



August 2025 LCEDC Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Wednesday, August 27, 2025

10:02 am – 12:01 pm

Park City Credit Union

1213 N. 4th Street, Tomahawk, WI 54487

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 (4): Rod Akey (City of Merrill), Sara Guild (EDC Director), Charis Lau (Tomahawk Chamber), Clyde Nelson (Merrill Chamber)

1. Call to Order & Introductions – 10:02 am by Chair Hartwig

Quorum at start = 10

2. Approve Lincoln County EDC Board Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2025

Johnson/Boyd motioned to approve the June 11, 2025 meeting minutes as presented; motion carried.

3. LCEDC Finance Report – June & July 2025

Guild provided a written finance report narrative in the packet. She highlighted the End-of-Year Projections section, noting that LCEDC has not yet received enough Net income to cover all projected expenses through the end of 2025 and will need to draw from 2024 reserves if additional income is not secured. Attendees briefly discussed ideas for generating additional income by the end of the year.

Hass/Johnson motioned to approve the June & July 2025 finance report; motion carried.

4. General Reports

a. Executive Director

Guild briefly highlighted a few key items from the written report. She also shared that the office printer the EDC recently obtained from the County recently stopped working and provided information on possible repair vs replacement options. Following a brief discussion, Daigle offered to sponsor the purchase of a new printer plus any necessary accessories. The Board agreed by consensus to authorize Guild to purchase a new printer from VIP Office Products and to recognize Daigle Brothers as the printer sponsor.

b. Strategic Plan Activities Update

Guild provided an updated Year-to-Date activities report based on a document she previously presented to the Lincoln County Board during their August 19th meeting. There were no questions.

c. Lincoln County Broadband Commission Update

The LCBC continues to meet regularly and is discussing moving its start time to 5:30 pm; its next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. The Charter/Spectrum RDOF installation project is in full swing and is generating a lot of resident questions regarding if/when they will be getting fiber internet service.

The preliminary BEAD program awards have been announced. Four different providers received awards in Lincoln County – Frontier, Bertram Communications, Brightspeed (Connect Holdings), and Starlink. Coverage is almost entirely fiber service. The LCBC will be developing and submitting a public comment to the PSC in support of these allocations during tomorrow's meeting. The LCBC plans to transition to implementing a new Digital Pathways technology access & utilization improvement program this fall.

5. LCEDC Upcoming Events

a. *Oct. 7 – Economic Update with the Federal Reserve*

Registration opened yesterday and a dozen attendees have already signed up. Park City is the Presenting Sponsor; FreMarq Innovations and IncredibleBank are Supporting Sponsors. Guild asked attendees to help promote the event by distributing fliers, forwarding emails, and sharing information on Facebook. Board members will be invited to attend a private lunch with the speaker after the presentation. Guild is also working with Tommy Wartman from Grow North to set up two roundtables ahead of the event with representation from across the Northwoods, one for Workforce Development and one for Business Leaders. Attendees were asked to send Guild their recommendations for participants.

b. *Oct. 30 – Benefits of Government Contracting & HUBZone Certification*

Guild is partnering with Langlade County to hold an online informational session about the benefits of federal government contracting featuring WPI and SBA representatives. It was originally planned for September but was pushed back to Oct. 30 due to other conflicts. Lincoln County will oversee registration and Langlade County will help with marketing.

c. *Nov. 20 – Fall Centergy EDO & Municipalities Meeting (Host)*

Attendees reviewed the event flier in the packet. Guild noted that this event will bring lots of other economic development and local government professionals to Merrill and provides a great opportunity to showcase the positive development activity in the region. The event will include an update from the City, an overview of the REV program, and a tour of NTC's facilities. Board members & economic development partners are invited to attend.

d. *2026 Economic Summit*

Planning will kick off soon for the 2026 Summit, which will focus on support for entrepreneurs. Guild has tentatively identified April 7 as the date and the Merrill Expo Center as the likely location. Frederick volunteered to join the planning team. Board members were asked to send their event ideas to Guild.

6. 501c3 Application Update

An updated draft of the Form 1023 application was sent with the meeting notice for Board review. Guild has been working on finalizing the content with guidance from the LCEDC's accountant and an attorney.

a. *Engagement with Legal Services*

Frederick connected Guild with Attorney Jesse Roberts from the Michael Best law firm, noting his experience with 501c3 applications. FreMarq donated the retainer fee so the LCEDC could quickly secure his legal services at no cost to the organization. Guild summarized some of the attorney's suggestions to improve the application. Based on his recommendations, Guild is preparing to write a Supplemental Responses document that clearly details how the LCEDC's activities now align with 501c3 requirements.

b. *Consideration of New Conflict of Interest Policy & Bylaws Amendment*

Attorney Roberts also recommended the Board adopt a more formal Conflict of Interest policy instead of relying on the LCEDC bylaws' more generic statement. Guild provided a draft policy document using the exact language the IRS recommends for 501c3 nonprofit policies. She clarified that in order to adopt the new policy, the Board must first amend its bylaws to reference an external Conflict of Interest policy moving forward. A bylaws amendment requires a ten-day notice starting from the date the proposed language is first shared with the Board. Language for a possible bylaws amendment and the new policy draft were first shared via email in the Board's meeting packet on August 25. Attendees briefly discussed the new Conflict of Interest Policy and clarified its potential impact on the LCEDC's 501c3 application.

MOTION: Hass/Johnson m/s to approve the proposed LCEDC Conflict of Interest policy contingent upon an affirmative Board vote to amend the LCEDC's current bylaws Article V, Section 9 as stated in the packet, and to authorize all Board members to vote on the proposed amendment to the bylaws via email starting no sooner than Sept. 4, 2025, and concluding no later than Sept. 10, 2025, and further to officially record the resulting decision of the Board's vote to amend the bylaws as part of the next LCEDC Board meeting; motion carried.

7. Merrill Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV) Program

a. REV Program Oversight Transition Proposal

Frederick reported that the REV program activity continues to progress. The REV leadership team recently discussed how to best ensure continuation of the program long-term and recommended asking the LCEDC to assume formal ownership and oversight of the REV initiative in the future. Guild noted that the program could be treated similarly to the Broadband Commission, with a separate committee and leadership team that includes at least one LCEDC Board member and reports to the LCEDC Board. Attendees discussed the proposal and agreed it aligned with their goals for the LCEDC and with the Director's role to support business development. The Board agreed by consensus to support the proposed eventual transition of the REV program to be housed under the LCEDC.

8. Current Grant Opportunities & Updates

Guild provided updates on the following grant opportunities:

EPA Recreational Economies for Rural Communities Grant: The LCEDC did not receive this technical assistance grant. Guild will be participating in a webinar that afternoon to get more information about other programs and resources that could potentially still support the projects proposed in that grant application.

USDA Rural Business Development Grants: The federal government still has not released these grant funds. It has until Sept. 30 to do so or the programs will not be funded. Last week, Guild was asked to complete a preliminary accessibility compliance review, which indicates the LCEDC's application is still under consideration.

Merrill Community Foundation Grant: This new grant opportunity focuses on supporting community development initiatives in Merrill. Awards are expected to be \$10,000 or less. The REV leadership team recommended the LCEDC pursue funding to help support Executive Director activities related to small business development. Attendees discussed how to develop an application that emphasizes how the LCEDC's activities and the REV program advance community development.

MOTION: Mindak/Frederick m/s to authorize Guild to apply for the Merrill Community Foundation Grant to fund activities related to supporting small business development; motion carried.

Grow North Entrepreneur Grant: Grow North has money available from an Associated Bank grant that it intends to divide between its 8 counties and three tribes to support activities related to small businesses & entrepreneurs. Each applicant is guaranteed \$500 but can request up to \$1500 for more competitive initiatives. Attendees discussed using the funds to support staff time spent assisting entrepreneurs, completing REV program activities, and/or supporting the 2026 Economic Summit, which will focus on entrepreneurs.

MOTION: Johnson/Greg Hartwig m/s to authorize Guild to apply for the Grow North grant and to pursue the maximum amount of competitive funding to support the 2026 Economic Summit; motion carried.

WEDC Small Business Technical Assistance Grant: The WEDC has two grants open right now. Its Technical Assistance grant can help offset administrative expenses related to providing technical assistance to small businesses. This grant requires 1-to-1 matching funds and only 15 awards are expected to be approved.

MOTION: Johnson/Hass motioned to authorize Guild to apply for the WEDC Small Business Technical Assistance Grant with a project that commits up to 30% of the Executive Director's time to offering small business technical assistance and to match the WEDC grant funds with LCEDC general funds; motion carried.

WEDC Small Business Development Grant: The second WEDC grant can help fund projects that directly support small businesses and broaden their access to capital. There is no match but all money must be passed through directly to businesses and cannot be used for administration costs. Jen from Tomahawk Main Street spoke with Guild about developing a façade matching grant program and offered to provide primary program coordination. However, Main Street cannot apply directly; it must partner with either the City or an economic development organization, and the City declined her request due to capacity issues. Attendees discussed ideas for developing a small business support program by the Sept. 15 deadline that would include all key development partners in the County and utilizes partners and/or Board members to help administer the program.

MOTION: Schlegel/Johnson m/s to authorize Guild to apply for the WEDC Small Business Development Grant if she has sufficient time to develop a viable matching grant program that will support small businesses in Lincoln County prior to the deadline; motion carried.

9. The Role of the LCEDC Board in Setting & Guiding Strategic Plan Goals & Strategies

Guild explained that a Board member had requested including a discussion about the role of Board members in executing Strategic Plan activities so that efforts are not limited to staff capacity. Attendees briefly reviewed the Strategic Plan and identified investor recruitment as an area that could benefit from additional Board engagement. Guild was asked to email all Board members to request volunteers for a new Investments & Fundraising Subcommittee that will work with Guild to develop a plan to increase LCEDC investments.

10. LCEDC Partner & Board Member Updates

a. Lincoln County

Boyd stated the County is busy working on the 2026 budget and is going through the collective bargaining process with the Sheriff's Department.

b. City of Merrill

Akey shared the following updates:

- i. Merrill's Committee of the Whole met the night before and voted to recommend extending TID 3 for another three years to allow the City to capture more increment above the tax levy.
- ii. The City is working with the Boys & Girls Club on a \$3 million project to transition the old armory into a new Boys & Girls Club facility. They intend to apply for a State grant for half the funding, which can be matched by a local foundation. They still need to raise approximately \$1.5 million in additional funding to cover the first five years of operational expenses.
- iii. Aldi's recently decided against opening a store in Merrill because it has been struggling in other smaller markets across northern Wisconsin. The proposed location will be going back on the market.
- iv. A new multifamily housing development proposal along the riverfront has been accepted. It will include three 20-unit complexes and bring approximately \$12 million in investment to TID 9.
- v. JAS is putting up six condos in the old Merrill View Motel area near the clinic.
- vi. Four new single-family homes along Spruce Street were sold in 2025 and 4-6 more are expected to be built and sold in 2026.
- vii. The City is in the process of developing its 2026 budget.

c. City of Tomahawk

Schlegel provided the following updates on behalf of the Tomahawk CDA:

- i. The City is monitoring progress on plans to renovate the old fire-damaged downtown bookstore.
- ii. The CDA recently purchased land near the highway to support development of a 72-unit apartment complex; construction is expected to begin in 2026.
- iii. Swiderski is working on plans for another housing development in the Kings Hill Estates area that will create 15 more single-family homes.
- iv. The City is exploring ideas for another TIF district near 4th Street.

Lau also noted that the old Moose Run Inn was sold and is currently being developed into apartments.

d. *Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce*

Nelson reported that the Chamber has been very active in promoting tourism in Merrill and has distributed close to 25,000 destination guides this year. The Labor Day Parade & Car Show is coming up this weekend, and NTC is holding a ribbon cutting and open house at its new Community Safety Simulation Center on Sept. 25. Nelson also confirmed he will be retiring by the end of the year.

e. *Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce*

Lau reported lots of upcoming events, including the popular Fall Ride in September. The Tomahawk Chamber has been making a lot of changes to its Board and administration, including a recent decision to split its fall Annual Meeting away from the Membership Appreciation Dinner, which will now take place in January. The Chamber has also re-engaged with the Lincoln County Dream Up! Childcare Committee.

f. *Tomahawk Main Street, Inc.*

Director unavailable due to scheduling conflict – newsletter was provided in the packet.

g. *LCEDC Board Members* - NONE

11. Future Meeting Dates & Topic Requests

The next LCEDC Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025, starting at 10:00 am at the Lincoln County Service Center in Merrill.

12. Meeting Adjournment – 12:01 pm by Chair Hartwig

Minutes Approved 11/19/2025 by LCEDC Board; recorded by SG