

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
March 31 2021 meeting notes

Norman McKindles opened the online Zoom meeting at 12:02 pm.

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Kelly Klein (Iron Co. Economic Development), Brandon Yuchasz (Gogebic Range.net,) Joe Bonovetz (Gogebic County), Glen Ackerman-Behr (Gogebic Community College), Jim Lundberg (Merit), Thomas Stephenson (Connect MI), Haley Tollefson (LTD Broadband), Richard Thiede (Oma resident), Dan Hance Watersmeet resident), and Opal Roberts (Iron County Supervisor).

Tower Updates: The Fisher Lake Tower will be in service soon and may be able to provide service to some of the residents on Spider Lake. The Water Tower micro-pop is in the works for April. Waiting on the PSC for permission to change the construct of the Lake of the Falls/Musky Point tower. Waiting to hear from Gogebic Township on Little Girl's Point tower. Plans to start on this in summer. He is looking at LTE deployment on some of the larger towers.

Bug Tussel Grant for Iron County: Kelly explained Bug Tussel's application for a grant to add fixed wireless to the nine cell phone towers being erected in Iron County. He is waiting on a conference call with them about this project. Bonovetz said the grant is for the fixed wireless equipment to install on their towers. Thiede asked if there was a map showing service areas. None that are available at present.

Community Education Subcommittee: the committee has not met.

Business Center/Shared Workspace: Glen reported that the use of the workspace would be free for individuals and a small fee would be charged for businesses. Kelly suggested researching to see if some of the recovery money could be used for this project.

FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF): McKindles asked if the project would be all fiber. Haley replied that it will be all fiber including up to the home. The current problem is the shortage of splicers to install the fiber. They are looking to hire over thirty of them. There is a 4-year timeline to complete the build. McKindles expressed his concern that this could put the Mom & Pop providers out of business. Stephenson explained that RDOF would be partnering with these small providers. Hance asked if there would be access to the fiber trunks in their area. Lundberg answered that Merit has fiber along US 2. Their major problem with laying fiber is with Forestry/DNR and the tribes. Obtaining permits to work in these areas can sometimes be difficult.

Next meeting will be April 28th at noon. This might be an in-person/online meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:40 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts