

Montgomery County Board Minutes For Tuesday, January 14th, 2025 – 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, January 14th, 2025. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 PM.

Roll call was taken – 13 members present, 1 member absent.

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

Members Absent: Patty Whitworth

Moment of Silence in memory of former Montgomery County Board member Ed Helgen, who served from 1992 through 2012 in roles including Chairman of the Health, Welfare & Elections Committee. He passed away on Thursday, December 26, at age 84.

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by County Board Member Connie Beck.

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

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

Approval of Minutes of Previous County Board Meeting:

Motion by Ritchie and second by Young to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, December 10th, 2024. All in favor, motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Animal Control Report** – April Pier, present for questions.
2. **Circuit Clerk’s Report** – Daniel Robbins, report submitted, present for questions.
3. **Coroner’s Report** – Randy Leetham, report submitted.
4. **County Clerk and Recorder’s Report** – Sandy Leitheiser, report submitted, present for questions.
5. **Enterprise Zone Report** – Mike Plunkett, report submitted, present for questions.
6. **EMA Report** – Dan Hough, report submitted, present for questions.
7. **EPA Report** – Dan Hough, present for questions.
8. **Health Department Report** – Hugh Satterlee, report submitted, present for questions.
9. **Highway Department Report** – Cody Greenwood, report submitted, present for questions.
10. **Maintenance Superintendent Report** – Phil Ernst, report submitted.
11. **Probation Office Report** – Bane Ulrici, report submitted.
12. **Public Defender’s Report** – Erin Mattson, report submitted.
13. **ROE – Monthly, Quarterly & Annual Reports** – Julie Wollerman.
14. **Sheriff’s Report** – Tyson Holshouser, report submitted, present for questions.
15. **SOA Report** – Kendra Niehaus, report submitted, present for questions.
16. **State’s Attorney Report** – Andrew Affrunti, report submitted, present for questions.

17. **Treasurer’s Report** – Nikki Lohman, report submitted, present for questions.
18. **VAC Report** – Cassandra Hampton, report submitted, present for questions and made a verbal correction to her report, indicating \$350 in financial assistance in December, 2024.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion by Corso and second by Jones 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 708 Board met on January 13th, reviewed reports from grantees, and will elect a new chair in February.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** – Bergen had nothing to report.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth was not present.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Bergen had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Hughes reported a meeting set for January 23rd at which Matt Jones of WCDC will be the guest speaker.
- **Planning Commission** — Ritchie had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported the board met yesterday, and the new solar system is installed.
- **UCCI** – Ruppert had nothing to report.
- **U of I** – Beck had nothing to report.
- **WCDC** – Jones reported an open house was held on December 18th, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- **Bill Schroeder** urged the County Board to attend the informal conference and public hearing yet to be scheduled for the Deer Run Mine Permit 424 significant revision application. He said the application is to increase the refuse site height from 65 feet tall to over 100 feet in order to accept coal waste from City Water Light & Power (CWLP), the public utility in Springfield. He questioned whether the mine is currently accepting CWLP coal waste, and reminded the board of the February 22nd public comment deadline.
- **Linda Liebscher** distributed information about Montgomery County Health Department funding, pointing out the health department purchased a \$1.3 million CD in January 2024. With a total fund balance of over \$4 million, she suggested using funds to boost services such as off-site services. She said she also shared this information with the 708 board, which distributed \$185,000 to the health department in 2024, and said the Health Department missed out on an IDPH Mental Health Division grant opportunity received by Macoupin County.
- **Brandi Lentz** said she had obtained the necessary petition signatures to place a public question to elect the Supervisor of Assessments on the ballot. She said concerns raised about the current Supervisor of Assessments go beyond the wooded acreage issue and urged the county board to vote to place the question on the ballot at this meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **EMA Report Update/Approval:** EMA Director Dan Hough reported volunteers have been working in the office, but one volunteer had been recently hospitalized.
2. **West Central Development Council/Job Center Board/CEO Board Update/Approval:** Donaldson said a meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 16th, 2025.
3. **Ad Hoc Special Advisory Committee to Address SB3455 Wooded Acreage Assessments Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the committee will act in an advisory capacity to give input into the process described by SB3455, but will not have any personnel input. Four County Board members and three members of the public have been asked to serve on the committee: county board members Chad Ruppert, Christine Daniels, Andy Ritchie, and Russell Beason, along with public members John Lentz, Jesse Boehler, and Ron Deedrick. Beason will chair the committee, which will begin meeting in February, 2025. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Hughes to appoint County Board members Chad Ruppert, Christine Daniels, Andy Ritchie, and Russell Beason and public members John Lentz, Jesse Boehler, and Ron Deedrick to an Ad Hoc Special Advisory Committee to Address SB3455. All in favor, motion carried.**
4. **ARPA Treasurer's Office Carpet Bids Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the committee opened two bids for new carpet in the Montgomery County Treasurer's Office and one bid for carpet installation. The committee approved the low bids of \$5,710.11 from Quality Flooring of Litchfield for carpet and from Greg Chambers for \$4,930 for installation. Remaining ARPA funds will be used for the project.
5. **Litchfield TIF 4 Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported board member Andy Ritchie voted in favor of a new Litchfield TIF district as he represented the County Board at a Taxing District meeting on Dec. 18 in Litchfield for a new residential TIF district seeking to provide new single-family and multi-family developments near St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield. In answer to questions from board member Young, Ritchie described the intent of the TIF. Ruppert added the county had little choice in protesting municipal TIFs, and Hughes said they are a good economic development tool.
6. **National Law Enforcement Day (Jan. 9) Proclamation Update/Approval:** Donaldson read a proclamation acknowledging January 9th as National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day and said since the board meeting fell after that date, the media had been notified in advance. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Murzynski to adopt a proclamation acknowledging January 9th, 2025 as National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day in Montgomery County. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, page 83).**
7. **Nextlink Update/Approval:** Donaldson stated Nextlink representative Mike Johnson visited the county in December, and he was the project manager to update the county. His report, including a detailed map, is in the County Board packet.

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

1. **Small Biz Grant Application Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee heard business proposals from Korenne Mesnard of Drape's Lounge, John Casterline of Bobo's Tough Toys, Cody and Jennifer Gudgel of Gudgel Ranch Saloon, John R. Gwinn of Dirt Doctor Hobby Shop, Angie Eickhoff of White & Associates and AEJE Holdings, and

David Kalaher and Jeff Compton of Miss Kitty's Goldmine. With these awards, the county will have awarded \$297,500 of the allotted DCEO Energy Transition Grant funds and have just over \$39,000 remaining in the grant fund. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Beason to award Small Biz Grants of \$5,000 to Drape's Lounge in Schram City; \$7,500 to Bobo's Tough Toys in Fillmore; \$20,000 to Gudgel Ranch Saloon in Litchfield; \$7,500 to Dirt Doctor Hobby Shop in Raymond; \$7,500 to White & Associates and AEJE Holdings in Hillsboro; and \$7,500 to Miss Kitty's Goldmine in Litchfield. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Young. All in favor, motion carried.**

2. **Plains Solar Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee discussed the revised site plan with developer Rebecca Cheatham virtually present by telephone. The committee requested another 30 days to develop siting permit conditions, and Cheatham said she would propose language for the requested conditions.
3. **Montgomery Springs Solar Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated the committee was notified that Apex Clean Energy submitted a permit application for Montgomery Springs Solar, as well as the application fee, on December 19th, 2024. The committee will wait until after a City of Hillsboro zoning hearing scheduled for January 20th on the parcel before setting a permit Public Hearing date. The committee also discussed a proposal from Hurst-Rosche to review the permit application. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Hughes to accept a proposal from Hurst-Rosche to review the permit application for a fee not to exceed \$3,500. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, page 84).**
4. **SOA Elected Position Election Referendum Ordinance 25-01 Update/Approval:** Ruppert said concerns about the Supervisor of Assessments' performance have been raised to the committee and the county board, along with a request the office be changed from an appointed position to an elected one. This action can only happen by voter referendum, and the referendum could be placed on the ballot in one of two ways: by county board action or by petition. Committee Chair Ruppert said the position has always been appointed in Montgomery County because it should not be partisan; the office should operate according to the law and not ruled by the county board. He said according to IDNR, Montgomery County is one of the last in the state to implement wooded acreage reclassification, and the forestry CSP program is an easy work-around for those affected. Ruppert expressed confidence the Montgomery County Supervisor of Assessments office is doing everything by the book. Ritchie asked if the position had ever been elected in Montgomery County; County Board Administrator Plunkett confirmed it has not. Bergen said he intended to vote against placing the position on the ballot because there should be a better way to handle public criticism. Young said voters should have the right to determine if the office should be elected or appointed. Chairman Donaldson said he is asking the County Board to consider placing the question on the ballot because those who want to see the question on the ballot have proven they can easily get the required 2% signatures on a petition to do so. State's Attorney Andrew Affrunti said in order for the board to put the public question on the ballot, they would need to approve an ordinance directing the County Clerk to do so. He presented such an ordinance, which was read by Ruppert in making the following motion: **Motion by Ruppert and second by Young to adopt the ordinance directing the Montgomery**

County Clerk to place a yes-or-no public question on the November 2026 ballot to change the Montgomery County Supervisor of Assessments position from an appointed position to an elected position. **ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Young. Voting no: Bergen, Corso, Hughes, Ruppert. **Motion carried 9-4. (For copy of Ordinance 25-01, see Resolution Book 22, page 85).**

5. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Animal Control Warden April Pier reported a successful adoption event was held at Rural King on December 26th, 2024. She said she is researching a cremains processor. The committee will review and potentially change adoption fees at the next committee meeting.
6. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the county received a nearly \$1.2 million grant reimbursement check on Tuesday, January 7th, which catches the grant up with all submissions of request for payment to date. County Board Administrator Plunkett reported December grant disbursements were submitted and approved by DCEO in the same afternoon. DCEO continues to review the next phase grant application, and a grant agreement is expected soon.
7. **City-Wide Clean-Up Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed an application for re-instituting city-wide clean-up grants to municipalities and townships. The grant would reimburse eligible municipalities or townships up to \$750 per year for landfill costs from the Montgomery County Board Trustee Fund, which is generated from the trustee sale program. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to reinstitute the City-Wide Clean-Up Grant. All in favor, motion carried.**
8. **TIF District Update/Approval:** Ruppert encouraged attendance at a public hearing for a proposed new Litchfield TIF set for 6 p.m. Thursday, January 16th, 2025, at Corwin Hall, and a public hearing for a proposed new Nokomis TIF set for 6:30 p.m. Monday, January 27th, 2025, at Nokomis City Hall.
9. **Employee Handbook Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Bushue HR has been working with the county to update the Employee Handbook; and after a meeting with them on Thursday, January 9th, Ruppert said the Development & Personnel Committee should have an updated handbook for the board to review next month.
10. **Rivers & Routes Tourism Resolution Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed and discussed an annual resolution in support of participation in Rivers & Routes Tourism at no cost to the county. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Bergen to adopt a resolution in support of Rivers & Routes Tourism. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, page 86).**

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

1. **Courthouse Chiller Bid Opening Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee opened six bids; and, after a discussion about separate proposals for electric work and controls for the new chiller, the committee agreed separating the contract could lead to warranty problems, so they approved a motion to reject all bids and rebid it as a turn-key project. Maintenance Director Phil Ernst met with Hurst-Rosche to obtain a proposal for writing bid specs and overseeing installation. **Motion by Hughes and second by Hancock to approve a proposal from Hurst-Rosche to write bid specs and oversee installation of a new chiller at the Montgomery County Courthouse. Motion by**

Ruppert and second by Young to amend the motion for an amount not to exceed \$5,000. All in favor, motion carried.

2. **Maintenance and Cleaning Issues and Report Update/Approval:** Hughes thanked the Maintenance Department for their snow removal efforts. At the Maintenance Director's recommendation, the committee also approved a bid from Weiss Construction for \$4,500 to remove and replace a section of flooring in the Montgomery County Courthouse to allow for plumbing repairs and from Heise Plumbing for \$1,491 to make repairs to damaged cast iron pipes. Hughes said this work has begun and the damaged cast iron pipes have been repaired, but he expects the existing cast iron plumbing to continue to fail.
3. **Courthouse Complex Cleaning Contract Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee reviewed the current contract with National Maintenance & Cleaning, which calls for a rate of \$25 per hour beginning January 1st, 2025, for 4-6 hours per day for cleaning the Montgomery County Courthouse Complex and requires a 30-day termination notice. The committee will continue to research other options.
4. **Courthouse Annex Table Request Update/Approval:** Hughes said Regional Superintendent Julie Wollerman offered to replace tables in the Courthouse Annex meeting room with smaller rolling tables and the committee gave consent. He stated the Regional Superintendent is arranging transportation.
5. **County Board Room AV Work Feb. 3-7 Update/Approval:** Hughes said AV work in the County Board Room to equip it as a backup court room will be conducted Feb. 3rd-7th, 2025. Committee meetings will have to be moved to either the Conference Room or the Courthouse Annex to accommodate the work.

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

1. **UKA Virden Wind Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported Engineer Cody Greenwood has a draft road use agreement and requested input from the committee as to how to proceed. The County Engineer will continue to work on the draft and hopes to have it ready by the February committee meeting. The committee will then review it for 30 days before making a recommendation to the full board.
2. **Horseshoe Solar Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Murzynski said Engineer Greenwood presented a road use agreement for Horseshoe Solar at the intersection of Fillmore Trail and Schoolhouse Road. The solar project has the same developer as previous neighboring project Anacott and Blue Star, and Greenwood said the road use agreement is also the same. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Ruppert to approve the Road Use Agreement with Horseshoe Solar. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 87-96).**
3. **Highway Department Snow Response Update/Approval:** Murzynski stated Engineer Greenwood gave a number of updates, including his department's response to the 8-10 inch snow event. He said county forces logged 314 hours plowing 7,100 miles and assisting 21 stranded drivers. The highway department used 1,750 gallons of diesel fuel and spread 660 tons of salt, sand and grit mixture. He said the committee also watched a video on the effectiveness of segmented snow plow blades in use by the highway department.

FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Chairman Andy Ritchie:

1. **SOA Report Update/Approval:** Ritchie said Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus provided State of Illinois sales ratio information and subsequent township multipliers to the committee, adding because of the sales ratio and multiplier process, under-assessed property impacts every other property owner. She reported the process has rolled to the Board of Review level, which can make changes as they deem necessary. She also provided intergovernmental agreements with the Audubon-Nokomis MTA and the Fillmore Consolidated-Witt MTA which will need to be approved by the county board. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Beck to approve an intergovernmental agreement with the Audubon-Nokomis MTA for assessment services for \$7,000. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 97-98). Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to approve an intergovernmental agreement with the Fillmore Consolidated-Witt MTA for assessment services for \$7,000. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 99-100).**
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated the November coal royalty payment was \$61,776.04 and coal interest earned through the end of November of \$417,254.59.
3. **MCSO Vehicle Bid Award Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee reviewed one bid for two 2024 Dodge Durango Pursuit AWD police vehicles from Victory Lane Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram in Carlinville. He said the first bid was \$45,709 less \$9,000 trade in for a 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility with 99,120 miles for a net price of \$36,709. The second bid was \$45,709 less \$19,000 trade in for a 2020 Ford Explorer with 41,291 miles for a net price of \$26,709. During the course of the meeting, in response to a request by the committee, Sheriff Holshouser obtained proposals from GTSI of Greenville to equip the new vehicles for \$8,318.31 each. The total to purchase and equip the two vehicles is \$80,054.62 and the amount budgeted from coal reserves was \$135,000. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Corso to award the low bids of \$36,709 and \$26,709 for two new 2024 Dodge Durango Pursuit AWD vehicles to Victory Lane of Carlinville. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Young. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to approve a proposal from GTSI of Greenville to equip the two vehicles for \$8,318.31 each. All in favor, motion carried.**
4. **Unified Child Advocacy Network (UCAN) Update/Approval:** Ritchie said UCAN Executive Director Tammy Lercher and Family Advocate Kathy Norris addressed the committee to request funds for their organization which provides forensic interviews of abused children. Norris said UCAN is a non-profit organization receiving state and federal funding, plus funding from all five counties covered, and their main office is in Jerseyville. Undersheriff Jeff Roach added he has worked approximately 80 cases with UCAN over the last five years, and Sheriff Tyson Holshouser said the organization helps immensely and, sadly, is needed far too often. In the past, UCAN has been locally funded through the 708 levy for amounts ranging from \$7,800 to \$16,500 per year, but this past year they missed the application deadline. **Motion by Ritchie and second by**

Corso to donate \$15,000 from ARPA interest to UCAN. All in favor, motion carried.

5. **IRS Mileage Rate Update/Approval:** Ritchie noted the IRS mileage rate increased to 70 cents effective January 1st, 2025, and the county typically reimburses travel at this rate. Beason said there is no reason to raise the travel reimbursement rate above the current 67 cents per mile. Young said board members do not have to voucher reimbursement at the full allowable rate and he only vouchers for 50 cents per mile. Ruppert said the annual mileage rate will be addressed in upcoming Employee Handbook updates. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Murzynski to set the county mileage reimbursement rate at 70 cents per mile effective January 15th, 2025. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **County Credit Card Update/Approval:** Ritchie said on the advice of Treasurer Nikki Lohman, the county needs to develop a credit card policy. Lohman has been working on a policy using Champaign County's policy as a template, and she has researched it with our county auditors. County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser added the county travel ordinance also needs updated to reflect current travel and lodging rates. Committee members reviewed the most recent county credit card bill, the voucher to pay the bill from the Forfeiture Fund, receipts, travel ordinance, and the draft credit card policy. Ritchie pointed out special funds, such as the Forfeiture Fund, may be spent per statute at the office holder's discretion. The Finance & Budget Committee will place reviewing the bill for possible reimbursement to the Forfeiture Fund, reviewing and recommending a credit card policy, and reviewing and updating or revising the county travel ordinance on next month's agenda.
7. **Education Incentive for Township Assessors Update/Approval:** Ritchie reported Chairman Donaldson had asked the county to research financial incentives to pay for the education required for individuals to seek the office of Township Assessor. The committee discussed this need, and the Supervisor of Assessments will provide a list of training requirements and the cost for training prior to the next committee meeting.

RULES OF ORDER AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT: Given by Committee Chairman Connie Beck:

1. **Rules of Order Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations Update/Approval:** Beck said the county board had recommendations to review the Rules of Order for 30 days, and the ad hoc committee made three more revisions, which she pointed out and explained. **Motion by Beck and second by Jones to adopt the revised Montgomery County Board Rules of Order. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Montgomery County Board Committee and Liaison Assignment Update/Approval:** Beck reported State's Attorney Affrunti informed the ad hoc committee since county board committee and liaison assignments were made by the County Board Chairman, consent of the board is needed. **Motion by Beck and second by Jones to approve the Montgomery County Board committee and liaison assignments as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES:

Motion by Beason and second by Ritchie to approve the six committee reports and minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chairman Donaldson reminded the board of two TIF public hearings: the Litchfield TIF Public Hearing will begin at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 16th, 2025 at Corwin Hall in Litchfield, and the Nokomis TIF Public Hearing will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 27th, 2025 at City Hall in Nokomis.

SCHEDULE CHANGES: None

APPOINTMENTS: None

PAY BILLS AND PAYROLL: Motion by Young and second by Jones to pay all approved bills and Payroll. **ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Young. **All in favor, motion carried.**

ADJOURN:

The next regular full board meeting will be on Tuesday, February 11th, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Murzynski to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.