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First Annual Meeting of ErieNet LDC Recaps Progress to Date, Anticipates Start of Construction

400-mile fiber network will connect countywide; work kicks off in April

Today, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz joined ErieNet LDC Board Chairman Thomas E. Baines and Executive Director Melissa Hartman for the first Annual Meeting of the ErieNet Corporation, held at ErieNet's headquarters in Seneca One Tower in downtown Buffalo. At the meeting, Executive Director Hartman highlighted how far ErieNet has come in just one-year and the positive impacts that Erie County's first open access broadband network will have for residents and businesses throughout Western New York.

"The County's vision, starting back in 2017, has put Erie County in a great position to be able to take advantage of the incredible amount of grant funding available for not only broadband but for open access networks. This type of advance thinking and planning has positioned us to be an example to all of New York State," **Hartman stated.**

Thomas E. Baines, Board Chairman of ErieNet as well as Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development for Erie County, stated how pleased he is with how far the corporation has come in just one year. "From establishing the board of directors to hiring the Executive Director, much has been accomplished," **Baines said.** "We are truly excited to witness the impact ErieNet will have on our community."

Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz added, "The economic development opportunities that an open access network creates for not just the city or our outer suburbs but for our rural towns is game-changing. Internet access is critical to business, healthcare, education and so much more but fiber has not been available to rural community residents in Erie County, and they've never had competition and choice in broadband access. ErieNet will change that, and I thank President Biden and our federal delegation for making available government funding through the American Rescue Plan to help us build a stronger, more resilient Erie County."

ErieNet will begin construction in April on the municipal open access broadband network, bringing fiber across the county and connecting every municipality. The construction on the initial 400-mile fiber backbone is expected to be completed in mid-2025. However, recently ErieNet LDC completed an application for an additional \$21 million in funding through the NYS ConnectAll Municipal Infrastructure Program, which would expand the fiber backbone by approximately 170 additional miles. If Erie Net is awarded this grant, the completion of the full network would not be until mid-year 2026. The grant also covers all municipalities within Erie County's cost towards the network.