

Broadband Task Force

315 W Green St, Marshall, MI 49068 | calhouncountymi.gov/broadband



March 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes

1. Roll Call

Task Force Members in Attendance:

Michael "Mac" McCullough

Angela Stewart

Kathy Szenda Wilson

Paul Egnatuk

Marc Newman

Dr. Paul Watson

Monique French

Tommy Miller

Lorie Upright

Mike Nofs

Haley Snyder

Tina Rasey for Robert Stahelin

Paulette Porter

Others in Attendance:

Kelli Scott

Lucy Blair

Lynn Meikle

Brent Thelen

Erin Cummings

David Hackett

Mike Watza

Kaitlyn Elias

Ziggy Rivkin-Fish

Not in Attendance:

Jim Haadsma

Derek Perry

Jeff Albaugh

Shadi Makahleh

Barry Skutt

Sonja Elder

Art Kale

Lee Adams

2. Update on RFP and ROBIN process

Communications Director Lucy Blair gave an update to the Task Force about the Request for Proposal process. Five internet service providers responded, and three were approached to support their Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) grant applications. ACD.net and Comcast will be applying for the ROBIN grant, and MEC will be waiting for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant opportunity. The other applicants were 123.net and LIT Communities, which ultimately were not connected. ROBIN grant applications are due today, March 14.

County Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott added that Comcast proposed ~6000 addresses which would serve majority of the underserved in the county. MEC proposes covering the Southeast part of the County, and the southwest portion they are covering with rural development funds in the next 1-2 years. An additional \$1M in County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds was set aside by the Board of Commissioners for broadband needs.

Task Force Chair Mac McCullough noted his concern about what quality and speeds were proposed in rural areas. Ziggy Rivkin-Fish from CTC clarified Comcast stated fiber to the home.

Task Force Member Monique French asked who will cover Battle Creek? Scott responded that most of Battle Creek already has Comcast, a map would show all the areas that are served. Battle Creek isn't an area that is eligible for grants because it is considered served.

Scott asked to have the timeline for the ROBIN grant, and have the RDOF areas, served, and proposed expansion projects on one map, so we can see what is left to cover.

Ziggy Rivkin-Fish from CTC Energy & Technology gave his assessment of the RFP response. He stated the best proposal was Comcast, putting in 53% of their own funds, offering low-tier prices with Internet Essentials and Internet Essential + programs. Fiber to the home will help with speed to all areas.

3. Member engagement, related to ACP, future projects, statistics, etc.

Blair said we will be reacting out to Task Force Members about the Affordable Connectivity Program to talk about broadband projects that they have going on, what statistics they have for supporting grant applications, why connectivity is important in BEAD, and funding for digital navigators to help people connect.

Scott commented that she appreciates everyone listening to the county's updates, and the County is now working on next steps. The county wants to put together a list of community resources by institution, what each can bring to the table as a partner, so we have that inventory ready for the BEAD grant

4. Member Updates

Task Force Member Marc Newman said he will get the new president of Albion College up to speed about the Task Force and welcomes a meeting to coordinate with the County.

Mike Watzka from Kitch Law Firm is working on drafts to improve current law in Michigan, because Michigan law doesn't allow the federal funding available to go to local governments, universities. There is a bill from legislative service bureau coming out soon which would fix the problem. Worked on the 224 revision specifically. Watzka also commented that there is bi-partisan report that supports extending ACP for another year. A positive report.

Scott concludes our next steps is to have the County Communications Department promote the ACP program and get information out to you to get higher take rates.

5. Citizen's Time No citizens

6. Adjournment Adjourned 3:42pm