

**Lanesboro Economic Development Authority  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 5, 2026 – 10:45 a.m.  
City Council Meeting Chambers**

**Present Members:**

- Mindy Albrecht-Benson     Michael Boho     Tom Pursell     Linda Tacke (remote)  
 Kathryn Wade

**Staff:**

- Mitchell Walbridge     Darla Taylor     Michelle Marotzke

**Guests:** William Saint Amour, Cobalt (remote)

**Call to Order:** Member Wade called the regular meeting to order at 10:50 a.m.

- A. **Agenda Approval:** Member Albrecht-Benson entered a motion to approve the agenda; Chair Wade seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with three ayes and zero nays; Motion carried.
- B. **Public Comments:** No public comments were shared.
- C. **Consent Agenda:**
  - a. Minutes of the Regular Meeting, February 5, 2026
  - b. Minutes of the L.E.A.N. Sub-Committee, January 28, 2026
  - c. February EDA Financials

Director Marotzke indicated that item b, Minutes of the L.E.A.N. Sub-Committee, January 28, 2026, were not included in the packet and requested that they be removed from the Consent Agenda. Member Albrecht-Benson entered a motion to approve the agenda as amended; Chair Wade seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with three ayes and zero nays; Motion carried.

**Department Reports**

**A. EDA Director Report:**

- a. Director Marotzke shared highlights of her report, which was not included in the packet, including:
  - i. Bluff Country Business Academy has been a primary focus; there are 15 participants starting on Monday.
  - ii. The RLF closing for The Scoop is planned for next week with attorney Greg Schieber in Harmony.
  - iii. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is in full swing. This effort is led by Allison Whalen with the Fillmore County EDA and facilitated by First Children’s Finance with support from SMIF and Taylor Family Farm Foundation. It will kick off with a provider appreciation event on May 7<sup>th</sup> at Harmony Spirits, then the launch of surveys for providers, employers and parents.
  - iv. There are two workshops scheduled for the REV program. First is an AI session with Michael Seiler on March 18<sup>th</sup> and then a stress budgeting session with Scott Taylor on March 31<sup>st</sup>. SMIF will be sunseting the REV program and announcing a replacement.
  - v. Working with a local business for a Department of Ag grant to help them extend their offerings.
  - vi. I will attend EDAM’s Day at the Capitol on March 17<sup>th</sup> and will meet with Representative Davids and Senator Miller to discuss economic development topics that are important to Preston and Lanesboro.

- B. **City Council/City Administration:** City Administrator Mitchell Walbridge provided an update to the EDA Board including:
- a. There have been two City Council meetings since the last EDA Board meeting. The final design for the Highway 250 project has been approved. We are proceeding to put together the subsurface plans to get signoffs to apply for PFA funding.
  - b. The 30-day Notice to Cure has been delivered to Sparrow Valley. The next procedural steps will be taken in the next 30-45 days.
  - c. We are moving forward with mapping out and doing GPS and data collection for the electric grid, which will help us move forward to process interconnection applications for solar systems from our utility customers.
  - d. Monitoring every committee's agenda in the House and Senate for this session.
- C. **Chamber of Commerce:** Executive Director Joe Goetzke was not available to attend the meeting but shared an update with Director Marotzke.
- a. The Visitors Guides have been distributed to all regional visitor centers.
  - b. An advanced screening of McGivern's Main Street episode about Lanesboro will be held on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at the Saint Mane Theatre. Tickets are free-will donation and available online. The episode officially premieres on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - c. The 2026 Pocket Map is in production with Sarah Peterson. That should go to print in the next couple of weeks and has included more content and enriched it for SEO and AI searches.

Marotzke introduced William Saint Amour (Cobalt Community Research), who presented 2025 visitor data used for marketing, benchmarking, and economic development. Highlights of the presentation include:

- 531,000 visitors to the Lanesboro ZIP code generated 964,600 total visits (1.8 average), slightly down from 2024 in line with statewide trends.
- January–February saw increased visitation due to favorable weather, stable gas prices, and expanded winter marketing.
- June visitation rose, supported by good weather during Rhubarb Fest and the Art Festival.
- Core visitor demographic is ages 20–34, primarily white-collar and college-educated.

Board members asked about data methodology and visitor definitions. Mr. Saint Amour provided clarification and was thanked for his presentation.

- D. **School Board:** School board member Sarah Peterson was not available for an update.

### **Revolving Loan Fund**

- A. **Available Funds:** There is about \$15,000 available to disburse with the second USDA loan, with a disbursement deadline of June 30, 2026. Our USDA representative will perform a site visit this summer. The first USDA fund has approximately \$20,000 available to lend. Member Benson-Albrecht asked what our monthly income is for these loans. Walbridge and Marotzke will confirm the information.
- B. **Loans in Repayment:** Presented in the financials.
- C. **Pending Applications:** None at this time.

### **Continued Business**

- A. **Bluff Country Business Academy Update:** Marotzke shared that there are 15 people registered for the program. March sessions will be held at the Commonweal Theatre starting March 9th, and the April sessions will be held at the DMRC in Preston. The final session will be on April 27<sup>th</sup> at the Preston golf Course. Preston Foods provided a discount for snacks, and The Lanesboro Market will help with fresh

fruit. Rochester Technical College will provide instructors for the sessions. A Zoom link will be provided if a participant is unable to attend in person. Sessions will not be recorded.

- B. **SMIF Rural Entrepreneurial Venture Program Update:** Marotzke shared that SMIF is sunsetting this program and will share more information as they determine the direction they want to go. We have workshops scheduled with Michael Seiler and Scott Taylor, which will feed into the bigger workshop for the Highway 250 project.
- C. **Consider Bid from Okapi Strategy for TH250 Reconstruction Business Workshop:** Marotzke presented a proposal from Okapi Strategy to facilitate a 2-hour workshop and up to twenty 30-minute one-on-one sessions with businesses impacted by the 2027 Highway 250 reconstruction. She also consulted with Julie Kiehne (Winona State), who can offer helpful resources, though in a less coordinated, piecemeal approach compared to a dedicated consultant. Okapi owner Linda Mathiasen also offers optional add-on services that could support the project. The L.E.A.N. Subcommittee approved the bid. Member Benson-Albrecht moved to enter into a contract with Okapi Strategy; Chair Wade seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with three ayes and zero nays; Motion carried.

**Additional Discussion:**

Member Benson raised questions about downtown access and mapping during construction. Administrator Walbridge and Marotzke discussed enhancing wayfinding, particularly for business access. The group is considering applying for a SMIF Small Town grant next year. Coordination between Linda Mathiasen and Joe Goetzke on marketing was also discussed, along with broader strategies to support businesses and foster positive engagement with construction workers.

**New Business**

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, April 2, 2025, at 10:45 a.m.

Member Albrecht Benson entered a motion to adjourn; Chair Wade seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with three ayes and zero nays; Motion carried.

Member Wade adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Marotzke  
City of Lanesboro  
Economic Development Director