

BERRIEN COUNTY BROADBAND INTERNET TASK FORCE

[BCBIT](#)

August 10, 2023 12:30 PM

Berrien County Administration Center, Zoom+

MEETING NOTES

MEETING ATTENDEES: Berrien County Commissioner **Teri Freehling**; Berrien County Administrator **Brian Dissette**; Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) Executive Director **K. John Egelhaaf**; Berrien County Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Director **Lex Winans**; DCS Technology Design (DCS) President **Chris Scharrer**; Chikaming Township Supervisor **David Bunte**; Lake Charter Township Treasurer **Robert Clark**; [EnFocus](#) South Bend-Elkhart Regional Philanthropic Director of Projects **Gillian Shaw**; Herald-Palladium and Leader Publication Correspondent **Debra Haight**; Economic Development Specialist Kimberly Fedison.

- I. **ROBIN Grant Discussion.** Chris Scharrer, DCS Technology Design (DCS), updated BCBIT on the status of the ROBIN Grant. At the close of the 45-day objection period, word from the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office (MIHI) is that all projects approved for funding have received an objection to funding. With that, the MIHI office will review each objection and either approved or not approve an address for funding. Final awards will be determined and announced once this is complete.

- II. **BEAD Grant Discussion.** Once the final address list of parcels funded with ROBIN grant money been released by the state, we will review the remaining addresses and look for a fit with the upcoming BEAD Grant funding opportunity. Match requirements announced are 25%, whether in-kind, or direct funding. Projects that maximize sub grantee contribution and minimal BEAD subsidy will receive higher priority for selection. The initial receipts of BEAD will be states, who will then allocation funding, primarily to ISPs as sub-grantees.

- III. **MEC ROBIN Grant Update on Sub-Grant Agreements w/Townships.** Administrator Brian Dissette updated BCBIT on the progress of the sub-grant agreement template for townships to consider as the document to use with MEC specific to the ROBIN grant. Townships are, of course, free to craft their own document from scratch, by why re-invent the wheel. MEC is familiar with sub-grant agreements, so this is not their first rodeo either. Some folks requested the template, some folks have refused the assistance (for now). We will do our best to smooth out issues so that MEC can focus on deploying broadband infrastructure. Certain language has to be contained with a document using state money from federal funds. Contracts make some folks nervous. Others welcome a clarified list of expectations. MEC has made it clear, if someone drags their feet, they aren't stopping, and they aren't turning around.

IV. General Discussion Topics

A. Status of Berrien County Broadband Roadmap. John Egelhaaf updated BCBIT on the progress of the BCBIT Roadmap document. The committee is close to revealing a draft document. A flow-chart, created using on-line program [Canva](#) will be presented at our next meeting.

B. Adoption/Affordability Developments. As high-speed internet is deployed across the county adoption and affordability factors remain at the forefront. If internet is not affordable, using the internet for everyday life can't be done. At the other end of the spectrum, those with access may not be comfortable with using the internet. Either one is a type of exclusion that our community needs to embrace and erase.

V. Miscellaneous. Next Meeting September 7th. Web-page is updated with this information.