

Montgomery County Board Minutes **For Tuesday, March 11th, 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, March 11th, 2025. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 PM.

Roll call was taken – 12 members present, 2 members absent.

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

Members Absent: Bill Bergen, Evan Young

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by board member Rob Corso.

Mileage and Per Diem Approval: Claims for mileage and per diem were read by County Clerk Leitheiser. **Motion by Jones 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, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth. **All in favor, motion carried.**

Approval of Minutes of Previous County Board Meeting: **Motion by Hancock and second by Daniels to approve the minutes of the previous regular county board meeting held on Tuesday, February 11th, 2025. All in favor, motion carried.**

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. **Animal Control Report** – Chad Ruppert 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 receiving an application.
6. **EMA & EPA Reports** – Dan Hough was present for questions and reported training and a visit from the state EMA director's office.
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** – Kendra Niehaus was present for questions.
15. **State's Attorney Report** – Andrew Affrunti 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 Hughes and second by Beason 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 the previous evening and elected Dan Hough as Chairman. He stated they also had updates from several grantees.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** — Bergen was not present.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth reported the board is scheduled to meet April 15.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Hughes reported meeting with Rivers & Routes officials last month.
- **Planning Commission** — Ritchie had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported working on a list of senior events and stated budget letters will go out next month.
- **UCCI** — Corso reported a Feb. 24 meeting and a scheduled legislative meeting on March 19.
- **U of I** — Ruppert reported a new employee in Macoupin County and provided a schedule of seminars.
- **WCDC** — Jones reported meeting goals, but stated they are making budget adjustments in anticipation of potential cuts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Karyl Dressen thanked the County Board members who attended the previous IDNR informal conference on Feb. 27 now rescheduled for 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 19 due to the absence of a verbatim court reporter. The informal conference is regarding a pending permit revision to raise the Deer Run Mine's slurry wall from 65 feet to 100 feet. She questioned if the informal conference could still be held in the Historic Courthouse if the elevator is out of service, and Chairman Donaldson said County Coordinator Plunkett will check.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins has secured \$132,925.51 from a court grant to be used to improve security cameras, monitors, PCs, and server cooling systems. He also reported county board room tech work is complete pending final adjustments; he is working on video camera and server upgrades, and is continuing multi-factor token installation with county employees.
2. **EMA Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said EMA Director Dan Hough reported he was told by Deer Run mine officials no fly ash was entering from off site.
3. **Ad Hoc Committee to Address SB3455 Wooded Acreage Assessments Update/Approval:** The first meeting was on Feb. 19. Public member Ron Deedrick cannot be a committee member because of his lobbyist job description. Donaldson said Vince Reincke has agreed to fill this position. Ad Hoc Committee Chairman Russ Beason reported the committee is working on two goals: a list of best practices for property owners with wooded acreage and recommendations for the state's review of legislation due in July 2026.

4. **Resolution in Support of National Ag Day March 18 Update/Approval:** Donaldson read a resolution in support of Montgomery County Agriculture in honor of National Ag Day on March 18 and thanked the Montgomery County Farm Bureau for gift bags presented to board members. Farm Bureau Manager Katie Wilson thanked the board for their support and introduced two directors present, Tom Anderson and Dennis Hand. **Motion by Whitworth and second by Ruppert to approve the Resolution in Support of Montgomery County Agriculture in honor of National Ag Day on March 18. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, page 132).**

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

1. **Small Biz Grant Application Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated the committee reviewed applications and heard presentations from Kevin Kirby of Kirby Painting, Caleb Reynolds of War Turtle Meadery, Dylan Richter of The Sweet Spot, Scott Merano of Sam's Services, Becky Stolte and Ryan Follis of Curbside Cravings, and Luleta Rushiti of The Old Y Diner, and reviewed the application of Steve's Repair. Ruppert described each application along with one from Steve's Repair in Coffeen. He said these awards will deplete the DCEO grant funds for Small Biz grants, and he said committee members expressed interest in renewing the program with future grants. Jones encouraged the county to apply for another round of funding and encouraged those awarded this month to reapply since the amount of funds available for this last group of businesses was less than prior groups. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to award Small Biz Grants of \$2,500 to Kirby Painting in Hillsboro; \$1,000 to War Turtle Meadery of Hillsboro; \$1,000 to The Sweet Spot in Hillsboro; \$1,000 to Steve's Repair in Coffeen; \$1,000 to Sam's Services in Hillsboro; \$3,500 to Curbside Cravings in Nokomis; and \$11,594.55 to The Old Y Diner in Taylor Springs. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Nextlink Update/Approval:** The county board viewed a presentation from Karson Ortiz and Craig Hall of Nextlink showing a map of 10 active Nextlink towers and seven pending towers Hall anticipates will be active by the end of 2025. MCEDC Executive Director Bill Montgomery participated in the discussion, pointing out the rural ag community depends on the availability of fast, reliable internet. He also questioned the location of a tower at Central Park in Hillsboro since it is in one of the lowest areas of the city. In response to a question from board member Jones, Hall said Nextlink service will eventually be provided from their location in Morrisonville.
3. **Tourism Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed and approved the annual Tourism Grant Application. He stated completed applications must be submitted by March 28 and will be awarded in April and added applications are available on-line and in the County Board Administration office.
4. **City-Wide Clean-Up Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed three more applications. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to award \$750 City-Wide Clean-Up grants to the Village of Schram City, City of Litchfield, and Village of Taylor Springs. All in favor, motion carried.**
5. **Montgomery Springs Solar Update/Approval:** Ruppert reminded the board the public hearing for the project will begin at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 24 in the County Board Room.

6. **Employee Handbook Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee reviewed changes in the latest draft, which will remain under review until next month. Bushue HR will be on site at 1 p.m. Thursday, March 13 for the next meeting.
7. **Historic Courthouse Notary Update/Approval:** Ruppert noted the committee continued a discussion from last month about the possible need for notaries in the Historic Courthouse. Before next month, County Board Administration will check with each office on the number of documents requiring notary services.
8. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported the Animal Control Warden has been suspended pending the result of criminal charges. In the meantime, Ruppert stated the facility is operating as usual. He said the City of Litchfield is considering signing the county animal control contract, and he has discussed details with the City Administrator. He stated County Board member Jones and State's Attorney Affrunti will be attending the next Litchfield City Council meeting to answer questions.

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

1. **Maintenance and Cleaning Issues and Report Update/Approval:** Hughes reported the elevator in the Historic Courthouse has been out of service since the end of the day on Monday, March 3. Otis Elevator has diagnosed a power failure; the pertinent parts are on order.
2. **Tuck-pointing Update/Approval:** Hughes presented photos depicting the condition of the north wall of the VAC building basement where mortar up to two inches deep is gone, and a few areas on the Historic Courthouse where bricks were out and areas had been caulked but not tuck-pointed. The committee reviewed a proposal from RL Construction of Butler for \$12,400 total; \$7,550 for VAC work and \$4,850 for Historic Courthouse work. Funds are budgeted, and work will be completed within three weeks when weather allows. **Motion by Hughes and second by Murzynski to award the \$12,400 proposal from RL Construction of Butler for brick and tuck-point work at the VAC and Historic Courthouse. All in favor, motion carried.**
3. **Generator Waiting List Update/Approval:** Hughes said Maintenance Director Phil Ernst expressed concern the price of the Cat generator he applied for in the next DCEO grant will increase beyond the allotted grant amount. He requested permission from the committee to place the county on a no-obligation waiting list, much the same as the chiller process, and was given permission.
4. **Cinric VAC Wall Painting Proposal Update/Approval:** Hughes said because the proposed mural on the north wall of the VAC building is now off the table, the committee agreed the wall will not need to be painted.
5. **Old Highway Department Property Update/Approval:** Hughes reported Hillsboro School Superintendent David Powell and officials from the Hillsboro School District told the committee the district remains interested in the entire former Highway Department property on Seymour Avenue and University Street in Hillsboro for potential building trades house sites and a possible day care facility. Discussions will continue.
6. **New Hire for Cleaning Position Update/Approval:** Hughes reported he (along with Personnel & Development Committee Chairman Chad Ruppert and Maintenance Director Ernst) interviewed four candidates before the County Board meeting. He stated National Maintenance & Cleaning remains under contract for cleaning through March 14.

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

1. **UKA Virden Wind Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Murzynski anticipates the committee will review a draft road use agreement next month.
2. **Resolution 2025-1 appropriating funds for 100% county culvert replacement at multiple locations Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported the committee reviewed maps with the locations of 13 pipe culverts to be installed under county highways this year when weather permits. Two of the locations are in Bois D'Arc Township, three in Grisham, three in North Litchfield, three in Walshville, one in Witt, and one is in Zanesville. The total cost for all 13 is \$101,500 to be paid from the County Aid to Bridge Fund. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Whitworth to approve Resolution #2025-01 appropriating \$101,500 from County Aid to Bridge Fund 235 for 13 pipe culverts. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth. **All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 133-139).**
3. **Resolution 2025-2 appropriating funds for the payment of the County Engineer's Salary for 2025 Updated/Approval:** Murzynski said there is still no word from the state.
4. **Purchase of 2015 Stepp Manufacturing Model SPHD 3.0 Asphalt Dump Trailer Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee studied a video on the Stepp SPHD 3.0 hot box pothole patcher, a towable piece of equipment Engineer Cody Greenwood said he had anticipated budgeting \$60,000 next year to purchase new. He has discovered, however, a used 2015 model available in Indianapolis for \$29,000. His department has inspected the equipment and reports it is in "like new" condition. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Corso to purchase the 2015 Stepp Manufacturing Model SPHD 3.0 Asphalt Dump Trailer for \$29,000 from Joseph Sullivan of Indianapolis, IN. All in favor, motion carried.**

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

1. **SOA Report Update/Approval:** Ritchie noted according to the report filed by Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus, 907 senior homestead exemptions have been received and processed and 146 disabled person and disabled veteran exemptions have been received and processed. Ritchie added Montgomery County has earned a tentative multiplier of 1.0000% from the Illinois Department of Revenue, noting assessments are 33.09% of market value, up from 30.92% last year. He reported Niehaus is working with Information Services Director Curt Watkins on the possibility for township assessors to have direct access to the county's DevNet software from their location for data entry purposes.
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Ritchie noted a \$162,645.73 coal royalty payment in January.
Community Solar Proposals Update/Approval: Ritchie said the committee heard a proposal from Nathan McCarthy of Solar on Earth allowing the county to save 20% on county properties' electric bills through community solar credits. He said the Solar on Earth proposal would require a 10-year commitment but allow for an opt-out with 180

days' notice. He said McCarthy estimated the deal would save the county \$16,000 annually in electric charges. Ritchie stated a second proposal from Nexamp arrived on Monday, March 10 providing a 12% savings for a 15-year commitment and 14% for a 20-year commitment. Board members Hughes and Beck both said the county should consider installing its own solar array. Hughes added before committing, the State's Attorney needs to review any potential contracts. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Whitworth to accept the community solar credit proposal from Solar on Earth as presented. Motion withdrawn. Motion by Ritchie and second by Murzynski to table action until next month to allow the Finance & Budget Committee and State's Attorney to review any potential contracts. All in favor, motion carried.**

3. **ARPA Ordinance for ETSB Data Room Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee reviewed and discussed the ordinance for ARPA funds previously assigned. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to approve the ordinance to appropriate \$25,000 ARPA funds for ETSB Data Room upgrades. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, page 140).**
4. **County Travel Ordinance Update/Approval:** Ritchie reported the committee reviewed and discussed possible changes to the County Travel Ordinance as submitted by County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser. He said changes made include referencing the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) for maximum allowable reimbursement rates, referencing local transportation expenses, and defining to whom the ordinance applies. The committee discussed a request to add a pre-travel approval process, and ultimately decided to do so by referencing the applicable Illinois statute. Ritchie stated at the recommendation of Leitheiser, the committee will continue the discussion next month when the State's Attorney is available to participate.
5. **Resolution to Transfer Coal Rights Parcel 01-07-100-301 in Bois D'Arc Township Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and recommended the resolution from a trustee sale. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to approve the resolution to transfer Coal Rights Parcel 01-07-100-301 in Bois D'Arc Township to Keyrock Energy. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 141).**

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES:

Motion by Beck and second by Daniels to approve the five committee reports and minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS: County Board Chairman Donaldson noted the following:

1. The next meeting with Bushue HR is scheduled for 1 p.m. Thursday, March 13 in the County Board Room, 2nd floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.
2. IDNR has re-scheduled the Informal Conference for 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19 in the County Board Room, 2nd floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro regarding a significant revision application to permit No. 424 for the Hillsboro Energy Deer Run Mine. He said this location may have to be changed due to the building's elevator issue.
3. The Development & Personnel Committee has scheduled a public hearing for the proposed Montgomery Springs Solar project for 6 p.m. Monday, March 24, in the County

Board Room, 2nd floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro. He said this location may have to be changed due to the building's elevator issue.

4. IDNR has scheduled a Public Hearing for 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9, in the County Board Room, 2nd floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro regarding a significant revision application to permit No. 424 for the Hillsboro Energy Deer Run Mine. He said this location may have to be changed due to the building's elevator issue.
5. BLH has scheduled its 2025 Electronics Recycling Drives for Saturday, May 3 in Litchfield and Saturday, Sept. 13 in Hillsboro.

SCHEDULE CHANGES: None

APPOINTMENTS:

1. **Daniel Fenton to Shoal Creek Fire Protection District Update/Approval:** Motion by Murzynski and second by Whitworth to appoint Daniel Fenton as Trustee to the Shoal Creek Fire Protection District from May 1, 2023 through May 5, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.
2. **Donald Sturgeon Jr. to Shoal Creek Fire Protection District Update/Approval:** Motion by Hughes and second by Ritchie to appoint Donald Sturgeon Jr. as Trustee to the Shoal Creek Fire Protection District from May 1, 2024 through May 3, 2027. All in favor, motion carried.

PAY BILLS AND PAYROLL:

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

ADJOURN:

The next regular full board meeting will be on Tuesday, April 8th at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, 2nd floor, Historic Courthouse, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Hughes and second by Ritchie to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.