



February 2025 LCEDC Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details: Wednesday, February 26, 2025

9:59 am – 12:07 pm

Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156

801 N. Sales Street, Merrill, WI 54452

Board Members (10/13 total): Brian Arndorfer (Vice Pres.; Chair), Jesse Boyd, Steve Daigle, Mike Fick, Renea Frederick, Gary Hartwig (President/Treasurer), Greg Hartwig, Steve Hass, Dave Johnson (Secretary), Val Mindak, Roger Schlegel, Jeff Schneider, Steve Taskay

Other Attendees (6): Rod Akey (City of Merrill), Maggie Cronin (Rep. Tiffany), Sara Guild (EDC Director), Charis Lau (Tomahawk Chamber), Clyde Nelson (Merrill Chamber), Jennifer Turkiewicz (Tomahawk Main St)

1. Call to Order & Introductions – 9:59 am by Chair Arndorfer

Quorum at start = 6 current Board members, including 1 proxy (Akey for Gary Hartwig)

Vice President Arndorfer was recognized as the meeting Chair due to President Hartwig being out of town.

All attendees provided brief introductions.

2. Approve Lincoln County EDC Board Meeting Minutes – January 29th, 2025

Johnson/Hartwig motioned to approve the January 29, 2025, meeting minutes as presented; motion carried.

3. Consider Approval of New LCEDC Board & Ex Officio Members

The proposed slate of new Board member candidates with term end dates was provided in the meeting packet.

MOTION: Hass/Johnson motioned to approve the five proposed new Board members as presented in the packet; motion carried.

The approved new LCEDC Board members and term end dates were as follows:

- Steve Daigle, *President*, Daigle Brothers Inc. (term ends April 2025; option to renew at 2025 Annual Meeting)
- Mike Fick, *Owner*, Blue Jay Transportation and other local businesses (2026)
- Val Mindak, *CEO/President*, Park City Credit Union (2026)
- Jeff Schneider, *Safety Manager*, Sierra Pacific Windows (2026)
- Renea Frederick, *President/Owner*, FreMarq Innovations Inc (2027)

4. Presentation on LCEDC History, Guiding Documents, and Board Responsibilities

Guild gave a presentation that included the following topics:

- Historical highlights from the EDC's first 25 years;
- Background on the EDC's new mission, vision, and purpose statements;
- An overview of the 2025-26 LCEDC Strategic Plan document, including its key goals and strategies; and
- Bylaws sections relevant to Board member activities and responsibilities.

Attendees addressed questions related to the Strategic Plan, bylaws changes, and insurance coverage. Board members emphasized the importance of demonstrating EDC alignment with other key stakeholders in the County.

5. LCEDC Finance Reports

a. 2024 Annual Finance Report (preliminary)

Attendees reviewed the preliminary 2024 P&L (Activity) and Balance Sheet (Financial Position) reports.

Key points included:

- Guild explained that she manually entered all 2024 charges into the organization's new QuickBooks chart of accounts last fall after the Board terminated its contract with an external bookkeeping vendor.
 - Money Market income/expense lines reflect the internal transfer of funds from the EDC's Crossbridge money market account to its Park City checking account and are not actual income/expense items.
 - Final details may change after the report is reviewed by an accountant during the 2024 tax process.
- Hartwig/Johnson motioned to approve the preliminary 2024 Annual Finance report; motion carried.

b. *January 2025 Finance Report*

Guild highlighted the following items in the January 2025 finance reports:

- Blue Lines = final Money Market transfer; should not need again this year
 - Arndorfer noted that the Merrill Area Development Corporation may be willing to help cover any funding shortages at the end of the year if necessary.
- Orange = large annual insurance and CRN membership payments that will not occur again in 2025
 - These created more expenses than normal in a single month, which usually averages \$10-12k
- Budget Spreadsheet = Provided to help track financial activity alignment with 2025 budget goals
 - First column of Budget spreadsheet aligns with the monthly Activities report

Frederick/Johnson motioned to approve January 2025 finance report; motion carried.

Guild also confirmed that the EDC's authorized signers were updated at both financial institutions last fall.

c. *February 2025 Finances to Date (preliminary)*

Guild shared the current month's finance report through Feb. 22 for reference only. She noted that future finance reports will likely reflect the layout of these documents and asked for feedback. There were no questions or recommendations for changes to future finance reports.

6. Executive Director Report

Guild shared her written Executive Director activity report, noting that it uses a new format and clarifying that the printed packets include sections for *Upcoming Priority Projects* and *Upcoming Activities & Events* which were added after the packet was emailed out. She responded to questions about Centergy's Central Wisconsin Days advocacy event and explained some of the current efforts underway to complete a regional housing needs assessment with Centergy and the North Central WI Regional Planning Commission. Attendees also discussed recent and proposed childcare-related activities and assessed the challenges of impacting this issue in a coordinated and effective manner. Guild was asked to include more details about who she engaged with in future reports to make it easier for Board members to identify opportunities for additional collaborations.

7. Strategic Plan Activity Update

Guild explained how to read and use the Strategic Plan Tracking documents and clarified the differences between the summary page and the detailed document. The Board approved continued use of this tracking system but requested Guild be prepared to address any red "Minimal Progress" items during future meetings.

There was a brief discussion regarding the status of federal funding holds that may be impacting Lincoln County businesses. Cronin conveyed that Rep. Tiffany expects these holds to be temporary but she will verify this and can follow up with any interested parties.

8. Lincoln County Broadband Commission Update

The LCBC's January 30th meeting included presentations from two internet service providers (ISPs) who planned to apply for funding through the Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD) grant program to bring service to un(der)served addresses in Lincoln County. The program's goal is to ensure all underserved addresses have access to high-quality internet service by 2030. Following the LCBC's recommendation, the Lincoln County Board endorsed Bertram Communication's application. Moving forward, the LCBC may begin focusing on supporting activities that will increase digital access and utilization in the county. Their next meeting is tomorrow (Feb. 28th).

9. Status of 501c3 Transition

Guild shared a brief history of the steps taken to date by the LCEDC to pursue 501c3 reclassification. She also reported that last week she contacted the IRS for some clarification and was informed that the instructions they gave her in November to simply submit a letter requesting the transition was incorrect and that the organization must still complete the entire formal application process. Guild will complete Form 1023 as much as she can, then have it reviewed by an attorney before submitting it to the IRS. She intends to complete it by the end of April. Once it is submitted, she will notify Rep. Tiffany's office so they can help ensure it gets processed in a timely manner.

10. USDA Rural Business Development Grant Application

Guild gave an update on the status of the USDA RBDG application. Following some feedback from a USDA rep, Guild is preparing two different applications – one under the “Enterprise” category and one under the “Opportunity” category. Both are due this Friday. Grant activities revolve around developing and/or executing technical assistance programs for small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Merrill Chamber and the REV Team have provided crucial assistance with securing letters of support and other feedback to complete the applications. If approved, the grant(s) will cover up to 25% of Guild's salary for one year on all grant-approved activities. The Merrill Area Development Corporation has agreed to allow the LCEDC to use MADC's annual contribution for the 20% budget match. Arndorfer reiterated that grants that can cover staff salaries are very limited and emphasized that this is a great opportunity to support the LCEDC's budget while pursuing its business development goals.

11. 2025 Economic Summit

Attendees reviewed the event promo flier draft. Most of the presenters are confirmed and Guild will be finalizing the event web page and online registration system later this week. She contacted all of last year's sponsors on Monday and has confirmed that Park City, Daigle Brothers, and Church Mutual will be sponsors this year. She will send out requests for additional sponsors along with an event promotional email early next week. Board members agreed by consensus that they should not receive free tickets and instead should pay to attend the event as a way to demonstrate support for the organization.

12. October 7th Federal Reserve Event Update

The LCEDC will be holding a free event featuring a representative from the Ninth Federal Reserve District on Tuesday, October 7, at the Merrill Expo Center in partnership with Grow North. Guild would like to start promoting this event at the Economic Summit. She shared a proposed event schedule that included both the main presentations and small group meetings. Board members recommended holding the two small group meetings prior to the main event and offering an invite-only lunch with the presenter for the LCEDC and Grow North Board members afterwards. The marketing materials should include clarification on what the Federal Reserve is, why it matters to local businesses, and/or why people should attend.

13. LCEDC Investor Outreach

Attendees reviewed the updated LCEDC Investments handout. Guild was asked to add a list of key activities and EDC highlights to help Board members recruit investors. Once the document is finalized, it will be shared with all Board members so they can assist with investor recruitment. Guild will also speak with the Chambers about promoting this opportunity to their members. Park City Credit Union is the LCEDC's first investor at the Build level.

14. General Updates & Inquiries from Board Members & LCEDC Partners

Cronin provided a short overview of how Congressman Tiffany's Outreach Team can assist businesses, including providing help with federal agencies, writing letters of support, and connecting with Small Business Administration resources. In 2024, their office helped small businesses bring \$10 million back to the district. Anyone looking for help can contact the Wausau office directly and/or attend Rep. Tiffany's next listening session in March or April.

15. Future Meeting Dates & Topic Requests

Board members agreed to start meeting every other month on the last Wednesday at 10:00 am. The next EDC meeting will be on April 30th and will be the 2025 Annual Meeting. Guild will work with Mindak to try to have the meeting at the Park City Credit Union office in Tomahawk. The EDC Board will revisit this bi-monthly schedule in the fall and adjust the meeting frequency at that time if needed.

16. Meeting Adjournment – 12:07 pm by Hass/Hartwig; motion carried.

Minutes Approved 04/30/2025 by LCEDC Board; recorded by SG