

Montgomery County Board Minutes
For Tuesday, February 10, 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, February 10, 2026. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 PM.

Roll call was taken – 14 members present, 0 members 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, Patty Whitworth, Evan Young

Members Absent: None

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 Beason and second by Hughes to approve the mileage and per diem.**

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

Approval of Minutes of Previous County Board Meeting: **Motion by Corso and second by Whitworth to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, January 13, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Animal Control Report** – Tricia Papin was present later in the meeting.
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.
6. **EMA & EPA Reports** – Dan Hough was present later in the meeting.
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 present for questions.
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 not present.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA: Motion by Murzynski and second by Ritchie 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 had nothing to report.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** – Bergen had nothing to report.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth had nothing to report.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Daniels referenced a written report provided by Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath. She noted Fath had attended 13 meetings in the past month and sent out annual invoices. A meeting with USEPA officials at the Asarco superfund site in Taylor Springs has been rescheduled for March 6, 2026.
- **Planning Commission** — Ritchie had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported the Senior Citizens Board met on Feb. 9, and DCEO grant funded kitchen upgrades are now underway.
- **UCCI** – Corso reported bad weather had cancelled the last meeting, and he also provided information on the next Extension Leadership Academy.
- **U of I** – Ruppert had nothing to report.
- **WCDC** – Jones reported the next meet is scheduled for Feb. 19, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported to the committee court that grant audio upgrades are nearly complete, and his department is working on security door access, the jury server, and phone system upgrades. He said Watkins reported both the GIS website transfer to Bruce Harris and DevNet remote access for township assessors is waiting on his department, and he also anticipates working on DCEO-funded switch and storage upgrades as well as yearly PC replacements.
2. **EMA/EPA Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said EMA/EPA Director Dan Hough is working on a weather event report. He also discussed an IEPA virtual meeting on solid waste and recycling, a possible grant to replace the Cress Hill tower, a date for an evening table-top exercise, and the ramification of new regulations requiring 911 to acquire its own FEIN number.
3. **Safety Committee Update/Approval:** Donaldson said County Board Administration is working with Treasurer Nikki Lohman to establish a HELP Safety Committee which would result in a 10% reduction in Workmans Compensation premiums. The first meeting has been set for 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, in the County Board Room. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Jones to appoint Tyson Holshouser, Nikki Lohman, Mike Plunkett, Cody Greenwood and Phil Ernst to the HELP Safety Committee. All in favor, motion carried.**

4. **CIPT Intergovernmental Agreement & Ordinance 2026-01 Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the committee reviewed the annual CIPT Intergovernmental Agreement and Ordinance to Provide for Public Transportation. Nathan Nichols and Beth Beck-Marts were present for questions. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beason to approve the CIPT Ordinance 2026-01 to Provide for Public Transportation. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to approve the CIPT Intergovernmental Agreement with Shelby County. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, ages 146-150).**
5. **Rules of Order Ad Hoc Committee Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported the Ad Hoc Committee reviewed the chain of command language, which needs to be aligned with state statute, and recommended changing it to the statutory language. He said the committee also recommended a new rule reflecting state statute regarding a vacancy in the County Board Chairmanship. Those recommended changes are in paragraphs 3 and 4 under Section B on Page 6. He said the committee also discussed the disposition of Coal Fund 375 and preferred it to remain under the control of the County Board as a contingency fund. He stated the committee agreed with Rules of Order language suggested by the County Clerk's office, emphasizing Coal Fund 375 is best used for capital improvements/infrastructure and contingencies and that language was added as paragraph 11 on page 10 under Vouchers and Expenditures in Section D. **Motion by Beck and second by Bergen to approve amended Montgomery County Board Rules of Order. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Mayors Meeting Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported discussions at the Jan. 28, 2026, meeting centered on county help with grant eligibility, derelict property clean-up, and animal control.
7. **Review of Closed Session Minutes Update/Approval:** Donaldson stated the committee reviewed recommendations on pending closed session minutes. He said the committee recommended sealing five sets of closed session minutes while three other closed session minutes will remain pending until the next review. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Whitworth to forever seal the following closed session minutes: Buildings & Grounds Committee 8/24/21; Finance & Budget Committee 8/7/25; Full Board 9/9/25; Roads & Bridges Committee 11/5/25; Development & Personnel Committee 12/1/25. All in favor, motion carried.**
8. **Board Member Resignation Update/Approval:** Donaldson read a letter of resignation from County Board member Ritchie indicating he was relocating to another state. Donaldson said Ritchie has been an asset to the board and will be missed. He was presented with an award in gratitude for his service and applauded by the County Board. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to accept the resignation of Andy Ritchie as member of the Montgomery County Board effective February 27, 2026. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 151.)**

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

1. **MCEDC Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath reported in the past month she has attended a webinar, met with DCEO at Jardogs in Hillsboro, worked on Route 66 tourism events in preparation of the historic road's 100th anniversary, attended the Mayors Meeting, and continues to meet with municipalities and

attend conferences. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Hancock to approve payment of the \$15,000 invoice for annual dues in the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation. All in favor, motion carried.**

2. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated the committee reviewed monthly Animal Control reports. Additionally, Animal Control Warden Tricia Papin told the committee she has been researching a less expensive spay/neuter option. He said two new municipal Animal Control contracts have been signed and two are pending.
3. **Enclosure, Eye Wash, and Fence Bids Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed proposals for enclosing the front porch at Montgomery County Animal Control, proposals for installing an eye wash station, and proposals for installing fencing. The entire cost of the all three proposals will be reimbursed by the DCEO Energy Transition Grant. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Daniels to award the low proposal of \$29,985.67 for building construction and renovations to Weiss Construction & Roofing. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to award the low proposal of \$3,500 for eyewash station installation to Weiss Construction & Roofing. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to award the low proposal of \$15,000 for chain-link fence installation to Weiss Construction & Roofing. All in favor, motion carried.**
4. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported about notification from the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) dated Jan. 15, 2026 stating the county's application for the third round of the Energy Transition Community Grant Program had been approved. The letter anticipates the next stage of the grant process will take 8-12 weeks.
5. **Wind, Solar, and Battery Ordinances Update/Approval:** Ruppert reviewed proposed changes in the solar ordinance required by the Energy Omnibus bill signed by the Governor on Jan. 8, 2026. He said proposed changes include a lower maximum fee cap, a requirement to conclude the public hearing within 60 days, an increase in the timeframe to start the project from one year to five years, and a change in vegetative buffer requirements. Ruppert said he will ask the County Board to consider action on the amended solar ordinance, along with an amended wind ordinance, at the March meeting.
6. **County Starting Salary Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Bushue HR continues to review job study information to make recommendations.
7. **City-Wide Clean-Up for 2026 Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed the applications for City-Wide Clean-Up grants for 2026. Municipalities and townships are eligible for reimbursement up to \$750 per year in landfill/dumpster fees for hosting clean-up days from funds generated by the Trustee Delinquent Sale. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Hughes to continue the City-Wide Clean-Up grant program in 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**
8. **Report from Nextlink Update/Approval:** Ruppert reviewed a written update from Nextlink and 13 towers, which are presently in place in Montgomery County with three more ready for deployment this calendar year. He said with those towers, Nextlink is currently covering 71% of their obligated locations with gig speeds. The company is still looking for a suitable tower site near Walshville, has job openings for two tower climbers, and will add more install techs as the customer base grows.

- 9. Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau Resolution 2026-02 Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed a resolution in support of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Whitworth to approve Resolution 2026-02 in support of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau. All in favor, motion carried. (For a copy, see Resolution Book 23, page 152).**

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

- 1. County Farm Lease Bid Opening Update/Approval:** Hughes reported the committee unsealed and reviewed two bids for the County Farm Lease. The starting bids were \$403 an acre and \$405 an acre. Both raised their bids five times, with the ending bid being awarded to Allen & Arlen Kasten for \$450 an acre. **Motion by Hughes and second by Murzynski to accept the bid from Arlen & Allen Kasten to lease the County Farm for three years at an amount of \$450 per acre. All in favor, motion carried.**
- 2. Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes said Otis Elevators arrived to conduct inspections on the elevators of the Courthouse Complex, and the Maintenance Department completed 44 work orders during the past month.
- 3. 127 N. Main Street Property Update/Approval:** Hughes said negotiations on the potential purchase of 127 North Main Street Property in Hillsboro are an ongoing process. **Motion by Young and second by Murzynski to enter closed session at 6:04 p.m. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ruppert and second by Daniels to re-enter open session at 6:28 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.**
- 4. DCEO County Board Room Grant Update/Approval:** Hughes noted Double E Upholstery delivered the custom cushions for the bench style seating in the County Board Room on Jan. 27, 2026. He said the County Board has committed \$4,096.33 of the \$10,000 DCEO grant to those seat cushions, leaving \$5,903.67 available. The committee reviewed two proposals from Cinric Painting, one for \$10,750 to re-stain and refinish the historic woodwork, handrails, judge's bench and decorative moldings in the County Board Room, and the other for \$7,600 to paint them. The committee expressed interest in staining rather than painting. Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins reported Resident Circuit Judge Kit Hantla pledged \$3,000 to the project, and interest from the grant fund is also available. **Motion by Hughes and second by Beason to accept Cinric Painting's bid to refinish the historic woodwork, handrails, judge's bench and decorative moldings in the County Board Room, minus the railing in front of the public seating. All in favor, motion carried.**

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

- 1. Nokomis Rd. (CH 7) Extension/Improvement Project Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Murzynski reported the committee agreed the Nokomis Road Extension could qualify for Congresswomen Mary Miller's Community Project Funding, but since that time Engineer Cody Greenwood said the Walshville Bypass may be a better option for application since it will be shovel-ready by FY2027. He said they plan to reach out to Congresswoman Miller's office for further grant information.

2. **Resolution 2026-03, Equipment Purchase with borrowed Coal Funds Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported on Resolution 2026-03, which proposes to purchase a 2027 Western Star 47X tandem dump truck with snow plow and tailgate spreader for an amount not to exceed \$300,000 by borrowing the funds from Coal Fund 375, to be paid backed by the Highway Department. The resolution was forwarded to the Finance & Budget Committee for their consideration.
3. **Resolution 2026-04 appropriating funds for 50/50 culvert replacement on Schoolhouse Ave., Fillmore Consolidated Township Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Murzynski said the committee reviewed the resolution and map for a 50/50 culvert replacement on Schoolhouse Avenue in Fillmore Consolidated Township. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$24,000 with Montgomery County responsible for half the cost and Fillmore Consolidated Road District responsible for the other half. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Young to approve Resolution 2026-04 to appropriate funds from the County Aid to Bridge Fund to pay one-half of an estimated \$24,000 project to replace a culvert on Schoolhouse Avenue in Fillmore Consolidated Township. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 157-158).**
4. **Heavy Equipment Shed Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the county is still withholding ten percent of the contract on the new heavy equipment shed until a variety of items can be fixed. Additionally, several interior walls have had steel paneling installed, with the interior expected to be completed by the end of next week. He said the building has started to be utilized, with tandem trucks parked inside.

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

1. **SOA Office Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated the committee reviewed the report, including the Senior Homestead Exemption threshold increase.
2. **Property Evaluation & Tax Advisors Update/Approval:** Ritchie introduced Stan Jenkins from PETA, who gifted the county with a small flag for the Conference Room, and reported the Supervisor of Assessments office has made considerable progress during his firm's six-month contract which has recently expired. He said six months ago SOA employee Michaela Gray was alone and overwhelmed in the office, but she persevered and kept the office operating and is owed a debt of gratitude for her loyalty and dedication to county service. He also said SOA Tysha Mullen has now staffed the office, completed classes, passed tests, and learned the duties of the office at a very fast rate. He said although the PETA contract has expired, he and his partner Gary Twist will remain available for calls. **(For copy of Jenkins' comments, see Resolution Book 23, pages 159-160).**
3. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated the committee reviewed the reports and Committee Chair Ritchie noted a December royalty payment of \$145,099.44, bringing the Coal Fund total to over \$10.8 million.
4. **Special Service Area Ambulance Contracts Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee reviewed signed Special Service Area Ambulance District contracts from Farmersville-Waggoner, Nokomis-Witt, and Hillsboro. He said the contract for Raymond-Harvel Special Service Area Ambulance District has yet to arrive. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve the contract with Farmersville-Waggoner**

Area Ambulance Service for FY2026. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Young to approve the contract with Nokomis-Witt Area Ambulance Service for FY2026. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to approve the contract with Hillsboro Area Ambulance Service for FY2026. All in favor, motion carried. (For copies, see Resolution Book 23, pages 161-169).

5. **Solar Income Tax Filing Contract Update/Approval:** Ritchie said Treasurer Lohman requested a contract from Tri-Merit Special Tax Professionals, as recommended by the county auditor, for specialty tax services related to the Renewable Energy Tax Credit from solar projects at the Highway Department, Health Department, and Senior Center. The fixed fee for the contracts is \$7,500 and Tri-Merit estimates a total credit range for the three projects of \$135,000 to \$150,000. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Beck to approve the Tri-Merit Specialty Tax Professionals contract for \$7,500 to perform tax services related to the Renewable Energy Tax Credit. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Fund 375 Purchases Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed six requests for payments from Coal Fund 375. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Hughes to approve a \$17,900 Cinric Painting expense for front porch work at the Historic Courthouse to be paid from Coal Fund 375. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Whitworth to approve a \$4,295 Heart Technologies voucher for phone system upgrades to be paid from Coal Fund 375. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Ruppert to approve an \$11,714 Victory Lane Carlinville voucher for a used MCSO Tahoe to be paid from Coal Fund 375. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Young to approve the final \$14,583 Property Evaluation & Tax Advisors voucher to be paid from Coal Fund 375. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve Resolution 2026-XX for a \$300,000 loan for a 2027 Western Star 47X Tandem Dump Truck with snow plow and tailgate spreader to be paid from Coal Fund 375 and repaid from Fund 225 by Jan. 1, 2027. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth. Voting no: Beck, Young. **12 members voted yes, 2 members voted no, motion carried.****
7. **Elected Official Salary Resolution and Ordinance Approval:** Ritchie stated in preparation for setting salaries for Elected Officials ahead of the November 2026 election, the committee reviewed data compiled by Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins and a potential resolution drafted by County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser which would tie salaries to either a percentage of the State's Attorney's or the Sheriff's. The County Board also reviewed percentage data provided by Chairman Donaldson. Ritchie said the committee ultimately recommended setting the three elected officials salaries at 60% of the State's Attorney salary. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve the resolution setting salaries for the Treasurer and County Clerk at 60% of the annual salary of the State's Attorney as set by the State of Illinois, beginning on Dec. 1, 2026.** Young said he believed the suggested raises of almost \$25,000 were too much, and Bergen agreed. Donaldson said the raises would apply to three elected officials at this time, but this same raise could also apply to the Supervisor of Assessments if the public votes to make the Supervisor of Assessments an elected office and not an appointed

office. He recommended the topic be returned to the Finance Committee for further consideration.

Murzynski said while he believed Elected Officials deserved raises; he was concerned about the public perception. Corso expressed interest in raises which were more incremental. Ritchie said Elected Officials are professionals and the raises are long overdue. Whitworth noted employees have been getting larger raises than Elected Officials, and they are underpaid when compared to the responsibility of their positions. Daniels added for their past four-year term, Elected Officials have received raises of \$2,200 per year after a prior four-year term in which they received raises of \$520 per year. Young said he would be okay with setting the salaries at 49-50% of the State's Attorney. Hughes suggested a compromise of 54%. Bergen said he believed this percentage was still too high. **Amended Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve the Resolution 2026-03 setting salaries for the Treasurer and County Clerk at 54% of the annual salary of the State's Attorney as set by the State of Illinois, beginning on Dec. 1, 2026. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beck, Corso, Daniels, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Whitworth. Voting no: Beason, Bergen, Donaldson, Hancock, Ruppert, Young. 8 members voted yes, 6 members voted no, motion carried. (For copy of Resolution, see Resolution Book 23, pages 171-172). Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve Ordinance 2026-04 setting the salary for the Circuit Clerk at 54% the annual salary of the State's Attorney as set by the State of Illinois, beginning on Dec. 1, 2026. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth. Voting no: Bergen, Donaldson, Hancock, Young. 10 members voted yes, 4 members voted no, motion carried. (For copy of Ordinance, see Resolution Book 23, page 173).**

- 8. Travel Voucher Update/Approval: Ritchie said the committee reviewed an overnight travel voucher exceeding the GSA rate by \$49.78, thus requiring a roll call vote. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to recommend approval of a travel voucher for Cassandra L. Hampton for \$358.69. ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. All in favor, motion carried.****

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES: Motion by Hughes and second by Hancock to approve the committee reports and minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SCHEDULE CHANGES:

1. The monthly Department Head meeting with Bushue HR is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026, at 1 p.m. in the Conference Room, 2nd floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.
2. Chairman Donaldson thanked the Montgomery County Fair Board for treats.

APPOINTMENTS: None

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

ADJOURN:

The next regular full board meeting will be on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.