

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

**MINUTES**

**October 4, 2021**

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

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra (via Zoom), Bruce DeBlieck, Roger Imdieke, Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson (via Zoom) and David Sisser

Excused: Dean Bouta, Jason Hulstein, Ryan Nelson and Goldie Smith

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Contractor: Connie Schmoll

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal and Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:08 a.m.

**AGENDA**—The agenda was approved unanimously.

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY Rollie Nissen, to approve the Minutes of the September 13, 2021 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—

**Arvig.** Chair Boeschen reported Kandiyohi County approved \$330,000 for the installation of broadband in the City of Prinsburg. Arvig will fund \$450,000 of the \$1 million-dollar project and the city will fund \$45,000 from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, leaving \$175,000 to be bonded. There will be a community meeting in Prinsburg on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to share information on the broadband project. Central Minnesota Christian School has applied for a grant, but is not optimistic about success since it already has a school project that brought fiber into the school. Kandiyohi County has not yet received the agreement between Arvig and the City of Prinsburg. Arvig's agreement is fiber-to-the-premise and the project will cover the cost from the street to each home. One possible barrier to the project is some of the residents of Prinsburg have two-year contracts with Frontier Communications. The *West Central Tribune* recently published an article regarding the funding of broadband in Prinsburg. Connie Schmoll will contact the *Clara City Herald* about re-printing it.

**Charter's Expansion Plans.** Chair Boeschen has been in contact with Charter about three projects, including 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Riverwood Circle and 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Charter has made substantial changes to its earlier proposal, including the following:

1. 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue—request for County ARPA funding reduced from \$35,000 to \$11,770, even though the \$35,000 was already approved.
2. Riverwood Circle—request for County ARPA funding reduced from \$264,000 down to \$138,513.
3. 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue—request for County ARPA funding reduced from \$88,000 down to \$35,545.

Larry Kleindl has added the total request of \$185,828 in ARPA funds for 153 homes (\$1,214.56 per site) to the County Board agenda for discussion at the meeting to be held on October 5.

Chair Boeschen created a contribution detail spreadsheet to reflect Charter’s new proposal (see attached). The spreadsheet includes each township’s ARPA contribution set at \$200.00 per site, with Kandiyohi County contributing the remainder. Kleindl commented that the \$185,828 he plans to discuss with the County Commissioners does not take into consideration any contribution by the townships. Chair Boeschen responded there has always been an expectation that the townships will contribute. Discussion followed about whether there will be an issue having the townships contribute since Riverwood Circle is located in two townships. There was concern about whether getting township contribution approval will delay the project. Schmoll stated New London Township was in favor of contributing but will have to do a subrecipient agreement.

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to request up to \$185,828 from Kandiyohi County American Rescue Plan Act funds for three Charter projects, contingent on township contribution to the project. New London Township will be asked to contribute \$25,378.29 and Burbank Township will be asked to contribute \$4,986.47. MOTION CARRIED.

**Vibrant Broadband’s Expansion Plans.** Chair Boeschen reported the question still exists about whether Vibrant Broadband can supply the 100 megabits per second (mbps) download/100 mbps upload speeds required for the use of ARPA funds; 100/20 is the alternative minimum acceptable level. Vibrant advertises 100/10 speed, but maintains that 99.8% of those served would receive the 100/20 speed. It is not advertised because it cannot be guaranteed. Because this is a \$2 million project it would be quite risky to proceed without a guarantee. Vibrant’s proposal is high-level at this point; it is waiting to make sure funds will be available. Luke Johnson from Vibrant is checking on progress monthly. No action can occur here until there is more clarification on the flexibility of the ARPA funds.

**American Rescue Plan Funds.** Roger Imdieke attended a meeting in Washington D.C. where it was strongly suggested that ARPA funds be committed by the end of 2022 to avoid any disruption by the mid-term elections. “Committed” was defined as action taken by the County Board to commit the funds. This shouldn’t create an issue, but the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee should be cognizant. The concern is funds could go to other channels if the political climate changes, and the second disbursement of ARPA funds could be nullified. The deadline for application by townships and small cities is today. If the townships fail to apply they will not receive any funds. Less than 60% of the townships in Minnesota have applied. The seven townships involved in the Federated project have all applied and received their funds, as has the City of Prinsburg, Harrison Township and Dovre Township. Holland Township and Roseland Township have both applied. Boeschen applauded Schmoll and Marotzke for getting the information out to the townships.

**National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Grant.** Grant awards are expected to be announced on November 29<sup>th</sup>. NTIA responded immediately to the grant application with a request for additional information, which has been submitted.

**REPORTS—**

**2021 Township Broadband Projects.** Chair Boeschen reported the U.S. Treasury details have been released. The question remains if federal funds coming from the state and the county can both be used. The issue lies on a federal level, but the state can fix it by moving money around. Imdieke asked if a letter should be drafted to state representatives addressing the issue. Schmoll suggested working with the Rural Broadband Coalition on the letter. Chair Boeschen agreed, but thought a letter should be sent exclusively from Kandiyohi County as well. Marotzke suggested Blandin Foundation be involved also. Kleindl asked if the Border-to-Border grant isn't awarded until late winter, would the project be delayed. Schmoll replied that Federated will be ready to go in May, so if the Border-to-Border grant is awarded by March it should be fine. Letters should request passing state legislation requiring funds to originate from the general operating fund instead of ARPA funds. Schmoll will draft a letter and send to Swedburg to be distributed to state legislators.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Roger Imdieke, to draft a letter to state legislators in regard to funding difficulties for broadband. MOTION CARRIED.

**SUBCOMMITTEES---**

**Education/Marketing.** Marotzke is working on a handout for the City of Prinsburg broadband project.

**Blandin Foundation Broadband Meetings.** Marotzke reported there is a planning meeting on Thursday afternoon, October 7 to discuss details of the Blandin Broadband Conference, which will be held on October 12,13, and 14 from 9 a.m. until noon. Registration is now open for this conference, which is free of charge. Chair Boeschen attended Blandin's west central regional meeting. The majority of the meeting dealt with projects, such as creating digital bundles (hotspots and tablets) available for check-out at the library. Schmoll commented that Todd Hagen did a section on funding broadband projects and referred to Kandiyohi County as an example. Ryan Lange discussed how they use broadband from the agricultural perspective. Diane Wells mentioned the possibility of \$100 million additional federal funds coming into Minnesota for broadband. The Economic Development Authority (EDA) has a funding opportunity available through ARPA that has broadband listed as one of the uses. Broadband is being viewed as a utility infrastructure, as necessary as lights, water, electricity, etc.

**ADJOURNMENT**—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **10:30 a.m., Monday, November 1, 2021** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.

**Recommended ARPA Dollar Usage - Broadband**

Kandiyohi County = \$8.3M

Project	Served	Total Project	Provider/Other	County \$	Township Contribution	Left
Charter 141st	37	\$ 88,770.00	\$ 77,070.00	\$ 4,354.90	\$ 7,415.10	\$ (70.00)
Charter Riverwood	84	\$ 432,513.00	\$ 294,000.00	\$ 121,891.44	\$ 16,621.56	\$ -
Charter 199th	32	\$ 145,545.00	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 29,146.90	\$ 6,398.10	\$ -
Charter Longaeres	77	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Charter Chadwick	37	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Arvig Prinsburg	207	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 450,000.00	\$ 330,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 175,000.00
Vibrant	1698	\$ 4,165,127.00	\$ 2,082,563.50	\$ 1,832,655.88	\$ 256,703.59	\$ (6,795.97)
Federated	667	\$ 9,786,007.00	\$ 7,339,505.25	\$ 1,314,386.00	\$ 200,542.65	\$ 931,573.10
ROW to Home	75-600	\$ 300,000.00	\$ -	\$ 300,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2839</b>	<b>\$ 15,917,962.00</b>	<b>\$ 10,353,138.75</b>	<b>\$ 3,932,435.12</b>	<b>\$ 532,681.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,099,707.13</b>

Updated 10/4/21

**Township ARPA Contribution Detail**

Arctander	Burbank	Dovre	E Lake Lillian	Genessee	Harrison	Irving	Mamre	New London	Roseville	St Johns	Prinsburg
								\$ 7,345.10			
	\$ 4,986.47							\$ 11,635.09			
								\$ 6,398.10			
											\$ 45,000.00
	\$ 19,883.40		\$ 17,423.25	\$ 36,128.25	\$ 37,986.19	\$ 79,858.50			\$ 65,424.00		
\$ 33,480.75		\$ 112,279.95					\$ 33,566.25			\$ 21,215.70	
<b>\$ 33,480.75</b>	<b>\$ 24,869.87</b>	<b>\$ 112,279.95</b>	<b>\$ 17,423.25</b>	<b>\$ 36,128.25</b>	<b>\$ 37,986.19</b>	<b>\$ 79,858.50</b>	<b>\$ 33,566.25</b>	<b>\$ 25,378.29</b>	<b>\$ 65,424.00</b>	<b>\$ 21,215.70</b>	<b>\$ 45,000.00</b>