

Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition
Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2021

Attendance:

Anna Boroff, MN Cable Communications Association; Joe Buttweiler, CTC; Ken Cammilleri, City of Scandia EDA; Bill Coleman, Community Technology Advisors; Julie Foote, MVTW Wireless; Brian Frederick, Blue Earth County IT; Patrick Garry, Lead for MN Fellow; Jenny Glumack, MREA; Jack Gottfried, Upper MN Valley RDC; Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County EDA; JoAnne Johnson, MN Public Broadband Alliance; Mark Jones, MN Rural Health Association; Bernadine Joselyn, Blandin Foundation; Brian Krambeer, MiEnergy Cooperative; David Larson, Cooperative Network; Jane Leonard, Growth and Justice; Becky Lourey, Nemadji Research; Scott McMahon, Greater MN Partnership; Emily Murray, Association of MN Counties; Jaci Nagle, Koochiching County; Tim Penny, Southern MN Initiative Foundation; Pam Rosenau, MVTW Wireless; Connie Schmoll, Kandiyohi County & Willmar EDA; Jason Sjoblom, Koochiching County; Lucas Sjostrom, MN Milk; Abby Strom, Alexandria Area Development Commission; Sarah Swedburg, Kandiyohi County and Willmar EDC; Michelle Thomas, East Central RDC; Britta Torkelson, MN Rural Education Association; Ann Treacy, Blandin Foundation; Jay Trusty, SRDC; Anna Vold, Student; Mike Wimmer, Mille Lacs County EDA; Jim Yount, Koochiching Technology Initiative; Nathan Zacharias, Zacharias Government Relations.

Jay Trusty called the meeting to order.

Welcome and Introductions

Vince welcomed attendees and took introductions of all participants.

Approval of April 15, 2021 Minutes

Motion by Nancy Hoffman to approve the April minutes, second by Jack Gottfried. **Motion approved.**

Legislative Update

Nathan provided an end of session legislative update. The Legislature provided \$70 million in the biennial budget for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program. The money is coming from the ARPA Capital Projects Fund and was included in the Jobs Omnibus Bill. It will be spread out \$35 million per year. The process will work a little differently than it has in years past. OBD needs to apply to receive the funds from the federal government. Treasury is still developing an application and guidance on how the money can be used. Language to conform our state standards to the federal standards was included in the Jobs Omnibus Bill. The Coalition was also successful in stopping policy changes or funding carveouts to the state grant program this year. Discussion from members and questions regarding the Capital Projects Fund and the process for the grant program going forward.

Additional update on the Federal Infrastructure Bill: the bill that passed the Senate included \$42 billion for state broadband grants through NTIA. This would be a block grant to the state. It also included:

- \$14.2 billion for emergency broadband benefit extension, up to \$30/month for residential;
- \$2.75 billion for digital equity grants;
- \$2 billion for tribal broadband expansion; and
- \$2 billion for USDA reconnect program.

The bill awaits its fate in the House. Money is divided amongst states based on underserved/unserved homes.

Update from the Office of Broadband Development

Unavailable to join the meeting.

Speed Test Update:

Nathan provided an update on the speed test initiative. The speed test has been up for a year, and we have collected 58,861 speed tests across the state. Thanks to a half dozen anchor counties who have worked hard on getting tests. The speed test is set to expire at the end of the week. We hope the project will be continued in some capacity in the future, but the Coalition doesn't plan to extend the licensing. If any organizations are interested, let us know.

Fundraising Update/Financial Report

As of the end of July, the Coalition had \$2,477.21 and paid the first two quarters for AMC. Speed test budget is listed below, there is some money remaining in that fund. Discussion around fundraising activities going forward.

Contract Renewals

There were three contract renewals before the Coalition – Nathan Zacharias, SRDC, AMC.

Motion to approve contract renewals by Ken Cammilleri, second by Becky Lourey. **Motion approved.**
Discussion by membership.

Committee Membership

The Coalition is still looking for members to participate on the Executive, Legislative, Communications, and Fundraising Committees. An overview of each committee, chair, and membership was provided. Volunteers are welcome!

Additional Business

Bernadine: Blandin Broadband event coming up with OBD pulling together a series of regional broadband meetings before the state broadband virtual conference on October 12-14. In the lead up to the conference they are partnering with regional development commissions and initiative foundations for nine regional meetings. [Schedule for the regional meetings](#) included in the chat and invitations will be sent by email.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM.