



June 2025 LCEDC Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Wednesday, June 11, 2025

10:03 am – 11:25 am

Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156

801 N. Sales Street, Merrill, WI 54452

Board Members (10/13 total): Brian Arndorfer (Vice President), Jesse Boyd, Steve Daigle, Mike Fick, Renea Frederick (Treasurer), Gary Hartwig (President), Greg Hartwig, Steve Hass, Dave Johnson (Secretary), Val Mindak, Roger Schlegel, Jeff Schneider, Steve Taskay

Other Attendees (5): Rod Akey (City of Merrill), Sara Guild (EDC Director), Charis Lau (Tomahawk Chamber), Clyde Nelson (Merrill Chamber), Jennifer Turkiewicz (Tomahawk Main St)

1. Call to Order & Introductions – 10:03 am by Chair Hartwig

Quorum at start = 9

Post-quorum arrivals = Boyd (10:20 am)

2. Approve Lincoln County EDC Board Meeting Minutes – April 30, 2025

Hass/Johnson motioned to approve the April 30, 2025, meeting minutes as presented; motion carried.

3. LCEDC Finance Report – April & May 2025

Guild provided a written narrative in the packet summarizing all notable financial activity during the report period. There were no questions.

Greg Hartwig/Johnson motioned to approve the April & May 2025 finance report; motion carried.

4. 2024 LCEDC Tax Filing

President Hartwig & Guild reviewed and approved the LCEDC's 2024 990 tax filing on May 7; a copy of the final document was circulated for Directors to review. 2024 had more activity than usual due to the first Economic Summit, the temporary marketing contractor, and the Executive Director transition. No approval actions required.

5. General Reports

a. Executive Director

Guild referenced her written activity report. She highlighted completing WEDA's Basic Economic Development Course last week, which is a highly recommended program for all Economic Development professionals. She was also recently elected Secretary/Treasurer for the Grow North Board of Directors and was invited to join Wisconsin's Kiva Advisory Group to help represent northcentral Wisconsin businesses. Next week she will be attending the WI Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference in Wisconsin Rapids as part of the Rural Entrepreneurial Venture program team. She also reminded the Board that she will be out for a family vacation from June 23 – July 4, returning to the office on July 7th. There were no additional questions.

Johnson/Greg Hartwig motioned to accept the Executive Director's June report; motion carried.

b. Strategic Plan Activities Update

Guild provided a written "quick update" report this month since the Board received a detailed report in April. Many of the items were also mentioned in the Executive report but were reorganized to reflect the specific Strategic Plan Goal they supported. There were no questions.

c. *Lincoln County Broadband Commission*

The Broadband Commission did not meet in May; their next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 19th. Guild reported that there have been no official changes to the federal BEAD program yet, but some are anticipated. She does not expect the program to be eliminated, but there could be changes to the timeline or criteria. In addition to monitoring BEAD activities, the LCBC is preparing to complete a digital resource utilization assessment to better understand the barriers currently preventing residents from fully utilizing the internet and related technologies; this will be a primary discussion topic during the June meeting.

6. Update on Recent/Upcoming LCEDC Events

Guild provided updates on four different LCEDC-affiliated events:

- *ExporTech Informational Session*: This session was scheduled online for May 29th but was cancelled due to a lack of registrations. However, the promotions helped establish the LCEDC as a resource for import/export information so there was still a benefit to the organization for the time invested in marketing the program.

Boyd arrival – 10:20 am

- *LCEDC Info Sessions*: The Tomahawk info session was held on May 22 and had 11 attendees. The Merrill session was held on June 9th and had 20 attendees. Following the sessions, Guild received business assistance requests from four different attendees; no additional investors have been confirmed to date. Board members who attended affirmed that they felt the sessions were valuable and facilitated good dialogue. Attendees discussed ideas for developing a regular morning business meeting program to build on the feedback from these sessions. They recommended focusing on topics to help start and grow small businesses. Frederick and Akey volunteered to assist Guild with creating a business networking & education meetings program starting this fall, with support from the Chambers and Main Street partners as needed.
- *HUBZone Program*: Guild recently met with Langlade County EDC Director Angie Close to discuss the desired focus for the next HUBZone program. They are hoping to work with the WI Procurement Institute to create a program based on sharing real-life examples versus the “how-to” presentations used previously. They are still aiming to run the program in September in Merrill.
- *Federal Reserve Event*: Guild has the registration page and marketing flier drafted but is still finalizing the agenda and other presenters with help from the Grow North Director. Park City has been confirmed as the “Presenting” sponsor; Guild is seeking additional “Supporting” sponsors. The Workforce Roundtable will take place the afternoon before the event, while the Business Leaders Roundtable will occur earlier that morning. There will be an invite-only lunch with the presenter following the main presentation. All LCEDC and Grow North Board members will be invited, along with sponsors and other key guests as deemed appropriate.

7. 501c3 Application Status

Guild is still working on completing the application. She reviewed her progress with the Exec Team the day before. Frederick identified an attorney to help answer questions and complete a preliminary review of the application once it is ready. Guild is also going to meet with the LCEDC’s accountant in early July and will have him review the financial content of the application at that time. She is hoping to have the application completed by the end of July.

8. Lincoln County PACE Program Withdrawal Proposal

Boyd reported that the Lincoln County Board is preparing to withdraw from the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program, which is an economic development incentive program that can help offset expenses related to clean energy building improvements. The County Board is concerned about the risks it poses because of the requirement to put any delinquent charges on property tax bills. PACE has not yet been used in Lincoln County. Frederick said she had looked into using the program but it was very complicated to implement and is not likely to be used by county businesses. There were no objections to the County withdrawing from the PACE program.

9. LCEDC Partner & Board Member Updates

- a. *Lincoln County (Boyd):*
 - i. The asset purchase agreement for the Pine Crest Nursing Home has moved through most County committees and will be on the County Board's agenda next Tuesday. The current purchase agreement lists a purchase price of \$9.5 million, most of which will go towards paying off the facility's current loan/debt.
 - ii. 2026 budget discussions are in progress. The LCEDC will be funded next year using ARPA funds again, but a new funding source will need to be identified for 2027.
- b. *City of Merrill (Akey):*
 - i. Working on 2026 budget items; monitoring to see if the State updates the shared revenue program
 - ii. Preparing for the City's 10-year capital plan
 - iii. Several potential business development opportunities are in the works, including one for the old Walmart
 - iv. The old Merrill View Motel property is being redeveloped into 8 townhome-style housing units
 - v. Several new housing units have gone up in the area next to Fremarq
 - vi. An RFP went out for the old Anson-Gilkey property along the riverfront and the City is now moving forward with finalizing a development agreement, which will hopefully be completed yet this summer
 - vii. The City is working with Andy Geiss to extend the sewer system out to Geiss Meats and the Little Florida community next summer, with Geiss covering a substantial portion of the expense; this project may also help bring sewer infrastructure to Merrill's new industrial park.
- c. *City of Tomahawk:*
 - i. The Mayor was not present; Guild reported that she and Lau will be meeting with the Tomahawk Mayor and Clerk/Treasurer that afternoon to discuss a potential new housing development proposal.
- d. *Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce (Nelson):*
 - i. State tourism numbers were released yesterday, indicating another record-breaking year. Lincoln County had a 3.3% increase over the prior year, with \$113 million in economic impact. Recent efforts by the Cities and County to promote natural resources and outdoor recreation facilities appear to be paying off.
 - ii. Brief discussion occurred regarding other opportunities to leverage assets like the new Great Pinery River Trail and ways to maximize current/potential camping facilities. Akey noted that the Merrill fairgrounds will have online reservations available as soon as the new bathrooms are completed.
- e. *Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce (Lau):*
 - i. Lau reiterated the importance of the tourism data information shared by Nelson.
 - ii. The Chamber is exploring multiple potential housing development opportunities.
- f. *Tomahawk Main Street, Inc. (Turkiewicz):*
 - i. A copy of Tomahawk Main Street's current monthly newsletter was provided to all attendees.
 - ii. Main Street is working with the WEDC to secure a landscape architect to help redesign the downtown area, including addressing the loss of multiple elm trees and improving the lighting.
 - iii. Guild and Turkiewicz are discussing ideas for a possible grant collaboration.
- g. *LCEDC Board Members - NONE*

10. Future Meeting Dates & Topic Requests

The August 27th meeting will be held at Park City Credit Union in Tomahawk. It will include an update on the 501c3 application status. Partners may provide written updates in the meeting packet if desired.

Following a brief discussion, attendees decided to schedule one more LCEDC meeting this fall, on Wednesday, November 19th, starting at 10:00 am with a remote attendance option. Guild will send out meeting invites.

11. Meeting Adjournment – 11:25 am by Chair Hartwig