

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
July 6, 2020
Via ZOOM Video Conference**

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

Excused: Tim Furr

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boesch called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Ramsey Schaffnit, to approve the Minutes of the June 1, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Broadband survey results. Connie Schmoll reported there have been 291 responses to date for the survey. The survey has been announced on KWLM, Q102 and K-95 radio stations. Schmoll received a call from Andy of U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar's office, who wanted narratives as to use of broadband. Schmoll read the summary she prepared and shared with Klobuchar's office. The survey data will be extremely helpful and can be used to try and get a federal grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Schmoll provided a summary of the survey to the Minnesota Association of Professional Economic Developers (MAPCED), which is interested in doing a similar survey. The committee discussed what to do with the survey results. Comments included publishing the results in the newspaper; put it on the EDC's Facebook page and website; provide to all media sources and schools. Rollie Nissen commented on a resident who had a complaint that at 2:56 a.m. his speeds were 4Mb download and 2Mb upload; Schmoll asked that a story be obtained from him. Schmoll reported the goal is 100 Mb download speed and 20 Mb upload speed by 2026. Schaffnit reported TDS has been working on its towers. Schmoll will obtain final survey results some time this month.

NEW BUSINESS

CARES Act broadband funds. Schmoll reported the U.S. Department of Commerce has appropriated \$1.5 billion to aid communities affected by the pandemic to be used for deployment of broadband, remote learning and telehealth. Schmoll spoke with others about working with the U.S. EDA and contacted the regional contact in Chicago, Illinois. Schmoll received a letter of support from Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) and she needed a provider that is a nonprofit or cooperative. Chair Boeschen and Schmoll met with Tim Mergen of Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association about a possible project. Mergen spoke about fixed wireless. Meeker Cooperative serves the east side of Kandiyohi County and the east side of Kandiyohi Township. Copies of the 2016 study and 2020 survey were provided to Mergen. Mergen stated Meeker Cooperative's board will be doing its strategic planning in September and will wait until after that before making any decision. It wants to make sure their own residents are served first. Schmoll also spoke with and provided information to Kevin Beyer of Federated Telephone Cooperative, which is open to advancing and doing other projects. The U.S. EDA met Thursday with Les Nelson and Eric Day of MMDC and indicated the project must be highly competitive in the area of economic development, the number of jobs it will bring in and the businesses it will bring in. Nelson stated this is the U.S. EDA's first endeavor into broadband and it does not understand what is going on in rural America. There were a lot of good arguments for a project, but we did not have a major business and, thus, the representative would not support the project. Nelson stated the Chicago Regional EDA office is responsible for six states and was awarded \$225 million for those six states. It is a competitive grant round. Schmoll noted that with a local project costing almost \$10,000 per site, it is not competitive and the support of the representative is needed. Michelle Marotzke indicated that once companies find out we don't have sufficient broadband, they don't even contact us. Schmoll informed Senator Klobuchar's office of our experience. Nelson stated if the Opportunity Zone was in the project area, it would make a difference. Kandiyohi County has the attention of Beyer again so Schmoll will stay in contact with him.

REPORTS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Schmoll reported Nancy Birkeland attended the meeting and took notes (see attached), which the committee reviewed. The meeting highlights included the State Broadband Speed Test Initiative—they are looking for leadership, no timeline is set; MAPCED is putting together information to provide to the Blue Ribbon Committee, including policy issues related to broadband.

Other. Glenn Otteson reported the city of Raymond is being overbuilt by Hanson Communications this year. It is replacing the current equipment with fiber-to-the-home and also discussing service to surrounding townships. Otteson stated Hanson Communications has also discussed Prinsburg as it has facilities in Lake Lillian and Hanley Falls where they have cable TV and it may try to get customers in those areas. Dave Sisser recommended contacting Hanson Communications in addition to Federated.

Roger Imdieke commented on the conversations with Kandiyohi Power Cooperative and Schmoll noted its new executive director is interested, but not yet ready to proceed. They will support any project, could work on easements and are willing to partner on any project. Will start looking at doing a project in the future. The executive director will begin communications with her board to gain their support.

Committee members requested to meet in person in August and Imdieke suggested using the community room at the County Health & Human Services Building.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:41 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, August 3, 2020**.