

Lincoln County Broadband Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Monday, March 23, 2026

5:31 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): Pat Anderson* (Charter), Andrew Caylor*, Chris Crawford* (Charter), Travis Spoehr (County IT)

**Participated online (7 total)*

1. Call to Order – 5:31 pm by Wickham

Action Team Quorum = 7 (Backen, Guild, Lambrecht, McFadden, O'Hare, Welker, Wickham)

Arrived after *Call to Order* = Patterson (5:35 pm)

2. Welcome & Introductions

Wickham asked all attendees to provide short introductions.

3. Public Comment - NONE

4. Review & Consider Approval of Prior LCBC Meeting Minutes – February 26, 2026

McFadden/Backen motioned to approve the February 26, 2026, minutes as presented; motion carried.

5. Monthly Updates from LCBC Leadership & Partners

****NOTE:** Agenda topics taken out of order by Chair Wickham: Item 5c (ISPs) was discussed first, followed by 5a.

a. Commission Chair

Wickham reported minimal updates this month. He briefly discussed topics from UW-Extension's latest Broadband newsletter. He also noted that the BEAD BOB round was reported to have saved \$21 billion, which will be disbursed for other broadband-related purposes. However, the BOB program's funding disbursement announcement was delayed to allow additional time to process substantial public feedback.

b. Public Service Commission (PSC)

i. BEAD Program Updates

Guild reported that the PSC released a new BEAD Program Post-Award FAQs document, which contains a lot of information for both the grant award recipients and the general public, including information on low-cost service plans and BEAD locations. Wickham noted that Frontier has shared a map indicating where their BEAD-funded addresses are located in Lincoln County; Guild will share the map with the LCBC email list. The PSC is still finalizing contracts with the BEAD award recipients, so service installation timelines have not been shared publicly at this point.

c. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) ****DISCUSSED BEFORE 5a****

i. Charter RDOF Project Implementation

Attendees reviewed Guild's updated RDOF installation schedule map. Crawford and Anderson provided additional context, including clarifying the status of some of the partially completed sections in the Harrison area. Wickham noted that he has received very positive feedback from Harrison residents who were recently connected to fiber service through the RDOF program.

5:35 pm – Patterson arrived

Attendees briefly discussed some of the challenges related to getting service installed on private roads, especially when some of the residents refuse to approve easements. Charter tries to work with all the residents in these situations to find acceptable solutions but stated that it can be a struggle. Even so, Charter remains on track to complete most of the project by the end of 2026.

Guild stated that she has received inquiries from Charter customers who experience repeated outages. Crawford and Anderson said that they should be notified about any specific addresses or areas having recurring connectivity issues, especially if they are not related to weather, so they can investigate if there are unique or hidden issues. They also noted that all internet customers may be experiencing fewer problems related to bandwidth limitations because new technology improvements have reduced the overall bandwidth demand for activities like streaming videos.

Charter is also preparing to transition their coaxial-based infrastructure to a new “high-split” technology that will provide symmetrical speeds into homes without requiring a complete replacement with fiber, although it will have a fiber backbone. This process was recently completed in Rochester, MN, and will be coming to Wisconsin by the end of 2027.

Anderson and Crawford answered additional questions related to service options for new Charter customers and clarified some of the processes used to notify residents once service is activated in a new area. They encouraged LCBC members to continue to reach out to them with questions throughout the rest of the RDOF project installation period.

ii. Other ISPs – NONE

6. 5:54 pm – Anderson & Crawford out (discussion resumed at Topic 5a)

a. Action Team Members

Guild has had multiple residents tell her that they recently switched to Starlink because the pricing has become so competitive. Lambrecht shared information on how to find the most current plan prices. Guild also reported that she discussed the County’s broadband expansion efforts during a radio interview on WJJQ in Tomahawk last week.

7. Digital Pathways Roundtables Update & Prep

Attendees discussed preparations for the upcoming Business Stakeholders roundtables on April 9th and 14th. Guild emailed 85 invitations the prior week but has not received any RSVPs yet. Attendees reviewed the invitees list and discussed ideas for sending additional invites along with identifying personal outreach opportunities. They also affirmed that the roundtable agenda should remain similar to the prior meetings in February. Guild noted that the Nonprofit & Community Stakeholder roundtables are scheduled for May 7th & 12th at the T.B. Scott Library; she will send out invitations once the Business roundtables are completed.

8. LCBC Action Team Leadership Transition

Wickham transitioned the Chair role to Backen for this topic. Backen noted that Wickham will be stepping down from the Lincoln County Board after his term ends in April and thus will no longer be able to serve as the County Board’s elected representative. Guild has reviewed both the original County Board resolution and the Lincoln County EDC Board meeting minutes that jointly transitioned responsibility for the Commission to the EDC and verified that, while both documents included recommendations for specific participants, neither of them included a requirement to have an elected County Board supervisor on the LCBC. The LCBC Guidelines also do not specify any specific membership category requirements for either the Action Team or the Commission as a whole. Guild also noted that, per the Guidelines, the LCBC is required to vote to renew or replace three Action Team members as well as the Executive Team positions at the May meeting.

Wickham affirmed that he is interested in remaining involved with the LCBC as a county resident but will not be able to represent the County Board; he also recommended finding a new Chair to allow others to serve in this leadership position. Attendees discussed options related to retaining Wickham's participation, as well as a broader discussion about the goals for LCBC membership makeup, the benefits of having direct County Board elected official participation, and the long-term expectations for the Commission.

Consensus emerged that the LCBC members would like Wickham to remain engaged with the Commission, but would also like the County Board to appoint a new elected official to ensure there continues to be direct engagement at that level. Wickham agreed to remain the LCBC Chair until the annual meeting in May; in the interim, Guild will notify all Action Team members that there is an opportunity to transition into the Chair position.

9. Future LCBC Meetings Information

a. Future Agenda Topic Suggestions

The April LCBC meeting will include a recap of the Business Stakeholders roundtable as well as an update on preparations for the Community & Nonprofit Stakeholders roundtable in May. The May meeting will be the Commission's annual meeting with elections for the Action Team and Executive Team, and the June meeting will include the annual review of the LCBC Guidelines and the Lincoln County Broadband Plan.

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

The next Lincoln County Broadband Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23, at 5:30 pm in the Lincoln County Service Center; online access will be provided.

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

Minutes Approved: 05/28/2026 by LCBC, recorded by SG