



November 2025 LCEDC Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Wednesday, November 19, 2025

10:01 am – 12:07 pm

Lincoln County Service Center, County Board Room

801 N. Sales Street, Merrill, WI 54452

Board Members (9/13 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 (2): Sara Guild (EDC Director), Sarah Brooks (Merrill Chamber)

1. Call to Order & Welcome – 10:01 am by Chair Hartwig

Quorum at start = 9

Chair Hartwig thanked the following Board members and partners for giving extra time and/or resources to support the LCEDC in 2025:

- Renea Frederick (financial investor; attorney for 501c3 process; REV program; coffee & treats for Federal Reserve event)
- Val Mindak (financial investor; hosting roundtables and Board meeting at Park City locations)
- Steve Daigle (sponsoring new LCEDC printer; becoming new Builder investor for 2026)
- City of Merrill (long-time financial supporter; donated use of Expo Center for Federal Reserve event)
- Lincoln County (long-time financial supporter plus free office space and general support)
- Brian Arndorfer (extra help with legal questions)
- Jeff Schneider (assistance with Federal Reserve event set-up and roundtables)
- Investments Subcommittee members (Brian Arndorfer, Renea Frederick, Dave Johnson, Steve Daigle, Val Mindak)
- Sara Guild (general EDC activities administration)

2. Approve Lincoln County EDC Board Meeting Minutes: August 27, 2025

Johnson/Daigle motioned to approve the August 27, 2025, meeting minutes as presented; motion carried.

3. Affirmation of Vote to Amend LCEDC Bylaws: Conflict of Interest Policy

Attendees reviewed the documentation prepared by Guild to consolidate and record the bylaws amendment vote that adopted an external Conflict of Interest policy and was completed via email in September 2025.

MOTION: Chair Hartwig/Johnson m/s to accept the vote results as presented and affirm the Board's approval via an email-based vote in September 2025 to amend the bylaws to incorporate an external Conflict of Interest policy; motion carried.

4. LCEDC Finance Report: August, September, & October 2025

Guild referenced the printed financial activity narrative in the packet. She reported that the Tomahawk CDA has approved a \$2500 investment to the LCEDC but it has not yet been received. She also noted that the CDA Chair, Roger Schlegel, encouraged the CDA committee to consider allocating a higher amount in future years. Guild stated that the organization "broke even" as of the end of October but has not brought in enough funding to cover expenses for November and December so it will need to utilize funds saved from prior years. Attendees discussed the process for moving funds between LCEDC accounts and evaluated current and anticipated interest rates.

MOTION 1: Frederick/Johnson motioned to authorize the LCEDC Executive Director to move funds as needed between LCEDC financial accounts, including the current checking and money market accounts; motion carried. Guild was subsequently directed to investigate options for moving LCEDC money to access better interest rates.

MOTION 2: Greg Hartwig/Frederick motioned to approve the August/September/October 2025 finance report; motion carried.

5. General Activity Reports

a. *Executive Director*

Guild reviewed highlights from her written report, which included finalizing the LCEDC's 501c3 application, executing the Federal Reserve event activities, coordinating multiple grant applications, attending various conferences & events, developing a new LCEDC Investments flier, and supporting the Merrill Area Development Corporation's fall meetings and dissolution activities.

b. *Strategic Plan Activities Update*

Attendees discussed the Strategic Plan tracker spreadsheet format and directed Guild to start using only the "Summary" style moving forward, listing key actions under each goal for quick reference. Guild noted that one-on-one meetings with businesses were difficult to complete this year but the REV program team is exploring options to implement a process to accomplish this goal on a broader scale. There were no other questions or comments related to the Strategic Plan report.

c. *Lincoln County Broadband Commission*

Guild briefly reviewed key action items from the August and September LCBC meetings; the October meeting was cancelled. The next LCBC meeting is scheduled for Dec. 4 and will focus on finalizing plans for roundtable discussions in early 2026 designed to gather feedback on common barriers to internet & technology utilization that can be used to develop an action plan for the new Digital Pathways initiative.

6. LCEDC Updates & Opportunities

a. *Recent & Upcoming Events*

CENTERGY EDO & MUNICIPALITIES MEETING: This event is happening tomorrow at NTC's Public Safety Facility and will showcase Merrill's recent housing & business development activities, with an emphasis on the REV program. More than 40 people are registered. All Board members/partners are invited to attend.

FEDERAL RESERVE EVENT: The main event plus two roundtables and a luncheon were successfully held on Oct. 6 & 7 with 65 actual main event attendees. Guild shared post-event survey results, noting that both the survey responses and verbal feedback were very positive. The event secured \$2,000 in sponsorships while expenses came in at just under \$1000, resulting in a net profit of \$1,045. Attendees briefly discussed ideas to turn this into an annual Economic Update event.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING INFO SESSION: The online info session was planned jointly with Langlade County EDC and WPI for Oct. 30 but had to be cancelled because the government shutdown prevented the primary presenter (an SBA employee) from attending. They hope to reschedule the program for early next year but may wait until the federal contracting environment is more stable.

2026 ECONOMIC SUMMIT: The date for the Summit is being moved to either April 28 or 29, depending on keynote speaker availability; the original date conflicted with the onboarding day for Lincoln County's newly elected Board Supervisors. The Summit Planning team held its first meeting. It recommends the Summit retain the morning local updates and a data-focused presentation but not hold breakout sessions in the afternoon due to the Expo Center's lack of separate rooms. The team is also exploring ideas to increase opportunities for attendees to network with each other.

SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES: The REV Team will be discussing ideas to kick off the Small Business Roundtables in early 2026 at its December meeting.

b. *Grant Applications*

TOMAHAWK CDI GRANT: Guild assisted the applicant and the City with writing and refining the application narrative. She also attended meetings to show support for City Council approval. The WEDC has tentatively approved the application but it is still going through the final underwriting review process.

USDA RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT: State USDA reps asked Guild to sign documents preliminarily accepting a \$21,960 grant award at the end of September, but the federal government ultimately decided not to release funds for this program in 2025, so the grant was not awarded.

GROW NORTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT: The LCEDC was awarded \$1,450 to support its 2026 Summit. Guild must submit a report after the Summit explaining how the funds supported entrepreneurs.

MERRILL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: Guild applied for funding to help support technical assistance activities related to the REV program but the LCEDC's application was not selected.

WEDC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT: Guild has been informed that the LCEDC's application is still under consideration, and it appears likely they will be receiving this grant award, which could provide up to \$16,800 to support activities related to developing & executing a "local small business technical assistance program" in partnership with REV and other partners, including salary, marketing, and supplies.

WEDC DIVERSE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT: The LCEDC was asked to submit a joint application for this grant with Langelade County but was then informed it no longer qualified because the LCEDC was expected to receive funding for a different WEDC grant, most likely the Technical Assistance grant.

WEDC SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT: Guild began working with other economic partners in Lincoln County to develop a project that would provide funding directly to businesses but did not have enough time to develop a competitive project before the deadline. This idea will be revisited in 2026.

WEDC IGNITE ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT: Guild spent significant time exploring options to pursue this grant in partnership with REV, Centergy, and/or Grow North but there was not enough time to create a project that met the grant's very specific criteria. However, ideas generated during those discussions evolved into the following two initiatives.

c. *Innovative Construction Technologies Consortium (Grow North region)*

Frederick shared a handout outlining a proposal to develop an innovative construction technologies accelerator that supports development of new building technologies. The project would be in collaboration with Innovate Marquette, which has experience launching comparable accelerator programs, plus other partners. It would initially focus on developing ideas to support widescale execution of a specific new building system, with a facility set up in Merrill to test materials and develop processes. This project will serve as a catalyst to attract other innovative construction-affiliated business ideas in the future. Guild has been assisting in efforts to bring together potential partners and develop plans to move this idea forward. The Board briefly discussed the proposal and expressed support for Guild's continued engagement.

d. *Ignite Entrepreneurship Collaboration (Centergy region)*

Centergy has invited Guild to join a new group that is exploring options to develop a regional entrepreneur support system to help with things like scaling up small businesses. Details are still being finalized, and Guild may invite other REV team members to participate once the initiative's goals have been clarified.

7. Investments & Fundraising Subcommittee Update

The new Investments Subcommittee met twice this fall. Members worked with Guild to design a new Investments promotional handout and also created a Top 10 Targets list of likely investors. Attendees briefly discussed ideas for recruiting new investors. Guild will share the Top 10 Targets list so Board members can sign up to contact specific businesses. Board members were encouraged to invite Guild to join them at these meetings if desired.

11:41 am – Schneider Out

8. Proposed 2026 LCEDC Budget

Attendees reviewed the proposed 2026 budget and discussed changes from the 2025 budget. They supported the list of potential external sponsorships, including Centergy's new Industry & Site Readiness Evaluation Study. Guild clarified that she is exploring options to adjust her healthcare coverage to stay within the current \$1000 per month allocation but that the budget includes an increase if needed based on the current projected premium level. Attendees briefly discussed the likelihood of receiving each of the anticipated 2026 income sources.

MOTION: Johnson/Frederick m/s to approve the LCEDC 2026 budget as presented; motion carried.

9. New Policy Proposal: LCEDC Executive Director Decision-Making Authority Policy

Attendees reviewed the proposed new policy, which was created to help clarify the scope of authority the Board has delegated to the Executive Director and to formalize the required levels of Board and Executive Committee approval for organizational decisions and actions. Board members offered no changes and expressed its support.

MOTION: Johnson/Frederick m/s to approve the “Executive Director Decision-Making Authority Policy” as presented; motion carried.

11:55 am – Frederick Out

10. LCEDC Partner & Board Member Updates

a. Lincoln County

- i. Greg Hartwig reported that the County has passed its 2026 budget. He also shared that there have been a lot of recreation-related updates using the final ARPA funds, including a new bike trail bridge by Prairie Dells and new campsites at New Wood Park.

b. City of Merrill

- i. Mayor Hass shared the following updates:
 - 1. The City’s 2026 budget was recently passed.
 - 2. A groundbreaking was held for the new riverfront multifamily development project.
 - 3. A ribbon cutting was held for the new Swiderski development on River Street.
 - 4. The City has issued permits for 2 new duplexes and 13 new houses.
 - 5. A condo plot has been approved on Eugene Street and is up for sale.
 - 6. A new home has been completed on Spruce Street.
 - 7. The City received a bid to put a new home on the last vacant city lot on Grand Ave.

c. City of Tomahawk – Not Present

d. Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce

- i. Sarah Brooks introduced herself as the Chamber’s new Executive Director. She has been busy assessing ways to get the Chamber reconnected to businesses of all sizes and to help build a more united community that reduces past divisions. The Chamber is preparing to bring back more tourism-focused events, including a Merrill Wine Walk on Oct. 17, 2026, which will be open to all businesses, not just Chamber members.

12:02 pm – Daigle Out

e. Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce – Not Present

f. Tomahawk Main Street, Inc. – Not Present

g. LCEDC Board Members - NONE

11. 2026 Meeting Dates & Topic Requests

Attendees briefly discussed their preferred frequency for holding meetings in 2026 and agreed by consensus to hold Board meetings quarterly in Feb/May/Aug/Nov. Guild will meet with the Executive Committee and/or provide written updates as needed between meetings. She will send out calendar invites for the best date each quarter using late-month Wednesdays at 10 am as the preferred day and time.

12. Meeting Adjournment – 12:07 pm by Chair Hartwig

Minutes Approved 02/18/2026 by LCEDC Board; recorded by SG