

January 14, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BERRIEN COUNTY: Your County Finance Committee respectfully recommends the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Berrien County Board of Commissioners in their Operational Objectives for 2019-2020 included to "focus on support and improvement of County infrastructure including but not limited to staff and financial resources being utilized to pursue all options available to bring high speed internet into the unserved and underserved areas of the County"; and

WHEREAS, a sub-committee of Commissioners were appointed to a Broadband Committee and in their work with other agencies, became the Berrien County Broadband Internet Taskforce ("Taskforce"); and

WHEREAS, through their work, it was determined that data collection would be needed to satisfy requests to the federal government for funding to expand the infrastructure, bringing Broadband to those unserved areas; and

WHEREAS, the Berrien County Board of Commissioners authorized a contract with Merit Network, Inc. for data collection with regard to high speed internet and its accessibility to the residents of Berrien County; and

WHEREAS, the Taskforce has worked with Merit Network, Inc. to create a survey that will seek input from as many residents as possible; and

WHEREAS, to receive as much input as possible, a press release about the survey and the work of the Taskforce has been written and should be distributed widely to help increase the response; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners on the Taskforce have reviewed and approved the press release.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Berrien County Board of Commissioners approves the press release regarding the broadband survey and encourages and appreciates its citizenry's efforts to complete the survey.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
BERRIEN COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mamie L. Yarbrough, Chairperson

Jon Hinkelman, Vice-Chairperson

Teri Sue Freehling

Ezra A. Scott

RESOLUTION APPROVED AS TO FORM
Administrative Date
Comments Attached
Corporate Counsel Date
Comments Attached

BERRIEN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mac Elliott	Dave Vollrath
Ezra Scott	Jon Hinkelman
Michael Majerek	Julie Wuerfel
Teri Freehling	Don Meeks
Bob Harrison	Mamie Yarbrough
Rayonte Bell	Jim Curran



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Berrien County Board of Commissioners
Berrien County Administration Center
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Date: February 15, 2021
Contact: Brian Dissette, County Administrator
(269) 983-7111, Ext. 8601

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Berrien County Needs Resident Survey Participation to Assist in Broadband Internet Expansion Efforts

BERRIEN COUNTY, MI. - In establishing their Operational Objectives for 2019-2020, the Berrien County Board of Commissioners included to “focus on support and improvement of County infrastructure including but not limited to staff and financial resources being utilized to pursue all options available to bring high speed internet in the unserved areas of the County. With that, Commissioners Jim Curran, Teri Freehling, and Ezra Scott were appointed to work with other agencies on the subject, and the Berrien County Broadband Internet Taskforce (“Taskforce”) was formed.

The Taskforce has identified that data, demonstrating the need, is necessary in order to satisfy requests to the federal government for funding. To obtain that data, the Berrien County Board of Commissioners contracted with Merit Network, Inc., and is seeking county-wide input from the residents in the form of a survey.

The Taskforce knows that in some areas in Berrien County, high-speed Internet is not available. In order to bridge this digital divide, they need to gain a better picture of who has access in Berrien County. A survey was developed by Merit Network that will provide accurate data regarding which properties do and do not currently have Internet access. Information gathered will only be used to support broadband internet expansion efforts and will aid the Taskforce in seeking grant funding to increase broadband availability in Berrien County. The Berrien County Board of Commissioners urge residents to participate in this survey, once it is available, to help measure broadband access. Their goal is full connectivity provisioning for all of Berrien County by the year 2024.

“Now, more than ever, Broadband Internet is an essential and crucial service to those who live, learn, work, and visit Berrien County. Understanding which households are connected to the Internet at broadband speeds (25/3 mbps) is the first step in building support to seek funding to increase access in our area. Providing high-speed broadband Internet service throughout Berrien County has become a priority for the Berrien County Commission as well as leaders throughout southwest Michigan- like the Pokagon Fund.” R. McKinley Elliot, Chairman, Berrien County Board of Commissioners.

The survey is being conducted through a partnership with the Michigan Moonshot initiative that aims to bridge the digital divide in Michigan. With the participation of Berrien County residents, these organizations will collect the necessary data to develop a realistic representation of current broadband coverage and speeds. Accurate, unbiased data will assist in drawing necessary state and federal funds to the community.

Residents are being asked to visit MichiganMoonshot.org/Berrien to complete the brief survey, whether they pay for

Internet access at their property or not. The survey results will provide granular information about residents' broadband speeds and availability to aid the taskforce in gathering the necessary data for grant applications.

ABOUT THE MICHIGAN MOONSHOT: The Michigan Moonshot is a collective call to action which aims to bridge the digital divide in Michigan. Stakeholders include Merit Network, the nation's longest-running research and education network, the Quello Center at Michigan State University and M-Lab, the largest open Internet measurement platform in the world. Learn more about the Michigan Moonshot at Merit.edu/Moonshot.

For more information:

MichiganMoonshot.org/Berrien