

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
March 28, 2018 meeting notes

McKindles opened the meeting in the Iron County Board Room at 12:00 noon.

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Brandon Yuchasz (GogebicRange.net), Kelly Klein (Iron Co Economic Development), Amy Nosal (Iron County Extension), Jim Lorentson (Gogebic College), Mike Shouldice (Mercer resident), and Opal Roberts (Iron Co WI Supervisor).

Gogebic County update: Trying to kick off the online survey again. Some people who have responded say they are happy with the service they receive or are not engaged with online activities.

Michigan talking about broadband funding but nothing in the budget so far.

Mt Zion tower on the agenda for the April Gogebic Council meeting.

Connected Nation March 8th webinar: The webinar on Funding for Broadband Expansion was basically about where to look for grants. Most of the grants would be more than we can do on a small scale. The presenters will (for hire) help you with the applications. Yuchasz stated that most small entities are not applying for these grants.

Iron County update: McKindles had a conversation with the State of WI broadband director, Angie Dickerson about the timeline for announcing the successful PSC Broadband Expansion Grant applicants. Ms. Dickerson indicated that the announcement should be made in the early part of April.

Kline said that deciding on the next grant project will depend on whether or not we get this round of grants. He also reported that a Green bay company called Bug Tussle has funding from AT&T and is talking about contacting GogebicRange.net.

At the Tuesday Iron County Board meeting the board postponed voting on removing land from forest crop for the broadband tower since Yuchasz determined that the cost of bringing power to the site may be too prohibitive.

Community Resources: Had a brief discussion about “white space”. The Ironwood library was to be involved with a program using white space for broadband service. No information as to how this is proceeding.

McKindles met with the Mercer librarian who gave him a number of ways the library communicates with the public on the programs they offer. These could be used for distributing information on internet usage programs available to the public.

Nosal is in charge of the FE (Live Life) website and is working on creating a community calendar. She is presently working toward syncing with other community sites and making it easy for groups to submit their information and programs. Both chambers have been key players with this project and are providing the seed money to get this established.

Kline presented an attractive flyer on “Telecommuting in Iron County”. The flyer listed service providers, education, computer services and sites to research telecommuting. It has a map explaining the broadband expansion project and where service is currently available and lists several proposed sites. This promotional piece is directed more to the individual and hopefully will encourage young people to stay in the area.

McKindles reported that several people have said that CenturyLink is denying internet service to new customers. It is rumored that CenturyLink had designated a million dollars for internet service in Iron County last year but decided to use it in Vilas County instead. CenturyLink representatives have indicated that Iron County will be the last county that they work on.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday April 25th 2018 at noon in the Iron County boardroom.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts