KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
October 5, 2020
Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Mark Boeschen, Sonja Bogart, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlieck, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson, Gregg Price, and David Sisser

Excused: Ramsey Schaffnit

Absent: Les Nelson

Guest: Nathan Zacharias, Lobbyist for the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and Project Manager for the Minnesota Speed Test Initiative

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m.

AGENDA—There were no changes to the Agenda.

MINUTES—

   IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to approve the Minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and Speed Test Initiative. Connie Schmoll introduced Nathan Zacharias, Lobbyist for the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition and Project Manager for the Minnesota Speed Test Initiative. Zacharias stated the goal of the Speed Test Initiative is to get a more accurate map for the state's broadband services. Most maps only go to a census block, township or county rather than to a specific address. If one home in a census block is served, often the entire census block is considered served. Likewise, if a township has 80% or more that have access to 25mg download and 3mg upload, then the township is considered served. The program started with a pilot project being done in St. Louis County. The data collected will be presented to community leaders to support the need to expand local broadband and to the Legislature during the 2021 legislative session when its sets the next biennium budget. Zacharias showed the speed test, which is found at http://mnruralbroadbandcoalition.com/speedtest. The test asks how much you pay a month

for your Internet, but does not gather any other personal data. The map uses Google GIS services. The dots on the map represent those who have taken the speed test. A green dot means the speed matches or exceeds the state's goal of 25 Mb per second download speed and 3 Mb per second upload speed; a yellow dot is for those who have download speeds of 10-25 Mb; a red dot is for those who have download speeds under 10 Mb and a black dot represents no service. If there are yellow or red dots within a green area, it may be because individuals cannot afford the service. Each dot is drifted 150-200 feet from the actual address to give some privacy to the test results. If you highlight the provider on the data, it shows just that provider's dots on the map. Zacharias stated it is a crowd sourced speed test so individuals are needed to help market the program. The definition of ping is the amount of time it takes for your server to send data to the test server (the speed at which it is moving across the pipe) and jitter is the interference on the connection between you and the server. A ping over 50 or 100+ is bad and a slow connection.

When asked what steps are being taken to encourage more participation, Zacharias stated he has contacted every newspaper in the state; emailed every county administrator; is working with AARP, which will send a statewide email to everyone to take the test; he will be working with the League of Minnesota Cities to do outreach to every city; and marketing materials have been created. The test can be taken as many times as you like. When the data is analyzed, the results will show the address and they will use the average speed taken. Chair Boeschen questioned if there is a plan for how this committee can use the information or have access to Kandiyohi County's information? Zacharias stated the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition owns the data; the plan is to have the maps available by request. The Test Initiative will go until August 2021. When the data is reviewed, they can exclude mobile connections, hotspots, etc. as they consider that a temporary fix and not a permanent solution. Zacharias stated the Coalition will be having a strategy meeting in early November for its members to discuss legislative issues and to prepare for the 2021 legislative session to get more funding for the state Border-to-Border Grant. They are also waiting for federal stimulus money.

[Zacharias was excused from the meeting.]

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Township project update. Schmoll reported Federated Telephone Cooperative is interested in doing a project in the townships of Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns in 2021. Federated needs more data to determine what current providers have done and to determine if it will include more townships. Federated wants to stay on the western side of the county to start. Schmoll had invited township representatives to this meeting, but they were unavailable. She has been invited to attend their township meetings. Kevin Beyer informed Schmoll that all projects that can build with a 50/50 match have been done and those that remain are those that need more funding.

Potential funding document. Dave Sisser reported the Excel spreadsheet he created can be modified with any data that is input. He will update the information from the engineering study that was done.

Federated Telephone Cooperative project. Schmoll asked members to obtain letters of support for the grant application. Chair Boeschen stated a timeline and list of projects will be put together. It was noted that the 25 Mb download/3 Mb upload speeds are the state's goals by 2022 and the goals by 2026 are 100 Mb download and 20 Mb upload so this committee should actually be striving for the 2026 goals.

Roger Imdieke believes CARES Act funds could be used in regard to broadband. Funds need to be billed and paid for by December 1, 2020. Imdieke serves on the county's Education and Other Planning Team and he proposed to Larry Kleindl and Jean Spaulding that CARES Act funds be allocated to for broadband. Imdieke suggested the planning team do a marketing effort at an approximate cost of $5,000-$6,000 encouraging residents to take the speed test on November 1 as part of daylight savings time. Kleindl, Spaulding and team members are supportive of this proposal.

Imdieke also suggested CARES Act funds be used to update the engineering study done by CTC. Glenn Otteson stated the study would cover the areas that are unserved; Schmoll noted the study would include new areas. Beyer had indicated it would only be helpful if it shows what providers are in the area and what services they are offering. Otteson will need to have a conversation with Beyer as to what information he is seeking. Imdieke stated bids would not be required. Otteson estimated $8,000-$16,000 would be needed for the study. Michelle Marotzke questioned if the Vibrant & Equitable Communities Program by the McKnight Foundation could be used.

> IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Dave Sisser, to write a letter to the Kandiyohi County Education and Other Planning Team in support of using Kandiyohi County CARES Act funds to promote the Minnesota Speed Test Initiative and to update the engineering study at a cost of approximately $25,000. MOTION CARRIED.

Schmoll will write the letter to the county's planning team.

Meeker Cooperative Light & Power Association. Schmoll stated Meeker Cooperative will be doing its strategic planning soon.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:57 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, November 2, 2020** via ZOOM video conference.