

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

MINUTES

March 4, 2024

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

Present: Duane Anderson, Kelsey Baker, Mark Boeschen, Bruce DeBlieck, Jesse Gislason, Jason Hulstein (via Zoom), Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke (via Zoom), David Sisser and Chuck Stranberg

Excused: Paul Bolle and Ryan Nelson

Absent: Tony Kirby and Rollie Nissen

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 Roger Imdieke, to approve the Minutes of the February 5, 2024 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS—

Election of Vice Chairperson. Chair Boeschen stated that due to Michelle Marotzke being named Business Development Manager of the EDC, it is necessary to elect a new Vice Chairperson for the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee.

[Bruce DeBlieck joined the meeting.]

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY David Sisser to elect Chuck Stranberg as Vice Chairperson of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee for 2024. MOTION CARRIED.

GRANTS—

Minnesota Line Extension Grant Update. There was no update to report. Anyone who applied but didn't receive a grant will remain eligible for the next round.

Border-to-Border Grant Applications Update. There has been no disclosure of Border-to-Border grant awards as of today. Chair Boeschen suspects the announcement may be made at the Office of Broadband Development's Celebrating 10 Years of Connecting One Minnesota Broadband Event on March 12, 2024.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds. There is no change in the remaining ARPA funds allocated by Kandiyohi County for broadband use.

REPORTS—

Digital Connection Task. There is no update available.

CURRENT LOCAL PROJECTS

West FTTP. There is no update available.

City of Willmar. Sisser reported a meeting will be held on Friday, March 8 to discuss the Hometown Fiber project. A presentation and work session will be scheduled as well as additional meetings. The City hopes to get the bonding in place to start the project this year, but it may already be too late for 2024.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural ReConnect Program. Round five of the USDA Rural ReConnect Program will open on March 22, 2024. The program’s new definition of what constitutes a low-density area has diminished the effectiveness of this grant. Vibrant Broadband is responsible for submitting the application.

Vibrant ReConnect Project. Vibrant Broadband is working with the federal government to complete environmental assessments, which need to be done before engineering can be completed. The project should get started later this year.

Vibrant Border-to-Border Project. Sixteen miles in Harrison Township have been constructed with splicing to begin in the next few weeks. Engineering is complete in Lake Elizabeth and East Lake Lillian Townships, with field staking to begin in the next few weeks and construction starting shortly after.

The One Minnesota Annual Broadband Conference will take place on March 12, 2024 in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. Marotzke will speak on digital equity, while Imdieke will speak on broadband infrastructure.

ADJOURNMENT— Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, April 1, 2024** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.