

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
August 30, 2017 meeting notes

McKindles opened the meeting in the Iron County Main Meeting Room at 12:05 pm.

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Jim Lorensen (Gogebic Community College), Richard Thiede (Oma resident), Lynne Wiercinski (Ironwood Carnegie Library), Jean Montgomery (Superiorland Library Coop), Kelly Klein (Iron Co Economic Development), and Opal Roberts (Iron Co WI Supervisor).

McKindles provided a handout of an email from Will Andresen about the launch of Connected Aging Communities. This project will include classes, activities, and organized events to teach aging adults how to use the internet to their advantage. Key points of connectivity for seniors are social, health care, and financial.

Lorensen reported slow response on the broadband survey so more advertising is being planned. The Gogebic committee is attempting to work with Northern Michigan University, Gogebic range.net, and one of the Bad River providers to provide broadband to the western UP. Location of the tower could be on Mount Zion. Tower access may be given to other providers. The Northern MI University subscribers would need to take at least one course from the University to be eligible for service. The service is open to use by governmental units.

Klein explained the probable reasons why we were denied the Public Service Commission grant this year. Out of 53 applications 13 were awarded and all were in Republican Senate districts. One third of the grants were awarded to CenturyLink or Charter. Klein talked to the project manager and was encouraged to try again. There may be another round this fall. Roberts has suggested to the County Board that the requested matching funds be retained in the 2018 budget. Other possible sources of funding were discussed.

Wiercinski explained that the Gigabit Library Network is pushing for broadband for libraries using TV "white space". These are analog channels not being used at present. Four libraries were chosen in the library system. Carnegie would supply five hot spots in various public areas around Ironwood. The location of these hot spots can be changed as service needs change. Wiercinski will keep the committee informed on their progress.

Microsoft, Mazilla and other major companies are interested in getting broadband into rural areas.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday September 27th at noon in the Iron County boardroom.

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts