



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 19, 2025

WORKING SESSION

I. ROLL CALL

A Working Session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on February 19, 2025.

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM by Comm. LaBarre, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte(5:47), Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders (5:47), Katie Scott
Members Absent:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Annie Somerville
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Rose, ITS; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Ashlyn Poole, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Comm. Somerville, stated that she was at home watching and expressed that she was glad to see that the Board was receiving another shelter update.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Dan Kelly provided an update on operations during the current cold weather.

Comm. Scott explained the medical condition that an individual in the shelter was suffering from at the request of Comm. LaBarre.

Kelly stated that the shelters have been going through many cold weather items and stated that people could go to the website if they wanted to donate any items.

He spoke about the increase in necessary Mental Health Services and spoke about the work CMH has been doing. He said that Alphahouse has also seen an increased need.

Kelly thanked the BOC and Administration, the city of Ann Arbor and the city of Ypsilanti for the extra work that they are doing.

Comm. Scott stated that the shelter needed to bleach to clean the shelter and that she would be making a donation.

Comm. Maciejewski asked Kelly to speak about any nutritional services that the sheltering association may be facing.

Kelly spoke about the challenges of nutrition and an increase in the unique dietary needs of people staying in shelters. He praised the work of Food Gatherers.

Comm. LaBarre asked about occurrences of the flu in the shelters.

Kelly stated that they had seen the flu and Norovirus going through the clients and the staff, which created more challenges.

Comm. LaBarre asked if the sheltering association had what they needed to quarantine sick residents. Kelly explained their quarantine process.

Comm. LaBarre asked if the lagging previously promised Federal payment has had an impact on service delivery. Kelly said thankfully, it had not impacted them as they thought that it would. He also stated that they were preparing in case it did happen.

- B. Chris Scharrer, Washtenaw County Broadband Project Manager provided a broadband update. He shared that Salem and Superior opted out of the broadband update. so he did not have much information on them. He also displayed a map that showed the status of every area in Washtenaw. He noted that the map was searchable so residents could enter their address and get an update on the status of the projects in their neighborhood. Scharrer went by provider and gave a status on where they stood in the broadband update process.

- Washtenaw Fiber Properties: Construction Complete
 - 360 homes now servicable
- MEC: 90% Completed
 - 4,400 homes passed (All ARPA funded locations completed)
- Comcast: 70% Completed
- Charter Spectrum: 100% Completed, waiting on validation process
 - 1040 homes passed
- Mercury Broadband :
 - Mercury won the second largest amount of RDOF money in the state. Mercury could not handle the work that the promised being small company. They defaulted on about 90% if the award around the state. Tens of thousands of locations were given back to the FCC and put into another program.

Comm. Lyte asked if Dexter Township had been placed into the BEAD Program. Scharrer affirmed and explained that almost all of the infrastructure in Dexter Township had been built already because of ARPA dollars.

In total in the last 3-4 years broadband access has been provided to about 8,000

homes. Washtenaw County is the closest in the state to getting almost 100% coverage.

County Administrator Dill thanked Chris for his work.

Comm. Rabhi asked about Lyndon Twp. And the model that they use for their broadband. Scharrer stated that funding comes from an assessment on properties voted for by their residents. Operations are contracted through ACD Net which is municipally owned by the homeowners in the townships.

Comm. Rabhi stated his belief that this model should be replicated throughout the county.

Comm. Rabhi asked how public dollars traveled to the companies for the infrastructure. He expressed his problem with the members of the public providing the funds for the infrastructure and the private companies profiting off of the publicly funded infrastructure.

Scharrer noted that the private company took on a significant amount of the costs and that the public only funds about 30% or less of the project and that each company has to pay for any additional costs associated with the projects.

Comm. Rabhi asked what happens when a company defaults. Scharrer explained that the FCC would make recommendations for fines and the company would be responsible for paying some if not all of the money they were awarded.

Comm. Rabhi asked if the money went back to the federal government. Scharrer stated that for the RDOF funds would go back to the Federal government because they provided the initial money.

Comm. Rabhi asked if the customers received a 30% discount since the public funded about 30% of the project. Scharrer stated that this was not the case. He also stated that the rates were negotiated at the beginning of the contract and companies had to stick to that rate for a set amount of time.

Comm. Rabhi expressed some concerns about how the program was set up and the public investment and affordability. Scharrer stated that this was a current concern with the BEAD program.

Comm. Hodge thanked Scharrer for being helpful and answering constituent questions.

Comm. Sanders asked whether the recently connected residents' expenses will be much higher. Scharrer stated that the prices had to be similar to current competitor prices and spoke about some of the current prices.

Comm. Sanders stated her belief that the companies who invested would want something in return. Scharrer stated that as far as he knows, the companies are looking at this infrastructure as a long-term investment.

Comm. Scott thanked Scharrer for speaking at the meeting. She noted concerns about affordability in earlier discussions about broadband. She spoke about the needs for assistance for people who do not meet low-income thresholds but still need help.

Scharrer stated that this is something that they have been working on. He noted the problems that emerged with the end the ACP plan which ended early 2024.

Comm. Maciejewski thanked Scharrer for the work that he had been doing. He spoke about people in Lima and Dexter Townships praising their access to internet. He spoke about his work on the Broadband Taskforce.

Comm. Maciejewski asked when the rest of the project would be completed. Scharrer stated that it would be done by the Summer of 2025. Maciejewski noted that this was ahead of schedule.

Scharrer spoke about the strength of fiber and the investment that the county has made.

Comm. Hodge spoke about revisiting affordability funds that they set aside at the beginning of the project.

Comm. LaBarre noted that the project would be done ahead of schedule.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

Ashley Hall, Board of Commissioners Liaison provided a report on the Board of Commissioners Priority Retreat. She spoke about the highlights of the retreat, the priorities identified by the board, and the observer ratings. Ashley also provided some recommendations for the Board and Administration. She suggested that the board create a resolution reflecting the priority objectives and timelines.

Comm. Scott stated that the day was well organized and her belief that the retreat brought the team together. She asked if it would be helpful to take the priority areas and get more specific and measurable.

Comm. LaBarre stated that the retreat was really well done. He expressed his hesitation with creating a resolution and what the resolution would be used for because of the uncertainty of the future.

Comm. Lyte thanked Ashley for her work and stated her belief that the retreat was a great team building exercise. She expressed her desire for half of the retreat being a team building exercise and the second half of the day being for actual county business.

Hall stated that she would continue to work on the retreats for the future.

Comm. LaBarre thanked the staff that attended.

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

Comm. Scott, seconded by Comm. Lyte, moved to adjourn. Voice vote - motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:44 PM

Andy LaBarre, Chair of the Working Session

Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Ashlyn Poole, Deputy Clerk

Board Approved:March 5, 2025