

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Thursday, September 25, 2025

5:30 pm – 6:29 pm

Lincoln County Service Center (801 N. Sales Street Merrill, WI 54452)

County Board Room (#255/257/260)

Online Access: <https://meet.google.com/bjz-oiso-gpx>

Action Team Attendees (8/9 total): Tom Backen (Vice Chair), Jennifer Bishop, Sara Guild* (Secretary), Amber Lambrecht, Clyde Nelson, Heidi O'Hare, Amanda Patterson, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees (2 total): Dave Dyer, Travis Spoehr

*Participated online (1 total)

1. Call to Order – 5:30 pm by Wickham

Action Team Quorum = 7 (Backen, Bishop, Guild, Lambrecht, Patterson, Welker, Wickham)

Arrived after *Call to Order* = O'Hare (5:32 pm)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Wickham led brief introductions with all attendees.

3. Public Comment - NONE

4. Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – August 28, 2025

Welker/Backen motioned to approve the August 28, 2025, minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

a. Commission Chair

Wickham confirmed that the LCBC submitted its public comment regarding Lincoln County's BEAD award recommendations by the deadline.

Residents are continuing to contact Wickham about issues related to the Charter RDOF project installations, including multiple questions about getting service down private roads. Charter requires signed easements before they will provide service down a private road; however, the specific process to approve an easement has not yet been clarified. Wickham is going through this process himself and will continue to share updates.

b. Public Service Commission (PSC)

Guild reported that the Sept. 2 PSC public hearing served as method to provide a formal verbal summary of Wisconsin's entire BEAD process, including expressing the PSC's frustrations related to the various program changes this summer. The presentation did not reference any of the submitted public comments.

The PSC submitted its *Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program Final Proposal* to the NTIA on Sept. 3; the NTIA now has 90 days to review and respond. Guild noted that the PSC reported that 73.5% of the final awards were fiber-based, with another 13.3% fixed wireless and 13.2% satellite. In contrast, the original BEAD awards would have provide 93% fiber service, equating to 60,000 more fiber locations.

c. Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

i. Charter RDOF Project Implementation

Guild reviewed the updated RDOF map. Activation dates have been adjusted in multiple areas. The Somo/Wilson area in the northwest corner of the county was moved up to this fall, as was much of the eastern Harrison area. The western part of the Town of Tomahawk was pushed back from August to November, due in part to the need for some aerial work. Guild will request another update in December.

ii. *Other ISPs – NONE PRESENT*

d. *Action Team Members*

WELKER: Starlink has announced it will release a new mobile phone (Pi) to compete with the iPhone.

LAMBRECHT: Starlink is continuing to adjust its pricing frequently, often without warning. She encouraged residents to monitor the Starlink website to watch for future price fluctuations.

PETERSON: The Merrill Area Public Schools are collaborating with TB Scott Library to develop trainings on cybersecurity for families. This is still in the early phases but they will keep the LCBC updated.

6. Digital Pathways Project

a. *Key Stakeholders Outreach List & Meetings Prep Discussion*

Attendees reviewed the preliminary stakeholders list prepared at the August meeting and discussed options for scheduling the first roundtables to start getting feedback about barriers to technology utilization in Lincoln County. They decided to target public sector partners for the first meeting, since this group may be easier to bring together during the workday and could provide feedback to help guide future meetings with other stakeholders, including community agencies, non-profits, and businesses.

The first roundtable will be scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 4, from 1 – 2 pm at the Service Center. In-person attendance will be encouraged, but online will be available if needed. Guild will create the initial list of invitees based on the stakeholders spreadsheet and draft the invitation email; she will work with Wickham and Backen to finalize the documents and send the invitations out in early October. The LCBC will develop the roundtable agenda and create potential questions during the October LCBC meeting.

7. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. *Future Agenda Topic Suggestions*

October: Review registrations for November roundtable; develop meeting agenda and questions.

Future: Possibly share more information about Starlink phone if/when appropriate.

b. *Confirmation of Next Commission Meeting Date/Time/Location*

The next Lincoln County Broadband Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, Oct. 23, at 5:30 pm in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

8. Meeting Adjournment – Meeting adjourned by Wickham at 6:29 pm.

Minutes Approved: 12/04/2025 by LCBC, recorded by SG