband by Kandiyohi County. If additional funds are needed, the county will be approached for help.

Michelle Marotzke reported the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) has expressed interest in funding broadband projects. Marotzke mentioned there are small gaps in service as a result of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) program. EDA viewed this as an opportunity. Swedburg suggested that because the EDA counts farms as businesses, the southwest quadrant of Kandiyohi County could qualify for funding. Finding a willing provider will present a challenge. FTC will not participate in the Broadband Equity

Access and Deployment (BEAD) program due to the reporting requirements for federal funding. Marotzke commented Mid-Minnesota Development Commission is willing to help with reporting and grant applications. Vibrant Broadband may be a solution. Other areas that could benefit from EDA funding include the city of Blomkest, and Whitefield and Willmar Townships.

REPORTS—

Digital Connection Task Force. Comments on the digital opportunity plan have been submitted to the Office of Broadband Development.

West FTTP—FTC. FTC is running ahead of schedule on the West Project. The main line should be finished within the month. The connection process will take months to complete. An open house or ribbon-cutting event has been discussed.

City of Willmar. Sisser reported the agreements are in place with Hometown Fiber and the City of Willmar. Focus has shifted to how to handle the bonding. Once resolved it will be taken to the city council. Kyle Box, City Operations Director, and his staff will take on the task due to the resignation of Justice Walker. The project will move forward as scheduled.

Vibrant ReConnect Project. There will be an Open House on December 6, 2023 in Atwater for Vibrant Broadband to meet with area residents. A flyer will be sent to township supervisors in the relevant area.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, November 6, 2023** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.