



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

a division of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 - 10AM

Zoom Virtual Meeting
[VIEW THE RECORDING](#)

1. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 10:01 AM by Chair, Jim Caesar
- **Members Present:** Nick Koverman – Representing Washburn County, Donna Walker – Representing Private Industry (Dairyland Power Cooperative), Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County, Lynn Hall – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Dick Hartmann – Representing Burnett County, John Will – Representing Education (Northwood Technical College), Jeff Holte – Representing Bayfield County, Kathy Halbur – Representing Rusk County, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Carver Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Brooke Gilbertson – Representing Iron County
- **Members Absent:** Ilsa Hoeschen – Representing Education (UW-Superior), Michelle Johnson – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), John Righeimer – Representing Sawyer County, Philomena Kebec - Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- **Others Present:** BJ Rauckman – CEDA, Jim Miller – Congressman Tiffany’s Office, David Wierzba – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Kristina Wright – Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Stacey Hessel – Senator Quinn’s Office, Joy Melton – NWRPC, Jenice Meyer – Development Association, Thomas Michels – DWD, Michael Welsh – WEDA, Crystal Rohde – Visions Northwest, Sheldon Johnson – NWRPC/Visions Northwest

2. Welcome and Introductions

- Chair, Jim Caesar, welcomed the participants - everyone introduced themselves and their roles.

3. Approval of Draft October 8th, 2025, Meeting Minutes

- Donna W. made a motion to approve the October 8th, 2025, minutes, a second was made by Geri D. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Presentation: Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) Legislative Updates

- Michael Welsh – VP of Legislative Affairs, WEDA
 - <https://weda.org/gov-evers-signs-top-weda-legislative-priority-into-law/>
 - <https://weda.org/weda-legislative-update-whats-happening-under-the-capitol-dome-2/>
 - https://weda.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/WEDA-Legislative-Agenda-2025_FINAL_MW-1.pdf

5. Partner Update

- David Wierzba, Regional Economic Development Director – WEDC
 - See presentation slides for more information
- Mari Kay-Nabozny, CEO, NWWIB

- Family Friendly Workplace – event coming up in Ashland January 22nd - <https://familyfriendlyworkplacesinc.growthzoneapp.com/ap/Events/Register/kgF3vDolzCVC1>
- New Job Pods (access point for workforce services) – Medford is open, Iron River and Webster will also be getting them (these will be a bit smaller than Medford) – these are technology enabled – linking people to workforce resources.
- Reminder about three Digital Navigators – can lend iPads and laptops, also can help troubleshoot IT issues. Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties have services currently, but they are applying for Digital Navigator programs in southern Price, and Medford area. See the calendar here: <https://www.nwwib.com/programs/click>
- Coming to close on Wisconsin Early Childhood Association Grant in partnership with WECA – program available to expand home-based childcare. Time is running out. See flyer in email communication.
- New Fast Forward Grant for CDL drivers through Halvor Lines.
- 16 people started last week at Midwest Trucking getting CDL, OSHA 40 and Heavy Equipment Operators licenses.
- Submitted a grant for a healthcare Fast Forward Grant – for dental assistants.

6. Around the Table/Other Business

- Jenice M. gave an update on the Blatnik Bridge closure and the economic impact study and research being done by the DA and partners. Will have some local funds available for businesses to prepare. Will be advocating at Superior Days in Madison for a half percent sales tax during the bridge closure to be able to reinvest back into the businesses. If anyone wants to join the efforts at Superior Days February 10th -11th, learn more here: <https://www.douglascountywi.gov/1086/Superior-Days>
- John W. updated on the housing projects in Saint Croix Falls, Hurley, and Hayward. Construction is going well – in Hayward 15 of the 40 housing units have been leased. 80 names on list of interest. Hayward completion this Summer, Hurley will be this Fall. Next phase will be deploying mobile equipment for training at these sites (welding, mobile dental lab, etc.)
- BJ R. noted that Rusk County has extended their contract with CEDA for services, but is currently hiring a county-funded full-time economic development position. Position has been posted [here](#).
- Jim C. said they are beginning the final cohort of VentureHome with UWS and WiSys. Three major projects going one – one includes a robotics company that wants to come to Superior from Minnesota and could develop into a major campus (like Google).
- Carver H. hoping that our group can help move forward some challenges in Ashland County. Northland College has not been sold yet – the board of trustees wants to sell it as a whole campus and won't share the asking price. One option would be looking at finding a patient capital doner to purchase as an entity and take time to develop the campus into different businesses and community programs. Looking for any contacts and/or resources of philanthropy or donors. AADC will be hiring two full-time positions to support program efforts and technical assistance.
- Joy M. stated that NWRPC staff are staying busy responding to business inquiries about funding and technical assistance.
- Crystal R. shared few slides of upcoming events and resources. See the presentation for more information and links.

7. Confirm Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 8th, 2026 via Zoom at 10AM.

The meeting ended at 11:17AM.