

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

February 5, 2024

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

Present: Duane Anderson, Paul Bolle, Mark Boeschen, Bruce DeBlieck, Jesse Gislason, Jason Hulstein (via Zoom), Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson and Chuck Stranberg

Excused: Tony Kirby, Rollie Nissen and David Sisser

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Chuck Stranberg, SECONDED BY Ryan Nelson, to approve the Minutes of the January 8, 2024 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

Rescind motion of \$2,500 for FAJ Language Services.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to rescind the motion to recommend to the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners that \$2,500 in American Rescue Plan Act funds be allocated to reimburse Fadumo Hussein of FAJ Language Services for her work in the Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment process. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Use of ARPA funds for Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Enrollment. Chairperson Mark Boeschen reported the enrollment period for ACP will close on February 7, 2024, making the tabled discussion of recommending that \$15,000 of ARPA funds be spent to help with the enrollment process unnecessary. Anyone already enrolled will remain on the program until the funds run out in April. Notification of program termination will be sent to enrollees. ACP may be revived in the future, but it needs a long-term funding mechanism. Marotzke spoke with the Office of Broadband Development suggesting it institute a program to replace ACP.

GRANTS—

Minnesota Line Extension Grant Update. Chair Boeschen had no updates for the Minnesota Line Extension Grant. Roger Imdieke reported that a resident applied for it and was told the funds are already committed. This application will remain in the queue for the next round. Charter’s lack of participation in the program created a problem for area residents. With a new team in place at Charter, the hope is it will participate in the next round. Some residents in St. Johns Township were able to take advantage of the program.

Border-to-Border Grant Applications Update. Grant awards should be announced at the end of February or the beginning of March. Federated Telephone Cooperative has not received any challenges to its application area.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. Assuming all grants applied for this round are awarded, approximately \$95,000 remains in ARPA funds allocated for broadband usage.

REPORTS—

Current Local Projects

West FTTP – Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC). FTC plans to send letters to residents in the West Project to let them know when service will be available.

City of Willmar. Chair Boeschen, Marotzke, David Sisser and Bruce DeBlieck attended the Willmar City Council work session, where Hometown Fiber presented its overall plan. The City of Willmar will own the infrastructure and Hometown Fiber will install and operate it. Local service providers will have access to the fiber for a fee. No ARPA funds have been used for this project.

Miscellaneous. Chair Boeschen met with Whitefield Township to discuss next steps for a broadband project, and Green Lake and Willmar Townships have expressed interest. Hurdles for future projects include securing a provider and an unknown quantity of county funds. Vibrant Broadband and Charter are possible providers in those areas. Boeschen plans to continue visiting townships to keep them informed on the grant situation. New projects are on hold pending the announcement of Border-to-Border grant awards.

ADJOURNMENT— Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, March 4, 2024** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.