

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
December 2 2020 meeting notes

Norman McKindles opened the online Zoom meeting at 12:02 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), Jim Lundburg (Merit), Jerry Wuorenmaa (WUPPDR), Amy Nosal (UW-Extension), Sarah Lucas (Pandemic Response Plan), Thomas Stephenson (Connect MI), Richard Thiede (Oma) and Opal Roberts (Iron County Supervisor).

Tower Updates: Fisher Lake Tower construction will be delayed. Brandon's company will erect the first 60' then the climber does the rest. The delay is due to the climber shutting down for a month or two due to COVID. This tower will be solar powered. The Agreement with the Mercer Sanitary District for the micro-pop needs to be signed and the plan is to finish that project this month. Brandon will meet with the owners of Musky Point this Friday to discuss the location of the micro-pop at Lake of the Falls.

Regional Planning Commission Survey: Kline reported the survey was mailed. The survey was sent to residents of Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas and Iron Counties. 439 hard copies have been returned and 322 replies were filled out online. Also 38 replies from businesses have been received. The plan is to extend the reply date by a couple of weeks and to advertise it on social media.

Community Education Subcommittee: Glen stated the group will hold a meeting in January.

Business Center/Shared Workspace: Glen reported the college is still interested in hosting this but the college is on an "on again off again" campus opening problem.

UW-Extension: Amy asked that the previous meeting notes be included with the emailing of the meeting agenda.

The FE calendar of events may be going in two directions. A business site and a public site. These may be sister websites.

Other discussions: Tom presented information on the program that Connected Nation has launched. This is an online application for the AT&T K-12 connected learning program, which is focused on closing the homework gap for at-risk students by providing free AT&T wireless internet service and mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to students nationwide. Nonprofit organizations and schools that serve at-risk youth nationwide are invited to apply. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, nearly 17 million public K-12 students have fallen into the "homework gap" due to COVID-19 school closures. In addition, Bellwether Education Partners estimates that approximately 3 million at-risk students may not have experienced *any* formal education—virtual or in-person—since March 2020. The program is primarily focused on impacting students in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, with disabilities, and other at-risk students who may be disconnected from formal education opportunities.

They have partnered with the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to promote telehealth.

Kelly reported that Bug Tussel will have erected 16 or 17 cell towers by the end of 2021. They are interested in supplying broadband to the area and have applied for a grant to do this. Service would be provided from nine different towers if awarded.

Joe said that unless Michigan does something like Wisconsin to allow public/private ventures it would be beyond their group to plan for projects. Tom urged Michigan residents to make strong suggestions to their legislators, who have shut the public/private proposal down, to reconsider.

On December 8th a Broadband Connectivity webinar with the topic “Connecting Michigan Communities” was held.

Next meeting will be online January 27th at noon.

Meeting adjourned at 12:43 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts