

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Thursday, December 4, 2025

5:31 pm – 7:02 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 (7/9 total): Tom Backen (Vice Chair), Jennifer Bishop, Sara Guild (Secretary), Amber Lambrecht*, Glyde Nelson, Heidi O'Hare*, Amanda Patterson, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees (4 total): Andrew Caylor* (MAPS), Chris Crawford* (Charter), Gary Hartwig (LCEDC), Travis Spoehr

**Participated online (4 total)*

1. Call to Order – 5:31 pm by Vice Chair Backen

Action Team Quorum = 5 (Backen, Guild, Lambrecht, O'Hare, Welker)

Arrived after *Call to Order* = Patterson (6:00 pm); Wickham (6:26 pm)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Backen led brief introductions in the room and online.

3. Public Comment – NONE

4. Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2025

Welker/O'Hare motioned to approve the Sept. 25, 2025, minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

a. Commission Chair

****NOTE:** This update took place after Topic #6 due to Chair's arrival later in the meeting.

Wickham continues to receive frequent questions about the status of Charter's RDOF project installation timeline.

Action Team member Clyde Nelson is stepping down from the Commission; he recently retired from the Merrill Chamber. The LCBC will consider new candidates for the Action Team at its next meeting. Send recommendations for potential members to Wickham.

b. Public Service Commission (PSC)

i. BEAD Program Updates

The NTIA announced its approval of Wisconsin's final BEAD project awards this week. There were no major changes to Lincoln County's preliminary awards, which means the County will receive almost entirely fiber-based service, primarily from Frontier and Bertram Communications. The PSC will be finalizing official contracts with each of the providers in the upcoming weeks before installation activities begin in early 2026. All BEAD projects must be completed no later than 2030. The PSC's recent BEAD informational webinar included a recommendation to reach out to each county's awardees to establish contact and offer assistance as needed. The LCBC will look into doing this after the holidays.

c. *Internet Service Providers (ISPs)*

i. *Charter RDOF Project Implementation*

Crawford provided an update on the RDOF project implementation. He affirmed Charter is still intending to complete all work in Lincoln County by the end of 2026 and installation teams have been working aggressively to meet this deadline.

Guild brought up the RDOF installation timeline tracking document and Crawford provided additional context on the status of various project units. An updated RDOF map and timeline will be shared with the meeting minutes. Guild also provided a brief tutorial on how to access and utilize the online mapping systems for both RDOF and BEAD so attendees could be more comfortable looking up information on their own. Crawford reminded attendees that he can help address issues related to getting easements to bring service installation on private roads.

6:00 pm – Patterson arrived

ii. *Other ISPs - NONE*

d. *Action Team Members*

Welker has observed more activity from ISPs trying to get people signed up for new internet service, especially in areas where Charter was recently activated. He expressed concern that many people struggle to understand their actual service needs and may be over-purchasing for their speed levels; the prevalence of bundled services is also confusing. He would like to see more education on these topics.

6. **Digital Pathways Roundtable Preparation**

Attendees reviewed the spreadsheet Guild had prepared listing potential invitees for a Public/Government Agency Stakeholders Roundtable and provided feedback to expand and refine the list.

6:26 pm – Wickham arrived

Members discussed options for when to hold the roundtable and decided to schedule two separate meetings in February. The first will be on Feb. 5th from 12 – 1 pm and the second will be on Feb. 10th from 9 – 10 am, both at the Service Center. Invitees will be encouraged to attend in person but an online option will be provided upon request. Guild will send out invitations in early January. Attendees briefly reviewed a list of potential roundtable questions and decided to finalize the list of questions and roundtable goals at its January meeting.

7. **Future LCBC Meetings Information**

a. *Future Agenda Topic Suggestions*

The January LCBC meeting will include a review of any potential new Action Team candidates and a discussion to finalize plans for the February roundtables.

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

The next Lincoln County Broadband Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, Jan. 22, at 5:30 pm in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

8. **Meeting Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned by Vice Chair Backen at 7:02 pm.