

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Thursday, January 22, 2026

5:30 pm – 6:40 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* (8/9 total): Tom Backen (Vice Chair), Jennifer Bishop, Sara Guild (Secretary), Amber Lambrecht, Tim McFadden, Heidi O'Hare, ~~Amanda Patterson~~, Earl Welker, Ken Wickham (Chair)

Other Attendees* (4 total): Brian Arndorfer, Mark Leonard (PSC), Laurie Ollhoff, Travis Spoehr

**All attendees except Guild & Spoehr participated online due to frigid weather conditions (10 total)*

1. Call to Order – 5:30 pm by Wickham

Action Team Quorum = 5 (Backen, Guild, Lambrecht, Welker, Wickham; McFadden present but not yet approved)

AT arrivals after *Call to Order* = Bishop (5:34 pm); O'Hare (5:39 pm)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Wickham led introductions and welcomed new attendee Tim McFadden.

3. Public Comment - NONE

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

Welker/Backen motioned to approve the December 4, 2025, minutes as presented; motion carried.

Bishop arrival: 5:34 pm

5. LCBC Action Team Membership Update & Election of New Member

Wickham reported that McFadden contacted him after learning there was an open seat on the LCBC Action Team following Clyde Nelson's retirement; neither he nor Guild received any other inquiries. McFadden shared his relevant background, noting that he was an educator with the Rockford School district for close to 40 years, where he served as Technology Coordinator for the third-largest district in the state. He retired to 7 Island Lake area near Harrison and now works as a consultant; he is also on the Harrison Broadband Committee. He noted that it is difficult for his grandchildren to visit him because the internet is too slow to allow their dad to work remotely during their visits.

No other potential Action Team member nominations were presented for consideration.

MOTION: Guild/Welker m/s to approve the appointment of Tim McFadden to complete the open term on the LCBC Action Team that ends in 2028; motion carried.

6. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

a. Commission Chair

Wickham continues to receive questions related to Charter's RDOF program installation activities, especially regarding private road service, but he fielded fewer questions during the last month.

O'Hare arrival: 5:39 pm

b. Public Service Commission (PSC)

i. BEAD Program Updates

Leonard shared a PowerPoint presentation that summarized recent BEAD program activities and projected future timelines. The PSC is currently waiting for final budget approval from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and is working with all ISP award recipients to get mandatory documentation submitted and grant agreements prepared. The first BEAD projects will likely not begin doing in-ground work until late 2026.

Leonard also shared an overview of some PSC grants currently available to support various technology-related initiatives, including the *Nonprofit Access Grant*, the *Lifeline Outreach Grant*, and the *Telemedicine Grant*. Guild will share Leonard's presentation with the minutes.

c. Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

i. Charter RDOF Project Implementation

Guild provided an updated Charter RDOF map online shortly after the December LCBC meeting. She noted that there continues to be changes to the timeline so anyone waiting for service through this program should keep monitoring the quarterly schedule updates. She also shared an example of a resident who contacted the LCBC to ask if their hunting shack would be receiving service and, because of their outreach, the shack's address has now been incorporated into Charter's installation plans. She clarified that while this positive outcome cannot always be guaranteed, proactive outreach can help in some cases. Wickham and McFadden briefly discussed some of the unique challenges with bringing service to private roads.

ii. Other ISPs

Guild and Lambrecht noted that Starlink has been adjusting its pricing for both new and current customers to be more competitive. Leonard confirmed that Starlink would also be offering a special price for low-income customers who get future service through the BEAD program.

d. Action Team Members - NONE

7. Digital Pathways Roundtables Update & Prep

More than 60 people have been invited to the Public Stakeholders roundtables on Feb. 5th and 10th. Guild has received RSVPs from 14 people as of tonight. Attendees reviewed the list and discussed ideas to increase participation. Guild was asked to invite all Town clerks; Spoehr will encourage more participation from the County.

Attendees briefly discussed meeting logistics. Wickham and Backen volunteered to provide food and beverages for both meetings. Spoehr will set up a Google Meeting for the online attendees. O'Hare recommended providing a map showing where the projected RDOF & BEAD programs internet service coverage will be going.

Guild shared a list of potential questions for the roundtable discussions. Attendees discussed the questions as well as the best options for presenting them to attendees. They decided to have Guild send a survey to all the invited stakeholders prior to the roundtables to help gather preliminary feedback from a broader audience. The responses will then be used to guide the in-person discussions. Attendees provided Guild with additional guidance regarding the recommended content, focus areas, and methods for survey development and distribution.

8. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. Future Agenda Topic Suggestions

The February meeting will focus on reviewing the results of the first two roundtables and preparing for the next round of stakeholder meetings. Once all the roundtables are completed, the LCBC will spend time developing the organization's future goals and activities based on the roundtable and survey results.

b. Confirmation of Next Commission Meeting Date/Time/Location

The next Lincoln County Broadband Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb. 26, at 5:30 pm in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

9. Meeting Adjournment – Meeting adjourned by Wickham at 6:40 pm.