

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

November 2, 2015
EDC Board Room, Willmar

Present: Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Kathy Dillon, Scott Froemming, Larry Handlin, Wes Hompe, Larry Kleindl, Les Nelson, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Bruce DeBlieck, Linda Kacher, Jean Marthaler, Justin Mattern and Paul Smith

Absent: Mark Boeschen and Mike Malone

EDC Staff: Steve Renquist, Executive Director and 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.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Les Nelson, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2015 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

REPORTS

Wi-Fi community grant. Connie Schmoll reported the Wi-Fi partners met. Bids on the equipment were higher than budgeted, but the partners agreed the additional cost will come out of the grant funds. A contract was entered into with the city of Willmar for its portion of the grant. The grant is to be completed by the end of December and the final report to the Blandin Foundation is due in February 2016. Included in the final report will be any comments from users of the hotspots. Should committee members hear any comments from users, they are asked to provide those to Schmoll. Bouta indicated he will report this information to the Vision 2040 Goal 1 group.

Hack₂0 grant. Schmoll reported an RFP (Request for Proposal) was sent to the Hack₂0 participants to apply for funds from the \$10,000 that remains to develop apps. It is hoped that two out of the four apps will be developed. Larry Handlin offered to assist with the connections for the yellow bike app. The application deadline is November 20 with the deadline to develop the apps being March 2016.

Broadband meetings. Schmoll reported that at Rep. Dave Baker's request, a meeting was held on October 21 at Haug Implement Co. which included Rep. Baker, Rep. Kurt Daudt and representatives of the business community. Donna Boonstra, Kathy Dillon, Handlin and Schmoll attended from this committee. Local providers were invited, but did not attend. MVTV Wireless

did attend and provided information on wireless access they are installing in the county. Bouta reported he attended a meeting last week with Rep. Baker, Tim Flaherty and Marty Seifert, lobbyists with the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, Willmar Mayor Marv Calvin and council member Audrey Nelson, who wanted an overview of what is happening in the Willmar area as to broadband and what is being done. Bouta informed them the focus is on working with Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) and how communications have gone with the incumbent telcos. It is a positive sign that Rep. Baker continues to ask questions and seek information. Boonstra reported she met with Rep. Baker, provided him with a copy of the brochure, *What Fiber Broadband Can Do For Your Community*, explained to him that a telco must apply for the state grant and informed him of the upcoming Border to Border Broadband: Better Together conference. Larry Kleindl informed the committee that Rep. Baker will be attending the conference and wants to meet with anyone from this committee who will be attending. Boonstra, Handlin and Schmoll indicated they will be attending. Handlin stated he will be a presenter at the conference and will speak on the Hack₂0 grant and hackathon. Boonstra stated Rep. Baker asked if Kandiyohi Power Cooperative would share its poles, but was informed that is not possible for several reasons. Boonstra indicated Kandiyohi Power Cooperative could become a telco, if approved by its board and could request funds from the Rural Utilities Service. This may be a consideration if Swift County's grant is not approved and FTC does not move into Kandiyohi County. Scott Froemming indicated it would be preferable for Kandiyohi Power Cooperative to work with a company such as FTC. Wes Hompe stated Rep. Baker also contacted him about using Willmar Municipal Utilities' poles, which they currently share with Charter Communications. The feeling was good that Rep. Baker is looking at broadband with a fresh view and thinking of alternatives. Larry Kleindl reported MVTV Wireless approached Kandiyohi County to install 10-12 hotspots with the county paying \$1,000 per hotspot for two years. After the second year, citizens would be given the option to continue the hotspots. The hotspots have a one mile radius. Haug Implement has stated WiFi hotspots are too slow for its use. The request for hotspots will be presented at a future county board meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Feasibility study. Donn Winckler provided information from a visit he had with Kevin Beyer of FTC and Mary Magnuson of the Blandin Foundation. The maximum available through the Blandin Foundation grant is \$25,000. The next application is due December 4, 2015 and grants will be awarded January 15, 2016. Beyer informed Winckler the cost for the feasibility study will be approximately \$50,000 and FTC is willing to pay 25% of that cost and would not expect its contribution to be returned. Beyer stated there are no firms that can do a full study. An RFP will be done first and would be done in two parts, one for marketing and one for engineering. Beyer provided a few possibilities for the marketing part: Cooperative Network Services of Menahga, Minnesota, Communication Network Engineering of in Fargo, North Dakota, and Compass Consultants of Perham, Minnesota. Winckler requested those who are attending the state broadband conference explore what other marketing firms might be available to respond to RFPs. The engineering part of the study will take three to six months and will cost approximately \$30,000 and the marketing part will cost \$20,000 or less. Winckler estimated the entire process from RFP to completion of the study would be approximately nine months. Blandin Foundation does not require the applicants to choose the lowest cost estimates. Beyer stated for FTC to implement in Kandiyohi County, the project would need to be done in a minimum of three phases and possibly

even four to five. The cost of the project will also be higher due to the number of lakes as they would need to hand trench. The study will include research on what sewer and water systems are around each lake. FTC will assist with completing the grant application and will provide information needed for the application. Tom Lorenz, manager of FTC's operations, will be this committee's secondary contact. Schmoll reported the feasibility study is owned by the applicant, which will be either the EDC or Kandiyohi County, in case FTC is not the company that deploys. Once completed, the feasibility study will need to be updated on a regular basis, which FTC will do if it is engaged. FTC suggested the feasibility study be done now, whether or not Swift County is awarded a grant. Schmoll informed the committee the EDC would like to contract with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) to complete the grant application per the proposed contract provided (see attached). Winckler noted the MMDC will absorb any staff time above 32 hours.

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Larry Handlin, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Joint Operations Board that it enter into the Contract for Professional Services with Mid-Minnesota Development Commission to prepare a grant application for a broadband feasibility study at a cost of no more than \$2,400. MOTION CARRIED. Donn Winckler and Les Nelson abstained.

Winckler stated goals, vision statements and a current list of this committee's members are needed for the grant application, which the EDC will provide. Winckler would like to obtain copies of a couple of other applications that have been submitted to the Blandin Foundation to use as a reference. Les Nelson stated MMDC will include information from the EDC's BRE surveys. Winckler will provide a copy of the application to this committee before it is submitted to the Blandin Foundation. Winckler recommended the EDC be the grant applicant since it has a history with Blandin Foundation as a grant recipient.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's (EDC) Joint Operations Board that the EDC, in cooperation with Kandiyohi County, be the applicant for a grant through the Blandin Foundation for a broadband feasibility study. MOTION CARRIED.

Kleindl informed the committee he intends to ask the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners tomorrow to provide up to \$25,000 for the grant match. Schmoll and Chairperson Bouta will attend the county board meeting and provide any information needed for the board to make a decision. Winckler recommended informing the county board that having a public/private partnership scores better on the grant application. The county board should be made aware that this committee has been working on expanded broadband for some time and the county is being visited by state political representatives in this regard. Chairperson Bouta noted the committee is relying on state grants, but the county may need to come up with creative financing in the future.

IT WAS MOVED BY Wes Hompe, SECONDED BY Larry Handlin, to present information from the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee and the history of its work to the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners and request Kandiyohi County provide

funds in an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for a grant application to the Blandin Foundation. MOTION CARRIED. Larry Kleindl abstained.

Update on Minnesota Broadband Infrastructure Grant. Chairperson Bouta reported that for those who applied, grants will be awarded in December, and suggested this committee look at the other applicants.

Connect America Fund funding. Chairperson Bouta asked Beyer if FTC was interested in the Connect America Funds, but did not receive much of a response. It is believed Senator Klobuchar may be recommending other uses for these funds.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is 12 noon, Monday, December 7, 2015, in the EDC board room, Willmar.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:02 p.m.