

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

MINUTES

December 3, 2018

Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Willmar

Present: Mark Boeschen, Travis Bonnema, Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Bruce DeBlicek, Scott Froemming, Les Nelson, Gregg Price, Ramsey Schaffnit, David Sisser and Donn Winckler

Excused: Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Brian Mort and Connie Schmoll

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 12:04 p.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Added to the agenda under Unfinished Business was Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition update and under New Business was stories of the challenge process for the state grant.

MINUTES—Michelle Marotzke noted she was not at the last meeting and should be removed from those present.

IT WAS MOVED BY Donna Boonstra, SECONDED BY Regie Schaffnit, to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2018 meeting with the correction of moving Michelle Marotzke from Present to Excused. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition update. Chair Boeschen reported the Coalition prepared a letter to Governor-Elect Tim Walz urging three priorities: 1) base funding for the state border-to-border grant of \$70 million for fiscal years 2020-2021; 2) continue to support the Office of Broadband Development; and 3) continue the Governor's Broadband Task Force and developed its 2019 legislative priorities. Chair Boeschen will find out if there were any recommendations on the grant application.

Governor-Elect Walz has indicated broadband is a priority and new leadership will be on the Job Growth and Energy Affordability Policy and Finance Committee. Governor-Elect Walz has stated he wants \$300 million invested in high-speed Internet. It may be helpful to research who will be on the Job Growth and Energy Affordability Policy and Finance Committee. Donna Boonstra reported that according to Jason Duinck, Melissa Hortman will be the new Speaker of the House.

NEW BUSINESS

Challenge process for state grant. Donn Winckler stated the Southwest Regional Development Commission (Region 8) in Slayton is collecting stories on problems resulting from the challenge process for the state grant. Winckler will contact the EDC office for a particular statement before the Commission's January 19, 2019 meeting.

Project planning. Chair Boeschen asked the committee's opinion on where it recommends Arvig start with a project, if it is interested in Kandiyohi County. Connie Schmoll has recommended the southeast part of the county, however, that is Frontier's area so maybe it should be the southwest area. Sisser indicated Arvig was not concerned with starting in an area where it is already located. Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) looked at the north central part of the county partly because of population density. As discovered with CTC, the northern part has the most density, but it also involves seasonal residents. The project will need to be in an unserved/under served area so it is not contested. Scott Froemming noted other areas have looked at broadband projects as an economic development feature for their area. Kandiyohi County may not have an area that would not be challenged. It was noted that Federated Telephone Cooperative could easily provide services to the Sunburg area. Possibly sending a brief survey to residents was mentioned. The committee could provide Arvig with the pros and cons of areas of the county. Arvig received the feasibility study from 2016 and is concerned with the age of the data. It was noted the least served area is the southeast part of the county. Travis Bonnema stated a large number of residents in the southeast area have signed up with LTD Broadband. It was the consensus of the committee to recommend to Arvig that it do a project in southeast Kandiyohi County as it is the most under served area. Arvig would fund 50% of the project.

USDA grant applications. Chair Boeschen announced the USDA is accepting applications for loans and loan guarantees to extend access to broadband services in rural communities. Froemming stated Congressman Collin Peterson was not in favor of putting language allowing cooperatives to receive broadband funding in the Farm Bill. The USDA's broadband program helps fund costs to construct, improve or acquire facilities and equipment to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. To be eligible for funding, projects must have a minimum rate-of-data transmission of 25 megabits downstream and 3 megabits upstream for both mobile and fixed service. Froemming stated Kandiyohi Power Cooperative is waiting to see what Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association is doing.

Forming a Broadband Coalition. Chair Boeschen stated Schmoll is suggesting the committee host town hall meetings, whether it is in the southeast area or countywide, to begin the process of forming a Broadband Coalition to obtain interested members. Educating and getting people involved would be part of the meetings. Marotzke recommended contacting those who identified as champions during the CTC grant. It was suggested to hold the first town hall meetings in the previous grant project area and then branch out to the rest of the county. It was the consensus it should be a countywide coalition. A governance structure would be needed if fees are charged, identify goals, budget needs, fee structure and set a budget. Chair Boeschen stated the coalition should not replicate this committee. The coalition would be a local voice to advocate for broadband, seek funding and do more legislatively. Boonstra stated cooperatives are all members of the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and the National Rural Electric Association. Via the

coalition, healthcare, education and businesses would have the voice. Suggestions were that the coalition be a member of the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition or suggest to the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition that it develop coalitions on the county level, however, this committee does not want to wait that long.

The committee will need to decide where to hold town hall meetings (it was recommended to hold four to six meetings—some townships could be combined; what topics to cover; what education to cover (educate that nowhere in the county has broadband); be prepared to answer questions about a local coalition before asking for memberships; decide how many interested people to have before forming a coalition; develop potential goals before the coalition is started; anticipate possible questions and have professionals available to answer them; include realtors.

Further discussion/brainstorming as to a coalition will continue at the next committee meeting. Committee members were asked to bring ideas to the next meeting. Marotzke volunteered to put together a blueprint for the town hall meetings, which she will share with Winckler.

Other. Chair Boeschen announced Charter has a minimum 200 Mbps speed upgrade in Willmar.

ADJOURNMENT—

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

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

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **12 noon, Monday, January 7, 2019** at Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services Building, Room 2057, Willmar.