

KANDIYOHU COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

December 7, 2020

Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Mark Boeschen, Sonja Bogart, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bauta, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke, Glenn Otteson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit and David Sisser

Excused: Bruce DeBlieck and Rollie Nissen

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—Add to New Business was an update on the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.

IT WAS MOVED BY Glenn Otteson, SECONDED BY Gregg Price, to approve the revised Agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ramsey Schaffnit, SECONDED BY Roger Imdieke, to approve the Minutes of the November 2, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Township project update. Connie Schmoll reported she has spoken to all three townships, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns, which are interested in moving forward with a broadband project. The townships were interested in the results of the survey and discovering that residents want better broadband. Arctander and Lake Florida Townships also want to be included in a project.

Federated Telephone Cooperative project. Schmoll introduced Kevin Beyer, General Manager of Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) and Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, who explained the differences and similarities between the two entities. FTC's board is open to doing a total of \$8 million in projects in 2021-2022 that are contiguous to its current service areas. FTC has some wireless, but is only building fiber-to-the-premise. Beyer stated the 50/50 grant being done by the state is not sufficient to do projects in rural areas. FTC is willing to provide 25% of the cost of a project and with 50% (\$5 million maximum) from the state grant program, this committee will need to figure out how to cover the remainder.

[Self introductions were made.]

Schmoll has spoken with the township attorney, who is aware of the cost sharing that will be needed. It is believed there are 438 locations without service. For the previous grant application, this committee provided approximately 80 letters of support, provided local information and figured out how many businesses were in the proposed project area. Kandiyohi County will not provide financial support, but will provide a letter of support. Michelle Marotzke offered the support of Mid-Minnesota Development Commission. Beyer stated FTC does not know much about Kandiyohi County so it will rely on this committee for information needed for the grant application. Kandiyohi County used CARES Act funds to update the feasibility study previously was done in the northern part of the county. Otteson reported his company is updating that feasibility study, which covered Arctander, Colfax, Lake Andrew and Norway Lake Townships. That study estimated the townships would need to provide \$3,183 per site. Beyer stated the number of locations will be extremely important to determine the project cost and where the build will take place. Schmoll stated Dovre Township has a number of served locations that would not qualify for the grant. The project will be for unserved and underserved locations; other opportunities are looked at afterward. Beyer stated FTC has not been involved with the federal Economic Development Authority (EDA) as it has not been involved with broadband. Schmoll stated the federal EDA would only consider a broadband project if there was a business with 500 employees. FTC does not require commitments from subscribers; it trusts the county will assist in getting subscribers. At this time, it is unknown what funding will be available through the state Border-to-Border Grant Program. FTC will want the project ready to go by August 2021 as the application deadline is generally in September. Contacts on behalf of this committee will be Schmoll, Imdieke and township supervisors.

NEW BUSINESS

Speed test progress. Schmoll reported that as of today, 1,540 Kandiyohi County residents have taken the Minnesota Broadband Speed Test. Compared to other counties, Kandiyohi County is doing well. Imdieke spoke with Nathan Zacharias, who was very pleased with Kandiyohi County's speed test results. The tests show interest in broadband and provide some information on what provider's can provide. Beyer stated the speed tests show what service residents subscribe to and not what is capable at their location.

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Schmoll attended a recent meeting at which legislative priorities were determined and a discussion on membership was held. The Coalition selected a new chair, Nancy Hoffman. It will be working on fundraising, developing a new logo and a summary to recruit members. The Coalition continues to work for base funding for the state grant. Basic membership will remain at \$500. Boeschen recommended the EDC stay at the \$500 level.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dave Sisser, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to continue membership in the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition at a cost of \$500.
MOTION CARRIED.

Update of 2015 engineering study. Otteson stated the design has been redone and redrafted. He is waiting for prices on materials to finish the final cost estimate. Otteson will provide the final study to Schmoll, Imdieke and Beyer.

Other. Schmoll stated it will be important to get subcommittees or task forces reinstated in January. She is interested in obtaining computers through PCs for People for those who do not have them.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:47 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, January 4, 2021** via ZOOM video conference.