

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
October 30 2019 meeting notes

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

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Kelly Kline (Iron Co. Economic Development), Brandon Yuchasz (Gogebic Range.net), Joe Bonovetz (Gogebic County), Glen Ackerman-Behr (Gogebic Community College), Joe Pinardi (Iron County Board Chair), Neil Klemme (UW-Ext. Tech Change Makers, Jackie Bradley (Tech Change Makers), Monica Overman (Tech Change Makers), Samantha Butterfield (Tech Change Makers), Neil Martinko (Mercer), Richard Thiede (Oma Township), and Opal Roberts (Iron County Supervisor).

Introductions were made to get acquainted with the Tech Change Makers, led by Neil Klemme, and several other new attendees.

Gogebic County update: The Wakefield Industrial Park broadband project is currently on the back burner with Gogebic Range.net. Brandon did not submit an application for a grant for this project.

The most recent Gogebic Range Survey Report & Update from Connect Michigan (Tom Stephenson) has, in several areas, reached the minimum targeted response. It is at 50% or over for four other categories. The survey now has 54% of total targeted responses.

Iron County update: Tower updates: Saxon Harbor will be online later this week if all goes well. Forestry will be including the WIFI fees for internet service in the campground fees. Spider Lake tower has been delayed due to grant funds not being received from the state. Fisher Lake property has been released by the DNR and site preparation work is in progress. The foundation will be constructed this year if weather permits. A private property owner has reached a verbal agreement, so far, with Brandon for the location of the Lake of the Falls tower. Zoning will need to approve a 3-acre split of the property. If the split is approved by Zoning then construction of the tower can begin next year. Brandon explained that, with the change in personnel and procedures at the state level, release of the grant funds had been running behind. This had caused delays in tower construction.

Internet Access Survey: Kelly has a call in to the Regional Planning Commission in Spooner about our planned survey. The Planning Commission is considering going from an Internet Access Survey to an Economic Impact Analysis of broadband use.

Karban TV internet in Mercer: Gogebic Range.net is currently installing service to customers. They have about a 3-mile range from the tower. This is for internet service only.

Community Resources: At the Development Council presentation earlier this month four Mercer residents attended to talk about their ability to stay in the area and telecommute because of the availability of better broadband access due to the efforts of the Broadband Committee.

Other: Kline spoke with Bug Tussel to find that they are shooting for the construction of 16 towers in Iron County. 10 have been permitted and the remaining six are in the process. The initial intent is for service to AT&T cell phone customers.

The historical document on the Broadband Committee McKindles had prepared for the Internet Fair in 2017 needs to be updated to include the accomplishments of the committee since then.

Neil Klemme and the Tech Change Makers will hold three sessions in Mercer and three in Hurley to teach different aspects of broadband to the older community. The Microsoft grant of \$5,000 was established to encourage students to help senior community members understand the use of the internet. They will also be teaching online safety and security to fellow students. They also received \$500 for tech equipment such as ipads.

Klemme plans for the Iron County Youth to present the broadband issue at Superior Days this year and asked for ideas for the presentation. Kline suggested possible funding for other needed resources aside from infrastructure. Klemme also reported that when others downstate are talking about broadband Iron County is held as an example of what can be done.

Bonovitz would like to see more interaction by Gogebic County with Iron County.

McKindles stated that community education as to the availability and use of the internet is very important.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday December 4th, 2019 at noon in the Iron County boardroom.

Meeting adjourned at 12:43 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts