

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

**February 7, 2022**

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

Present: Mark Boeschen, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke (via Zoom), Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson, Rollie Nissen, Goldie Smith (via Zoom) and David Sisser

Excused: Bruce DeBlieck, Dean Bouta and Donna Boonstra

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Contractor: Connie Schmoll

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelen, Legal and Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:09 a.m.

**AGENDA—**

IT WAS MOVED BY David Sisser, SECONDED BY Larry Kleindl, to approve the Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to approve the Minutes of the January 3, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS—**

**Approve Membership in Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition (MRBC).** Swedburg reported the corporate rate for renewal of membership in the MRBC is \$750.00, which is included in the EDC's 2022 budget.

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Larry Kleindl, to ratify renewal of Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission membership in the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition at a cost of \$750.00. MOTION CARRIED.

## **Election of 2022 Officers.**

IT WAS MOVED BY Larry Kleindl, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to re-elect Mark Boesch as Chairperson and Michelle Marotzke as Vice Chairperson of the Kandiyohi County Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee for 2022. MOTION CARRIED.

**Broadband Planning Agreement with Connie Schmoll.** Swedburg reported the EDC Joint Operations Board and EDC Joint Powers Board have approved the extension of Connie Schmoll's Broadband Planning Agreement through March, 2022 at a cost of approximately \$9000.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Michelle Marotzke, to ratify the extension of the Broadband Planning Agreement between the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission and Connie Schmoll at a cost of approximately \$9000. MOTION CARRIED.

**Conversation with legislators Baker and Lang.** Schmoll reported Minnesota State Representative Dave Baker and Senator Andrew Lang attended the Kandiyohi County Board meeting, and broadband was the dominant topic. Schmoll spoke about the ongoing broadband projects and the barriers encountered, such as funding delays. Baker and Lang requested a meeting with Schmoll before the next legislative session. This meeting took place at the EDC, with Schmoll, Swedburg and Chair Boesch in attendance. They were given handouts and maps. Chair Boesch mentioned that more effort is needed to help people who don't have service, but are considered served by the state because they are only a short distance away from the served area. Baker and Lang thought Kandiyohi County has an excellent plan and could serve as a pilot project. Neither Baker nor Lang serve on broadband committees, but are willing to support the projects. Schmoll stressed the necessity of getting the broadband projects completed and suggested the State of Minnesota provide funding to speed up the process. One-half billion dollars out of the State's \$7.7 billion surplus could go a long way.

Marotzke attended the winter Economic Development Association of Minnesota conference with U.S. Senator Tina Smith, and thanked her for working on the Stafford Act issue. Bree Maki from Senator Smith's office contacted Marotzke for feedback on what federal funding has done to help the community. Marotzke provided information about Charter moving forward with local American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and the possibility of being awarded the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) grant. Maki was grateful for the information.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Vibrant Broadband.** Chair Boesch reported meeting with Luke Johnson from Vibrant Broadband. Vibrant has been working with engineers to get the project area finalized, but it is still not complete. There are 1933 locations, including the following nine townships on the east side of Kandiyohi County: Burbank, Kandiyohi, Fahlun, Roseville, Irving, Harrison, Genessee, Lake Elizabeth and East Lake Lillian. Vibrant Broadband is happy with the resolutions from the townships and Kandiyohi County is working on its resolution. Vibrant hopes to serve the lesser-populated areas with funds from the United States Department of Agriculture ReConnect Grant and is completing the application process. It is confident the grant will be awarded. Higher-populated areas will be served in Phase II of the project.

**Charter.** Chair Boeschen reported agreements are being finalized for each location to be serviced by Charter. New London Township has been re-worked and Charter will provide a final design. An update of the numbers will be needed before referring this to the Kandiyohi County Board. Schmoll visited with New London and Burbank Townships, they have agreed to work with Kleindl on funding. Burbank plans to use 10 percent of its ARPA funds, while New London Township will use 50 percent.

**Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC).** Schmoll had a conversation with Kevin Beyer from FTC on Friday. The state Border-to-Border Grant program will likely release two rounds of funding this year. If the NTIA Grant is not received, the first round will be used on the four-township project, which includes Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns. The second round will be used on the three-township project of Colfax, Lake Andrew and Norway Lake. The township leaders from the three townships will meet on March 1<sup>st</sup>, and Beyer plans to attend to discuss how FTC operates. NTIA Grant awards should be announced prior to that meeting. FTC informed Schmoll that it has two cities to service that were awarded Small Business Development Grants. These projects will go forward first because the funding is already in place. This could change the timeline on the township projects.

**American Rescue Plan Act Fund.** Chair Boeschen reported discussion is needed about the "last mile," where someone is considered served but doesn't have cable all the way to their residence. The initial ARPA funds proposal had \$300,000 earmarked for this purpose. The state considers these residents served so they aren't eligible for grants. Chair Boeschen is aware of at least three residents that have this problem and he doesn't know how widespread it is. It can cost \$13-14,000 to get them served. Representative Baker suggested moving forward to see what happens. The typical out-of-pocket cost is \$1500-2000 per stop for residents in some grant project areas. Chair Boeschen doesn't think it should cost more than \$5000 to get cable to a residence. Roger Imdieke suggested making a grant available that may not pay for the entire amount. A 50-50 grant with a maximum out-of-pocket cost of \$5000 was a suggested parameter. Anyone in an area considered served would be eligible. It is unknown how many people are affected and whether those affected will be willing to pay up to \$5000 for service.

**NTIA Grant.** The new deadline for the announcement of NTIA Grant awards is the end of February. Marotzke submitted public comments on behalf of this committee, answering 3 of the 36 questions that NTIA had for the \$65 billion available through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. The questions responded to were related to the Stafford Act and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

**USDA ReConnect Grant Program.** Vibrant Broadband is requesting residents in the USDA ReConnect Grant area to take an internet speed test. The test takes two to three minutes to complete. With the speed test Vibrant hopes to gather information for the ReConnect Grant and for future projects. Schmoll was on Open Mic to explain the importance of participation. Postcards will be sent to residents of the nine townships in the Vibrant project area. EDC had a post on Facebook about it. Jason Hultgren will get the message out to schools in the project area, including BOLD, ACGC and BBE. Schmoll will work with a homeschool group. Letters of support from residents of the nine townships would also be appreciated. The ReConnect Grant application is due February 22, 2022. Vibrant's goal is 10 percent participation in the speed test, which equals 190 speed tests. This is a preventive measure that may combat some of the challenges it is facing in being awarded the grant.

## **REPORTS—**

**Education/Marketing.** Marotzke reported there are still residents who don't believe the internet is necessary, so continued education is necessary. A township meeting will be held at the American Legion in Willmar on March 14, 2022 from 9:00 a.m – 12:00 p.m. This is an opportunity to bring up the need for letters of support and speed test participation.

**Grant Writing.** Schmoll reported letters of support are the most pressing issue.

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Swedburg reported that Broadband Day on the Hill will be held virtually on Wednesday, March 30. The recap of the Office of Broadband Update to the Legislation was short but good. Both *Blandin on Broadband* and the Broadband Coalition have summaries available. Chair Boeschen encouraged all committee members to follow Ann Treacy on *Blandin's* blog as an easy way to keep up-to-date on what is going on throughout Minnesota in regard to broadband.

**ADJOURNMENT—**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, March 7, 2022** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.

## **Kandiyohi County Broadband Projects in Planning**

- 1. Four-Township Border-to-Border Project includes Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns Townships (755)**

The provider for this \$9,990,951 fiber-to-the-premise project is Federated Telephone Company, Kevin Beyer, CEO

Our plans are to apply for 48 to 50% of the funding in a state Border-to-Border grant application, for approximately \$4,995,000.

Other funding proposed as follows:

Provider	\$ 2,500,000	25%
County ARPA	\$ 1,314,386	13%
County Funds	\$ 100,000	1%
Township ARPA funds	\$ 200,543	2%
Townships/constituents	\$ 883,000	9%

This project is nearly shovel-ready with all four townships having made plans for tax levy, use of existing funds or a subordinated service district tax levy plan.

A challenge for this project has been to not include all locations within the townships. Two reasons exist. Federal Rural Digital Opportunity Funds (RDOF) awards were tentatively announced for some locations in some of the townships, excluding them from eligibility for state funded projects. In addition, portions of Dovre Township are already served according to state definition, making those locations ineligible for state grant funds.

The current barrier is waiting upon DEED's Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Border-to-Border program to be released. The RFP is typically released in September each year. The funds have been legislated, however, the funding source for the state grants, is federal ARPA funds. A determination is still under consideration that would allow local areas to use federally disbursed ARPA funds as a match for the state grants in the project funding plans.

A grant application for NTIA funds has already been submitted for this project in addition to three other townships located in northwest Kandiyohi County.

- 2. Three-Township Border-to-Border Project to be submitted in the year following the Four-Township project proposal (1305)**

The Three-Township project includes Colfax, Lake Andrew and Norway Lake Townships in NW Kandiyohi County. The total cost is estimated to be around \$19,000,000. The area includes lakes and hills as well as farm sites. The population is greater in the lakes areas and sparse in the farmland



areas. The provider for this fiber-to the-premise project is Federated Telephone Company, Kevin Beyer, CEO.

Plans include applying for approximately \$5,000,000 in state Border-to-Border grant funds, more if the state allows a greater grant for such remote rural areas. Plans are to also secure County and Township ARPA funds and conduct township-level tax levy for the project. Planning has just begun.

### **3. Arvig Fiber Broadband Project for the City of Prinsburg (210)**

A fiber-to-the-premise project is planned for all businesses and residences in the City of Prinsburg. Arvig is the provider for this project. The total cost is projected to be \$1,000,000

All funding has been allocated and approved for the project as follows:

Provider	\$ 450,000	45%
County ARPA	\$ 330,000	33%
City of Prinsburg ARPA	\$ 45,000	4.5%
City/Tax Levy	\$ 175,000	17.5%

An informational meeting for constituents was conducted on Tuesday., Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. A subrecipient agreement has been approved and signed by both parties. An agreement between Arvig and the City of Prinsburg has also been completed and signed by both parties. Construction will begin in 2022 and be completed by December 2022.

### **4. Charter Project 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue in New London Township (37)**

Charter Communication will provide cable broadband infrastructure with near gigabit speeds to 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE in New London Township.. Funding has been approved as follows:

Provider	87%
County & Township ARPA	13%

A subrecipient agreement is currently under review by Kandiyohi County and Charter.

### **5. Charter Project Riverwood Circle in New London Township AND Burbank Township (84)**

Charter Communication will provide fiber broadband infrastructure to Riverwood Circle in New London and Burbank Townships. Funding has been approved as follows:

Provider	68%
County & Township ARPA	32%

**6. Charter Project for a portion of New London Township (32)**

Charter Communication will provide cable broadband infrastructure with near gigabit speeds to 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New London Township. Funding has been approved as follows:

Provider	77%
County & Township ARPA	23%

A subrecipient agreement is currently under review by Kandiyohi County and Charter.

**7. Charter Project for an area in portions of Dovre and Willmar Township (23)**

Charter Communication will provide cable broadband infrastructure with near gigabit speeds to 30<sup>th</sup> Ave NW which is on the north border of Willmar Township conjoining the south border of Dovre Township. Funding has been approved as follows:

Provider	59%
County & Township ARPA	41%

**8. Charter Project for the remaining premises in New London Township (32)**

Charter Communication will provide Fiber broadband infrastructure with up to gigabit speeds to the remaining premises in New London Township. The total cost is \$710,238. Funding has not yet been recommended by the EDC Broadband Committee. Further information is being sought.

Provider	63%
County & Township ARPA	37%

**9. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Seven-Township Project includes Arctander, Dovre, Mamre, St. Johns, Colfax, Lake Andrew and Norway Lake Townships (2060)**

Kandiyohi County has joined efforts with Federated Telephone Cooperative as partner organizations that understand the challenges and are united and steadfast in efforts to bring world-class, future-proof fiber optic networks to the rural areas of Kandiyohi County. The County has applied to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for funds covering 88% of the cost to deploy fiber to the premise infrastructure to eligible locations in seven rural townships including Arctander, Colfax, Dovre, Lake Andrew, Mamre, Norway Lake and St. Johns. The total project cost is \$32,618,662.



The grant application proposes the following for financing for this project:

NTIA Grant	\$ 28,695,623	88%
Provider	\$ 3,823,039	11%
Kandiyohi County	\$ 100,000	1%

The Kandiyohi County Commissioners have authorized the \$100,000 for the project.

**10. Vibrant Project for the East side of Kandiyohi County includes Burbank, Roseville, Irving, Harrison, Genessee, and East Lake Lillian Townships (1698)**

**Past:** This project has received a high-level proposal from Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association/Vibrant Broadband. Meeker Cooperative is requiring 50% funding from sources other than the provider to deploy fiber/fixed wireless technology that will provide speeds of between 100/10 Mbps and symmetrical gigabit (1,000/1,000). The estimated total cost for the project is \$3,750,000. A full fiber project is an option but would cost substantially more, as high as \$18,000,000 and would require an 80% injection by the county/townships. Kandiyohi County will consider ARPA funds for this project in the future. Current language in ARPA requires the build to provide at least 100/20 Mbps to all locations. Inquiries have been made to Vibrant Broadband about meeting this requirement.

**Current:** Vibrant Project for the East side of Kandiyohi County includes Burbank, Roseville, Irving, Harrison, Kandiyohi, Genessee, Fahlun, Lake Elizabeth and East Lake Lillian Townships (# of premises unknown at this time)

Vibrant Broadband, a component of Meeker County Power and Light Cooperative, is working with Kandiyohi County to apply for a ReConnect grant for eligible portions of the nine townships listed. For this phase-one buildout, if the ReConnect grant is awarded, no local financial support will be needed in addition. Non-eligible homes and businesses in the townships will not be left out. Vibrant Broadband is considering a phase-two build out of high-speed fiber broadband for the additional structures. Phase-two build out will require local financial support from Kandiyohi County and the Townships. The funds could be APRA funds and/or township level bonding.



# 2022 MRBC Membership Form & Invoice

January 1 – December 31, 2022

**\*Please return a copy of this form with payment.**



\_\_\_\_\_  
Today's Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization Website

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Person

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

Please select your membership type from the list below:

## MRBC SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP

☒ Nonprofit/Corporate/Organization Rate **\$750**

### County, City, Township Rate (Based on population)

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 2,000      | \$750   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2,001 - 5,000  | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5,001 - 15,000 | \$1,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15,000+        | \$2,000 |

**AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP** Note: Affiliate Members do not have voting privileges.

☐ Annual Contributions of \$100 - \$749

## COALITION SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to memberships, MRBC relies on sponsors to support its efforts. Sponsors provide the necessary expanded financial support for ongoing coalition efforts as well as specific activities. Each sponsorship level includes one Sustaining Membership per organization.

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Partner | \$10,000 or above  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Premier Partner    | \$5,000 to \$9,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Partner | \$2,500 to \$4,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner            | \$1,000 to \$2,499 |

Please enter your total due here: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make the check payable to our fiscal host:

Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC)  
2401 Broadway Ave, Suite 1  
Slayton, MN 56172

Questions regarding this financial transaction should be directed to:

Brooke Swart, SW Regional Development Commission, 507-836-1634 or [brookes@swrdc.org](mailto:brookes@swrdc.org).

Questions regarding the MN Rural Broadband Coalition should be directed to:

Emily Murray, Coalition Staff, 651-789-4339 or [emurray@mncounties.org](mailto:emurray@mncounties.org).

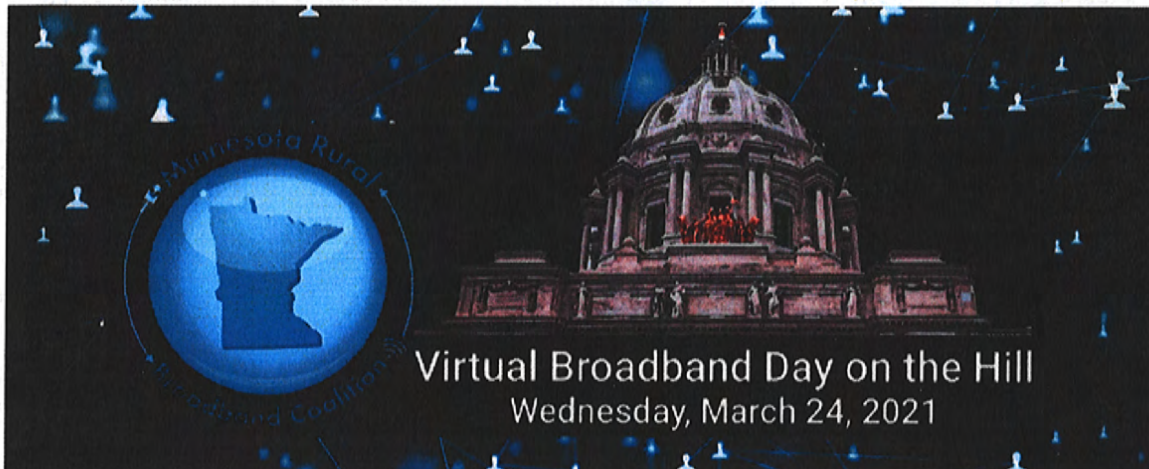
**\*Please return a copy of this form/invoice with payment.**

[mnbroadbandcoalition.com](http://mnbroadbandcoalition.com)  
[@broadband\\_rural](https://twitter.com/broadband_rural)

**Sarah Swedburg**

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**From:** Emily Murray <emurray@mncounties.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 24, 2022 1:42 PM  
**To:** Sarah Swedburg  
**Subject:** Save the Date! MN Rural Broadband Coalition Virtual Day on the Hill - Wednesday, March 30, 2022



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**MRBC Virtual Day on the Hill**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

**Via Zoom**

**Details and Registration Coming Soon!**



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MN Rural Broadband Coalition  
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