

MINUTES

Economic Development Committee Meeting

Date / Time: Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:30 P.M. | **Meeting called to order by** Lukens at 5:30 P.M.

In Attendance

Members Present: Carol Lukens, Chad Henke, Gary Gisselman, Terry Kilian, Victoria Tierney

Others Present: Randy Fifrick, Shannon Graff, Tammy Stratz, Carrie Edmundson, Andy Lynch, Atty. Anne Jacobson, Sam Wessel (NCWRPC)

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Comment

- No community members presented for public comment.
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Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from May 6, 2025, Meeting

- Item removed from agenda - moved to next meeting.
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Agenda Item 3 – Discussion on Metro Housing Report from Northcentral Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission update (Wessel)

Sam Wessel, Senior Planner with Northcentral Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, provided an update on the 2022 housing study, noting the number of units built since its release and projected population trends based on census data.

Henke expressed appreciation for Wessel’s mention of climate change, sharing that members of his own family returned to Wausau to avoid natural disasters elsewhere. He supports housing development as a way to show community investment and attract new residents.

Gisselman questioned the need for more housing given Wausau’s declining population and stagnant wages.

Tierney agreed, noting there is significant housing construction but limited job creation. She also pointed out that Wausau’s high property taxes push many to live outside the city.

Fifrick responded that Wausau’s housing strategy is meant to attract new residents to fill existing job openings, as many local employers face staffing shortages.

Lukens confirmed that staffing shortages are a common concern expressed by employers in her professional experience.

No action required.

Agenda Item 4 – Discussion on Housing including existing stock, current and future projects.

Edmundson provided an overview of Wausau’s housing landscape, focusing on aging housing stock, ongoing projects, and future opportunities. Over 60% of the city’s single-family homes were built before 1970, raising concerns about maintenance, lead hazards, and code compliance.

Current efforts include infill development through Habitat for Humanity, CDBG-funded rehabs, Down Payment Assistance, and the Lead Safe Homes Program. The Thomas Street corridor project is moving forward with support from the WAMS grant process, and an RFQ was issued to modular home dealers for additional affordable housing on city-owned lots.

One LIHTC project is underway with completion expected in 2025; another will begin soon, with units available in 2026. The Foundry on 3rd is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. Kolbe and Kolbe is also building an apartment complex near its facility, though the City is not involved.

Future plans include drafting an RFP for downtown parcels to support higher-density, mixed-use housing, pursuing state and federal funding for workforce and senior housing, and exploring employer partnerships to offer housing incentives for new hires.

Edmundson referenced the 2022 Housing Study, which identified a need for 525 new units by 2025, 293 more by 2030, and a total of 898 units by 2040. She stressed aligning housing strategies with the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update.

Alders expressed support for proactive housing development but requested more detailed cost-benefit analysis of proposed incentive tools.

Several members voiced concerns about the pace of redevelopment and stressed the importance of maintaining neighborhood character.

There was general consensus on the need to prioritize affordability, accessibility, and sustainability in all new housing initiatives.

Agenda Item 5 – Discussion and possible action on Consent to Transfer, Waiver of Right of First Refusal, Termination of Recorded Deed Restrictions and Recording Set of Revised Deed Restrictions for 840 S. 66th Avenue (Lynch)

- Item removed from agenda.

Agenda Item 6 – Discussion and possible action approving Quit Claim Deed - Beacon Resources, LLC – 731 N. 3rd Street (Lynch)

Lynch explained that the proposed Quit Claim Deed is intended to remove a 1960s deed restriction limiting the property to department store use, following the consolidation of three city blocks for the former Prange Department Store. A recent title review raised concerns that the restriction may conflict with the buyer’s intended use. Staff recommended approval.

Kilian expressed concern about approving the deed without knowing the buyer’s plans for a key downtown parcel. Lynch clarified that there is no City ownership or involvement in any current project. Kilian questioned why the City would issue a deed if it doesn't own the property. Attorney Jacobson explained that the deed would simply remove any lingering use restriction the City may hold, not transfer ownership.

Tierney added that the property is owned by a local developer and referenced a DNR letter about site contamination. She voiced concerns based on past redevelopment experience involving the same developer.

*Gisselman motioned to approve, seconded by Henke **Motion Carried 5-0***

Agenda Item 7 – Adjourn

*Tierny motioned to adjourn, seconded by Henke. **Motion Carried 5-0.***

Meeting Adjourned at 18:30 PM

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ALL City of Wausau Meetings can be viewed at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/@CityofWausauMeetings>

The ED meeting from 06/03/25 can be viewed at:

- <https://www.youtube.com/live/Pm7nPCpJKwg?si=kdDReRLKDFJGZgXU>