

NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher Appoints Digital Citizens Commission & Releases Ulster County Draft Broadband Map

Kingston NY (May 4, 2022)—Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher announced the appointment of a new Ulster County Digital Citizens Commission. The mission of the Commission is to bring universal connectivity to all Ulster County residents and businesses with equitable, affordable access to high-speed cable fiber broadband and cellular service. The Commission will make digital access information public to inform policy discussions to improve infrastructure through public private partnerships. The Commission convened under §C-57(H) of the Ulster County Charter includes the following members:

Ulster County Digital Citizens Commission		
Name	Town	Stakeholder Role
Mike Baden	Rochester	Town Supervisor
Lindsey Bauer	Marlboro/Big Indian	Healthcare Professional
Amy Fradon	Woodstock	Citizen Advocate
Deborah Franklin	Kingston	Educator
Joyce Grant	Shandaken	Town Clerk
Zak Hilty	Shokan	Citizen Advocate
Jenny Lee	Denning	Citizen Advocate
Laura Nordstrom	Kingston	County Executive's staff
Liz Potter	Phoenicia	Librarian
Clark Richters	Kingston	Citizen Advocate
Jim Sofranko	Olive	Town Supervisor
Justine Tomkiell	Saugerties	Citizen Advocate
Paul Tuzzolino	Wawarsing	Town Board Member

Thirteen towns in Ulster County have some areas that still lack access to broadband cable fiber. As a first action the Commission today releases an updated Ulster County cable fiber broadband map for public comment. People can review the county and town maps [here](#). Residents and businesses are encouraged to review the map to see if their location is represented correctly. Feedback on the map will be accepted until May 31, 2022, at CountyComptroller@co.ulster.ny.us or by phone 845-331-8774. Feedback from the public will be incorporated before the map data is sent for incorporation in the NYS Broadband map currently under construction.

“The pandemic has made all too clear that broadband is critical infrastructure necessary for business, education, healthcare and civic participation,” said Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher. “Federal and state infrastructure funding for broadband and digital equity will be available and municipalities with up-to-date mapping and strong advocates will be those best positioned to receive funding for build out. I am pleased to bring these local leaders together to assist Ulster County in advancing our digital future.”

“Broadband is no longer a luxury. It is a necessary utility to the residents of Ulster County and needs to be classified as such. Society functions on the internet,” said Rochester Town Supervisor Mike Baden. “The child who requires broadband to learn, the small business owner who requires broadband to order supplies and transact money, the single parent who requires broadband to go to college online, the senior who facetimes with their grandkids all require broadband in their lives. NYS must acknowledge this and make certain it is accessible in an affordable and reliable way to all residents of Ulster County.”

“Previously, broadband buildout decisions have been purely data-driven by New York State and the large cable providers using census block data to determine need based on broad demographics and cost,” said Olive Supervisor Jim Sofranko. “Nearly one billion dollars has been spent statewide on broadband buildout in the last 8 years, yet many rural areas still lack access to high-speed internet or cellular service. Local community leaders best know the broadband needs of their areas. The Digital Infrastructure Citizens Commission will give the residents and businesses of Ulster County a strong voice as to where future broadband buildout is implemented in their towns.”

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