

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

January 8, 2018

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Dean Bouta, Scott Froemming, Michelle Marotzke, Brian Mort, Les Nelson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Donna Boonstra, Bruce DeBlieck, Kathy Dillon and Larry Kleindl

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Dean Bouta called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. Chair Bouta introduced new committee member Gregg Price, Network Manager of Carris Health/Rice Memorial Hospital, who is replacing Kathy Dillon, followed by self introductions.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Donn Winckler, SECONDED BY Scott Froemming, to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2017 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Alliance Communications. Connie Schmoll reported Donna Boonstra was informed by Alliance Communications that it is not interested in a project in Kandiyohi County at this time.

Hiawatha Broadband Communications. Schmoll reported the representative for Hiawatha Broadband Communications (HBC) was unable to attend today's meeting. HBC has connections near the southern part of Kandiyohi County and requested information on the businesses located in that area, which Schmoll provided. It was noted HBC's projects are not full fiber; they are fiber to certain points and then wireless to the end user. HBC manages the RS Fiber projects in Renville and Sibley Counties and prefers not to participate in the state's Border-to-Border Grant. Schmoll has requested a meeting with the County Commissioners on what Kandiyohi County may be willing to do for future projects.

WildFire5G. Schmoll stated WildFire5G requested a potential customer list from the previous grant project, but Schmoll informed them the list was proprietary to Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC). The original list was provided by Kandiyohi Power Cooperative with the agreement that it was for a single-use purpose. Scott Froemming stated another list could be requested from Kandiyohi Power Cooperative.

LTD Broadband. Schmoll reported LTD Broadband has a tower by Home Depot. It was reported a customer has a connection with LTD Broadband and is happy with it. She is paying for 6 Mbps

download speeds, but it is better than what she had. Another customer is getting 6 Mbps and sometimes up to 10 Mbps, which is adequate for him and he is happy with it.

MVTV Wireless. David Sisser reported MVTV Wireless has been updating all of its backhauls in Kandiyohi County and would like to speak to this committee to see if there is anything it can do for broadband in the county. MVTV Wireless worked with Charter Communications and TDS for its fiber backhauls. Committee members voiced concerns with the number of wireless providers coming into Kandiyohi County. Sisser will find out what may work for MVTV Wireless to attend a future meeting.

Charter Communications. Mark Boeschen stated Charter Communications made a 100/10 change, but users must contact Charter Communications to request the higher speed. Boeschen contacted Charter Communications and had his speed increased; it is possible some subscribers had their speed increased without a request. It was noted Charter Business is different from residential.

HughesNet. HughesNet is satellite service. Its speeds are decent, but it caps the bandwidth and limits how much can be used in a month and the speed goes down. HughesNet requires a two-year contract.

Broadband Coalition. Schmoll reported the new Broadband Coalition has 12 members generating income of \$7,200 plus \$15,000 received from the Blandin Foundation. The Coalition would like to have enough members to generate income of \$30,000. The Coalition's first meeting is tomorrow where the Coalition will be discussed. It is also looking at a possible paid position. Schmoll passed around a list of the Coalition members. Schmoll will find out how the Coalition has advertised for membership.

Connect America Funding. Boeschen announced the Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II auction maps were recently published. Every six months providers must submit FCC Form 477 for determining eligible census blocks. At a future meeting, Boeschen will provide further information as to who has coverage and where. Boeschen stated everything east of County Road 5 qualified for CAF and everything west did not qualify. It was noted rural census blocks are large areas and the FCC determines CAF from those census blocks. It was suggested that the committee continue to monitor Frontier Communications and TDS.

NEW BUSINESS

Blandin Foundation listening sessions. Donn Winckler reported the Blandin Foundation would like to hold listening sessions in the region for legislators and economic development professionals. Winckler tentatively scheduled a local listening session for the afternoon of February 15th possibly in Litchfield. Schmoll noted if legislators are personally invited, they generally attend. Schmoll volunteered to assist with invites. Blandin Foundation will host the meeting and will bring its own agenda items, but there may be time for local discussion.

Election of chair and vice chair. Chair Bouta requested the chairperson position rotate between other committee members. Boeschen, Sisser and Michelle Marotzke have indicated an interest in chairing the committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY Ramsey Schaffnit, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to elect Mark Boeschen as chairperson and David Sisser as vice chair of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

2018 Goals. Chair Bouta requested the committee work on new goals for future work. The last goals were developed in May 2016 after CTC requested them (see attached). The committee reviewed the 2016 goals and had the following comments/changes:

- 1 and 2. Go together and are statements that are still appropriate.
3. This is still a part of the committee's goal and falls under its membership in the Broadband Coalition. The committee will continue working with local legislators, especially Dave Baker. Schmoll stated last year, the legislators stated there was no noise about broadband. This committee needs to assist with keeping broadband on the radar. Change this goal to read as follows: Continue to push for state and federal legislative action with active participation in the Broadband Coalition.
4. Seek funding sources, not just through grants.
5. This goal is ongoing. Change language to "with a preference for fiber-to-the-premise wherever possible" and change to "move forward with improved broadband."
6. Remove as it repeats other goals.
7. Remove and change it to read "Continue to gather data and secure updated maps on current broadband offerings."
8. Remove.
9. Change the goal to read: Recommend solutions that the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners will approve and invest in with financial support.

The committee determined the first three additions suggested in red are already incorporated in other goals, but suggested the following changes/additions:

- Incorporate educate legislative leaders into goal 2.
- The second suggested addition as to educating all individuals and companies could be part of adoption by the public and encourage businesses to register their location on Google maps.
- Incorporate the third suggested addition on public/private relationships into goal 4.
- It was decided the last suggested addition is a given and is part of adoption and education. Rather than specifying ag, it should be kept generic.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:03 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is 12 noon, February 5, 2018, Room 2057, at the Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar.

Draft Goal Statements

May 2016

1. The EDC, in cooperation with Kandiyohi County, Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040 and private partners, goal is to expand a robust high-speed broadband network, utilizing fiber to the premise (FTTP) networks wherever possible to attain broadband access to every premise in the county.
2. The initiative may need to utilize a mixed use of technologies to overcome the county's challenges of many lakes, topography issues, areas of low population density and funding constraints.
3. Continue to push for legislative action to provide funding of the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program.
4. Seek out other sources for grant funds needed to proceed with implementation of broadband in Kandiyohi County.
5. Have discussions and conduct planning with private providers to share goals and initiate plans to move forward with FTTP broadband network deployment.
6. Secure one (or more) broadband provider(s) that is willing and able to install an FTTP broadband system to the entire county. This will assist our businesses and residents in bringing a digitally connected community through a world class, next generation broadband network.
7. Using informational maps from "Connect Minnesota," and the County's GIS department, we have determined there are 7,653 buildings (housing units and businesses) that are currently unserved or underserved by the state's definition of high speed broadband. The map data shows there is an additional 13,393 buildings in what is considered served areas; however, we feel there are some areas of the map that could be contested.
8. Secure as many grants/public subsidy as possible to allow private providers to meet their cash flow needs and move forward on phased in implementation.
9. Secure an implementation plan that the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners will approve and invest in with financial support.

Suggested additions

Work to educate Legislative leaders on the importance and vision of what Broadband can do for us, and how current legislation, or lack of legislation is stalling, or not favorable to expand broadband to Minnesota.

Educate all individual and companies in Kandiyohi County on what broadband is and what it will do for them. Create and promote participation from individuals and companies to subscribe to broadband connections when available.

Work on Public and Private relationships to move any Broadband efforts forward for the County.

One thought in the last section talking about the ag industry, "utilize new technology" should new technology be expanded describing precision ag that allows producers to apply the exact amount of product where needed thus saving money and helping the environment?