LINCOLN COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Monday, June 15, 2026 - 2:00 PM

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

2. Confirm Meeting Date and Time

a. Next meeting scheduled for July 8, 2026 at 4:00pm at the Lincoln County Service Center, 801 North Sales Street, Room 255, Merrill, WI 54452.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approval of the Minutes

a. Approve Minutes From: May 13, 2026

M/S Thiel/Lyskawa to approve meeting minutes from May 13, 2026. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

5. Appointments

a. Appointment of a Public Safety Committee representative for the Negotiation Team regarding the Lincoln County Ambulance Service Agreement.

Thiel motioned to approve the appointment of Cummings as the Public Safety Committee representative for the Lincoln County Ambulance Agreement negotiations. All ayes, motion carried via unanimous consent to appoint Angela Cummings as the Public Safety Committee representative for the Lincoln County Ambulance Agreement negotiations. The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17, 2026. Angela will coordinate with the Administrative Coordinator to determine availability.

6. Public Comment

None

7. Emergency Management

a. Year-to-Date Budget Report

Verhasselt reported that the Emergency Management year-to-date budget is proceeding as expected. Clarification was provided that county Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) are separate from the sheriff's squad AEDs, ensuring no cross-contamination of budget lines. No other questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

b. Travel & Expense Report

M/S Cummings/Miller to approve the Emergency Management travel and expense report. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

c. Emergency Management Activity Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

d. Proposed Emergency Management 2027 Preliminary Budget

Verhasselt presented the preliminary 2027 budget, noting that the format has been adjusted to zero out general accounts in favor of project-specific accounting. This shift is intended to facilitate better trend analysis and cost-benefit analysis of department services. Verhasselt proposed that safety training, currently funded by the Emergency Management budget with revenue collected from other departments (like highway and forestry), should be structured differently because these departments are not levy-funded. The complexities of whether departments that do not use levy funding should contribute to these costs was discussed. The committee recommended that Verhasselt attend the next Finance Committee meeting to propose safety training reimbursement policies and provide context on proposed budgetary items.

The budget includes revenue and expense lines for public alert and warning systems. Verhasselt noted that the budget consolidates two projects—internal and external alert systems. Verhasselt detailed adjustments for inflation regarding grants like the Emergency Management Performance Grant. A new service contract is planned to cover continuity of operations and government planning software. Hazard Mitigation grant funding is typically a $10,000 item. The department plans to expand the program next year by applying for three grants instead of one, with no required tax levy match.

The committee discussed the 3% tax levy increase in the Emergency Management budget, specifically addressing a $50,000 grant match for the Public Alert and Warning grant. Verhasselt explained that while this is a worst-case scenario projection, the grant is a valuable investment.

M/S Thiel/Miller to forward the entire Emergency Management 2027 Budget to the Finance Committee for comprehensive review. All ayes, motions carried on voice vote.

8. Coroner

a. Year-to-Date Budget Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

b. Coroner's Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

9. Judicial

a. District Attorney and Victim Witness

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

b. Clerk of Courts and Family Court

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Barker reported the Circuit and Family Court budgets are performing well. They are currently managing a high volume of jury questionnaires for an upcoming three-week homicide trial in October. State reimbursement is expected. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

c. Register in Probate and Circuit Court

i) Year-to-date Budget Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

10. Sheriff's Office

a. Statistical Reports

i) Case Summary Report

Report reviewed. The committee questioned the ongoing utility of this report and the required time and resources to produce it. The committee unanimously agreed to have the Case Summary report removed from future agendas.

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

Report reviewed. Chief Deputy Iverson reported that inmate revenue projections are calculated based on 160 inmates at $60 per day, which suggests a revenue of nearly $1.5 million. It was noted that revenue reports are typically a month or two behind. The administrative fringe benefits budget was discussed, noting that expenditures appear to be exceeding the allocated budget. This variance is often due to personnel changes, such as switching from single to family coverage, which the department cannot control. The committee discussed hiring costs, which were lower than anticipated due to issues with a past vendor who failed to complete work and consequently was not paid. As the department now utilizes a new provider, they expect to incur standard hiring costs.

iii) Recreational Officer Activity Report

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

iv) 9-1-1 Supervisor's Report

Report reviewed. The committee discussed interest in modifying the format to compare current year data against previous years to better identify trends, which the department agreed is feasible. Report placed on file.

v) Jail Census Report

Hoeft reported that the current jail census is at 68 inmates, with a total capacity of 183 beds; however, 160 is considered the functional limit for safe operations. Staffing is currently stable, with hiring processes underway to replace departures and maintain coverage. Two female COs have completed jail school with honors.

b. Proposed Sheriff's 2027 Preliminary Budget

Sheriff Schneider and Chief Deputy Iverson presented the 2027 preliminary Sheriff and Jail budgets. Lincoln Hills revenue projection of $100,000, noting that it is based on trends and inmate custody status. The $10,000 allocation for the Sheriff's wells program is a flexible line item. Vehicle replacements, which are currently included in the Sheriff's budget, were historically treated as Capital Improvement Plan items. The Sheriff prefers to include them in the annual budget as an operational expense. Outside housing costs for inmates is estimated at approximately $30,000 per month. Sheriff Schneider noted that these estimates account for variables like increased inmate populations and specific diet requirements. The increase in uniform costs is due to rising inmate numbers and the need to maintain an inventory of uniforms which suffer significant wear and tear.

The committee discussed the status of a specific detective position that had been added when Lincoln Hills revenue was available. Concerns were raised that if this funding disappears, the department may face a reduction in staff to the lowest levels in over 20 years. Dispatcher uniforms discussed, noting that uniforms would currently only be used for professional functions or funerals. The $41,000 contract renewal for the 911 system was discussed. Sheriff Schneider emphasized that wild is optional. This contract acts as an insurance polity for the $500,000 system and ensures guaranteed response times from vendors. The Nordic revenue line item is currently zero, but it remains to account for future drug investigation funds. The Neighborhood Watch line item should be zeroed out and eventually removed form the budget once the necessary period for retention has passed.

Sheriff Schneider and Chief Deputy Iverson explained that the approximate $660,000 budget increase is driven by vehicle replacements, the expiring five-year warranty on the main radio system, and mandated wage increases following a wage story and ratified deputy contracts,

M/S Cummings/Miller to approve the proposed 2027 Sheriff's Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion cared on voice vote.
M/S Thiel/Lyskawa to approve the proposed 2027 Jail Preliminary Budget. All ayes, motion cared on voice vote.

11. Emergency Medical Services

a. Tomahawk Report

Kirkley presented the April EMS report, noting that call volumes were 1.3% lower than budgeted, which was not considered a significant concern. While expenses related to operating salaries, revenue, and supplies were slightly elevated, overall budget performance remained consistent for the start of the year. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

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

Resolution reviewed. Corporation Counsel expressed concerns regarding the handling of public records request, noting that private entities may lack the necessary experience to process there in a timely manner, and emphasized that the county could face liability if requests were not managed correctly. Corporation Counsel recommended that any approval of the camera and GPS installation be contingent upon a satisfactory contract that addresses the processing of public records request and provides full indemnity to the county for any associated legal costs or failures to respond. There is a concern of an uptick in requests for footage could lead to increased administrative and legal burdens for the county. The contract will be drafted by Aspirus. Contract terms must be resolved and reviewed by Corporation Counsel and the committee before moving to the County Board.

M/S Cummings/Thiel to approve the resolution for Installation of Forward Facing Cameras and GPS Tracking Devices for Ambulances contingent upon the approval of a contract between Lincoln County and Aspirus regarding open records management and legal indemnity, subject to review by Corporation Counsel.

b. Merrill Report

Merrill report inadvertently not included in packet due to packet management issues. April report will be included in July packet.

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

M/S Miller/Lyskawa to approve write-off amount of $26,971.02. All ayes, motion cared on voice vote.

d. YTD Budget

Report reviewed. No questions or concerns. Report placed on file.

e. 2027 Projected EMS Budget Proposal

The 2027 projected EMS budget proposal reviewed, which included a request for four additional positions, totaling approximately $475,000 and representing a 34% increase. Chief Klug explained that this allocation was intended to address staffing needs and to improve daily minimum staffing levels from five to six. Chief Klug reported that 90% of the department's calls for service are EMS related, yet the budget distribution had not historically reflected this, creating sustainability issues. The proposed increase was intended to resolve administrative backlogs, such as updates to the Community and Care Paramedic program, which has been dormant due to a lack of personnel following previous staffing reductions. Chief Klug noted that the proposal included a state levy limit exemption, which would allow for the funding without taking resources from other departments. It was estimated that this would result in an approximate $20 annual tax increase for a $150,000 property, which Chief Klug suggested would be a reasonable cost for improved public safety service.

The committee raised concerns about including the significant personnel expansion in the budget before contract negotiations were finalized, noting the risk of having to adjust the budget later.

M/S Cummings/Miller to lay over the budget proposal until next month to allow time for contract negotiations to progress, providing a clearer financial picture for future committee approval. All ayes, motion carried on voice vote.

12. Future Agenda Items

None

13. Adjourn

Chair Hartwig adjourned the meeting at 3:46pm.