

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition
Meeting Minutes
August 8, 2019, 10:00 AM

Attendance:

On Phone: Brenda Nyberg, Connie Schmoll, Steve Giorgi, JoAnne Johnson, and Ryan Severson.

On-Site: Nancy Hoffman, Vince Robinson, Heidi Steinmetz, Katie Kienbaum, Bruce Miller, Bill Coleman, Dan Larson, Judy Erickson, Nathan Zacharias, Daniel Lightfoot, Anne Treacy, Jane Leonard, Carah Koch, Jennie Blumack, and Jim Beattie.

Nancy Hoffman called the meeting to order at 10:12 AM. Attendees introduced themselves and discussed what each of our organizations bring to the table.

Minutes of the June 18, 2019 Coalition Meeting

The Minutes of the June 18, 2019 meeting were reviewed with no edits offered.

Office of Broadband Development Updates – Border to Border Grant

There was not a representative from DEED available at the meeting to discuss updates. Members filled in what they knew about Dana McKenzie taking a leave of absence from the Office and DEED hiring a new person to be the interim Director. The new person is Angie Dickison. The Border to Boarder Grant application materials have been posted and the deadline for the applications is September 13. It appears that this will be a very competitive grant cycle.

Governor’s Task Force Update

Approximately 30 people from around the State have applied to be on the Task Force, including several Coalition members. The Governor has not yet selected any members and there have been no timelines published for when he will do so.

Legislative Updates

Nathan Zacharias updated the members on meetings he has been having concerning strategies for the upcoming legislative session. He met with Dana McKenzie and Angie Dickison from the Office of Broadband Development to get their perspective on the current grant cycle and the potential for them being able to manage additional funding if we would pursue it during the 2020 session. He also met with Darial Dannon, Government Relations with DEED, and Charles Sutton, and advisor for Gov. Walz to get their take on the potential for additional broadband funding in 2020. The consensus has been that with the projected budget surplus it would be a good idea to try and pursue additional funding. The 2019 legislature was very supportive of additional funding, but the budget challenges caused the Senate to scale back the full request. The authors of the 2019 bills have all agreed to author again in 2020 if it is decided to pursue additional funding.

Jim Beattie provide a summary of what is happening with CAFII funding and with ACAM funding and what the difference is between the two Federal programs.

Blandin Broadband Conference

Bill Coleman and Anne Treacy discussed the upcoming Blandin conference. It is scheduled for October 8-10 at Grandview Lodge near Nisswa. The focus of this year’s conference is how to work with local residents and businesses to realize the full potential benefits of broadband.

Coleman also informed the members of another broadband workshop he is organizing called the Growing Innovation Conference that will be held on September 12 in Winthrop. This will be geared toward using broadband for rural and agricultural development.

Financial Report

The members reviewed the financial report that had been prepared by Jennie Palmer, the Coalition fiscal agent. The report showed July 31 YTD revenues of \$56,925 and YTD expenditures of \$39,921.38.

Next Meeting Date

No date was set for the next meeting, but it is anticipated that it will be sometime in November in order to prepare for the 2020 legislative session.

At 11:20 the meeting went in to closed session for Governing Members only.

Governing members present for this portion of the meeting were Jane Leonard, Bill Coleman, Jim Beattie, Bruce Miller, Heidi Steinmetz, Nancy Hoffman, and Vince Robinson. With Steve Giorgi, JoAnne Johnson and Brenda Nyberg participating by teleconference.

Lobbyist Contract, Budget, and Fundraising Plan

The members addressed the proposal and draft contract from Nathan Zacharias. There was considerable discussion about how to move forward with the timelines and funding for this extensive of a position. With the current budget constraints it was felt that it needed to be a very clear-cut contract that provide a termination clause should the Coalition not be able to raise all the funding necessary to pay for the entire term of the contract. It was also felt that the contract term should be modified to coincide with the calendar year, which is also the practical fiscal year for the Coalition.

M/S/P Miller/Coleman to authorize Robinson to negotiate a contract with Zacharias that would be for 14 months beginning November 1, 2019 and ending December 31, 2020, and that the total amount of payment for personnel services included in the contract would not exceed \$43,000 over the 14 months. The monthly amount of payment could be varied depending upon expected workload, but was to be proportional to workload and not too front-end loaded. Robinson was then to bring the negotiated contract back to the Executive Committee for review and approval.

The members also reviewed the proposed 2020 budget and noted that the fundraising plan may need to be revisited to encourage organization to fund the Coalition at a higher annual level. It was also decided that the Fundraising Committee should go back to Blandin to see if they would be willing to fund 2020 at the same \$20,000 level that they provide for 2019. Hoffman indicated that the Fundraising Committee would be meeting soon to take all these things into consideration and develop a fundraising plan for 2020.

With there being no further business before the Coalition, Hoffman adjourned the meeting at 12:30 PM.

All motions were passed unanimously unless otherwise indicated.

Minutes submitted by Vince Robinson