

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
June 27, 2018 meeting notes

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

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Jim Lundberg (Merit network), Joe Bonovetz (Gogebic County), Kelly Kline (Iron Co. Economic Development), Amy Nosal (Iron County Extension), Mike Shouldice (Mercer resident), Dick Thiede (Oma resident), and Opal Roberts (Iron Co WI Supervisor).

Gogebic County update:

Bonovetz stated that there was a listening session for MI broadband but not much is going on. Seems they are doing a lot of information gathering and not much else. Lundberg said that with only one provider in some areas there is no competition to drive prices down. Businesses are complaining about the cost.

Iron County update:

Kline reported that the grant is almost done. This grant will be for \$34,975.65 to construct a tower near Fisher Lake. An additional \$18,300.64 will be requested which is the balance not awarded from the last grant we received. This project has been started and should be finished by November. Kline had been assured by the PSC that the balance of the funds from the last grant will be awarded even if the rest of the grant is not approved. The grants will be awarded in September. The PSC will not be doing partial grants in the future because there are too many complications from this procedure. Kline asked if an email could be sent to residents of the Fisher Lake area asking them to conduct speed tests so this information can be included in the grant application.

The Spider Lake Association is having a meeting at which McKindles and Shouldice will provide updates to the members on the proposed service from this latest tower, if constructed.

Kline stated that Gogebic Range.net said this may be his last project for a while. Brandon needs time to get caught up on providing service to the current towers.

The Palmquist tower is installed and has the ability to provide some coverage for the Pike Lake area. Other "small tower" areas will depend on requests to Gogebic Range.net. Shouldice suggested another survey be conducted to determine underserved or unserved areas.

Community Resources:

Amy Nosal had a handout about the Digital Divide Index of Iron County from 2015. Iron County falls well below the state and national averages on both the infrastructure and the socioeconomic scores. A webinar will be held on June 28th at 1:00 pm to explain why different factors create disparities that affect the digital divide (those who have access to computers and the internet and those who do not).

The Cold Iron Brew Pub is providing technology nights each month. The last one was well attended.

Lundberg has heard that AT&T may be abandoning copper infrastructure and going with wireless. They are considering partnering with Verizon in the future.

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

Meeting adjourned at 12:53 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts