

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

MINUTES

November 5, 2018

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Bruce DeBlieck, Larry Kleindl, Brian Mort, Les Nelson, Gregg Price, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Dean Bouta, Scott Froemming, Michelle Marotzke, Ramsey Schaffnit and Connie Schmoll

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Chair Boeschen added to the agenda under New Business a report on a meeting with Arvig.

MINUTES

IT WAS MOVED BY Donn Winckler, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2018 meeting as e-mailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2018 Fall Blandin Conference report. Donna Boonstra reported it was an excellent conference where there was a lot of discussion on success stories and how the projects were done. One community canvassed townships door to door on broadband service availability and cost. One gentleman had a survey on an iPad that could be answered right away and sent to a central collection site. This committee did do door-to-door canvassing of most homes, although some seasonal homes were missed. Chair Boeschen suggested it would be an up-front buy-in. Larry Kleindl noted this committee had a hard time getting commitments. Chisago County had success with door-to-door canvassing and added a portion of the cost to its taxes. RS Fiber also went to townships and got the momentum going. Rock County also canvassed and had 100% success in signing up residents. It was felt language in the law needs to change to address incumbents being able to challenge projects. Boonstra stated she spoke with Tom Lambrecht, Economic Development Director for Great River Energy about interest by local cooperatives in expanding broadband.

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition report. Chair Boeschen reported the last meeting of the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition was administrative work and creation of committees, such as legislative and fund raising. The Coalition's goals for 2019 include legislation and securing funding.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting with Arvig. Chair Boeschen reported he, Dave Sisser, Connie Schmoll and Boonstra participated in a good discussion with representatives of Arvig. Arvig is interested in doing a project in Kandiyohi County and is willing to fund the project versus obtaining county bonding provided the county can provide a match of approximately 50%. Costs covered would include some engineering. The feasibility study previously done did not address costs for particular areas of the county. Incumbents would more than likely contest any project in Kandiyohi County, if a grant was sought. Arvig estimated a cost of \$11,000 per site to carry the fiber versus CTC's estimate of \$7,000. The committee will need to figure out how Kandiyohi County can provide the 50% match. Arvig gave examples on how money was raised in other places, such as 25% from townships, 35% from CenturyLink and 40% from a state Border-to-Border grant. Arvig is looking for this committee to identify a specific area of the county for it to do preliminary engineering. Arvig has installed fiber from Willmar to the south. Kleindl stated Arvig is installing lines underneath Lake Wakonda for a Meeker County project. Arvig offers speeds of 25/3 Mbps for \$50 and offers up to 1G. Pricing may not be as good as what a cooperative could offer. Arvig is looking for the best take rate, most likely 50%. Incumbents are doing projects where a majority of the population is located. Arvig did not discuss a return on investment and is not afraid to invest. Committee members suggested it would be good to let Arvig know this committee is interested in working with Arvig and possibly select an area of the county with a middle density population. It was recommended that a few committee members meet to discuss a possible project with Arvig and suggest an area for a project. Committee members questioned if TDS completed projects it had promised. It was felt education is key to get buy-in by residents. Getting financial participation from townships was seen as positive. It was also questioned if the county can start charging a broadband fee to be deposited into a savings account and, if not used, it is returned to the taxpayers. Arvig felt it would be three years before it could dig. It was suggested a test survey could be done in a particular township and if a majority of its residents are interested in broadband, but the township is not willing to help with financing, a project would not be done in that township. It was noted that 2020 would be the first time another broadband grant could be applied for by this committee. Kandiyohi County may not be able to get 50/50 from the state broadband grant program as other awards have been 60/40.

Project planning. Chair Boeschen reported last month the committee discussed possible projects and determined the following as priorities: (1) form a local broadband coalition; (2) partnerships and (3) funding.

It was felt the committee should focus on education and marketing. Education could include: broadband's effect on home values; town hall meetings to get members; education and support of local legislators. To start a local coalition a clear goal is needed.

ADJOURNMENT—

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

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:02 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, December 3, 2018** at Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Room 2057, Willmar.