

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

MINUTES

January 7, 2019

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlicke, Scott Froemming, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Brian Mort, Les Nelson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit, and Donn Winckler

Excused: David Sisser

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:05 p.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Added to the agenda under

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Donn Winckler, to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2018 meeting with the correction of moving Michelle Marotzke from present to excused. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

2019 Chair and Vice Chair Elections.

IT WAS MOVED BY Ramsey Schaffnit, SECONDED BY Larry Kleindl, to re-elect Mark Boeschen as chair and David Sisser as vice chair. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Connie Schmoll reported she will attend the January 30th meeting of the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition via phone. Broadband Day on the Hill will be

held April 3, 2019. The Coalition is encouraging individuals to contact their legislators in support of broadband. Governor Tim Walz is highly supportive of broadband and including more funds. Steve Grove, the new Commissioner of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) that oversees the Office of Broadband Development, was formerly employed by Google and should be in favor of broadband.

Demo—NEO Partners. Schmoll reported she was contacted by Paul Deming, who is now working with NEO Partners. Chair Boeschen, Schmoll, Donn Winckler and Larry Kleindl attended a demonstration by NEO Partners, which has a marketing tool. The proposition included the county owning the broadband and bonding for it at a cost of \$52 million. The county is not interested in owning broadband, which was conveyed to NEO Partners. Winckler felt it was a better fit for cities rather than an entire county.

Arvig's Plans. Schmoll discussed with Arvig the USDA Community Connect Grant Program. The USDA's served definition of broadband speeds are 10 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 1 Mbps upload. Schmoll stated Arvig is still interested in doing a project in Kandiyohi County and would like a written proposal of where to do the project. Arvig would fund 50% of the project and would look to this committee to fund the other 50%.

Other. Scott Froemming reported the Farm Bill includes \$350 million in grants and loans for deploying rural broadband. Grants are for areas where 90% of the homes lack internet service at a minimum level of 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload. In other areas where half the homes are without 25/3 Mbps service, applicants will be eligible for loans. Regional workshops and online webinars will be held. Schmoll reported she is developing a letter to U.S. Senator Tina Smith about what else can be done for broadband as the USDA Community Connect Grant Program is not an option. Congressman Peterson has said funds are available, but not being used, which is due to the unserved language not being realistic. It is believed the USDA program includes wireless service, but not satellite.

Dean Bouta noted Blandin has interesting articles on the FCC and Microsoft on its website. DEED has maps online and a link to www.checkspeedminnesota.com, where individuals can test their internet speed. LTD is advertising 250/30 service; Charter now has 200/13 and 1 Gig; and Arvig bought out Windstream. Meeker Cooperative is excited about its broadband project. Schmoll and Froemming will be meeting with Meeker Cooperative in January. Schmoll read parts of a newspaper article as to a lawsuit by the Minnesota Attorney General against Frontier Communications. Winckler reported he provided information on Kandiyohi County's state broadband grant process to Southwest Regional Development Commission, which is collecting stories on the challenge process for the state grant.

2019 GOALS/PROJECT PLANNING

Broadband Coalition. The committee reviewed the "Draft Ideas for Forming Kandiyohi County Broadband Coalition," prepared by Marotzke, Winckler and Les Nelson (see attached). Winckler stated he based these ideas on what was done to form the Highway 23 Coalition and stated the following as ideas the committee needs to think about:

- current status of broadband
- goals for the coalition
- how could a coalition help the process

For the community meetings, the following was mentioned:

- state that the committee is thinking of forming a coalition and ask the attendees if they would join
- get feedback from attendees
- find out who would be interested in serving on a board/committee
- get feedback on a membership fee structure (Winckler noted the core group of the Highway 23 Coalition set its membership fees rather than asking the potential members)
- plan for current providers to participate

Market the community meeting with a line, such as “Tired of bad internet? Consider attending a proposed broadband coalition meeting.” It will be a grassroots effort to bring broadband to the county. The local broadband coalition could be a member of the state coalition. Schmoll suggested the committee could start with education on the township level. Kleindl stated the annual township meeting is in March at the Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building. Marketing and education will be key as more than half the population lives in the cities of Willmar, New London and Spicer, which all have broadband. It could be proposed that the townships add a broadband fee onto their taxes. Winckler stated Highway 23 Coalition members attended city council meetings and made one-to-one contacts with potential members.

It is important to determine the goal of the coalition. It was suggested that if the state broadband grant rules are not changed, Kandiyohi County will never have a broadband project. To get the rules changed, Kandiyohi County will need to join forces with other counties.

Marotzke is willing to help with education.

The following was discussed:

- What is this committee going to deliver?
- Invite previous contacts to be members of the coalition?
- Need to define the coalition.
- Vision and goals should be primary focus.
- What is in it for those who already have decent broadband?
- Need amenities to support the county’s regional center.
- Get testimonials.
- Why would someone want to be a member, what would be valuable?
- Need to be part of a bigger voice
- Impediments includes the grant rules and education.
- Get the language for the state grant rules.

Schmoll, Winckler, Donna Boonstra and Boeschen will work on goals, a message and who will be the members. A meeting date will be announced should other committee members wish to attend. Froemming questioned if the committee will try to pull things together to have an impact on this legislative session? If so, Kleindl stated bills are introduced in March. It was suggested that

if the Southwest Regional Development Commission is working on a bill, this committee could support them. Winckler agreed to check with the Southwest Regional Development Commission as to a draft bill. Goals for the coalition would be high-reaching goals and lesser goals that can be achieved in short order. Schmoll recommended this committee prepare to have a strong voice at the Capitol on April 3rd.

Kleindl announced this committee's monthly meeting conflicts with the Vision 2040 Steering Committee meeting. The County Board will set its committee assignments tomorrow and he will see if a County Commissioner can replace him on this committee and attend these meetings.

ADJOURNMENT—

IT WAS MOVED, SECONDED AND CARRIED to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:07 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, February 4, 2019** at Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Room 2057, Willmar.

Draft Ideas for Forming Kandiyohi County Broadband Coalition

The following would be Bylaws headings for the Coalition that will indicate areas where decisions will need to be made: As funds are involved need to do things in a proper fashion.

- Name of Organization
- Organizational Structure
- Purpose
- Vision and Goals
- Membership Make-up
- Voting Members and if we have ex-officio members
- Use of membership funds
- Organizational Management
 - Board of Directors
 - Terms
 - Meetings
 - Vacancy
 - Officers and terms of officers
 - Standing Committees and the allowing for Special Committees
 - Standing Committees could be Membership Committee, Legislative Committee, Marketing/Education Committee, other?
 - Utilize our current County Broadband Committee as the Technical Committee that also helps staff the Coalition
 - General members of the Coalition may serve on Standing Committees
 - Meetings of General Membership
 - Rules & procedures for meetings, etc.
- Amendment process to Bylaws

Starting spot for discussion of possible **budget** with guesses on amounts to come up with an idea on first year costs: Obviously, this will be a big discussion point on what we want to accomplish and what will it take financially. For example, do we need a website if it is determined it is too much to raise? [Could we piggyback on the EDC's website \(a devoted page\) rather than creating one devoted to broadband?](#) **Using the EDC's website would be a good idea if they are agreeable. As this coalition is totally inside the County, they will probably be willing. What we save on a website, we may need to add to marketing materials, as I likely underestimated the need here? Again I would want and expect a good group discussion for all of this.**

➤ Website development hosting/updating	\$5,000
➤ Marketing materials/printing	\$5,000
➤ Legislative activities	\$1,000
➤ Bookkeeping	\$1,500
➤ Supplies	\$ 500
➤ Legal and Professional Services	\$1,250
➤ Board Insurance	\$750
➤ Special Events/meetings	\$2,000
➤ Misc.	\$500
➤ State Coalition Membership	<u>\$1,000?</u>

TOTAL

\$18,500

Note: The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission is the bookkeeper /fiscal agent for the Highway 23 Coalition. We would be open to do this for this Coalition as well. Cost would only be for time spent by my Financial Director for this duty.

Possible Membership Structure:

Government Members:	Possible Amount – Annual Membership
Kandiyohi County	\$2,000
City of Willmar	\$1,000
Cities 1000+ population	\$500 (3 cities x 500 = \$1,500)
Cities between 200 and 999	\$250 (4 x 250 = \$1,000)
Cities under 200 population	\$100 (3 x 100 = \$300)
Townships	Note: didn't count Regal Pop. 34 <u>\$100 (24 x 100 = \$2,400)</u>
Potential Sub-Total (If all give)	\$8,200

To reach draft budget approximately \$10,300 additional dollars need to be raised.

Annual Business/Organizations/Individuals Memberships

Platinum \$500 or more Is \$1,000 too much to ask? What is the membership cost for the Hwy 23 Coalition? Maybe structure it similar to that (maybe this is?). I cut way back on what was asked by the Hwy 23 Coalition asked businesses: (\$1000, 500, 200, 100). As many of the same businesses will have donated to the Hwy 23 Coalition, I do not know how much they are willing to spend? This is a much-needed group discussion. The Highway 23 Coalition's budget was also much larger than my starting budget proposal (\$48,500), but it was for a larger area also. The amount we need to raise (budget discussion) will greatly influence the decision on how much we need to ask. It is a balancing act of wanting to raise enough funds, but also wanting to encourage as many memberships as possible to show broadband's importance.

Gold	\$250
Silver	\$100
Bronze	\$50
Individual	\$25

For the larger donations we would promote those who gave on certain materials and on website.

Note: Governmental bodies not mentioned above, i.e. school districts, would be treated as an organization.

Some additional considerations:

Does the Coalition form as a 501 (c) (4) Corporation like the Highway 23 Coalition did? I feel like it's a good idea, given the success of that coalition. It may get people to realize that we are serious too.

Possible Purposes: The Kandiyohi County Broadband Coalition will work with the Kandiyohi County Broadband Committee to help educate the need for, promote, and pursue high-speed broadband opportunities in working towards county-wide affordable broadband coverage. The Coalition will

educate Kandiyohi County residents, businesses and others to help convince them of the need for high-speed broadband services. We will need to convince as many as possible to show support and sign up for services when offered in their area of the county. The coalition will support the state coalition with supporting state and federal wide efforts with providing grant programs and guidance. The Coalition will also work toward a goal of Inclusion, so that Broadband services will be utilized by all ages and income levels.

Possible Vision: To ensure that all of Kandiyohi County has access to ~~affordable~~ **reliable** high-speed internet service **at an affordable cost**.

Donn's notes in Red

Vision for moving forward with a Broadband Coalition

Reach out to businesses and individuals that were "Champions" from the first round to see if they are interested in becoming a founding member of the coalition. They would not pay anything to start but would help us with town hall meetings by presenting or fielding questions from their peers. **I would only offer no payment to individuals and/or from the four groups you show below, not potential business, organization or government members that can afford to give to the needed budget expenses.** My thought on this section would be to not ask for money at the onset. Rather get through the town hall meetings and then have the proposed costs available for people to consider. This way, if we oddly find out that people aren't terribly interested, we don't have to return checks. But...I could be persuaded into your line of thought. **I understand what you are saying now. Ok.**

- These could be representatives of ag, real estate, education and healthcare among others (homeschooling parents? Self-employed people who work from home?)

Start with 4-6 town hall-style meetings (Raymond, Spicer, Willmar, Atwater and ?).

- Broadband committee list a couple of goals in why this is being done, stated in the introduction at the meeting
- Explain that the intent is for us to be a county coalition but we would **also** support the state coalition (that is already formed) as a paying member (include the cost of that)
- Have suggested cost for individual and business membership of the coalition (could change depending on the coalition leadership)
- Indicate benefits of a coalition and how the Highway 23 Coalition worked to get Greater MN a better highway system
- Discuss what being a member entails (door knocking, meetings, what does someone have to DO other than pay money?) **Add provide testimonials after door knocking**
- Each meeting has 2-3 speakers on the subject of broadband and how having better service could impact their business. Include things like how they "get by" now and what the lost opportunities may be.
- Meetings should last 45-60 minutes at most and then allow time for people to ask questions
- Invite Rep. Baker, County Commissioners, various state, county and city personnel (principals, mayors/administrators, public works, DOT, State/County parks, etc)

Have a signup process at the town hall meetings that people can indicate their interest in joining a coalition (no payment required at this point). Also have materials they can take with that clearly state why this is being considered and how to sign up or get more information.

At this point, the Broadband Committee can determine what the level of interest in a Broadband Coalition is and how successful it might be. If there is a lot of interest, start the process to become a coalition. If there is not, back to the drawing board we go.