

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

MINUTES

April 6, 2020

Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlieck, Roger Imdieke, Michelle Marotzke, Les Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit and David Sisser

Absent: Tim Furr

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:16 p.m.

AGENDA—

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the Minutes of the March 2, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Township projects. Connie Schmoll indicated Dovre Township representatives will join today's meeting, if necessary. St. Johns Township sent its letter and ballot and received 22 no votes and 16 yes votes. The Township Board decided not to move forward with the broadband project as they decided it was too expensive. The board is willing to keep working on a broadband project for next year with more education being done before a vote is taken. Mamre Township has had 60 ballots returned to date. Chair Boeschen noted the conditions were for all three townships to be part of the project and since St. Johns has withdrawn, he believes the project is over. Roger Imdieke questioned the status of Arctander Township. Schmoll informed Arctander Township of the costs to do a study and it voted not to pursue a study this year, but would maybe do one next year. Chair Boeschen stated additional education will stop for now, but this committee needs to decide what to do next. Schmoll

stated education would begin again once a new project is determined. Schmoll stated should any new townships be interested in a project, new studies would be needed.

Rollie Nissen suggested doing a questionnaire to the four townships, including Norway Lake asking for their speeds while working at home; this would be valuable information to pursue a project next year. Schmoll reported she has contacted the schools to see if anyone needs hotspots for students. The schools are responsible for making sure students have access. It was felt that obtaining information from the schools as to access would be helpful. Dave Sisser reported he has been working with MVTV Wireless, which has been inundated with requests for wireless connection. Michelle Marotzke questioned if a survey to include in what city or township do you live should be sent to the school principal for teachers to send to students? It was felt obtaining data for legislative purposes is important for funding and would tell us where this committee stands. It was recommended that any survey wait until after the pandemic dies down as the stress level is high right now. Bruce DeBlieck stated people do not know what they do not have and there are things they cannot access because of their speeds. Imdieke indicated it would be interesting to know the demographics of those who voted no; if a survey is done through the schools, the committee would reach a different demographic.

NEW BUSINESS

Broadband during the pandemic. Schmoll stated U.S. Senator Tina Smith's office has been introducing new bills into Congress. Imdieke stated there has been a lot in the news about telemedicine. Sisser stated the pandemic will change the landscape of telemedicine, distance learning and working from home, and could turn it into a more permanent situation in some cases. Sisser's brother's company has discovered it can save money without losing production by having employees work from home. Chair Boeschen suggested deciding what data would be useful and ask what can be provided from the school. Sisser questioned if there is a way this committee can ask people to vent their frustrations and collect data during the pandemic. How is COVID19 impacting your internet usage? Ramsey Schaffnit asked about those who do not have internet at all? How to obtain data was discussed. Nissen stated the media is looking for stories about the pandemic and would be very willing to help. Chair Boeschen will work with Schmoll on how to gather data during the pandemic.

REPORTS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Schmoll reported the legislature passed a COVID-19 bill, but there was nothing included for broadband. At Broadband Day on the Hill they learned Governor Walz took from his proposed budget, the extra \$30 million to reserve for a COVID-19 response; \$20 million is in this year's budget for broadband. Schmoll reminded committee members to reach out to legislators as noted in her email and, if available, join the webinar series. Schaffnit indicated the webinars are archived. Marotzke stated she attended a couple, but there was nothing new.

Broadband Day on the Hill. Schaffnit indicated Rep. Dave Baker appears to be more amenable to eliminating the first refusal requirement. Nissen enjoyed visiting with everyone as it is always worthwhile, but it is a struggle to get results. Attendance was down this year; Schmoll noted it was at the beginning of the warnings to stay home. Speakers mentioned the \$30 million during their presentations. The group that went met with Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, who gave the formal announcement about the \$30 million not being in the budget. Angie Dickison spoke on behalf of the Office of Broadband Development. Nissen and Imdieke sat in on a hearing where they spoke on the \$30 million and everyone was in favor of it. Nissen stated Senator Andrew Lang understands the need. Nissen is concerned with kids on the fringes not getting service. Schmoll stated Tim Furr also went on the trip; he had good suggestions for legislators and spoke about the needs of Ridgewater College and its students. Schmoll stated Ridgewater College may have some stories; it is progressive and may change its ways of doing online classes in the future. Marotzke stated there was a lot of passion for getting things done, but COVID-19 overshadowed the day. It was felt COVID-19 should make this committee's job easier.

Other. Dean Bouta stated Frontier may be filing bankruptcy and admitted it did not change to what the market needs, fiber to the home. Hopefully when it reorganizes, it will commit to changing its plan.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, May 4, 2020** via ZOOM video conference.