

Montgomery County Board Minutes **For Tuesday, April 14, 2026 – 5:30 PM**

The following are minutes of a regular meeting of the Montgomery County Board held at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois, on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 p.m.

Roll call was taken – 12 members present, 1 member absent.

Members Present: Russell Beason, Connie Beck, Rob Corso, Chris Daniels, Doug Donaldson, Keith Hancock, Mark Hughes, Jeremy Jones, Ethan Murzynski, Chad Ruppert, Patty Whitworth, Evan Young

Member Absent: Bill Bergen. Chairman Donaldson asked for a moment of silence in memory of Bergen, who passed away at age 77 on Friday, April 10, 2026. Donaldson stated Bergen had served on the Montgomery County Board since 2014, including as Chairman of the EMA/Ambulance Committee. He has also served his community as a Litchfield Coach, Firefighter, EMT, Fire Chief, Deputy Coroner, Park Board President, and on the Litchfield City Zoning Board of Appeals.

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by County Board Member Rob Corso.

Mileage and Per Diem Approval: Claims for mileage and per diem were read by County Clerk Leitheiser. **Motion by Young and second by Hughes to approve the mileage and per diem.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. **All in favor, motion carried.**

Approval of Minutes of Previous County Board Meeting: **Motion by Beck and second by Hancock to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, and the special County Board meeting held on Wednesday, March 18, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Animal Control Report** – Tricia Papin was present for questions.
2. **Circuit Clerk's Report** – Daniel Robbins was present for questions.
3. **Coroner's Report** – Randy Leetham was not present.
4. **County Clerk and Recorder's Report** – Sandy Leitheiser was present for questions.
5. **Enterprise Zone Report** – Mike Plunkett was present for questions and reported sending two Enterprise Zone applications in the past week.
6. **EMA & EPA Reports** – Dan Hough was not present.
7. **Health Department Report** – Hugh Satterlee was present for questions.
8. **Highway Department Report** – Cody Greenwood was present for questions.
9. **Maintenance Superintendent Report** – Phil Ernst was not present.
10. **Probation Office Report** – Banee Ulrici was not present.
11. **Public Defender's Report** – Erin Mattson was not present.
12. **ROE – Monthly, Quarterly & Annual Reports** – Julie Wollerman was not present.
13. **Sheriff's Report** – Tyson Holshouser was present for questions.
14. **SOA Report** – Tysha Mullen was not present.
15. **State's Attorney Report** – Brian Shaw was present for questions.
16. **Treasurer's Report** – Nikki Lohman was present for questions.
17. **VAC Report** – Cassandra Hampton was present for questions.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion by Hughes and second by Whitworth to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. All in favor, motion carried.

LIAISON REPORTS:

- **CEFS Board** — Beason had nothing to report.
- **708 Board** – Murzynski reported the board met on Monday, April 13, 2026.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** – Bergen was not present.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth had nothing to report.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Daniels referenced the Executive Director's report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported work continues on grant items.
- **UCCI** – Corso had nothing to report.
- **U of I** – Ruppert reported the board will meet on Thursday, April 16, 2026.
- **WCDC** – Jones had nothing to report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- **Kevin Olson** spoke regarding the proposed Pattern Energy wind project, noting how fragile the water table is and how many rural people depend upon wells for rural water. He also noted the United States is losing farmland at an alarming rate.
- **Jim Self** criticized lack of information about the project and referenced a lawsuit regarding Pattern for false claims to investors. He also questioned the number of local construction jobs there would be for the project and cited the negative impact on local roads and on the landscape.
- **Jim Brockmeyer** reported he visited the Lotus wind project at Virden and Girard and found it worse than he had imagined. He said he can't fathom living near them, and he expressed concern about the negative impact on health and safety. He questioned the impact on land values due to greed and said he believed new technology would soon make wind energy obsolete. He stated a map should be made available to the public showing parcels with Pattern leases and easements.
- **Eric Bradley**, a retired land surveyor, described his work on public projects and questioned Pattern's lack of transparency on turbine locations and the environmental impact of this project.
- **Rita Bruntjen** said her husband is a fourth generation farmer and her son is a fifth generation farmer. She stated although her family is not interested in participating in the project, they have already been negatively impacted with Pattern providing inaccurate information about them. She said Pattern Land Agents have falsely claimed they are the only family in their area to not sign a lease, which is deceptive business practice. She stated her concerns about property damage and potential for health and safety issues, and she requested the County Board reject the project.
- **Dan Mulch** thanked members of the audience who came to the meeting to express their concerns about the Pattern wind turbine project, and he noted last month when he requested more information from Pattern there was none available on their website, which is unacceptable. He questioned Pattern's Land Agent practices and the length of leases extending to up to 50 years, and he told County Board members he believes they

have more power in this process than they think. He requested the County Board post a map showing parcels with Pattern leases and easements to their website.

- **Rick Graden** thanked the board for their resolution passed last month supporting SB2842, and he noted two weeks ago his coalition discovered a company has submitted a proposal to place four CO2 injection wells in Montgomery County to the Illinois EPA. He stated local landowners should not sign a lease or easement and asked the County Board and the public to attend a meeting regarding this proposal on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Nokomis Park House.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported working on many of the same projects, with the new phone system and computer replacements at the top of the list. He stated he has also begun working on secure door access and has been vigilant for cyber-attacks stemming from the conflict in Iran.
2. **EMA/EPA Report Update/Approval:** None
3. **HELP Safety Committee Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the committee has met, conducted building inspections, and is currently working on a Slip/Trip/Fall Policy and a Safe Lifting Policy. He stated their next committee meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, May 12, 2026.

DEVELOPMENT & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Chairman Chad Ruppert:

1. **MCEDC Update/Approval:** Ruppert said MCEDC Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath reviewed her written report, highlighting information from the Central Illinois Economic Development Authority (CIEDA) about bond funding potential and her work with the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) study.
2. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported adoption events are planned for April 18, 2026, May 1, 2026, and May 18, 2026. He stated new fencing at the facility has been completed, the new hire is now working, and work has begun to frame in the front porch of the facility.
3. **Pattern Energy Update/Approval:** Pattern Lead Project Manager Diogo Botelho gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions from County Board members. Botelho said he has been visiting the county at least monthly for the past three years, and Pattern Energy (an American company headquartered in Houston and San Francisco) has established an office in Raymond, Illinois. He said Pattern Energy is owned by three large pension fund investors, has about 30 power projects currently in operation, and has a lot of support in Montgomery County. He said Montgomery County was chosen for a wind project due to its access to the power grid, its good wind speeds, and land availability. He believes the project is a good fit for the county due to union job creation, long-term financial benefits, transformational tax revenue, and how wind works well alongside agriculture. Botelho displayed a working footprint map of the proposed 500MW wind turbine project and said the timeline includes permitting in 2027-28, construction starting at the end of 2028, and operation beginning in 2030. He said the project is now gathering data, and no turbine layout has been established yet. He

answered some questions asked at the last County Board Development & Personnel Committee meeting, and then he took questions from County Board members. Donaldson requested the company to stop any misleading information coming from their Land Agents and asked constituents who hear about this misleading information to contact their County Board member with their concerns. Jones asked the company to terminate any Land Agents acting unethically, and he asked questions about turbine heights and distances from municipalities. Young asked about land acquisition for power lines, and Hancock asked about the negative impact of changing USDA lending requirements on farmland with wind turbines. Ruppert stated he is also concerned about the misinformation being presented by Pattern Energy representatives, and he requested memorandums of understanding be implemented with local unions to assure local labor will be used for Montgomery County wind projects. He also asked questions about environmental studies, the interconnect process, an FAA study, and the pay-back timeline for Pattern's investment. Botelho stated Pattern has a one billion dollar investment in this wind turbine project, and no pay-back timeline has been established. Murzynski asked about how road use agreements will be obtained, and County Clerk Leitheiser explained the free online land records search process available on the county website. Ruppert explained the county permit approval process, and Donaldson asked the Pattern team to remain after the meeting to answer any questions from members of the public who attended the meeting. Donaldson also asked Pattern Energy representative Botelho to commit to holding a public meeting when Pattern has more information to answer questions and resolve issues, and he offered to host this meeting in the County Board room of the Historic Courthouse. Botelho pledged a public meeting will be held. Ruppert stated this project will be on the agenda for discussion at upcoming Personnel and Development Committee meetings, which are open to the public. **(For a copy of Pattern Energy's PowerPoint Presentation, see Resolution Book 23, pages 265-267).**

4. **CO2 Sequestration Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed a March 25, 2026 email from the Coalition to Stop Co2 Pipelines sent to Chairman Donaldson about a plan by Elysian Carbon Management to store carbon dioxide in Montgomery County. He stated the coalition has planned an April 28, 2026 meeting at the Nokomis Park House beginning at 7:30 p.m. Donaldson encouraged all County Board members to attend this meeting if their schedule allows.
5. **Surplus Property Disposition Update/Approval:** **Motion by Ruppert and second by Beason to declare an Animal Control 2008 Ram 1500 vehicle as surplus property. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated documents have been filed to extend Phase II of the grant, and the extension has been granted.
7. **Tourism Grant Application Review Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed and scored 12 Tourism Grant applications, with requests totaling \$11,750 for \$5,000 available funding. Scores were then mathematically adjusted for funds available with award amounts ranging from \$625 to \$225. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to award \$5,000 in Tourism Grants as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**
8. **Site Selection Magazine Rankings Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported Illinois ranked second nationwide for the fourth consecutive year in Site Selection Magazine's annual rankings of corporate relocation and expansion activity.

9. **Small Biz Grant Follow-Up Update/Approval:** County Board Administrator Plunkett continues to follow up with previous grantees, and he has applied to DCEO for approval to modify the Phase I grant for \$67,606 additional funds for Small Biz grants.
10. **County Compensation Administration Program Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed Bushue HR policies for starting salary and merit-based increases and asked County Board Administration to send them out to Department Heads. He reported Department Heads had no feedback. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to approve the Montgomery County Compensation Administration Program. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 268-269).**
11. **Elm Lawn Solar Public Hearing Update/Approval:** Ruppert said a public hearing for Elm Lawn Solar has been set for Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 6 p.m. in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Chairman Mark Hughes:

1. **Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes reported 70 items on Maintenance Director Phil Ernst's report, plus 65 work orders completed during the past month.
2. **America 250 Kickoff May 29 Update/Approval:** Hughes said Hillsboro Community and Economic Development Director Melissa Smith presented a proposed plan of events to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of America, including lighting the Historic Courthouse and an address from the Mayor of Hillsboro. He stated the committee approved use of the Historic Courthouse grounds for the plan.
3. **Imagine Hillsboro Flower Pot Request Update/Approval:** Hughes said Imagine Hillsboro requested permission to move the flower pots situated around the Historic Courthouse from the northeast corner to the southeast corner. The committee agreed. Imagine Hillsboro has done an amazing job with the upkeep of the flower beds, and they agreed to allow Imagine Hillsboro to rearrange the flower pots.
4. **Altorfer Generator Maintenance & Extended Warranty Update/Approval:** **Motion by Hughes and second by Hancock to approve Altorfer Power System's planned maintenance agreement for the generator at the Courthouse Complex for \$1,858. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Hughes and second by Beason to approve extended warranties on the Courthouse Complex generator for \$2,140 and the Montgomery County Jail generator for \$2,050. All in favor, motion carried.**
5. **State of Illinois Office Space Request Update/Approval:** Hughes reported the State of Illinois reached out to County Board Administrator Plunkett expressing interest in renting an office for an employee of the Illinois Department of Revenue. After the state made an onsite visit to inspect and measure the current County Board Chairman's office for this potential use, the county was sent an offer to rent the office for \$11.73 a square foot a year. This would result in the monthly rent totaling to \$134.90 a month, or \$1,618.80 a year. The committee did not accept the offer and instructed Plunkett to reach back out to the state for a final offer. He made contact with the state after the meeting, and Plunkett reported the State of Illinois is no longer interested.
6. **Snow Blower/Snow Blade Update/Approval:** **Motion by Hughes and second by Jones to purchase a manual snow blade for \$1,379 to be used with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office side-by-side. Majority in favor, motion carried (Young and Donaldson voted against).**

7. **127 North Main Street Property Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee discussed options for the boring of a fiber optic cable to the newly acquired 127 North Main Street property. He said the proposed plan would have a fiber optic cable run from the basement of the Courthouse Complex, under North Main Street, and into the basement of 127 North Main. **Motion by Hughes and second by Jones to pay Reid-Baughner Century 21 commission fees totaling \$6,300 for real estate services received toward the purchase of the 127 North Main property. Majority in favor, motion carried (Young voted against). Motion by Hughes and second by Murzynski to pay an amount not to exceed \$4,800 to Bondurant Plumbing for sewer repairs needed at the 127 North Main property. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Hughes and second by Whitworth to spend an amount not to exceed \$1,900 to replace a water heater at the 127 North Main property. All in favor, motion carried.**

ROADS & BRIDGES COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Chairman Ethan Murzynski:

1. **County & Township 2026 MFT Oil Letting Update/Approval:** Murzynski said due to the price of oil, the 2026 MFT Oil Letting has been postponed in hopes prices will drop. Engineer Cody Greenwood plans to advertise the oil letting throughout April, and hopes to receive and review bids at the May Roads & Bridges Committee meeting.
2. **Plains Solar Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the developer of the Plains Solar project, a solar insulation located south of Witt Avenue and east of E. 14th Road, objected to some of the wording in the proposed road use agreement. Greenwood reported he had forwarded the proposed revision to State's Attorney Brian Shaw, and he hopes to present an updated agreement next month.
3. **Heavy Equipment Shed Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported the heavy equipment shed is now being utilized.

FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Vice Chairwoman Connie Beck:

1. **SOA Office Update/Approval:** Beck said in addition to written reports, SOA Tysha Mullen noted the Board of Review concluded their hearings on Monday, April 6, 2026.
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Beck noted a royalty payment of \$52,273.98 was received in February, and a total Coal Fund balance of \$10.8 million. Treasurer Nikki Lohman said investments have since matured, resulting in interest income increases.
3. **Energy Bids Update/Approval:** Beck said the committee reviewed a recommendation from Tradition Energy to accept the proposal from Direct Energy for capacity pricing for 36 months (.0610 plus supplier cost), a slight increase, and from Direct Energy for fixed pricing for 36 months (\$4.479), a slight decrease. **Motion by Beck and second by Whitworth to accept the 36-month Direct Energy proposals for electricity and natural gas. All in favor, motion carried.** After the motion approval, County Highway Engineer Greenwood requested Highway Department and Health Department buildings be opted out of the agreement due to billing difficulties connected to their solar arrays. **Motion by Hughes and second by Whitworth to reconsider the electricity and natural gas proposals. All in favor, motion carried.**
4. **Bruce Harris/Beacon Contract Update/Approval:** Beck said since Beacon has purchased Bruce Harris, the county is not switching to Bruce Harris for its GIS website.

She said County Board Administration and the Supervisor of Assessments are negotiating about payments previously made to Bruce Harris.

5. **FY2027 Wage Changes, Salary Adjustments & Starting Salary Update/Approval:** The committee received information from the UCCI Salary Study as well as information about county Collective Bargaining Agreements for 2027 and requested time to review for another month.
6. **Budget Hearing Dates/Times Update/Approval:** Beck reported the committee tentatively set budget hearings for Aug. 18-19, 2026, beginning at 8:30 a.m. each day.
7. **Fund 375 Purchases Update/Approval:** Motion by Beck and second by Hughes to approve three Buildings & Grounds vouchers from Fund 375 to Great Lakes Ace Hardware for \$97.94; to Grainger for \$55.98; and to Hillsboro Electric for \$95.84. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Beck and second by Corso to approve two Montgomery County Sheriff's Office vouchers from Fund 375 to Motorola Solutions for \$131.25 and to Ray O'Herron Co. for \$2,943. All in favor, motion carried.
8. **County Trustee Resolutions Update/Approval:** Beck said the committee reviewed the potential transaction and questioned future use of the property. After the committee meeting, it was confirmed the City of Litchfield intends to demolish the building. Motion by Beck and second by Young to approve the Resolution to transfer parcel 10-33-376-004 in North Litchfield Township to the City of Litchfield. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 270-271).

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES:

Motion by Hughes and second by Whitworth to approve the committee reports and minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SCHEDULE CHANGES: Chairman Donaldson reminded the board a public visitation for Bill Bergen's funeral is planned for Thursday, April 17, 2026, from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at Plummer Funeral Home in Litchfield. Funeral services will be held on Friday, April 18, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Litchfield.

APPOINTMENTS:

1. Daniel Fenton to the Shoal Creek Fire Protection District: Motion by Donaldson and second by Jones to reappoint Daniel Fenton to a three-year term as trustee to the Shoal Creek Fire Protection District beginning May 2026 through May 2029. All in favor, motion carried.
2. Marilyn Harvey and Jay Greenwood to the Green Hill Cemetery Association: Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to reappoint Marilyn Harvey and Jay Greenwood to six-year-year terms as trustees to the Green Hill Cemetery Association through April 2032. All in favor, motion carried.

PAY BILLS AND PAYROLL: Motion by Hancock and second by Beck to pay all approved bills and payroll. **ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. All in favor, motion carried (Daniels left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.)

ADJOURN: The next regular full board meeting will be on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Murzynski and second by Beason to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.