

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BROADBAND AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
September 14, 2020
Via ZOOM Video Conference**

Present: Mark Boeschen, Donna Boonstra, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Les Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Glenn Otteson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit and David Sisser

Excused: Dean Bouta and Michelle Marotzke

Absent: Bruce DeBlieck

Guest: Sonja Bogart, CEO, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:06 p.m.

AGENDA—There were no changes to the Agenda.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Dave Sisser, to approve the Minutes of the August 3, 2020 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

New committee member. Chair Boeschen introduced Sonja Bogart, CEO of Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, who is interested in joining this committee. Connie Schmoll stated she has met with Bogart about local broadband issues. Bogart indicated she is interested in the Cooperative becoming more involved in broadband and has voiced this to her board.

IT WAS MOVED BY Dave Sisser, SECONDED BY Rollie Imdieke, to recommend to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Joint Operations Board that it approve Sonja Bogart as a new member of the Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Conversations with Federated Telephone Cooperative. Schmoll reported Federated Telephone Cooperative reviewed the Engineering Study and Market Analysis completed by Compass Consultants for the three townships, which included the cost per township. Kevin Beyer stated Federated's board is interested in doing a project for those three townships at an estimated cost of just under \$4 million for 438 unserved and under-served locations. Federated's intent would be to submit a state Border-to-Border Grant application for 2021. Rollie Nissen reported Arctander Township is very interested in participating in the project. Schmoll noted a study may need to be done for that township; she will speak to Beyer about including Arctander Township. Schmoll asked Sisser to update the potential funding document he previously created. Schmoll noted letters of support will need to be obtained for the grant application. It was noted that educating township residents will be the biggest hurdle for the project. Schmoll stated Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association is installing broadband on the east side of Kandiyohi County and may be interested in extending services. Meeker Coop was also given the Engineering Study and Marketing Analysis done by Compass Consultants and its board will be meeting in regard to a project. It was the consensus that the committee will discuss a more specific plan for a grant application, including assignment of tasks, timelines, etc., at its October meeting. Mark Boeschen informed the committee he also spoke with a Whitefield Township board member about a future project.

Final broadband survey results. Schmoll reviewed a 2020 June Broadband Survey Summary (see attached) she prepared and noted highlights from the report:

- The areas with the greatest response were the cities of Willmar, New London and Spicer and the townships of Lake Andrew, Norway Lake and Dovre
- 83% (290) respondents had one or two people working from home
- 48% (166) had students participating in distance learning
- Half of the respondents receive internet from telephone companies; 20% from cable companies and 19% from non-cellular wireless services
- 64% (225) stated the internet has not met their needs during the pandemic
- 97 of 349 who responded had to use a public site or other hot spot to upload or download information.

Schmoll also prepared a spreadsheet by city and township so it can be shared with those entities. The goal of the survey was to obtain data and stories to use for the state broadband grant application. Schmoll can contact the townships to attend a meeting and share the data. Jason Hulstein stated Willmar Public Schools is trying to help students with mobile hot spots rather than working with a variety of vendors; they receive many requests for help a day. The school district will end up with approximately 100 students who need a hot spot. The reasons vary from financial to location. Schmoll stated the school's information can be used for the grant application. Roger Imdieke reported one of the county's CARES Act teams is working on schools; the county is trying to fill gaps, such as purchasing iPads for schools. Schmoll stated there continues to be discussions on the state level about broadband access. Nissen suggested Arctander Township could use its CARES Act funds for a broadband study; Schmoll noted timing could be an issue.

Hanson Communications. Glenn Otteson stated he would like to get a meeting set up with Mark Hanson of Hanson Communications. He believes Hanson Communications would be interested in a project next year. Hanson Communications is doing a project for the City of Raymond, south of Highway 23.

REPORTS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Chair Boeschen gave highlights from Ann Treacy's blog located on the Blandin on Broadband website from the Minnesota Broadband Task Force meeting on September 8, 2020. The Task Force heard from the Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association about mapping and a recent push for lower geo satellites. Upload speeds are not expected to surpass 3-10 Mbps. Connected Nation gave a demonstration of the most recent interactive maps and the following subcommittees gave updates: Digital Inclusion, which is collecting stories for annual reporting; Minnesota Model—funding is its top priority and Barriers to Technology—gathering stories for barriers and successes. There was also a discussion on CARES Act funding for broadband, which must be completed by year end. Schmoll noted she has been getting questions about 5G and Space X.

Chair Boeschen reported on the Minnesota Broadband Speed Test Initiative and the mapping being done. Once a test is taken, a dot will appear on the state map. A green dot means the speed matches or exceeds the state's goal of 25 mg download and 3 mg upload; 10-25 mg download receives a yellow dot; under 10mg receives a red dot and no service is a black dot. Imdieke and Nissen both stated they have shared the test link. Schmoll will send a link to the test today and asked the committee to share it with their connections. Bogart offered to share the link on the Cooperative's website. Imdieke stated Nathan Zacharias gave a presentation and demonstration of the test to the Minnesota Association of Counties Infrastructure Policy Committee recently. The Coalition is trying to promote a statewide testing strategy and questioned how this committee could help. Suggestions included placing an ad or promoting the taking of the test on a certain day. It was noted that those without internet can enter their address showing there is no available service. Retaking the test would only be beneficial if something changes. Chair Boeschen noted when he took the test, the test speed showed slower than what he is actually getting as the server used is farther away from Minnesota; thus, he has some concerns about the test and is not confident in its accuracy as it seems to artificially lower some speeds. Dean Bouta also checked his speed, which also showed slower than what was actual. Imdieke indicated the testing originated in the Iron Range in collaboration with the Coalition for independent data not given by the providers. Chair Boeschen suggested committee members do the Coalition's test, as well as from another site to see if there is a difference. Generally the speed is measured from a server close to your physical location. Imdieke suggested if everyone uses the same test, it may be beneficial. Boeschen noted they may use some margin of error in the results. Imdieke stated the test could be promoted through the county, if it is willing. It was noted many factors can affect speeds. The results may be good information, but it is hard to draw conclusions.

Other. Chair Boeschen reported seeing quotes from local candidates relative to broadband and suggested this committee may wish to send a letter to all candidates relative to this committee's position on broadband. Schmoll offered to write a letter to include information

from the broadband survey. It was the committee's consensus to send a letter to candidates, including county commissioner candidates, on what this committee has done and is doing.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business,

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, October 5, 2020** via ZOOM video conference.

Efforts to Secure REAL Broadband Continue

Many rural Kandiyohi County residents still remain without access to high-speed broadband and the many benefits that come from having such access. The situation has never been more apparent than in the past months of social distancing, working from home and distance learning.

The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) has a committee focused on securing high-speed broadband for all people in our county. The committee's past efforts have expanded broadband, but we are well aware that today's digital demands make this issue more urgent. All Kandiyohi County residents, businesses, remote employees and distance-learning students need high-speed internet access to thrive in our digital world.

Starting in May, the EDC began polling people through Survey Monkey to assess just what issues are being experienced and where efforts need to be focused to get everyone up to speed! The number of respondents from Kandiyohi County was 349.

Survey results that stand out are as follows:

Residents of the cities of Willmar, New London and Spicer and the townships in the same general area, Lake Andrew, Norway Lake and Dovre were the top responders.

83% (290) of respondents have either one or two people working from home and 48% (166) had students participating in distance learning.

Half of those who responded receive their internet access from telephone companies such as TDS, Frontier or CenturyLink. Second highest, 20%, are cable company (Charter) subscribers, and 19% receive non-cellular wireless services.

Over 64% (225) of those who responded said the internet has not met their needs during the pandemic. The issue for most, 61%, was connections that slow down or drop.

And, 97 of 349 Kandiyohi County respondents have had to use a public site or other hot spot to upload or download assignments, classwork or communication for work.

When asked about the benefits of broadband while staying at home, answers fell in these categories:

- ✓ The ability to work from home
- ✓ Connecting with family members
- ✓ School work
- ✓ College assignments

- ✓ Staying connected with friends
- ✓ Entertainment at a time when there is not much else to do
- ✓ Keeping up to date on COVID-19 and other health-related issues

When asked about the issues faced, this is what we heard:

- ✓ Not enough bandwidth
- ✓ Dropped connection
- ✓ Unable to finish a meeting
- ✓ Unreliable
- ✓ Often difficult
- ✓ Not helpful, need to reset several times a day
- ✓ Unable to perform my job duties due to slow and dropped internet
- ✓ Chose to go to the workplace when I should not have so children could do distance learning
- ✓ If it works, I get by
- ✓ Unable to open files for classes or remote into the network for my job
- ✓ We many times go sit outside of the Lake Lillian Library to access the internet
- ✓ Often max out the cell phone data plan which makes data even slower
- ✓ Extremely slow, reminds me of the dial-up days
- ✓ I am so hoping we can soon get real broadband
- ✓ No issues now that we have fiber to our home

Fiber to every home is another way to access true broadband, speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload, would be the minimum goal. The state standard by the year 2026, is speeds for all households and businesses of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload in order to thrive in today's digital world. We have work to do to reach those standards in rural Kandiyohi County.

The information that has been collected will be helpful for:

1. Understanding the real-life benefits of good broadband and the challenges for those who are not getting by,
2. Utilizing the data and stories in grant applications for funding toward deployment of high-speed broadband,
3. Securing a broadband provider to deploy the broadband and manage the services, and
4. Evaluation of what can happen when high-speed broadband is secured throughout the county.

For more information and details about the survey, please check out the survey results at: <http://kandiyohi.com/broadband-survey/>. Feel free to call the EDC with any questions: 320-235-7370 or 866-665-4556.

Q1. What is the physical location of your home worksite?

Answer choices: (349 Kandiyohi County Responses)

City

Atwater	2	
Blomkest	1	
Kandiyohi	1	
Lake Lillian	1	
New London	12	
Prinsburg	6	
Raymond	9	
Spicer	8	
Suburg	2	
Willmar	26	

Township

Arctander	13	
Burbank	13	
Colfax	19	
Dovre	28	
Edwards	4	
Fahlun	4	
Gennessee	4	
Green Lake	13	
Harrison	12	
Holland	17	
Irving	6	
Kandiyohi	4	
Lake Andrew	54	
Lake Elizabeth	1	
Lake Lillian	3	
Mamre	5	
New London	38	
Norway Lake	8	
Roseland	1	
Roseville	3	
St. Johns	2	
Whitefield	5	
Willmar	17	
Unknown	7	

Q2. How many members of your household are working from home?

(349 Kandiyohi County Responses)

Zero	45
One	151
Two	139
Three or more	13
Untagged	1

Q3. How many students in your home are using the internet to participate in distance learning?

(349 Kandiyohi County Responses)

Zero	181
One	51
Two	64
Three	37
Four or more	14
Untagged	2

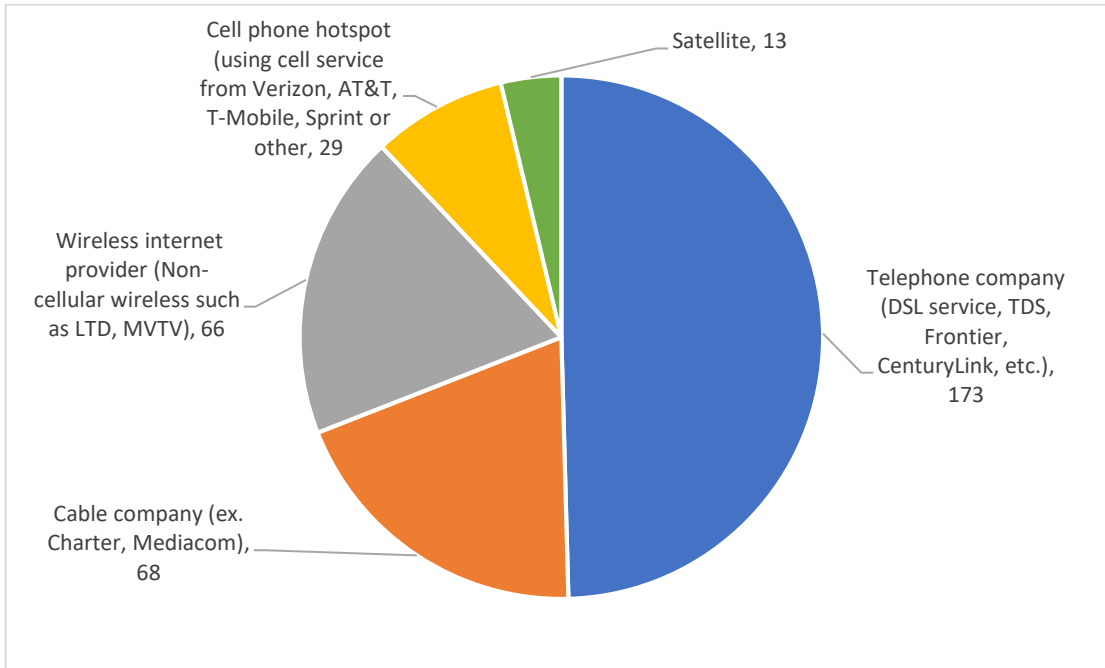
Q4. How many members of your household are working from home?

(349 Kandiyohi County Responses)

Zero	45
One	151
Two	139
Three or more	13
Untagged	1

Q5. What type of internet connection do you use for working remotely from home?

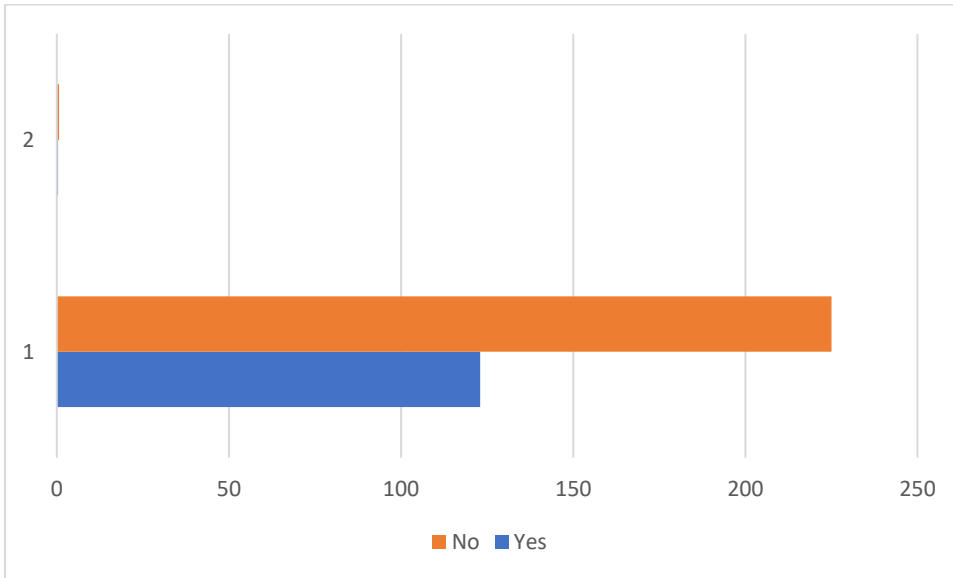
(349 Kandiyohi County Responses)



Telephone company (DSL service, TDS, Frontier, CenturyLink, etc.)	173	49.5%
Cable company (ex. Charter, Mediacom)	68	19.5%
Wireless internet provider (Non-cellular wireless such as LTD, MVTM)	66	18.9%
Cell phone hotspot (using cell service from Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, Sprint or other to connect to the internet)	29	8.3%
Satellite	13	3.7%

Q6. Has your internet connection been sufficient for you?

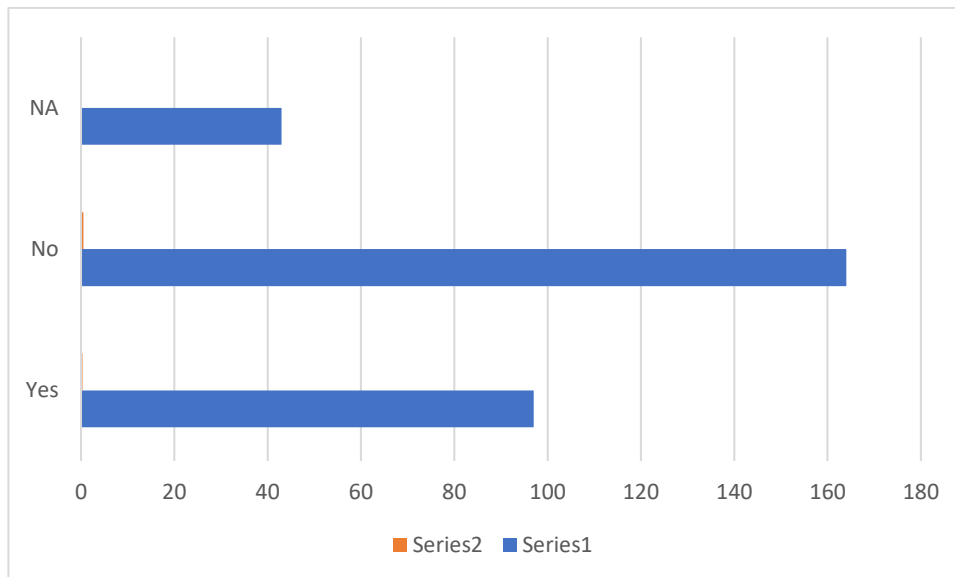
(348 Kandiyohi County Responses)



Yes	123	35.34%
No	225	64.65%

Q7. Have you had to use a public site or other hot spot to upload/download assignments, classwork or communication from work or school?

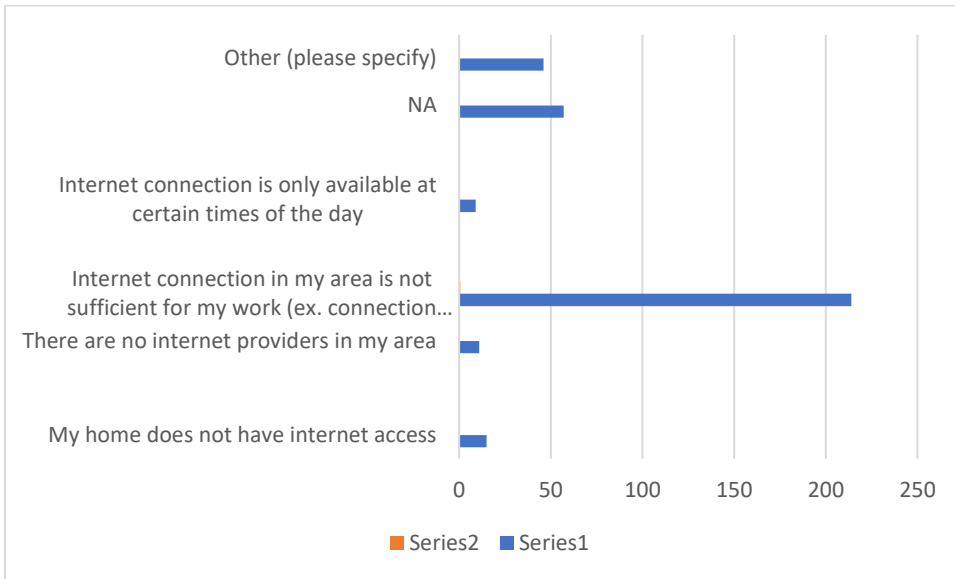
(304 Kandiyohi County Responses)



Yes	97	31.90%
No	164	53.94%
NA	43	14.14%

Q8. Do you experience any of the following internet or connectivity issues? Check all that apply.

(352 Kandiyohi County Responses)



My home does not have internet access	15	4.26%
There are no internet providers in my area	11	3.12%
Internet connection in my area is not sufficient for my work (ex. connection drops or slows down)	214	60.79%
Internet connection is only available at certain times of the day	9	2.55%
NA	57	16.19%
Other (please specify)	46	13.07%

Other Responses: 46 See Data Sheet “Narrative”

Other Issues You have Experienced

- 1 Also only one provider
- 2 Goes in and out sometimes for short periods of time on and off, and sometimes for a day or two at a time
- 3 Had to add satellite internet provider to help alleviate capacity constraints with TDS on speed. Satellite service speed not appreciably better
- 4 High speed not available-
- 5 I cannot stream a basic 1 hour tv show. It stops, buffers, freezes, etc.

I do a significant amount of video conferencing and teaching which requires a faster upload speed than we are able to access through our provider. My husband and daughter use our Frontier internet and the University has provided me with a Verizon hotspot so I can complete my work in a timely manner.
- 6
- 7 Internet is very slow and sometimes none at all. We would gladly pay for better service.
- 8 Internet service is not adequate for all the needs of our family
- 9 internet speed is awful. I cannot Work at home while kids are doing school. workat
- 10 Internet speeds vary throughout the day sometimes to the point of losing my connection and kicking off server
- 11 Internet was never the speed we paid for and could not get service for more than 20 days
- 12 It seems to drop service or lag a lot
- 13 It suffices, if im the only one on the internet doing anything. ANYBODY else doing anyTHING else, does not suffice.
- 14 It's been up and down in the morning during past month
- 15 LTD is the only provider in my area
- 16 Not only is our internet slow, the only provider we can get is TDS.
- 17 Occasionally lose connection
- 18 Our internet is adequate almost all the time. about once a month we will have interrupted service.
- 19 Paying for 12g but lucky if we get 3-4g
- 20 Poor rural service. Broadband was not offered down our major county road.
- 21 reliability and speed have decreased since activated few years ago
- 22 Satellite service is poor. Talked to TDS, their service is worse. Tried LTD, tower is too short and get no signal. This is affecting my job performance.
- 23 Satellite is slow and expensive
- 24 Satellite is slow and expensive
- 25 Slow
- 26 Slow
- 27 slow, not strong enough for video and we do not work from home
- 28 slow, often unresponsive, I feel sorry for students and adults working from home.
- 29 some connection issues but varies not too bad
- 30 Speed is not consistent
- 31 Streaming videos or tv is always interrupted.
- 32 Super slow and sucks!
- 33 TDS was too expensive and wasn't always reliable. We are currently check with MVTV as that seems to be the only option.
- 34 The local companies are not sufficient for our needs. T-Mobile's rural services are
- 35 Unable to get mvtv or Ltd because of location frontier is terrible and frontier
- 36 Upload speed is unsatisfactory
- 37 Very slow and intermittently ok
- 38 Very, very slow. TDS is our only option.
- 39 VPN disconnects at random. Unable to effectively place online orders
- 40 Was sluggish even before the pandemic overload.
- 41 We don't have any providers to our area and can only use hotspot however our service with verizon at our house is only 1-2 bars.
- 42 We only have 15 g of data so when that runs out it is impossible to connect.
- 43 We stream movie with interruptions
We used to have TDS, which is a rip off as their internet is slower than dial up, now we have MVTV which was better than TDS, but with the increase need it's super
- 44 slow. I used to live in Japan and internet here is slower than Japan's dial up of 15 years ago
- 45 When I called for set up it was 2 months out plus price is always high
- 46 While working, other streaming devices/apps in our home are significantly slowed down