

RESOLUTION NO. 3158

RESOLUTION CREATING THE WARREN COUNTY BROADBAND
TASK FORCE; PROVIDING FOR MEMBERSHIP, ORGANIZATION
AND PROCEDURES; AND SETTING FORTH PURPOSE,
FUNCTION, RESPONSIBILITY, AND SUNSET PROVISION

WHEREAS, Warren County is a rural community which is both geographically remote and includes large portions of the Allegheny National Forest which have hindered the penetration of broadband internet access; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 study authorized by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, found that “Connectivity speeds were substantially slower in rural counties” and that “The opportunity costs of not providing communities with affordable access consist of very real impacts on their economic health.”; and

WHEREAS, A 2006 Massachusetts Institute of Technology study found that “between 1998 and 2002, communities in which mass-market broadband was available by December 1999 experienced more rapid growth in employment, the number of businesses overall, and businesses in IT-intensive sectors, relative to comparable communities without broadband at that time.”; and

WHEREAS, in the 2017 Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, the number one priority was e-connectivity saying “E-connectivity is fundamental for economic development, innovation, advancements in technology, workforce readiness, and an improved quality of life.”; and

WHEREAS, during the declarations of emergency by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Warren County due to the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and the ensuing early closure of all public schools in the Commonwealth, the Warren County School District conducted studies regarding e-learning opportunities and found that a large section of students were unable to participate in e-learning due to a lack of overall access to high-speed internet; and

WHEREAS, Warren County has one of the lowest broadband penetration rates of any county in the state of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Warren County's real estate market is underperforming because houses need to be connected to high speed internet to be attractive in today's market; and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Board of Commissioners is taking a proactive role in developing and implementing programs that will result in increased tourism and a generally improved environment for growth in Warren County,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WARREN COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, that:

Section 1. *Creation.* There is hereby created the Warren County Broadband Task Force.

Section 2. *Purpose.* The purpose of the Warren County Broadband Task Force is to develop strategies and recommendations that will lead to expanded broadband access in Warren County. This may include the development of a pitch to hire a consultant for feasibility study, development of an overall plan which can be implemented in a public-private partnership or other similar framework, a grant proposal which can be used to draw down state and federal dollars for the purpose of broadband expansion or any similar proposal which leads to broadband expansion.

Section 3. *Limitations on Authority.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force is advisory only and shall not have the power or authority to create any law or policy with the force of law, to enter into contracts or incur any financial obligations, or to create any liability, contractual or otherwise, on behalf of Warren County or any of its agencies or instrumentalities.

Section 4. *Membership.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force shall consist of a minimum of seven members appointed by the Warren County Board of Commissioners and consist of at least one Warren County Commissioner and six or more community members.

a) Member appointments shall be made at a public meeting of the Warren County Board of Commissioners.

- b) Members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall reflect the diversity of the community.
- c) The officers of the Task Force shall include the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary. Members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall select their officers by nomination and a simple majority vote at their first official meeting. The term of every member shall last until December 31, 2023. A member may resign by written notice to the chairperson. A member may, upon notice and hearing, be removed by the Board for good cause. Any member vacancies on the Warren County Task Force shall be filled by appointment of replacements by the Warren County Board of Commissioners in a public meeting after recommended replacements have been presented to the Commissioners by the Warren County Broadband Task Force. If the County Commissioner serving on the Warren County Broadband Task Force is unable to perform their duties on the Task Force, they must be replaced by another Warren County Commissioner by appointment at a Public Meeting. In the event of a chairperson vacancy, the vice chairperson shall conduct the meeting and the members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall select a new chairperson at that meeting. In the event of a vice chairperson vacancy, the chairperson shall conduct the next meeting and the members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall select a new vice chairperson at that meeting.

Section 5. *Organization and procedures at meetings.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force shall meet within 30 days of the appointment of its members. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Warren County Broadband Task Force. Members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall select their chairperson and vice chairperson at the first official meeting. The chairperson shall preside at all meetings at which he or she is present. The vice chairperson shall act as chairperson in the absence of the chairperson. The Secretary shall be responsible, in cooperation with the chairperson, for providing notice of the meetings to the members of the Task Force; for the advertisement of public meetings; for the arrangement of facilities (either physical or electronically) for public meetings; and for taking minutes of the meetings.

The Warren County Broadband Task Force may establish, adopt, and amend bylaws, rules, and regulation for its own governance. In order to transact any business or to exercise any power vested in the Warren County Broadband Task Force, a quorum consisting of a majority of those persons duly appointed shall be present. The members of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall serve without compensation.

Section 6. *Regulations.* All proceedings of the Warren County Broadband Task Force shall be conducted in accordance with the Government in the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 Pa.C.S. §§ 701-716 and the Pennsylvania County Code. The Warren County Broadband Task Force shall be deemed an “agency” for the purposes of the Open Records Law. The Chief Clerk of Warren County shall act as the Open Records Officer for the Warren County Board Band Task Force.

Section 7. *Report and responsibility.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force shall provide its initial report setting forth its initial findings and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners within 180 days from the date of the Warren County Broadband Task Force’s initial meeting. The initial report submitted may consist of the Task Force’s overall recommendations and the result of its efforts over the 180 days. The Commissioners do not wish to dictate the contents of the initial report as the meetings and the deliberations that take place may bear fruit beyond what the Commissioners are capable of visualizing during the group’s inception. This report shall be placed on the agenda of a public meeting of the Warren County Board of Commissioners for review and potential adoption. The board may then request further work of the Warren County Broadband Task Force as may be in the public interest.

Section 8. *Staff.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force may be provided with assistance from County staff on an as-needed basis. The staff may be tasked with keeping and preparing records of the Warren County Broadband Task Force; may prepare, in cooperation with the chairperson, the preparation of reports, documents, or correspondence as the Warren County Broadband Task Force may direct; and, generally administer the business and affairs of the Warren County Broadband Task Force, subject to the limitations of the County budget and general staff availability. The County Solicitor shall provide legal counsel, as needed, to the Warren County Broadband Task Force.

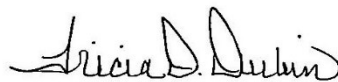
Section 9. *Authorized collaboration.* Although the Warren County Broadband Task Force reports directly to the Warren County Board of Commissioners, the Board encourages and supports federal, state, and local initiatives to increase Pennsylvania tourism and business investment and encourages collaboration and coordination by the Warren County Broadband Task Force with local, state, and federal agencies and officials in order to acquire data, solicit recommendations, and promote joint ventures and investment.

Section 9. *Sunset.* The Warren County Broadband Task Force shall sunset and stand dissolved at the end of the day on December 31st, 2023 unless the subsequent Board of Commissioners extends the term of service by majority vote. The Warren County Broadband Task Force may need to continue beyond the sunset period in order to provide guidance and coordination on the execution of projects related to its initial proposals and provide public education and further guidance to the community beyond its initial parameters.

COMMISSIONERS OF WARREN COUNTY

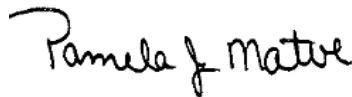


Benjamin Kafferlin
Chair



Tricia D. Durbin
Vice Chair

Attest:



Pamela J. Matve
Chief Clerk



Jeff Eggleston
Commissioner