

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

**MINUTES**

**July 12, 2021**

**Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar and Via ZOOM Video Conference**

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlieck, Jason Hulstein (via Zoom), Roger Imdieke (via Zoom), Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Glen Otteson (via Zoom), David Sisser and Goldie Smith

Excused: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Contractor: Connie Schmoll

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:02 a.m.

**AGENDA—**

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

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Bruce DeBlieck, to approve the Minutes of the June 7, 2021 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Federated Telephone Cooperative's Plans.** Connie Schmoll reported this committee is working with Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC) on the four-township project. FTC has reviewed the property list for each township, eliminating all non-residential properties. Michelle Marotzke is responsible for assisting Arctander Township data, Schmoll for Dovre and Mamre Townships and Chair Boeschen for St. Johns Township. Chair Boeschen submitted to the state Office of Broadband Development a list of unserved properties to contest and all were approved with two more yet to send. FTC is currently working on engineering. Township meetings will be held next week: Arctander at 5:00 p.m. July 19<sup>th</sup>, Dovre at 5:00 p.m. July 20<sup>th</sup>, St. Johns and Mamre at 7:00 p.m. July 21<sup>st</sup>. All meetings will be held at the township halls except Arctander, which will be at East Norway Lake Church. The meetings will include an overview of how these projects got started, barriers, challenges and why is it important to have broadband today. Each township will be responsible for its own funding plan. Dovre Township will be doing a subordinated service district to divide out who will be assessed since only a small portion of the township will be serviced by FTC. Mamre, St. Johns and Arctander may assess everyone in their respective townships. The state legislature passed \$70 million for the state Border-to-Border Grant program for

the next biennium. The application deadline for the state grant program has not yet been posted. No changes to the grant application are expected this year.

**Charter's Expansion Plans.** Chair Boeschen reported Charter is proposing service at 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE, Riverwood Circle, 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and Chadwick Estates in the New London area. The Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee's draft proposal to the county moved on 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Riverwood Circle and 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Discussion was held on the proposed projects for Riverwood Circle and 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, including whether or not county funds are necessary; type of service—fiber versus coaxial cable; and reliability of service with a combination of fiber and coaxial cable. It was noted Charter is looking for a six-year return on investment. The estimated costs for these projects are as follows:

- 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE (coaxial cable) is estimated at \$89,000; Charter is asking for local share of \$35,000;
- Riverwood Circle (fiber) is estimated at \$433,000; Charter is asking for local share of \$300,000; and
- 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (coaxial cable) is estimated at \$145,000; Charter is asking for local share of \$100,000.

It was suggested Charter apply first for a Border-to-Border grant and then inform this committee how much more is needed. Chair Boeschen responded that because grants are awarded based on money and geographic location, if Charter was awarded a grant, it would risk the possibility of a grant to FTC. Chair Boeschen noted 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is actually an extension for Charter. Schmoll commented that FTC is interested in the two areas in Dovre Township (Chadwick Estates and 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NW) and suggested Charter not receive funding for those areas. Chair Boeschen would like to see total project costs, including those areas before a decision is made. The FTC project is approaching \$10 million. Quite a few sites have been eliminated, but adding the two Dovre Township areas could bring the total back to \$10 million.

Chair Boeschen proposed approving funding for Charter for 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE because it is asking for less than half of what is being asked for 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue with more homes involved. Schmoll proposed funding 50% of what Charter is asking for 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Riverwood Circle, which meets what a state grant would do. Imdieke proposed 50% for all of the Charter projects. FTC is covering 25% of the installation cost, and possibly 30% if the cost exceeds \$10 million. Kandiyohi County and the townships would cover about half of what is left. The townships will be asked to contribute 75% of their ARP money. Burbank Township would contribute \$10,000 and New London Township would contribute \$25,000 for Riverwood Circle. The county share would be \$264,000 for Riverwood Circle. This committee has not had conversations with Burbank Township and it may not have any interest. Committee members recommended 50% funding to Charter. Glenn Otteson commented this committee isn't doing a grant in that area at this time so there should be some support. Marotzke asked if there can be a condition to get the project done in two calendar years. Chair Boeschen recommended that since the committee was amenable to giving Charter money with conditions, the discussion be tabled until next month when the committee could meet with Charter. Chair Boeschen requested a motion on the funding request for 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Dean Bouta, that the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee recommends that Kandiyohi County approve using \$35,000 of its American Rescue Plan fund for Charter's broadband project along 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE in New London Township. MOTION CARRIED.

199<sup>th</sup> Avenue was discussed. Imdieke proposed funding \$30,000 of the \$100,000 that Charter proposed. Marotzke recommended tabling discussion until Vibrant is contacted.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke to recommend approval of funding to Charter for 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue at the same level per service as 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, a total of \$30,272. MOTION FAILED.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dave Sisser, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to table discussions on 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and Riverwood Circle until the August committee meeting after having conversations with Vibrant Broadband and Charter. MOTION CARRIED.

#### REPORTS—

**Adoption.** Sisser reported the subcommittee sent an adoption letter to the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee requesting input. Schmoll asked about a proposed budget as there is none. In the adoption letter they addressed highlights of connectivity into your home, speed issues, how to test speed and possible causes of internet being slow. It mentioned websites where you can get free computers or funds to pay for the internet. It also addressed Wi-Fi, YouTube and hotspots. Schmoll suggested adding education about internet TV.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

**National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) Grant.** Marotzke, Larry Kleindl and Schmoll are working on the NTIA Grant for Colfax, New London and Norway Lake Townships plus looking at options for including all seven townships. If this grant is awarded, ARP funds cannot be used, so the \$1.3 million could be re-allocated to other projects. NTIA will do 200 grants across the entire United States so chances of receiving one are slim. Imdieke commented that each township received \$25,000 from the county and they should not use those funds for broadband projects; they should use their ARP funds for the broadband projects.

**Arvig Broadband Plans.** Schmoll reported Arvig is working with Prinsburg. Schmoll will be meeting with the mayor, city council and school superintendent tomorrow to discuss funding. The current draft proposal includes 207 households at a cost of \$1 million. It has asked the county for \$450,000 to \$500,000 in ARP funds. Chair Boeschon proposed an allocation of \$330,000 from the county and \$35,000 from Prinsburg's ARP funds. Schmoll recommends this committee use \$330,000 of the ARP funds since Prinsburg is being left out. Because of LTD, the townships surrounding Prinsburg cannot apply for Border-to-Border grant funds. Frontier previously received funds to service Prinsburg, but it is still considered underserved. Arvig is offering to service the entire city of Prinsburg.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dean Bouta, SECONDED BY Dave Sisser, that the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee recommends that Kandiyohi County approve using \$330,000 of its American Rescue Plan funds for Arvig's broadband project in the City of Prinsburg. MOTION CARRIED.

**Vibrant Broadband.** Chair Boeschon reported Vibrant Broadband is installing fiber to a monopole for 137 households to receive fiber, the rest will be wireless. The total project cost is \$4.1 million. It is asking for \$2 million. Chair Boeschon has concerns with the definition of broadband for ARP funds. The speeds are at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download/20 Mbps upload. If you can't do 100/100 Mbps you have to explain why. Vibrant Broadband is planning 100/10 Mbps, but it can do 100/20 Mbps at almost everyone's site. This needs to be clarified before moving forward. Other funding opportunities should be known in another week or two. The federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) has \$6 billion so there could be

additional funding. Vibrant Broadband is a good project, but it is a lot of money so this committee needs to make sure it meets the audit. Out of the \$4.1 million total, Vibrant Broadband is asking for \$2.08 million. The county share would be \$1.8 million and the townships would contribute the rest. The residents will not be asked to contribute because this is a wireless project.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:10 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**—The next regular committee meeting is **10 a.m., Monday, August 2, 2021** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.