

Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee
Minutes of Monday, June 8, 2026 @ 8:00 A.M.
Lincoln County Service Center, Room 257
801 N. Sales St., Suite 106, Merrill, WI 54452 **715-539-1034**

Members Present: Greg Hartwig, Norbert Ashbeck, Don Nelson, William Bialecki, Andy Zelinski,

Absent: none

Members Excused: none

Visitors: Luke Williams, Amy Krueger, Lee Rahlf, Robbin Gigl (virtual), Fred Heider, Sam Dardouk, Fatmeh Dardouk

1. Call meeting to order. The Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee met on Monday, June 8, 2026, in Conference Room 257, Lincoln County Service Center. The meeting was called to order by Hartwig at 8:00 a.m.
2. Approve minutes of May 11, 2026. The minutes from the May 11 meeting were corrected for tax delinquent properties, with the minimum bids for Property 3-26 revised from \$118,600 to \$119,600 and Property 5-26 revised from \$193,360 to \$193,600. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Zelinski, to approve the corrected minutes. All ayes. Motion carried.
3. Review year to date budget report. The Committee reviewed year to date budget report and placed on file.
4. Public comments Sam Dardouk addressed the committee regarding the circumstances that led to his tax delinquency, providing his perspective on the matter.
5. Presentation by Fred Heider – Outdoor Recreation Plan update, survey results, and discussing of the process moving forward. Heider presented the results of the Outdoor Recreation Survey, noting that 83% of respondents were from Lincoln County and expressing satisfaction with the total of 385 survey responses received. The survey identified hiking, fishing, and boating as the top three recreational activities among respondents, while expanding recreational trails was ranked as the highest priority opportunity for future outdoor recreation development. Heider explained that the next steps in the planning process include reviewing the draft goals and objectives of the plan and working to incorporate specific projects and initiatives into the plan.
6. Update and potential action regarding the Russell Property acquisition Paul Russell reported that he met with his siblings to discuss Hartwig's proposal from the previous meeting that the timber sale revenue be used as the purchase price for the property. After discussing the proposal, the Russell family would like additional time to consider the matter and requested that further discussion take place in closed session at the July Forestry Committee meeting.
7. Approve setting the tax deed sale date for July 13, 2026. Williams noted that although the minimum bids were established at the May meeting, the sale date itself was not set. He recommended scheduling the tax deed sale for July 13, 2026, with bids due by July 10, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. Motion to approve Zelinski, second by Bialecki All Ayes. Motion Carried.
8. Approve 2027 Preliminary Budget Williams provided follow-up information requested at the previous meeting regarding several Forestry Department budget accounts. Finance Director Heather Marheine explained that the Recreational Trails account (62010900-570000) has historically been used to cover overages in the ATV grant program and other line-item overages as needed. The Insurance account (62010900-551000) was previously used for an insurance allocation through 2022 but is no longer utilized, and funds were reallocated in 2025. Marheine also noted that the Salaries/Wages (62011000-511000) and Fringe Benefits (62011000-520000) accounts are dependent upon staffing assignments and labor expenditures, with budget modifications made as needed throughout the year to align

expenditures with actual costs. Williams further reported that the current year/next year budget analysis document had been updated to correct a typographical error in the 2027 projection for the Miscellaneous account (62011000-571000), changing it from \$1,500 to \$15,000. Marheine advised that unforeseen expenses often arise during the year and that Forestry Department expenditures are covered through timber sale revenues rather than the tax levy, with year-end budget modifications made to ensure all expenditures are properly accounted for. Motion by Zelinski, second by Bialecki, to accept the budget update as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

9. Open and award timber sale bids Tract 9-26 did not receive any bids during the May bid letting and was re-advertised in June. One bid was received from Hesston Meier for a total bid value of \$50,415. Motion to approve by Bialecki, second by Zelinski. All ayes. Motion carried.
10. Discussion and possible approval to solicit bids for concrete work associated with the installation of new fuel pumps and interior shop areas. Williams informed the committee that the department has been experiencing issues with fuel quality in its storage tanks, which has resulted in several trucks running poorly. A fuel sample was tested and indicated the fuel itself appears to be acceptable, leaving the source of the issue uncertain at this time. Williams noted that the department had already been planning to replace the tanks in the coming year and suggested that the issue may be related to the tanks themselves. He proposed potentially replacing and relocating the tanks, which would require new concrete work. He also noted that there is additional outstanding concrete work at the shop, including drainage and tuckpointing, and suggested combining these items into a single project. Williams requested authorization to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to obtain cost estimates. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Bialecki, to approve issuing an RFP. All ayes. Motion carried.
11. Discussion and possible approval to solicit bids for purchase and installation of new fuel tanks, associated site work, and a fuel-chip based access and tracking system. Williams discussed the need to replace the department's existing 500-gallon fuel tanks with new 1,000-gallon tanks and incorporate a chip-based fuel access and tracking system to improve accountability and recordkeeping. He noted that current fuel usage is tracked manually using a paper log system and that the new system would provide improved accuracy and oversight. Williams stated that the department is seeking to obtain pricing at this time and would like to explore upsizing the tanks as part of the replacement. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Nelson, to authorize solicitation of bids for the project as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.
12. Review and consider approval of chemical site preparation for 2027 planting site. No bids were received under the specifications outlined in the RFP.
13. Consider acceptance of Email submitted bid for Chemical Site Preparation An emailed bid was received from American Drone. Williams consulted with Corporation Counsel and was advised that the bid could be accepted as its own agenda item since the RFP had been advertised twice without receiving bids, the timeline for completing the spraying is short, and the County has already incurred costs for trees and mechanical site preparation. The bid from American Drone was \$65 per acre at a rate of 3 GPA, plus mileage at \$0.725 per mile, with the County supplying the herbicide. Motion to approve by Nelson, second by Zelinski. All ayes. Motion carried.
14. Approve Harrison Hills ATV Club Request for an Organized Event Permit for October 3, 2026 Williams reported that the Harrison Hills ATV Club plans to hold its annual club ride on October 3, 2026, noting that this is a recurring event and he is not aware of any previous problems. The club will complete the required organized event permit and provide proof of insurance. A motion by Zelinski to approve the request, seconded by Ashbeck, passed with all ayes, and the motion carried.

Authorize requesting a quote to purchase seedlings from PRT Williams requested authorization to obtain a quote from PRT for tree seedlings, noting that in recent years the department has gone directly to PRT rather than issuing an RFP because the seedlings are a specialty product and no other vendors can meet the required specifications; legal counsel has confirmed this approach is permissible. Williams intends to request a quote from PRT for the 2028 planting,

15. covering 83 acres at a rate of 800 seedlings per acre, totaling approximately 66,000 trees, and will report the cost at a future meeting. A motion by Nelson to authorize obtaining the quote, seconded by Ashbeck, passed with all ayes, and the motion carried.
16. Discussion regarding development of a hiking trail around Roothouse Lake and authorization for volunteers to assist with trail construction. Williams reported that several volunteers have expressed interest in assisting with trail clearing and brushing along the overgrown hiking trail around Roothouse Lake and would be required to sign a volunteer waiver before participating. He noted that the trail has received little maintenance in recent years and will require several bridges to be installed over small creeks before it can become fully functional. Volunteers have also indicated an interest in assisting with bridge installation if the necessary permits can be obtained; however, at this time they are only seeking authorization to perform trail clearing and maintenance work. Williams stated that establishing this trail has been a goal of the Forestry Department for approximately 25–30 years. Motion by Nelson, second by Bialecki, to authorize volunteers to work on trail clearing and maintenance activities around Roothouse Lake. All ayes. Motion carried.
17. WDNR Report Bill Groth called and was unable to attend the meeting, but reported that they have been out marking county timber sales and remain on track to meet their county-hours commitment by the end of June.
18. Review Administrator's Report Williams informed the committee that the Public Property Committee selected Kimmons Roofing from the submitted bids to install new roofing and siding on the Forestry Shop. He also provided an update on the Harrison Dam inspection conducted with the DNR. Williams reported that the dam is currently classified as a high-hazard dam and that DNR staff advised the county to pursue reclassification due to the additional costs associated with the current designation. Reclassification will require further evaluation of downstream floodplain impacts and redesign of the overflow spillway. Additional information and recommendations will be presented as the project progresses.
19. Close Timber Sales Smola Enterprises T019-24 Close and return Letter of Credit. Williams recommended closing and refunding bonds. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Zelinski to close sales per Williams recommendation. All ayes. Motion carried
20. Set next meeting date. The next Forestry, Land & Parks Committee Meeting is set as follows: Monday, July 13, 2026 at 8:00 a.m., LCSC Conference Room 257
21. Adjourn. Motion to adjourn meeting by Nelson, second by Bialecki at 9:25 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Amy Krueger & Luke Williams