

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026

5:30 pm – 7:05 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, Tim McFadden, Heidi O'Hare*, Amanda Patterson, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees (2 total): Laurie Ollhoff* (TB Scott Library), Travis Spoehr

*Participated online (2 total)

1. Call to Order – 5:30 pm by Wickham

Action Team Quorum = 7 (Backen, Guild, McFadden, O'Hare, Patterson, Welker, Wickham)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Wickham led attendees in short introductions, including re-introducing new Action Team member Tim McFadden.

3. Public Comment - NONE

4. Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – January 22, 2026

Welker/Backen motioned to approve the January 22, 2026, minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

a. Commission Chair

Wickham reported minimal updates outside of the Digital Pathways activities that will be discussed later. He shared that he is not running for County Board this term, which may impact his participation on the Broadband Commission. The Commission will discuss any potential transitions at next month's meeting.

b. Public Service Commission (PSC)

i. BEAD Program Updates

Guild shared that the PSC's BEAD awards budget was approved by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) on Feb. 9, which enabled the PSC to officially execute the grant program contracts. She also spoke with Frontier's primary BEAD contact but has not yet reached out to the other BEAD ISP representatives to offer assistance and request a tentative timeline for installation in Lincoln County; Wickham offered to assist with this as needed. Attendees briefly noted that there are reports of additional BEAD funds in the PSC's budget due to savings from the BEAD-BOB process that will be available for other allocations but details are not yet known.

c. Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

i. Charter RDOF Project Implementation

There are no recent RDOF updates. Guild will request an updated RDOF project installation timeline ahead of the March meeting.

ii. Other ISPs

Guild reported that the Frontier/Verizon merger was completed as of January 20th, making Frontier a wholly owned subsidiary of Verizon. Todd Kruse remains Lincoln County's primary contact and has confirmed that this merger does not impact Frontier's BEAD award agreements. He also reported that there are plans to invest in service improvements for current self-funded Frontier customers in the Merrill area this spring.

d. *Action Team Members*

Welker: He has been closely following discussions related to data centers across the state, especially the policy-related issues. He will provide some information to Guild for distribution to other interested parties.

Patterson: A “Social Media Safety for Teenagers” event is happening in Wausau at the Grand Theater on March 18. Guild will share the event details with the Broadband email list.

Ollhoff: The TB Scott Free Library held their digital literacy program earlier today but attendance was rather low. Finding the right time for these events continues to be a struggle.

O’Hare: The Tomahawk Library is working with Nicolet College to launch an AI computer training course. This four-week series will start in April. She will share more information once it is finalized.

6. Digital Pathways Roundtables

a. *Review of Public Stakeholders Roundtables (Feb. 5th & 10th)*

Guild gave a quick overview of the attendance for the first two roundtables. She sent invites to 92 people plus the LCBC Action Team. 26 different people attended – 10 from the LCBC plus 16 general invitees. 25 people responded to the pre-meeting survey, providing a statistically significant level of feedback.

The February 5th meeting had 21 attendees. Key topics included the continued need for more reliable and affordable internet plus multiple observations that a lack of digital skills is not limited to older generations but is also seen frequently in younger people who have only been exposed to limited types of technology. The February 10th meeting had 13 attendees (including some repeats). This discussion included similar themes from the first meeting but focused more on ideas for improving resources and training programs. LCBC reps discussed their key takeaways and identified potential future focus areas and action items.

6:10 pm – Ollhoff out

b. *Future DP Stakeholders Roundtables*

Attendees affirmed their intent to hold four additional roundtables. The Business stakeholders meetings will be on April 9th and 14th in the County Board Room while the Community stakeholders meetings will be on May 7th and 12th in the lower-level conference room. Guild will send out the pre-meeting surveys again after making minimal changes to better align the language with each audience. Attendees reviewed a printed list of potential invitee categories and names that were developed during prior LCBC meetings and added additional attendee ideas. Guild will finalize the stakeholder lists and send out the roundtable invitations and surveys.

7. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. *Future Agenda Topic Suggestions*

The March meeting will include a discussion about the LCBC Chair succession plan and a review of the status of the Business stakeholders RSVPs ahead of the April roundtables.

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

Due to scheduling conflicts, attendees decided to move the next Lincoln County Broadband Commission to **Monday, March 23, at 5:30 pm** in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

8. Meeting Adjournment – Meeting adjourned by Wickham at 7:05 pm.