

Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee
Minutes of Monday, March 9, 2026 @ 8:00 A.M.
Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156
801 N. Sales St., Suite 106, Merrill, WI 54452 **715-539-1034**

Members Present: Nobert Ashbeck, Greg Hartwig(virtual), Ken Wickham, Andy Zelinski

Absent:

Members Excused: William Bialecki

Visitors: Luke Williams, Lee Rahlf, Amy Krueger, Jeff Weber

1. Call meeting to order. The Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee met on Monday, March 9, 2026, in Conference Room 156, Lincoln County Service Center. The meeting was called to order by Ashbeck at 8:00 a.m.
2. Approve minutes of February 9, 2026. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski to approve minutes of February 9, 2026 meeting as printed in the packet. All Ayes. Motion Carried.
3. Review year to date budget report. The Committee reviewed year to date budget report and placed on file.
4. Comments from members of the public or invited guests. None.
5. Review and consider approval of truck bids. Williams reported that two bids were received and read both into the record. Esfahani Auto Group submitted a bid for a Toyota Tundra in the amount of \$59,900 without trade and \$53,900 with trade; however, the truck offered included only a 6.5' box rather than the 8' box specified. Holz Motors submitted a bid for a Chevrolet Silverado in the amount of \$48,432.50 without trade and \$41,432.50 with trade. Discussion followed. Motion by Zelinski to approve ordering the Chevrolet truck from Holz Motors, seconded by Wickham. Motion carried with all members voting aye.
6. Review and consider approval of spring planting bids. Williams reported that one bid was received from Superior Forestry Incorporated at a rate of \$70.15 per acre. The spring planting project covers 57 acres, totaling approximately 45,000 trees, which equates to roughly nine cents per tree. Williams noted that this rate is lower than last year's cost of \$71.43 per acre. He also reported that the area being planted was clear-cut in 2023, generating \$8,924 in revenue, with a 2007 thinning producing nearly \$1,000 as well. Motion by Wickham to approve the bid, seconded by Zelinski. Motion carried with all members voting aye.
7. Consider authorizing an application for the Lookout Mountain ATV Rehabilitation. Williams informed the committee that the department intends to apply for an ATV rehabilitation grant covering 0.75 miles of trail in Harrison. The project includes work at six locations and will involve trail bypasses, straightening, widening, ditching, and improving corners. Department staff would complete the work. Williams requested approval to proceed and asked if there were any questions. Discussion followed. Motion by Zelinski to approve proceeding with the grant application, seconded by Wickham. Motion carried with all members voting aye.
8. Consider authorizing an application for the Devil's Creek Snowmobile Bridge Report. Williams reported that the department would like to apply again for funding for a new bridge on Devil's Creek. The project was applied for last year but was not awarded. The proposed project totals \$158,600 and includes the design and installation of a new bridge, a short reroute, and a hydrology and hydraulics (H & H) study. Williams noted that the project is a 50/50 cost split between the Snowmobile Program and the Winter ATV Program. He added that although funding is unlikely this year, the application is complete, and continuing to apply demonstrates ongoing need, which may help support future snowmobile program funding. Motion by Ashbeck, seconded by Zelinski. Motion carried with all members voting aye.

9. Discussion regarding the potential purchase of parcel #00833052249998. Williams stated that he was contacted by an attorney handling the estate of Kathleen and Lee Wegner, who inquired whether the county might be interested in purchasing a parcel that abuts County Forest in the Town of Harding. The property appears wooded and does not have legal access for a private party; however, access for county harvesting is available from the county forest road system to the north. The committee requested that Williams obtain an inventory of the timber on the property and report back at the next meeting.
10. Discussion regarding parcel #01432063539996 and consideration of adding it to this year's tax-delinquent auction. Williams presented information regarding parcel #01432063539996 and the possibility of adding it to this year's tax-delinquent auction. He explained that an adjacent landowner had expressed interest in purchasing the parcel. The property was taken by the county in 1946 as part of a tax deed; while it is not required to be included in this year's sale, it also cannot be sold directly to a private party. The parcel is 33 feet wide and was originally retained to allow for potential future road development, which appears to have been standard practice at the time. The committee expressed support for including the parcel in the upcoming tax-deed sale, and Williams will consult with Corporation Counsel to confirm the appropriate process.
11. Discussion regarding the condition of select tax-deeded properties and the need for potential cleanup or demolition services. Williams presented a slideshow with recent photographs of tax-deeded properties PIN 02232070119998 and PIN 02232082349991, both of which were shown to be in extremely poor condition with significant health hazards present. Weber reported that two professional cleaning companies viewed the homes; one declined to provide a bid due to the condition, while Northstar Restoration submitted quotes of \$13,185.73 for PIN 02232070119998 and \$20,876.55 for PIN 02232082349991. Weber also obtained demolition estimates of \$16,954.62 for PIN 02232070119998 and \$29,093.70 for PIN 02232082349991. It was noted that parcel 02232082349991 has been included in previous auctions without receiving any bids. The committee discussed concerns about not wanting to incur large costs on delinquent properties and expressed interest in pricing them at levels more likely to attract buyers. Williams stated that while state law requires the properties to be listed at fair market value, he will seek advice from Corporation Counsel to determine how low they can legally go when setting the sale price.
12. Update on Ahlstrom. Williams reported that a five-year average was calculated for wood hauled from the Lincoln County Forest to Ahlstrom, totaling \$37,293.33 annually. He noted that the majority of the material delivered to this mill has been softwood pulp, and the mill's closure will significantly affect the marketability of these products. The nearest remaining mills accepting softwood pulp are now located in Escanaba, Michigan, and Kaukauna. Williams stated that the department would need to continue monitoring the situation, as the loss of this market might influence minimum specifications or operational decisions in the future. Discussion followed.
13. Set the date and authorize the Spring 2026 timber sale. Timber sale date set for 9:00 am May 11, 2026. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski. All ayes. Motion carried.
14. WDNR Report. Bill Groth not present.
15. Review Administrator's written report. Williams asked if there were any questions. Discussion followed, and the report was placed on file.

16. Close Timber Sales.

Hesston Meier	T005-24	Close and refund bond.
Futurewood	T005-25	Close and refund bond.
Wiitala & Vozka	T008-24	Close and return Letter of Credit.

Williams recommended closing and refunding bonds upon receiving final payments. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Zelinski to close sales per Williams recommendation. All ayes. Motion carried.

17. Set next meeting date. The next Forestry, Land & Parks Committee meeting was set for Monday, April 13, 2026 at 8:00 a.m., LCSC Conference Room 156

18. Adjourn. Motion to adjourn meeting by Wickham, second by Zelinski at 8:52 a.m. All Ayes. Motion Carried.

Minutes prepared by Amy Krueger and Luke Williams