



January 2025 Special EDC Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Wednesday, January 29th, 2025

10:00 – 11:33 am

Lincoln County Service Center (801 N. Sales Street Merrill, WI 54452)
Room 156

Board Members (6 total): Brian Arndorfer (Vice President), Jesse Boyd, Gary Hartwig (President/Treasurer), Greg Hartwig, Steve Hass, Dave Johnson (Secretary), Roger Schlegel, Steve Taskay; 1 seat open

Other Attendees: Rod Akey (City of Merrill), Sara Guild (EDC Director), Christine Vorpapel (Lincoln Co)

1. Call to Order – 10:00 am by Chair Hartwig

Quorum = 6/8 members

2. Approve Lincoln County EDC Board Meeting Minutes – December 4, 2024

Johnson/Hass motioned to approve the December 4, 2024, meeting minutes as presented; motion carried.

3. Executive Committee Report

The Executive Committee met last week and completed the Executive Director's 6-month review.

4. 501c3 Transition Update

The EDC's restated Articles of Incorporation were submitted to the WI Dept of Financial Institutions in mid-Dec.; the official approval of their filing was received from the DFI via email on Jan. 13, 2025. Guild will be writing and submitting a letter to the IRS next week formally requesting the EDC be transitioned to 501c3 status.

a. Formal Acknowledgement of Bylaws Approval Vote

Attendees reviewed the documentation prepared by Guild to consolidate and record the restated bylaws approval vote that was completed via email in December 2024.

MOTION: Boyd/Greg Hartwig motioned to accept the vote results as presented and affirm the Board's approval of the restated EDC bylaws via email vote in December 2024; motion carried.

5. Ninth Federal Reserve District Fall Presentation Request

Grow North has asked the Lincoln County EDC to consider hosting an event featuring a representative from the Ninth Federal Reserve District this fall, ideally the week of October 6-10. The presentation will feature economic information relevant at both the regional and state levels. The Federal Reserve would like to have at least 75-100 attendees. Board members were supportive and briefly discussed ideas for promotion, target audience, location, and fees. Guild will move forward with planning this free event. She will work with City of Merrill staff to hold it at the Bierman Building.

6. Review of Proposed Board Member Candidates

Attendees reviewed the list of proposed candidates to fill the five open Board seats. Following a brief discussion, seven individuals were selected to move forward as candidates at this time. Board members volunteered to contact each candidate to determine if they are interested in joining the EDC Board. Once the number of interested candidates is confirmed, Guild will work with the Exec Committee to develop a final list of five candidates. The new members will be voted on at the February meeting. Guild will provide the candidates with EDC materials and info ahead of that meeting. The February meeting will include a brief overview of the EDC's history and key information relevant to Board members, as well as time to answer questions from new members.

7. Fundraising and Investor Recruitment Proposals

a. *USDA Rural Business Development Grant*

Attendees reviewed the USDA RBDG flier and summary proposal provided in the packet. Guild explained how this competitive grant could help pay for some staff time related to executing activities under the EDC's strategic plan Goal 1: Business Development. Covered activities must center around providing technical assistance to support small rural businesses and could include the Rural Entrepreneurial Venture program. If awarded, the funding would be available by Sept. 1 and would last for up to 12 months. Funding from the Cities and/or Merrill Area Development Corporation could possibly be used as optional match to make the grant more competitive. Board members briefly discussed possible activities, funding, and overall impact.

MOTION: Greg Hartwig/Johnson m/s to authorize the LCEDC Executive Director to apply for the 2025 USDA Rural Business Development grant; motion carried.

b. *Investor Level Recommendations*

Guild reviewed the proposed investment funding levels and benefits as laid out in the packet. She recommended the Board and staff begin limited recruitment in February and execute more active outreach starting in March after the website is updated. Board members asked Guild to create a list of recent and planned EDC activities that could be referenced when recruiting investors. Attendees discussed if/how to prorate investment levels throughout the year.

MOTION: Johnson/Greg Hartwig m/s to approve the EDC Investment levels and benefits as presented with the addition of prorated levels at 50% of full rate between July-Sept & 25% between Oct-Nov; motion carried.

c. *Summit Sponsorships Flier*

Board members reviewed the 2025 Economic Summit sponsorship levels proposal. Guild noted that event sponsorships provide more guaranteed visibility than general EDC investments. Members agreed by consensus that Guild should move forward with using the sponsorship levels as proposed.

Attendees held brief discussions related to Board member engagement, recent Merrill area and County development projects, the status of the USDA Wood Innovation grant, and Broadband Commission activities.

8. Future Meeting Topic Requests

Board members requested that the February 26, 2025, Board meeting agenda include the following items:

- Vote on new Board members
- Brief new member onboarding/EDC history & information
- Update on 501c3 application status
- Update on recent economic/community development projects in Merrill and Tomahawk
- Status of website updates

9. Meeting Adjournment – 11:33 am by Chair Hartwig