Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: **Thursday, September 24, 2026**
5:30 PM – 6:54 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 *(8/9 total)*: Tom Backen (Vice Chair), Sara Guild (Secretary), ~~Amber Lambrecht~~, Tim McFadden*, Donald Nelson, Heidi O'Hare*, Amanda Patterson*, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees *(3 total)*: Chris Crawford* (Charter), Christina Luna* (PSC), Travis Spoehr
**Participated online (5 total)*

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1. **Call to Order – 5:30 PM by Wickham**
   Quorum Present = 6 (Backen, Guild, McFadden, Nelson, Welker, Wickham)
   Arrived after *Call to Order* = O'Hare (5:33 PM); Patterson (5:55 PM)

2. **Welcome & Introductions**
   Wickham welcomed all attendees.

3. **Public Comment –** None

4. **Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – August 27, 2026**
   Nelson/Backen motioned to approve the August 27, 2026, minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. **Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners**
   a. *Commission Chair*
      Wickham stated that all his updates would be covered under other agenda items this month.

5:33 PM – O'Hare arrival

   b. *Public Service Commission (PSC)*
      i. *BEAD Program Updates*
         Luna reported no recent activity on Lincoln County-affiliated BEAD projects or contracts. The NTIA recently released its BEAD Supplemental Deployment Policy Notice, outlining the process states must follow to apply for remaining funds not committed during the initial allocation round. Luna provided a brief overview, noting that the process will follow the same rules as the BEAD Benefit-of-the-Bargain (BOB) Round 1. The PSC is currently awaiting NTIA's preliminary list of qualifying locations before proceeding.

      Luna also reported that State Broadband Expansion Grant applications remain under review, with award announcements expected later this fall. Both Brightspeed and Bertram Communications included Lincoln County locations in their proposals. She encouraged Lincoln County to consider pursuing Broadband Forward Certification to help attract additional broadband infrastructure investment and noted that a Digital Equity Grant opportunity is expected to be announced in December.

   c. *Internet Service Providers (ISPs)*
      i. *Charter RDOF Project Implementation*
         Crawford reported continued progress on RDOF installations, with most areas of the county now at least partially completed. Many outstanding issues involve individual private easement situations. Construction along Highway 107 has delayed activation in two areas until early 2027. Guild is updating the Broadband webpage and will share an updated RDOF map once the new site is ready. Several attendees complimented Charter's installation crews on the quality of their work.

ii. *Frontier/Verizon Copper Lines Transition*
Guild shared information received from a Verizon representative in response to questions raised by the LCBC last month. Customers who transition to another Verizon service will have equipment and installation costs waived. Existing customers who live in areas without access to either a Verizon internet option or another viable service option will remain connected to the copper-wire network until an alternative becomes available.

Luna noted that the PSC is aware of the issue but has no direct authority over these decisions by private internet service providers. Customers wishing to submit comments or complaints may contact the FCC. She also noted that United Way's 211 system can help customers identify alternative service options and available financial assistance programs, and encouraged the LCBC to refer affected residents to this resource.

5:55 PM – Patterson arrival

iii. *Other ISPs* - None

d. *Action Team Members*
Welker requested clarification regarding the Broadband Forward Certification program. Wickham provided an overview, noting that Lincoln County had previously considered pursuing certification but ultimately decided against it. The LCBC may revisit the opportunity at a future meeting to determine whether certification would now benefit the County.

6. Review & Consider Approval of Proposed LCBC Mission Statement and Goals Updates

Wickham, Backen, and Guild presented the proposed updates to the LCBC Mission Statement and Goals, developed in response to feedback from the August meeting. Key changes included shifting the Commission's emphasis from a "coordinating" role to a "supporting" role to better reflect its capacity and resource limitations, while also incorporating technology support and utilization. The number of goals increased from three to five, and Guild summarized the distinct purpose of each. Attendees briefly discussed the proposed changes.

6:14 PM – Crawford departure

Nelson/Welker m/s to approve the updated LCBC Mission and Goals as presented; motion carried.

7. Discuss Potential LCBC Priorities, Action Items, and/or Key Strategies

Attendees discussed potential activities to support each of the newly adopted goals. They concluded that Goals 1 (service expansion) and 2 (resident advocacy) primarily require responsive, as-needed activities, with LCBC members engaging with ISPs, residents, and partners as appropriate to support service installation and maintenance. Goal 3 (funding and resources) will require ongoing monitoring of potential opportunities, with specific options to be discussed as they arise.

Goals 4 (technology education) and 5 (community collaboration) were identified as requiring more proactive engagement. For Goal 4, attendees recommended maintaining a list of online self-help resources and working with partners to identify and promote other relevant in-person and online training opportunities and resources.

For Goal 5, attendees supported establishing a subcommittee of representatives from organizations involved in digital skills development. This group could assess trends and local needs, identify opportunities for collaboration, and determine which partners are best positioned to lead or support specific efforts. The LCBC will discuss potential subcommittee members and outreach strategies at its next meeting.

8. UW-Extension Broadband Workshop Hosting Opportunity

Guild reported receiving an invitation from UW-Extension's Broadband Team for Lincoln County to apply to host an "Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age" workshop in early 2027. Attendees reviewed the opportunity and discussed anticipated hosting requirements and potential benefits. By consensus, the LCBC authorized Guild to submit an application, provided that hosting would not require a significant commitment of local staff time.

9. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. Future Agenda Topic Suggestions

Topics identified for the next LCBC meeting include reviewing the new Broadband webpage, discussing potential subcommittee members, and receiving an update on the "Entrepreneurship in the Digital Age" workshop application.

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

The next LCBC meeting will be held on Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 5:30 PM at the Lincoln County Service Center, with online access available. The meeting is scheduled one week later than usual due to scheduling conflicts.

Attendees also agreed to cancel the regularly scheduled November and December meetings due to holiday conflicts and instead hold one final meeting for the year on Thursday, December 3, 2026.

10. Meeting Adjournment – Nelson/Backen m/s to adjourn at 6:54 PM; motion carried.

Minutes Approved: 10/29/2026 by LCBC, recorded by SG