

Permitting Consistency Needed to Ease Broadband Builds



Permitting delays can inhibit competition in high-density areas.

As the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program funding allocations are issued, executing broadband build plans is ever-pressing for communities across the U.S. Many are seeking to cooperate with partners and create a long-term vision of connectivity. But getting local permits approved to access rights of way and utility pole attachments remains a key barrier.

Cheri Beranek, CEO of Clearfield, says permitting delays can inhibit competitors in high-density areas. “The first fiber in gets the best chance to get the customer,” she says. “The permitting process stands in the way or has the potential of choosing [which entities are] the winners and losers.”

AVOIDING DAMAGES

Broadband builders should be cautious to not disturb existing utilities. The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is driving awareness of this process. Earlier this year, the CGA issued its “50 in 5” challenge, calling for the damage prevention industry to reduce damage by 50 percent by 2028. The CGA encourages the industry to focus on three areas: consistent use of 811; excavator practices; and accurate, timely location of utilities.

Sarah Magruder Lyle, president and CEO of the CGA, says all utility stakeholders need to buy in, particularly as providers seek to meet aggressive broadband build timelines. “There’s a competitive edge to get there first, which sometimes means

more utility line locators are needed,” she says. “We must address and mitigate the risk.”

CALLING FOR COORDINATION

Even when providers get suitable markers, another barrier they face when trying to expand broadband is a lack of permitting coordination.

Marissa Mitrovich, vice president of public policy for the Fiber Broadband Association, says that though permitting is getting more attention, the process hasn’t evolved much over the past decade.

“It’s no secret [the U.S.] permitting system is dysfunctional,” she says. “It is the cause of too many Americans not having high-speed access today, which hurts [the] economy because people remain either unserved or underserved.”

If the U.S. wants to reach long-term broadband goals, coordination to prioritize processing permits is essential. With many communities feeling left behind in the broadband race, the need for consistent permitting to enable faster, more effective network buildouts is obvious. The bottom line: Communities with friendlier, consistent permitting structures in place will be able to retain and attract new residents and businesses. 🌱

Sean Buckley
sean@bbcmag.com

CEO

Barbara DeGarmo / barbara@bbcmag.com

PUBLISHER

Nancy McCain / nancym@bbcmag.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sean Buckley / sean@bbcmag.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Masha Zager / masha@bbcmag.com

EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Steven S. Ross / steve@bbcmag.com

COPY CHIEF

Eli Penberthy / eli@bbcmag.com

ADVERTISING SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Irene Prescott / irene@bbcmag.com

EVENTS COORDINATOR

Dennise Argil / dennise@bbcmag.com

MULTIFAMILY NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Valerie M. Sargent / valerie@bbcmag.com

ART DIRECTOR

Karry Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS

- Rollie Cole, Sagamore Institute for Policy Research
- David Daugherty, FiberCorp
- Heather Burnett Gold, Mears Group Inc.
- Joanne Hovis, CTC Technology & Energy
- Trevor Jones, OTELCO
- Michael A. Kashmer, Digital Broadband Programming Consultant
- W. James MacNaughton, Esq.
- Christopher Mitchell, Institute for Local Self-Reliance
- Bryan Rader, Pavlov Media
- Craig Settles, Gigabit Nation

BROADBAND PROPERTIES LLC

CEO

Barbara DeGarmo

VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS & OPERATIONS

Nancy McCain

BUSINESS & EDITORIAL OFFICE

BROADBAND PROPERTIES LLC
1909 Avenue G • Rosenberg, TX 77471
281.342.9655 • Fax 281.342.1158

www.broadbandcommunities.com

Broadband Communities (ISSN 0745-8711) (USPS 679-050) (Publication Mail Agreement #1271091) is published 7 times a year at a rate of \$24 per year by Broadband Properties LLC, 1909 Avenue G, Rosenberg, TX 77471. Periodical postage paid at Rosenberg, TX, and additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to **Broadband Communities**, PO Box 303, Congers, NY 10920-9852.
CANADA POST: Publications Mail Agreement #40612608. Canada Returns to be sent to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Copyright © 2023 Broadband Properties LLC. All rights reserved.

