

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition
Meeting Minutes
June 18, 2019

Attendance:

On Phone: Mark Mrla, Finley Engineering; Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy Cooperative; Alejandra Henriquez, Congressman Tom Emmer's Office; Dan Larson, MRC; Mark Erickson, RS Fiber Cooperative; and Danna Mackenzie, DEED Office of Broadband Development.

On-Site: Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County; Vince Robinson, Lincoln County; Heidi Steinmetz, Kanabec County; Emily Murray, AMC; Katie Kienbaum, ISLR; Bruce Miller, MN Farmers Union; Robin Weis, SW RDC; Bill Coleman, CTA; Patrick Murray, Cooperative Network; Kent Sulem, MMUA; Steve Giorgi, RAMS; Diane Wells, DEED Office of Broadband Development; JoAnne Johnson, MN Public Broadband Alliance; Judy Erickson, Conversation Strategies; Nathan Zacharias, Conservation Strategies; Steve Fenske, MAT; Daniel Lightfoot, LMC; Anne Treacy, Treacy Information Services; Brent Christensen, MN Telecom Alliance; and Bruce Miller, MFU.

Nancy Hoffman called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves and discussed what each of our organizations bring to the table.

Session Overview

Judy Erickson provided an overview of what took place during the legislative session, focusing on the success and what went well with the coalition. The outcome of the legislative session was that the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program received \$40 million over the 2020-2021 biennium. This is the first time the program has received multi-year funding. Nathan Zacharias highlighted activities from the Day on the Hill event this year. Discussion on how to keep the momentum going in the interim.

Interim Plan/Next Session

Judy Erickson focused future plans on going after supplemental budget funding in the 2020 session, specifically the additional \$30 million that the coalition and OBD asked for this session. Nathan Zacharias also highlighted some policy work that the coalition discussed this past year that might be on the table again next year and that the coalition should focus on.

Judy suggested leaning on the DEED OBD and the Governor's Task Force on Broadband to identify policy items for next session that the coalition could also work on. It will be important for the coalition to have a presence on the task force and at the Blandin Broadband Conference this fall. Danna mentioned some of the challenges with policy issues going forward because of the differences of opinion. Brent Christensen reminded the group that we need to be careful with policy recommendations – to make sure any recommendations we pursue are fixing something – and not create a vehicle bill for bad policy to get through. Steve Fenske also mentioned that we need examples of problems in order to fix them. There is a difference between policy items we don't like and those that are creating real problems.

Organizational Future

Vince discussed the current coalition budget and how it plays into the future of the organization. The original budget for 2019 was for \$60,000: \$15,000 for AMC, \$40,000 to Conservation Strategies, and \$5,000 set aside for miscellaneous expenses. To date, the coalition is approximately \$8,000 short for budgeted expenses for the year. AMC is willing to amend the contract that they put together. The coalition will continue the contract, but will be amending the scope of work and reimbursement to AMC.

Conservation Strategies will be downsizing in the next year and will be decreasing its workload. Judy will not be continuing with the coalition into 2020, but the current contract goes until the end of October. Remaining balance owed to CSI is \$10,000.

The coalition needs to decide how to focus on current and future needs in terms of fundraising. Last year, we started fundraising in July. It has been proposed that we have different fundraising levels and increase the total amount we are requesting.

There was an open discussion on how to move forward with the two contracts and fundraising.

Motion by Bruce Miller to amend the terms of the contract with Conservation Strategies, Inc. to allow for payment of \$2,500.00 for the months of July through October, second by Vince Robinson. Motion approved.

Motion by Steve Giorgi that the executive committee meet to develop the 2020 budget, which would include a new contract for lobbying, second by Brent Christensen. Discussion. Motion approved.

Motion by Heidi Steinmetz to have Vince Robinson work with AMC on an amendment to the current contract, second by Vince Robinson. Motion approved.

JoAnne Johnson suggested that the executive committee set out tasks for the individual committee work, including fundraising and communication.

Brent Christensen will chair the fundraising committee going forward.

Next Meeting Date

The group will find a meeting date in July.

Meeting adjourned at Noon.