

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Thursday, August 28, 2025

6:30 pm – 7:35 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 (6/9 total): Tom Backen* (Vice Chair), Jennifer Bishop, Sara Guild (Secretary), Amber Lambrecht, Clyde Nelson, Heidi O'Hare*, Amanda Patterson, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees (1 total): Travis Spoehr

*Participated online (2 total)

1. Call to Order – 6:30 pm by Wickham

Action Team Quorum = 6 (Backen, Guild, Lambrecht, O'Hare, Welker, Wickham)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Attendees shared brief introductions.

3. Public Comment - NONE

4. Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – July 24, 2025

Wickham/Backen motioned to approve the July 24, 2025 minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. LCBC Executive Team Membership Annual Vote

Guild clarified that the annual Executive Team vote was due in June but was delayed due to open Action Team seat.

Current Executive Team reps are Wickham (President), Backen (Vice President), and Guild (Secretary).

Wickham opened the floor for nominations. No additional names were brought forward.

MOTIONS:

- Welker/Backen motioned to approve Wickham for LCBC President for the 2025-26 term; motion carried.
- Welker/Wickham motioned to approve Backen for LCBC Vice President for 2025-26 term; motion carried.
- Welker/Backen motioned to approve Guild for LCBC Secretary for the 2025-26 term; motion carried.

6. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

a. Commission Chair

Wickham has seen an increase in resident inquiries regarding broadband installation activities, primarily due to Charter's active RDOF project installations. He noted that private roads are being bypassed, and he has reached out to Charter to request clarification on the easement process required to get service for these residents. He anticipates fielding additional inquiries due to the recent BEAD program media coverage.

b. Public Service Commission (PSC) – NOT PRESENT

c. Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

i. Charter RDOF Project Implementation

Guild recently shared an updated RDOF map timeline reflecting the information Charter provided after the June LCBC meeting. She will try to get another update ahead of the September meeting.

ii. Other ISPs - NONE

d. *Action Team Members*

Lambrecht reported that the price of Starlink equipment recently decreased significantly, likely in anticipation of the BEAD program impact. She noted that various packages are available and encouraged interested persons to check the Starlink website for the most current information.

O'Hare expressed concerns about potential DFI funding changes that may impact the library's Wi-Fi program.

7. Lincoln County BEAD Program Updates & Public Comment Opportunity

The PSC's preliminary BEAD awards were released last Friday; Guild included links to the information with the LCBC's August meeting notice. In Lincoln County, ISPs were awarded as follows:

- Frontier Communications = \$14.4m to cover 1,827 locations with fiber; primarily near Merrill & Tomahawk
- Bertram Communications = \$4.4m to cover 855 locations with fiber; primarily Corning, Harding, & Schley
- Connect Holdings (Brightspeed) = \$612k to cover 164 locations with fiber in the Gleason area
- SpaceX/Starlink = \$55,500 to cover 37 locations using satellite; households were spread across the county
- SUMMARY: Four ISPs will receive a total of \$19.4m to bring service to 2,883 locations throughout the county

The Public Service Commission is accepting public comments through tomorrow to allow people to provide feedback on the proposed BEAD awards. Attendees reviewed examples of comments from Oneida County and Green County and discussed what to include in Lincoln County's public comment. Guild was asked to craft a statement that included the following points:

- Do not reduce the County's proposed level of fiber service;
- Reference the County's initial endorsement of Bertram Communications;
- Ask PSC/NTIA to hold all ISPs accountable to their commitments on service levels, pricing, and timeline;
- Ask PSC/NTIA to require responsible installation practices that minimize property damage.

Guild will email the Action Team a draft of the LCBC's public comment statement for review no later than tomorrow morning. She asked that all feedback be sent by mid-afternoon to allow for changes before the submission deadline.

8. Digital Pathways Project

a. *Key Stakeholders Outreach List & Meetings Prep Updates*

Wickham postponed this topic to the September LCBC meeting.

9. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. *Future Agenda Topic Suggestions*

The September LCBC meeting will include an update on the Charter RDOF project as well as the Digital Pathways stakeholders list review and meetings prep discussion.

b. *Review of Standard Meeting Logistics*

Attendees debated starting the LCBC meetings earlier. Guild will send out a poll to all LCBC Action Team members and frequent attendees to identify a preferred start time. The meetings will remain in the evening to maximize access for the public. No other meeting logistics changes were requested.

c. *Confirmation of Next Commission Meeting Date/Time/Location*

The next Lincoln County Broadband Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 25, at 6:30 pm in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

10. Meeting Adjournment – Meeting adjourned by Wickham at 7:35 pm.