

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)  
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
March 1, 2021  
Via ZOOM Video Conference**

**Present:** Mark Boesch, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Tony Kirby, Michelle Marotzke, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson, Ramsey Schaffnit and David Sisser

**Absent:** Bruce DeBlieck

**Guest:** Ryan Nelson, Kandiyo Power Cooperative

**Staff:** Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boesch called the meeting to order at approximately 10:04 a.m.

**AGENDA**—Chair Boesch stated the time of the next meeting as noted on the Agenda should be 10:00 a.m.

Connie Schmoll welcomed Ryan Nelson as a possible committee member representing Kandiyo Power Cooperative followed by self introductions.

**MINUTES**—

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to approve the Minutes of the February 1, 2021 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**—There was no unfinished business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Remove Sonja Bogart.**

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Dave Sisser, to remove Sonja Bogart from the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee as she is no longer with Kandiyo Power Cooperative. MOTION CARRIED.

**Federated Telephone Cooperative project.** Schmoll reported a meeting was held February 16 between Federated Telephone Cooperative and the three townships. Education of the

residents and finding leaders in each township to move the projects along are key. It was very helpful to have Beyer at the meetings to answer questions and he provided everyone with his contact information. The FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction could become an issue. Schmoll reported Joel Johnson went out and spoke to the larger property owners in Mamre Township, who want the project done with no hesitation. This committee will help get the message out and bring information to township residents. Dave Sisser stated all three townships were interested in moving forward. Chair Boeschen added that all three townships passed a resolution as to their willingness to move forward. St. Johns Township discussed contributing funds to lessen the amount paid by its residents. It was noted that Dove Township, in particular, needs a champion; some residents have indicated they will attend future board meetings to encourage the project. Schmoll will attend the Dove Township meeting tomorrow night and Marotzke stated she would attend future meetings. Nissen spoke with a Dove Township resident and informed them that property values will increase if they have broadband; he also received a call from a resident of Lake Andrew Township, who was upset they will not be included in the project.

Beyer spoke about costs being \$400,000 higher than when the study was done and explained what the costs would be for the townships, including attorney and accountant fees. St. Johns Township will have approximately 43 fewer sites due to the RDOF auction, but Beyer noted this would also result in less costs and he may consider including either Lake Andrew or Arctander Township. Arctander Township would be higher per customer as there are fewer residents. Lake Andrew has more sites, which would also increase the cost. Schmoll will meet with the state Office of Broadband Development to see if it is feasible to have a project that is higher than \$5 million. Glenn Otteson mentioned the cost would be higher in Lake Andrew as there is a more confined area for construction and more boring versus plowing would need to be done, making construction more difficult. Schmoll will be scheduling a meeting with the township attorney and Todd Ehlers, a financial consultant, for 4 p.m. March 8<sup>th</sup> so the townships can start discussing how to pay for the project. The attorney is doing the work pro bono.

Marotzke stated Federated can install fiber to residents who are in the RDOF areas, if permission is given by the landowner and pay for the installation. In addition to the St. Johns sites, the northern part of Dove by the Lake Florida slough and the northeast corner of St. Johns Lake are in the RDOF auction area. This committee will need to assist St. Johns Township in determining its next steps, including education. Schmoll stated Federated, as a cooperative does these projects as a service to the community and does not look for commitments from subscribers, but will expect the townships and this committee to be committed to the project. Subscribers will not become a member of the cooperative until all project costs are paid, which usually takes around ten years. Marotzke noted Federated has a very good dividend program. Schmoll added that it is possible that the amount assessed to residents could be repaid in dividends. Over the years, Chair Boeschen and Marotzke will attend the annual meeting of the townships where they will encourage other townships to start considering a project for next year. Schmoll would like to again ask the board of Kandiyohi Power Cooperative (KPC) to assist financially; it is not interested in doing the project. Ryan Nelson requested information on Federated and the proposed project indicating there is cooperation between cooperatives. The KPC board has discussed the project and wants to help. Nelson stated KPC may be able to assist with communication.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Education/Marketing.** Marotzke, Schmoll and Nissen met to go over items and will start putting together some education materials. Schmoll will go over everything tomorrow with Dovre Township. Mamre Township meets at 7 p.m. on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The subcommittee will evaluate what was done in the past and what should be done this time.

**Grant Writing.** Schmoll is preparing to write the grant. She will need names, addresses and emails of those willing to write a letter of support and encouraged committee members to start getting those. She will provide a sample letter to write.

**Adoption of Broadband.** Sisser had nothing new to report. He will send out the notes and try to set up another meeting to take next steps. Otteson stated Hanson Communication is looking at doing the City of Prinsburg and Edwards Township near Raymond and questioned if this committee should start a conversation with that township. Schmoll noted she received a call from the city of Prinsburg about broadband has already heard that Edwards Township is interested. Schmoll researched the area and it is sporadically covered by the RDOF auction and would not qualify for a state grant. Hanson Communication told her the state is thinking of letting areas of the RDOF auction awarded to LTD Broadband be included in the state grant. Beyer is okay with Hanson Communication doing another project. Otteson suggested that townships need to step in to prevent cherry picking by providers. Through the RDOF auction LTD Broadband won the greatest amount of funds, \$1.5 billion, but it has never done gigabit fiber and it is unknown if it has the ability. LTD Broadband has six to eight years to complete a project.

[Roger Imdieke was excused from the meeting.]

Chair Boeschen added that LTD Broadband is an unknown at this time and we are waiting for the state to make a decision. The state has not determined any funding for next year. Schmoll noted that grants just awarded by the state had to remove areas serviced by LTD Broadband.

## **REPORTS**

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Schmoll stated that it continues to monitor the legislative session and is seeking funding.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:52 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next committee meeting is **10 a.m., Monday, April 5, 2021** via ZOOM video conference.