

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

**MINUTES**

**June 6, 2022**

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

Present: Donna Boonstra, Dean Bouta, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Tony Kirby (via Zoom), Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson and David Sisser (via Zoom)

Excused: Mark Boeschen and Bruce DeBlieck

Absent: Rollie Nissen and Goldie Smith

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal and Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Vice Chairperson Michelle Marotzke called the meeting to order at approximately 10:05 a.m.

**AGENDA—**

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

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Donna Boonstra, to approve the Minutes of the May 2, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS—**

**Meeting date in July.** Due to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July national holiday, the next Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee meeting has been rescheduled to Monday July 11, 2022, 10:00 a.m. at Room 2057 of the Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**Broadband Project Evaluation Criteria.** Vice Chair Marotzke presented the updated Broadband Project Evaluation Criteria form (see attached) and requested the committee review and email any comments or

suggestions to Chairman Mark Boesch, Sarah Swedburg and Vice Chair Marotzke. The finalized document will be approved at the July meeting.

**Vibrant Broadband (Including USDA ReConnect Grant).** Swedburg reported the East Project (Hawick and Long Lake) is moving forward. Irving Township approved the use of \$20,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the project. Roger Imdieke invited a community champion, John Noeldner, to Irving Township's meeting. He spoke directly about the need for broadband in the area and his experience with TDS. Community champions are needed for Roseville Township, which has not approved the use of ARPA funds for the East Project. The project will move forward regardless of participation, but lack of participation could affect its priority status in the future. Imdieke stated the Township Chairman, Mike Flanders, is in favor of funding the project, but at least one board member favors spending ARPA funds on roads. A community champion from Monson Lumber in Hawick or the north side of Long Lake will be needed at the next township meeting to advocate for the project. Imdieke will attend the meeting, which will be held on Thursday, June 9, 2022. Vibrant Broadband has agreed to a 50 percent cost split which equates to \$1,695 per passing.

**Charter.** Charter Communications reported a successful groundbreaking at the 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue project. Amanda Duerr, Director of Government Affairs at Charter, reported 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue is now almost complete, but waiting for a Department of Natural Resources permit for the final section. Thirtieth Avenue is 60 percent built, 199<sup>th</sup> Avenue is awaiting Minnesota Department of Transportation approval to begin, and Riverwood Circle has not yet started. A new Charter project will cover all of New London Township, minus the projects that are underway. This committee's approach going forward is to visit with the township first to ensure its support. Community champions are needed for New London Township, which will require property owner approval since Border-to-Border Grant funds will not be used. The project totals \$3.44 million, and will serve 531 locations with fiber to the home. Charter's contribution is \$1.33 million, or \$2,500 per passing. Kandiyohi County has committed \$1.046 million in ARPA funds, or \$1,970 per passing. New London Township will be responsible for \$232,000, leaving a remainder of \$809,000 or \$1,500 per property owner. Anyone in New London Township with service below 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download/20 Mbps upload is considered underserved and will be updated. Concerns about Charter's ability to maintain service were raised and will be addressed with Duerr.

**Federated.** Vice Chair Marotzke reported the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has \$61 billion available from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, with \$40 billion available for the states to apply for and manage. It is not determined whether there will be grant money available from the remaining \$21 billion. Eleven million dollars remains unallocated from the first round of NTIA grants. This committee's score on the first grant application is not known. The Border-to-Border Development Grant Program has opened for application and is allowing eight weeks for submission of an application. This year's construction season has already been missed. The legislative session ended with a portion allocated from general funds for broadband, and an additional \$70 million from capital project funds. Twenty-five million dollars in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds have been authorized for use in Border-to-Border grants. Regulations for Border-to-Border grants have changed under the guise of the Low-Density Pilot Program, although the statutes do not clearly define "low density." Under this program, the cap is \$10 million or 75 percent of the project cost. The Request for Proposal (RFP) just released will remain at the traditional \$5 million cap, or 50 percent of the project cost. The West Project will need an additional \$500,000 due to increases in labor and supplies, which will push it to the full 50% limit. Federated will be asked to help cover at least half of the additional cost. The grant application for the West Project is 70% completed, but needs activities concerning access and adoption added, such as marketing and education. The subcommittee structure will be reorganized to comply with the Border-to-Border

grant activities requirements. Chair Boesch, Swedburg and Vice Chair Marotzke will review these requirements and make recommendations for these activities at the next meeting. Swedburg will connect with the West Central Tribune and New London Lakes Area Review to give the public a status update. Upcoming broadband education opportunities at a community level will be discussed at the next meeting. For example, LeSueur County did a Broadband Fair with booths for all providers. Each provider was given an opportunity to speak on their current projects.

Inviting legislators to the next Broadband Committee meeting was discussed, and it was decided to wait until September or October, just prior to the election. The West and Northwest Projects will reconvene now that legislative action has taken place. The committee is hopeful the Northwest Project will have low enough density to qualify for the new program. The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development will determine what constitutes “low density.”

**Arvig.** Swedburg reported Arvig is continuing to work in Prinsburg. A groundbreaking ceremony for this project is under consideration.

**Kandiyohi County Line Extension Grant.** Swedburg stated \$5 million has been approved for the State of Minnesota Line Extension program using a portion of capital projects funds. The launch date is undetermined and the program will be reviewed every six months. The structure of the state program is similar to the county version, which the committee has considered allocating \$300,000 to reach residents out of the range planned by providers. Residents will be encouraged to apply for the state grant, with the county program implemented after state funds are exhausted. A list of qualified residents in Kandiyohi County will be compiled.

**American Rescue Plan Act Funds.** Swedburg reported many townships have allocated their ARPA funds to projects other than broadband. The committee’s new approach will be to ask each township for a set amount per passing, regardless of the source of the funds. Kleindl commented that from the county perspective residents shouldn’t be penalized if the township in which they reside doesn’t cooperate.

#### **REPORTS—**

**Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition.** Swedburg reported no meeting has taken place, but anticipates the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition will have a meeting this summer.

**Reimbursement of Mileage/Expenses.** Reimbursement of mileage costs and other expenses for committee members was discussed. The EDC Budget has mileage allocated that has never been used. This will be discussed at the July meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT—**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, July 11, 2022** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.

## Broadband Project Evaluation Criteria

Project Name \_\_\_\_\_ Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Start/Completion \_\_\_\_\_

Township Board Date \_\_\_\_\_ County Board Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Total Project Cost</b>	\$ _____	<b>Total Passings</b>	_____
<b>Provider Commitment</b>	\$ _____	<b>Cost per Passing</b>	\$ _____
<b>County Commitment</b>	\$ _____	<b>Add'l Cost Notes:</b>	
<b>Township/etc Commitment</b>	\$ _____		

**Population Density** – *Describe location of passings relative to each other.*  
 (The Committee’s goal is to reach all residents within the County, no matter the density.)

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**Existing Infrastructure** – *Where are current providers located or could this provide a benefit long term?*  
 (The Committee is provider agnostic and work with existing providers should be prioritized if possible.)

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**Demand** – *Are residents, businesses, townships, or other parties seeking increased internet speeds or a different provider?*  
 (Even though the Committee’s goal is to reach all properties within in the County, those with more demand should be targeted first.)

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**Location Distribution of Funds** – *Are government funds being fairly spread around the County?*  
 (The Committee desires to spread funds throughout all County districts.)

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**Existing Grant Areas** – *Are existing grant areas included in the project? If so, why?*  
 (The Committee does not want to “double-up” on funding and existing grant areas should be avoided.)

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**Technology / Speed** – *Does the project include fiber-to-the-premise or does the project meet the minimum speed standards as defined by the State?*  
 (The Committee gives preference to fiber projects and all projects must meet the 2026 State speed goal of 100/20.)

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*\*nothing in this document prevents the Committee from making exceptions to stated goals.*