

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

**January 9, 2023**

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

Present: Duane Anderson, Mark Boeschen, Bruce DeBlieck, Jason Hulstein, Roger Imdieke, Larry Kleindl, Michelle Marotzke, Ryan Nelson (via Zoom), Rollie Nissen, David Sisser, Goldie Smith (via Zoom) and Brian Zawierucha (via Zoom)

Excused: Donna Boonstra and Dean Bouta

Absent: Tony Kirby

Staff: Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

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

Chairperson Mark Boeschen called the meeting to order at approximately 10:07 a.m.

**MINUTES—**

IT WAS MOVED BY Michelle Marotzke, SECONDED BY Larry Kleindl, to approve the Minutes of the December 12, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

**NEW BUSINESS—**

**Introduction and Election of New Committee Member.** Chair Boeschen introduced new committee member Duane Anderson, Kandiyohi Commissioner of District 5. Rollie Nissen will remain on the committee as a private citizen. Self-introductions were conducted.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to accept Duane Anderson as a member of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Boeschen reported Dean Bouta's resignation from the committee. Chair Boeschen sent a thank you letter and Bouta will be given a plaque to commemorate his excellent service to the committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to accept with regrets the resignation of Dean Bouta. MOTION CARRIED.

## **Election of Officers.**

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY David Sisser, to re-elect Mark Boeschen as Chairperson and Michelle Marotzke as Vice Chairperson of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee for 2023. MOTION CARRIED.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS—**

**State Line Extension Program Communication.** Sarah Swedburg reported she has composed a State Line Extension Program press release and email (see attached) that will be sent to newspapers, radio stations, county commissioners and township clerks. Anyone with service of less than 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload speed is eligible to apply, and the state will give the addresses to providers for reverse bid every six months. Applications are done on-line or by paper application upon request. After receiving the committee's thoughts and suggestions on the press release, Swedburg will send it to the *West Central Tribune*, *Lakes Area Review*, *Clara City Herald* and *Paynesville Press*.

## **CURRENT PROJECTS—**

**Riverwood – Charter.** Chair Boeschen attempted to contact the Charter representative, but has received no response. There was activity in the area prior to Christmas, but the project won't be completed before spring.

**West Project – Federated Telephone Cooperative (FTC).** Chair Boeschen reported FTC is waiting for the final contract from the State of Minnesota, which is under review by the Office of Broadband and the Department of Employment and Economic Development legal team. The contractor is prepared to order the materials, but this cannot be finalized until the contract is in place. Materials need to be on order by the end of January for the project to go forward in 2023.

**Border-to-Border Broadband Grant 2023.** Chair Boeschen presented a map depicting where American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have been spent, and another showing potential new projects (see attached). One project will concentrate on southeastern Kandiyohi County in Lake Elizabeth and East Lake Lillian Townships. The townships will be required to pay a minimum of \$200 per passing with ARPA funds. Vibrant Broadband and Mediacom will submit proposals for this project. A second project will cover Colfax and Lake Andrew Townships. Lake Andrew is the densest area with over 1,000 passings. Norway Lake was omitted to avoid exceeding the \$10 million limit on project cost. FTC and Mediacom will be approached for bids. The Border-to-Border Broadband Grant application period is open with a submittal date of March 2, 2023. Prenotification letters are due on January 19, 2023. Letters of support will be critical to the success of the application.

**ReConnect 4.** Vibrant Broadband applied for a United States Department of Agriculture ReConnect 4 grant to service a very small area in northeast Kandiyohi County. The application was due on December 8, 2022. Notification of grant awards could take six months or more.

**REPORTS—**

**City of Willmar Broadband RFP for High-Speed Internet.** Sisser reported the City of Willmar received a proposal from Hometown Fiber, which included an analysis of what presently exists and an outline of what it would propose to do if Willmar decided to do its own fiber. Thursday the city will communicate with another city that implemented its own fiber. One concern is much of the installed fiber in Willmar is passive optical network fiber, which is run to each block and then goes to the homes via phone lines. The speed is good, but it is not fiber to the home. A decision will be made on Thursday.

**Internet for All meeting.** The Office of Broadband Development is hosting a one-day broadband conference on January 25, 2023 at Mystic Lake Casino. The state of Minnesota has been awarded \$5 million through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the legislative aspects of this award will be discussed at the meeting.

**Hometown fiber.** Chair Boesch and Kleindl met with Hometown Fiber, a company that provides infrastructure, for use by other providers. Because this is an untested process the county will not get involved.

Chair Boesch reported on a meeting between himself, Representative Dean Urdahl, Swedburg and Marotzke. Representative Urdahl was given an update and is supportive of the broadband initiative. He reported that the DFL released a project list and broadband was not high on it.

**ADJOURNMENT—**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING—**The next regular committee meeting is **10:00 a.m., Monday, February 6, 2023** at Room 2057, Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Building, Willmar and via Zoom video conference.

## PROGRAM PRESS RELEASE

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission  
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Willmar, MN 56201

[1.9.2023]

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Apply for State Broadband Line Extension Connection Program Today!

[Willmar / Kandiyohi County, MN] —

During the 2022 Minnesota State Legislative session, the Department of Employment and Economic Development's Office of Broadband Development (OBD) was directed to create a Broadband Line Extension Connection Program.

Any resident or business in the State of Minnesota that does not have wired broadband internet service of at least 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload is now eligible to apply for this program. OBD will send a list of addresses to broadband providers offering service in Minnesota every six months, after which OBD will hold a 60-day reverse auction for providers to bid to extend service. Once awarded, broadband providers will have one year to complete the broadband line extension project.

To learn more about the program and apply, visit the State's website at <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/extension/>. To request a paper application, call OBD at 651-259-7610.

Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission's Broadband Committee remains committed to working with internet providers to complete broadband construction projects in Kandiyohi County so that all premises have access to high-speed internet. The State's Line Extension program is a great opportunity for businesses and residents outside of the recent Border-to-Border project award area (specifically Arctander, Mamre, St. John's, and portions of Dovre townships) that do not have adequate broadband service – especially those who know that they are near a provider's infrastructure. We encourage you to apply for the program today! Additional inquiries about Kandiyohi County broadband can be sent to Sarah Swedburg at [sarah@kandiyohi.com](mailto:sarah@kandiyohi.com) or 320-235-7370.

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