

Gogebic Range Broadband Committee
May 26 2021 meeting notes

Norman McKindles opened the online Zoom meeting at 12:05 pm.

Participants: Norm McKindles (primary/secondary education), Kelly Klein (Iron Co. Economic Development), Joe Bonovetz (Gogebic County), Glen Ackerman-Behr (Gogebic Community College), Brandon Yuchasz (Gogebic Range.net), Thomas Stephenson (Connect MI), Marie Graser (Ironwood Township Treasurer), Richard Thiede (Oma resident), Dean Gustafson (Mercer resident), Mike Shouldice (Mercer resident), Dan Hance (Watersmeet Township Internet Taskforce), Bob McGuffin (Watersmeet township), Joan Movrich (Charter/Spectrum), and Opal Roberts (Iron County Supervisor).

Tower Updates: The Fisher Lake Tower is almost to the top and will be completed soon. Equipment for Mercer Water Tower is up and operational. Will be accepting customers next week. This location will possibly reach part of Springstead and north as far as the Pike Lake area.

The solution for Lake of the falls is the placement of LTE equipment on the Popko Circle tower which has been approved by the PSC and will reach the Lake of the Falls area. This will also increase available speeds for current customers using the Popko tower.

Currently testing LTE equipment to increase bandwidth on the Copper Peak tower. A question was asked about the coverage area from the Copper Peak tower. Brandon stated that Black River Harbor has no internet service at all and the testing for the Copper Peak tower is mainly to the south.

Remote Worker Get-Together: Kelly is working with Amy Nosal, Glen Ackerman-Behr, Marlana, and Teresa Schmidt to plan a remote worker meetup. This meetup will help determine what their needs are both in business and social areas. Date is set for June 25th at noon using Zoom. Advertising will begin about three weeks before the meetup. Regional efforts include Gogebic County. The attendees at the online meetup will help determine the next step to be taken. McKindles suggested the attendees be informed of the Business Center/Shared Workspace project.

Telemedicine Update: Shouldice reported Aspirus telehealth is being used for in-patient settings with a Physician's Assistant and tele-hospitalist MD providing direction and guidance. It is being used in the clinics to connect with specialists, critical care nurses and others. They are noticing increased patient acceptance of using telehealth. The FCC is awarding \$250,000,000 specifically for tele-medicine connectivity.

Thiede is now on the board of Northlake Communities Clinic and they are working to use telemedicine but they are finding that the coverage overall in Iron County is spotty.

Business Center/Shared Workspace: Kline had researched a workspace located in a Rhinelander storefront. It offers a private office for \$300 a month, short term space for \$30 a week or \$15 a day. There is also a common space which can be used for meetings of larger groups. We will know more about the needs of our local remote workers for a workspace in Mercer after the online get-together.

Thiede could not get inside the Aukee building in Mercer so was unable to determine if the building is worth pursuing as a shared workspace.

Grant information: The Wisconsin governor has proposed moving ARPA money to broadband expansion. The speeds proposed are 100 mg download. This might be a strain for local and smaller providers.

CenturyLink has lots of fiber in Mercer Township but they have no plan to run fiber to individual houses. They might be outdone by companies willing to place fiber directly to homes.

Charter is talking to MI and WI counties that are underserved about using ARPA funds to obtain service.

Next meeting will be June 30th at 10:00 am in person in the Iron County boardroom and virtually through Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

Submitted by Opal Roberts