

LINCOLN COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 13, 2026 - 4:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Hartwig called the meeting to order at 4:00pm with the following committee members in attendance: Cummings, Lyskawa, Miller, Thiel Excused: Friske

2. Confirm Meeting Date and Time

- a. **Next Meeting: 4:00pm, June 10 2026, Lincoln County Service Center, 801 North Sales Street, Room 255, Merrill, WI 54452.**

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Election of Committee Officers

a. Vice Chair

Vice Chair — Nominees for vice chair were Dana Miller and Angela Cummings. Supervisor Cummings received the most votes and accepted her election as Vice Chair of the Public Safety Committee.

b. Secretary

Secretary — Laurie Thiel was nominated as secretary. Without further nominations, Supervisor Thiel was unanimously elected as Secretary of the Public Service Committee.

5. Approval of the Minutes

a. Approve Minutes From: April 8, 2026

M/S Cummings/Lyskawa approved April 8, 2026 meeting minutes .All ayes, motion carried.

6. Public Comment

None

M/S Hartwig/Miller to move Clerk of Courts next on the agenda. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

7. Emergency Management

a. Year-to-Date Budget Report

Verhasselt explained that the department anticipated a slight overage (approx \$1000) in the safety program budget due to unforeseen device agreement charges and the installation of first aid cabinets at the Tomahawk and Merrill Highway shops and the Maintenance Department. These installations replaced the need for employees to procure supplies from retail locations, which was expected to result in overall county cost savings and improved employee efficiency.

b. Travel & Expense Report

Verhassel reported that the charges on the expense report were related to Abe's Adventures. The committee requested that Verhasselt include relevant dates and detailed explanations in future expense reports to ensure clarity for committee members reviewing expenditures.

M/S Cummings/Thiel to approve the Travel and Expense report. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

c. Emergency Management Activity Report

Verhaselt reported that most townships qualified for Wisconsin disaster funding following Blizzard Elsa, with total damages estimated at just under \$400,000, and noted that the county's own expenses totaled \$155,000. Only four townships in Lincoln County did not qualify for funding. The Town of Harding and Town of Russell did not apply for funding at all.

Verhaselt also reported that department leaders participated in a 3-day FEMA-funded intermediate EOC course, which allowed for the establishment of an official roster and assignment of scope and responsibility for emergency stations. Verhaselt informed the committee of planned independent study training to prepare members for their role in the policy group during emergency operation center activations. This training is intended to assist the committee in making difficult resource allocation decisions, such as prioritizing emergency response services during resource-constrained events. Verhaselt will forward training information via email to the Public Safety Committee members.

d. Res. 2026-XX, Acceptance of Computer and Hazard Materials Response Equipment Grant Funding

M/S Cummings/Lyskawa to approve RES 2026-06-XX Acceptance of Computer and Hazard Materials Response Equipment Grant Funding. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote. Hartwig will author the resolution and Miller will co-sponsor.

8. Coroner

a. Year-to-Date Budget Report

Caylor reviewed the report. Continue to monitor autopsy expenses. No questions or concerns.

b. Coroner's Report

Caylor reported during the month of April, 27 reported deaths, including six formal investigations and two suicides. Caylor indicated that she continues collaborative work with the governor's office and conservation boards regarding carbon monoxide education and prevention.

c. *Proposed Coroner 2027 Preliminary Budget

Caylor presented the 2027 budget, which included increases for deputy wages to provide buffer room during busy periods, as well as adjustments for postage and anticipated toxicology price increases. Caylor also noted that grant funding for body bags had helped mitigate supply expenses. Caylor clarified that per diem expenses were related to travel, and explained the staffing model, which consists of four deputies who are paid \$100 to be on call and \$75 to respond to a call when the coroner is unavailable.

M/S Miller/Thiel to approve the proposed Coroner 2027 Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

9. Judicial

a. District Attorney and Victim Witness

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns.

ii) Proposed District Attorney 2027 Preliminary Budget

The Committee reviewed the District Attorney's 2027 Preliminary Budget, noting a decrease in the fringe benefits line item following a request by the District Attorney.

M/S Cummings/Lyskawa to approve the proposed District Attorney 2027 Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

iii) Proposed Victim Witness 2027 Preliminary Budget

M/S Thiel/Cummings to approve the proposed Victim Witness 2027 Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

b. Clerk of Courts and Family Court

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Barker reported that the jury expense line item was currently over budget due to an increase in jury trials, which involve bringing in 30 to 40 people per trial. However, the office recovered nearly \$900 in jury costs from an individual who defaulted on the day of a scheduled trial, and the office expected to lower expenses for the remainder of the month as judges continue to stack trial for resolution.

ii) Travel and Expense Report

M/S Thiel/Miller to approve the travel and expense report for the Clerk of Courts. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

iii) Proposed COC 2027 Preliminary Budget

Barker presented the 2027 preliminary budget, noting increases in court-appointed attorney's hourly wages, guardian ad litem fees, and the family court commissioner's hourly rate. A new line item for the small claims mediation was introduced to save court time and align with practices used in Marathon County, and the office noted rising costs for postage, travel and juror meals. Barker also reported that state-provided court support funding and interest income from civil judgements, which totaled over \$6000 for the current year, would help cover budget increases. Barker indicated that he consolidated the family court commissioner budget with the Clerk of Court budget.

M/S Cummings/Lyskawa to approve the proposed Clerk of Court 2027 Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

c. Register in Probate and Circuit Court

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Byer reported no budget concerns and noted continued success with the Title IV reimbursement program. The committee discussed how increased estate planning by the public has led to fewer probate filings, and the committee also discussed a new agreement for online legal research for judges and corporation counsel, to be shared with a two-thirds and one-third cost split.

ii) Proposed Circuit Court 2027 Preliminary Budget

The preliminary budget was reviewed, which included a new shared agreement for online legal research services which will be shared by two judges and corporation counsel.

M/S Thiel/Lyskawa to approve the proposed Circuit Court 2027 Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

10. Sheriff's Office

a. Statistical Reports

i) Case Summary Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns.

ii) Expense Budget, Revenue Budget (Year-to-date Report)

Sheriff Schneider and Chief Deputy Iverson reported an average revenue of roughly \$100,000 per month from outside housing, with expectations to increase the number of state prisoners housed to 70 by the end of the week. Staffing levels for corrections officers were reported as better than the previous year, though the office remained focused on hiring and training to sustain capacity.

Sheriff Schneider reported that the agency currently has no K-9 units following the retirement of the previous dog. The agency is working on an agreement to allow a new hire to bring their canine from a previous agency, and future K-9 procurement requests are currently on hold pending the outcome of that potential arrangement.

The proposed 2027 preliminary budget will be presented next month to ensure the department and committee have sufficient time to review it.

iii) Recreational Officer Activity Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns.

iv) 9-1-1 Supervisor's Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns.

v) Jail Census Report

The census report shows a total of 128.43 inmates, with an average of 60 outside boarders, marking an increase of approximately five outside boards. Sheriff Schneider and Chief Deputy Iverson explained that some inmates are housed in other facilities due to liability or behavior issues, and noted that the state provides classification reports for all incoming inmates to guide placement and management decisions. The facility has access to medical histories for inmate transfers and maintains contact with the agency POC, which prohibits the transfer of individuals with significant, unmanaged health histories. When individuals with undisclosed health needs, such as heart conditions, are discovered during screening, they are returned to the sending facility because the sending entity is responsible for that health history. The department is addressing subpar dental screening provided by the contractor on a case-by-case basis.

11. Emergency Medical Services

a. Tomahawk Report

Kirkley explained that the Tomahawk Emergency Medical Services division operates under a county contract where the county reimburses expenses incurred which Aspirus provides personnel. The ambulance, supplies and equipment are owned by Lincoln County, and the Tomahawk unit currently staffs one Advanced Life Support crew per day. Total operating revenue depends on reimbursements, and staffing costs fluctuate based on paid time of usage. As of the current reporting period, volumes are low, salaries are under budget, supplies were over budget by 7.9%, insurance and utilities, . The budget operates on a July to June cycle, which is finalized and submitted to finance annually. The Tomahawk unit currently has 13 staff members, with a total roster of 256 who can cross-train. The agency faces consistent staffing shortages and significant overtime, noting that the state of Wisconsin only certified 125 new paramedics two years ago. To manage these shortages, the agency has increased wages and is utilizing advanced Emergency Medical Technicians to supplement the workforce.

Kirkley also noted that the agency recently completed an eight-day review for accreditation by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, which covers air and ground services. Kirkley also highlighted recent community involvement, including the children's festival and quarterly trauma reviews with Aspirus hospital system.

i) RES 2026-05-XX Installation of Forward Facing Cameras and GPS Tracking Devices for Ambulances

Kirkly reported he would install cameras and GPS tracking systems. The installation process is internal and not not require holes in the vehicle roof. The cameras and Global Positioning System units are wired to the ignition, ensuring they shut off 10 minutes after the vehicle is powered down to prevent battery drain.

Chief Klug confirmed that the Global Positioning System data is owned by Aspirus and does not integrate into the dispatch Zerker system, although Aspirus could provide location data if an ambulance were stolen.

The committee debated the resolution's language regarding data storage and records access. A motion was made to amend the resolution to direct Aspirus Emergency Medical Services leadership to develop written protocols for data storage, access, retention and replies. Renee Krueger noted that Corporation Counsel had not yet reviewed the document and had questions regarding open records policies and liability, noting that the agency would need to work with Corporation Counsel to determine if Aspirus policies align with government entities. The committee confirmed that the fiscal impact is zero and will establish the author and co-sponsor during the next meeting.

M/S Miller/Lyskawa to approve installation of Forward Facing Cameras and GPS Tracking Devices for Ambulances.

M/S Cummings/Lyskawa to amend the resolution to " Be it Further Resolved, that ~~Emergency Medical Services~~ Aspirus Inc. Emergency Medical Services leadership is directed to develop and implement written policies and procedures governing system use, data, storage, access, retention, reply to record requests and implement training prior to full deployment; and ". All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

M/S Hartwig/Miller to carry over the resolution to next month to allow Corporation Counsel to review the legal and liability aspects of the installation and protocols for data storage, access, retention and replies. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

b. Merrill Report and Reimbursement

Chief Klug explained that the monthly reports presented at the Public Safety Committee meeting are the same reports presented to the City of Merrill Health and Safety Committee. Merrill Fire meets with Aspirus Trauma /ream quarterly to discuss trauma cases, preventative services at the annual Children's' Festival and attend the monthly Community Care Paramedic meeting. No questions or concerns. Tomahawk EMS is a hospital-based system whereas Merrill EMS is a fire-based system that consists of all staff cross trained as firefighters and paramedics.

i) ***Merrill Ambulance Statistics and Working Relationship between the City and the County**

Chief Klug presented information regarding Merrill Ambulance Statistics and the Working Relationship between the City and the County. There has been a long-standing positive relationship with Merrill EMS and the County. What started out as firefighters doing EMS and ambulance, we now have paramedics who respond to fire calls. Approximately 90% of calls are now ambulance related.

The last contract negotiation between the Merrill Fire Department and Lincoln County was in 2008. The County owns the ambulances, equipment and supplied and pays for nine positions. The county is billed monthly. Although the county pays for nine positions, the county gets the benefit of all 22 staff that are cross-trained. There is also a part-time administrative assistant and a part-time fire inspector. Merrill Fire Department will be negotiating to add another 4 positions (EMS Division Chief and 3 firefighters/paramedics).

The committee initiated the formation of a negotiation team to modernize long-standing emergency medical services contracts and address personnel expansion within the fire department. This team consist of Corporation Counsel, Administrative Coordinator, Finance

Director and a representative from the Public Safety Committee. The City of Merrill's team consists of Chief Klug, the Mayor and Finance Director.

c. Monthly Charge Report, Write-offs, and Collections

Marheine explained that there are multiple attempts to the collection process (ambulance biller, insurance, tax intercept). Once the account is forwarded to the state, there are no further attempts by the County to collect.

M/S Miller Thiel to approve write-offs of \$20,006. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

d. YTD Budget

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns.

e. ** Proposed Emergency Medical Services 2027 Preliminary Budget

Marheine reported that since the publication of this proposed budget, changes have been made. This budget will be brought back next month for review.

12. Adjourn

Chair Hartwig adjourned the meeting at 6:14pm.