**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**Tuesday, January 31, 2023 Minutes**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

**Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

**Task Force Members Present in Person:** Teddy Bekele, Barbara Droher Kline, Steve Fenske, Steve Giorgi, Marc Johnson, Micah Myers, Phil Stalboerger, Theresa Sunde, Jim Weikum, Paul Weirtz, Dave Wolf

**Task Force Members Absent:** Yvonne Cariveau, Nolan Cauthen, Jason Hollinday, Brian Krambeer

**Others in Attendance:** Anna Boroff, Carol Bossuyt, Deven Bowdry, Hannah Buckland, Anne Christensen, Brent Christensen, Steve Howard, Laura Kangas, Karrie Jansen, Tom Karst, Bree Maki, Connie Martin, Ann Treacy, Diane Wells, Melissa Wolf, Nathan Zacharias

1. **Welcome, Task Force Introductions, Approval of Minutes**

Chair Bekele called the meeting to order and roll call was taken. He provided an overview of the agenda. Meeting minutes from December 19 and December 22, 2022 were approved.

1. **Legislative Update**

Deven Bowdry, Government Relations Coordinator for DEED, presented the Task Force with a legislative update. Governor Walz recommends $138 million for broadband grants in both FY24 and FY25. Deven noted that Bree Maki and Teddy Bekele have presented to legislative committees. There are many new lawmakers that are learning broadband terms. Deven’s presentation is posted on the Office of Broadband Development website. <https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/task-force/>

1. **How Can the Task Force Advocate for Broadband Funding at the Legislature?**

Nathan Zacharias, Technology Policy Analyst with the Association of Minnesota Counties, presented about effective legislative advocacy including what materials to share, who to meet with, conduct including do’s and don’ts, etc. Nathan’s presentation is posted on the Office of Broadband Development website.

1. **Office of Broadband Development Update**

Bree Maki, Executive Director, updated the Task Force on the Broadband Kick-Off event held at Mystic Lake on Wednesday, January 25. There were 242 registered for in-person and 193 online attendees. She thanked all the speakers and panelists and the OBD team. A survey will be done in the near future. She also noted that a new grant administrator has been hired and another may soon be hired after a round of interviews.

1. **Line Extension Connection Program**

Bree Maki also provided an update about the Line Extension Connection Program. So far, there are 856 applicants (803 households and 53 businesses). $15 million has been allocated by the legislature for this program and up to $25,000 per line extension is allowed. Every 6 months, OBD will provide internet service providers (identified as those participating in the Connected Nation mapping data collection effort) the list of applicants and providers will have 10 days to notify OBD of service availability, then have 60 days to submit bids to extend service to those locations on the final list. The selected provider has one year to complete the line extension. The OBD office has a Line Extension Connection Program webpage with more information here: [Broadband Line Extension Connection Program / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (mn.gov)](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/extension/) with a fact sheet that can be printed for distribution.

1. **Border to Border Grant Program Update**

Diane Wells, Deputy Director for the Office of Broadband Development, gave an update on past and future grant projects, federal funding from NTIA, and the Low-Density Pilot Program. $99.6 million was awarded to 61 projects in December. Grant Round 8 opened up December 19 with around $67 million to award. Pre-notification emails were due by January 19. The SFTP portal to submit grant applications opens up February 3 with applications due by 4:00 p.m. on March 2. A list of applications received, with the project area, will be posted by March 7 and challenges will be due by April 5 at 4:00 p.m. The Low-Density Pilot Program is part of the grant round (providers must state which program they are applying for). OBD can award up to $30 million of the $67 million for Low-Density applications. Under the Low-Density Pilot Program, applicants can apply for up to 75% funding of eligible costs and there is a $10 million instead of $5 million cap per application. There are about 25-30 projects still open from past grant rounds but are close to being completed. Diane also shared the federal funding and the timelines for reporting and funding.

1. **Digital Equity Update**

Hannah Buckland, Digital Equity Program Lead for the Office of Broadband Development, presented information on the required Digital Equity plan components, covered populations, Digital Connection Committees, mini-grant opportunities, and the corresponding timelines. Hannah’s presentation is posted on the Office of Broadband Development’s website.

1. **Public Comment, Other Business, February 22 and March 27 Meeting Plans, Wrap-Up**

Chair Bekele asked the Task Force for suggestions for speakers that would be beneficial for the last two remaining meetings as well as a venue to hold one of the meetings in-person. He also asked if any Task Force members or the public had items to bring forward. Barbara Droher Kline stated her concerns about the discontinuation of the legislative Day on the Hill previously organized by the Blandin Foundation and the Rural Broadband Coalition.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.