

**KANDIYOHY COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)**  
**BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**May 2, 2016**  
**Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar**

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Bruce DeBlieck, Kathy Dillon, Scott Froemming, Larry Handlin, Linda Kacher, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Brian Mort, Les Nelson, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Dean Bounta, Wes Hompe, Mike Malone and Jean Marthaler

Absent: Justin Mattern and Paul Smith

EDC Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Connie Schmoll called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Linda Kacher, to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2016 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

Schmoll announced that Gardonville Cooperative Telephone Association was unable to come to today's meeting, but Schmoll will meet with them later this week. JoAnne Johnson of Minnesota Public Broadband Alliance was also unable to attend this meeting.

Schmoll informed the committee that Mike Malone asked to be removed from this committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donn Winckler, SECONDED BY Les Nelson, to approve the removal of Mike Malone from the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

**REPORTS**

**Blandin Hack<sub>2</sub>O grant.** Larry Handlin reported the group has begun to plan for a second hackathon in October 2016 and are looking forward to working on new apps. The first hackathon was held last September. Handlin stated they have discovered local individuals who telecommute to the Twin Cities who have been a great resource. Larry Kleindl reported the aquatic species app is expected to be done in September and he believes it will be a free app as they want individuals to

use it to identify aquatic species. The developer needed 30,000 shots of aquatic species for the app. Schmoll noted the grant deadline was the end of December 2015, but the Blandin Foundation approved using funds remaining from 2015 to do another hackathon. The deadline to complete the event and submit all bills and reports is December 31, 2016. Handlin reported the yellow bike app can be found on iTunes.

**Blandin WiFi grant.** Schmoll reported it was discovered antennas and modems did not get ordered for CCT or the United Way; thus, they will be ordered and the Blandin Foundation extended the deadline for the WiFi grant for another two months. Kleindl showed a display of the intended hotspot locations in the county (see attached—the orange markers are public libraries that currently have WiFi and the purple markers will be new locations in Blomkest, Pennock, Lake Andrew Township Hall and Sunburg). The goal is to have a hotspot within five miles of any direction. These hotspots are a bandaid solution for two years before broadband would be available. Plans are to install four hotspots using funds remaining from the Blandin Foundation WiFi grant and if there are not enough funds, Kleindl will ask the County Board to fund the hotspots. Linda Kacher commented on a community that had hotspots in buses, which they park throughout the community over weekends.

**Feasibility study.** Kacher reported she contacted Meeker Cooperative Light & Power and Kandiyohi Power Cooperative requesting their member lists for marketing purposes. Meeker Cooperative Light & Power will not release its membership list, but Kandiyohi Power Cooperative will release its list. Kacher also asked the Cooperatives to provide their customer locations, excluding personal information, which both Cooperatives provided. During May, the marketing company will be making calls to the community. Last week, the *West Central Tribune* published a promotional article on the broadband survey and a few days later the paper did an Editorial (see attached). Press releases were also sent to The Raymond-Prinsburg News and Lakes Area Review. Funds from the Blandin Foundation grant will be used to do ads. Kleindl reported tomorrow at 11:45 a.m. CNE (Communication Network Engineering, Inc.) will give a verbal update to the County Board and will do so each month during the study. Conference calls will also be held on the first Wednesday of each month. MPower Consulting, LLC provided a press release (see attached) and a draft version of the survey should be received by the end of this week. Telephone surveys will begin the first part of May. Used to determine the county's 6,400 estimated locations were the county's GIS data, Google Earth and Kandiyohi Power Cooperative service area. Maps were developed with one showing six service areas. Kleindl believes breaking the county up into six quadrants will be beneficial to the committee. Schmoll has been in contact with Joe Buttweiler of CTC (Consolidated Telecommunications Company). CTC is very interested in doing a project in the county. Buttweiler will start attending some committee meetings and CTC is interested in being in the community. Schmoll has received calls from Frontier Communications and New Ulm Telephone. When in Willmar, the Lt. Governor indicated it may be possible to stack funds. Rep. Dave Baker tried to get some changes made to the grant as to prevailing wage, but it did not go through. Costs are 30-40% higher if prevailing wage must be paid. Kleindl reported Rep. Tim Miller met with counties to the south and west (including Chippewa, Renville and Swift) and asked RS Fiber what it would take for it to build the backbone in the southern part of Kandiyohi County. Rep. Miller had recommended to those counties to bring in Kandiyohi County. Kleindl met with bordering counties and informed them Kandiyohi County is in the process of doing a feasibility study and is willing to listen to them as they are interested in what Kandiyohi County is doing, but

stated Kandiyohi County needs to do what is best for the county. Schmoll noted there has been some conversations about getting Hiawatha Broadband Communications involved. RS Fiber is in southeast Renville County and wants to build along main corridors. Kandiyohi County signed the contract with CNE on April 5; a video was done and is on the county's website and will be included on the EDC's website and Facebook page. It was mentioned the House of Representatives is recommending a two-year broadband funding of \$47 million with \$15 million the first year and \$25 million the second year and \$7 million for schools. CenturyLink announced at the meeting with the Lt. Governor that it will be doing a project this year past 400 homes in Kandiyohi County in the south part around Willmar, west and a little to the north. Attempts have been made to obtain more information from CenturyLink. It was noted CenturyLink is still using copper and not fiber.

**Legislative subcommittee.** Schmoll thanked Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra and Kleindl for participating on the panel and to Michelle Marotzke for her motivational comments at the roundtable session for the meeting with the Lt. Governor. Sam Romain of Haug Implement also participated. Bonnema noted everyone gave a similar message and expressed disappointment in working with the incumbent providers, who were also present at the meeting. Bonnema indicated the places the incumbents are updating this year, could qualify under the grant next year because they are not meeting the state's broadband requirements. Marotzke stated reliability is needed. It is unknown if the county's broadband project can include areas that will be done under by CAF (Connect American Fund) projects. It is believed the state will look at what areas are receiving CAF; however, those areas will be considered under served at 10/1 Mbps. As the state broadband grant is for one year, the county will need to state if it is addressing unserved or under served areas. If the state grant stays at \$15 million, it is unlikely Kandiyohi County can apply for a second grant. It is believed this year is the county's best opportunity and the committee needs to push for the maximum funds allowed. Schmoll was grateful that Jean Spaulding attended the Lt. Governor's meeting and challenged Rep. Baker and the incumbent providers. The Lt. Governor said the message came through clearly that \$40 million is not enough. Kleindl stated the next time this committee meets, the legislative session will be over. Discussion was held on whether to have a joint meeting with the incumbents to learn of their plans for the county. CenturyLink has contacted Kleindl. It is believed the incumbents are now interested as the cooperatives are competition; however, the incumbents are only using copper. It was the committee's suggestion not to work with any company that will not install fiber. Projects must be scalable to 100 Mbps symmetrical to be eligible for the state grant, which may require fiber. It is believed contact with the incumbents may fall within the task of the feasibility study. This topic will be tabled until next month after more is known from the feasibility study. Knowing where the incumbents are going could assist the committee in prioritizing its work.

**Marketing/Community awareness of projects.** Marotzke reported she, Les Nelson and Schmoll met and discussed various marketing options for community awareness of the telephone survey. Kandiyohi Power Cooperative will include the survey information in its newsletter. Information has been provided to local newspapers and for city and township meetings. Ads in the West Central Tribune started today and its online paper will have a banner ad. Radio ads will start this week. Q102 is doing its own promotion of the survey and information will be on KWLM's Open Mic. Distributing information at local parades is too late for the survey. Nelson noted Rick Reimer of Kandiyohi Soil & Water Conservation District suggested working with area lake associations and

township voting rolls. Haug Implement is willing to have information on its counter or website. Schmoll has a flyer for the ag community and REDstar Creative is creating a flyer that can be posted in city offices and libraries. It was suggested committee members do letters to the editor. It was agreed the marketing should be done well. Schmoll attended the Kandiyohi Good Neighbor meeting and spoke about broadband. Another suggestion included Willmar Regional Access Channels.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Broadband goals.** Schmoll reported she, Marotzke and Nelson started a Draft Broadband Goal Statements (see attached) and will continue to define them.

**Broadband funding.** Schmoll stated avenues of funding are being looked at. Kleindl reported Swift County is bonding (20 years) and the county will pay attention to what Swift County is doing.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next meeting is **12 noon, Monday, June 6, 2016**, in Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar.

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

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Mark Boeschen, to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:03 p.m.

# Kandiyohi County urges participation in broadband survey

By [Anne Polta](#) on Apr 22, 2016 at 11:15 p.m.

WILLMAR — If you live in rural Kandiyohi County and get a phone call next month asking about your broadband service, don't hang up.

The telephone survey is being conducted during May as part of a countywide broadband feasibility study, and organizers want — and need — the public to participate.

"We want to make sure people recognize the study and respond. That's critical," said Connie Schmoll, business development specialist with the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission.

The feasibility study is seen as a key step in positioning Kandiyohi County to bring broadband services to where they're needed the most. A contract between Kandiyohi County and Communications Network Engineering was signed earlier this month to undertake the study, which will be completed later this year.

Among the data being collected is consumer input. To ensure the survey results are statistically valid, the consultants are aiming for at least 376 complete survey responses.

Callers are targeting rural areas of the county that are currently unserved or underserved.

Respondents will be asked several questions about internet, television and other communications services.

The survey will include questions about prices for services and how much individuals are currently paying for services. Responses will help provide information on consumer preferences, competitive standards and pricing sensitivities.

All information collected will be confidential.

Responses will be aggregated so no individually identifiable information is retained. The surveyors will not ask for credit card information or payment.

Individual phone surveys will take anywhere from a few minutes to approximately 15 minutes to answer.

It's important to the overall study to have good local data — and for that to happen, the public needs to participate in the survey, Schmoll said.

"We need the responses of people from Kandiyohi County," she said. "We just really want to promote this."

## **Editorial: It's time to speak up on Kandiyohi County broadband survey**

By [Tribune Opinion](#) on Apr 28, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.

Kandiyohi County will be conducting a survey about broadband access in parts of the county in May, and the organizers need your help.



If you receive a call at your residence or business, it is important to participate.

How does broadband access in Kandiyohi County compare? Frankly, it is dismal and is impacting parts of the county and its residents.

Only 13 percent of households in Kandiyohi County have the level of high-speed access that Minnesota says is adequate. The state standard is a minimum download speed of 10 to 20 megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of 5-10 megabits per second.

The statewide percentage of homes with adequate access is 83 percent.

By comparison, Lac qui Parle County and Meeker County both have nearly 95 percent of households meeting the state's minimum broadband speed access.

This upcoming broadband feasibility study will be a critical step in helping position Kandiyohi County to bring better high-speed broadband services to all parts of the county.

The Kandiyohi County broadband survey has been contracted with Communications Network Engineering and is scheduled to be completed later this year.

The consultants have a goal of reaching at least 376 completed survey responses from the public as the first step in collecting data. The study will target rural areas within Kandiyohi County that are currently unserved or underserved.

The survey will ask about internet, television and other communication services, including questions about prices for current services.

All of the data collected will remain confidential and will be aggregated so no individual can be identified. The surveyors will not ask any questions about credit card or payment information.

Kandiyohi County's broadband improvement is a challenge as three separate companies now serve different areas within the county and there is little collaboration.

Broadband for rural Kandiyohi County is as important as rural electrification was in the early part of the 20th century. Appropriate broadband provides the communication and commerce power to rural residents of the county that are now available within Willmar and across Minnesota.

Kudos to the county for stepping up to study the broadband access issue in rural Kandiyohi County.

Now it is imperative that the residents in the rural sectors scheduled for the survey participate and answer the broadband questions.

**Newspaper Notice Copy:**

Kandiyohi County will be conducting a TELEPHONE SURVEY of county residents during the month of May, as part of a feasibility study for county-wide Internet service.

Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development commission (EDC)  
And, Kandiyohi County

**Public Informational Notice Copy/Press Release:**

Public Informational Notice  
Kandiyohi County Broadband Internet Feasibility Study  
County Resident Telephone Survey Calls  
April 21, 2016

Please be advised of upcoming telephone survey calls related to Kandiyohi County's Broadband Internet Feasibility Study.

The county is using these calls to generate a statistically valid, randomized sample of county residents in order to better understand the interest in county-wide Internet service.

The calls are a part of a larger feasibility study being performed by CNE Engineering, with offices in Fargo North Dakota and New London, Minnesota, which will take place in phases throughout the spring and summer months in 2016.

If you receive a survey call, please answer the survey questions to the best of your ability. During the call, the surveyor will ask you for your opinions and feedback on a number of communications topics, including Internet, television, and other communications services. Any information you provide is completely confidential; all responses will be aggregated and no individually-identifiable information or responses will be retained.

While the surveyors may ask about your feelings on prices of services, and what you pay for communications services currently, at no point will they ask for payment or credit card information. Pricing questions are asked in order to understand preferences, competitive standards and pricing sensitivities.

Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission



## Draft Broadband Goal Statements

May 2016

1. The EDC, in cooperation with Kandiyohi County, Willmar Lakes Area Vision 2040 and private partners, goal is to expand a robust high-speed broadband network, utilizing fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) networks wherever possible to attain broadband access to every premise in the county.
2. The initiative may need to utilize a mixed use of technologies to overcome the county's challenges of many lakes, topography issues, areas of low population density and funding constraints.
3. Continue to push for legislative action to provide funding of the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program.
4. Seek out other sources for grant funds needed to proceed with implementation of broadband in Kandiyohi County.
5. Have discussions and conduct planning with private providers to share goals and initiate plans to move forward with FTTP broadband network deployment.
6. Secure one or more broadband providers that are willing and able to install an FTTP broadband system to the entire county. This will assist our businesses and residents in bringing a digitally-connected community through a world-class, next-generation broadband network.
7. Using informational maps from "Connect Minnesota," and the County's GIS department, we have determined there are 7,653 buildings (housing units and businesses) that are currently under and unserved by the state's definition of high-speed broadband. The map data shows there is an additional 13,393 buildings in what is considered served areas; however, we feel there are some areas of the map that could be contested.
8. Secure as many grants/public subsidy as possible to allow private providers to meet their cash flow needs and move forward on phased-in implementation.
9. Secure an implementation plan that the Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners will approve and invest in with financial support.

### **Suggested additions**

Work to educate Legislative leaders on the importance and vision of what broadband can do for us, and how current legislation, or lack of legislation is stalling, or not favorable to expand broadband to Minnesota.

Educate all individuals and companies in Kandiyohi County on what broadband is and what it will do for them. Create and promote participation from individuals and companies to subscribe to broadband connections when available.

Work on public and private relationships to move any broadband efforts forward for the county.

One thought in the last section talking about the ag industry, “utilize new technology” should new technology be expanded describing precision ag that allows producers to apply the exact amount of product where needed thus saving money and helping the environment?