

Montgomery County Board Minutes
For Tuesday, May 12, 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, May 12, 2026. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 p.m.

Roll call was taken – 13 members present, 0 members absent. (One member vacancy exists in County Board District 7)

Members Present: Russell Beason, Connie Beck, Rob Corso, Chris Daniels, Doug Donaldson, Cody Gudgel (appointed at 5:32 p.m.) Keith Hancock, Mark Hughes, Jeremy Jones, Ethan Murzynski, Chad Ruppert, Patty Whitworth, Evan Young

Members Absent: None

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by County Board member Chris Daniels.

Appointment of County Board members:

1. **Declare County Board District 5 Vacancy Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to declare a vacancy in County Board District 5. All in favor, motion carried.
2. **Appointment to County Board District 5 Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Jones to appoint Cody Gudgel to fill the vacancy in County Board District 5. All in favor, motion carried. County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser administered Official Oath to newly appointed County Board Member Gudgel.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Gudgel, 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 Hughes to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, April 14, 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 present for questions.
4. **County Clerk and Recorder’s Report** – Sandy Leitheiser presented and described a new flyer providing education about how to read Montgomery County property tax bills.
5. **Enterprise Zone Report** – Mike Plunkett was present for questions.
6. **EMA & EPA Reports** – Dan Hough was present for questions.
7. **Health Department Report** – Hugh Satterlee was not present.
8. **Highway Department Report** – Cody Greenwood was present for questions.
9. **Maintenance Superintendent Report** – Phil Ernst was present for questions.
10. **Probation Office Report** – Banee Ulrici was present for questions.
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 presented a sample copy of the new property tax bill to be mailed later this month.

17. **VAC Report** – Cassandra Hampton was not present.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA: Motion by Young and second by Hancock to approve the items on the Consent Agenda. All in favor, motion carried.

LIAISON REPORTS:

- **CEFS Board** -- Beason reported as of July 1, Effingham County will become the grant agent for Central Illinois Public Transit (CIPT).
- **708 Board** – Murzynski reported hearing updates from school districts at the May 11, 2026, meeting.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** – none.
- **Health Department** -- Whitworth pointed out the annual report on members’ desks.
- **IL Association of County Officials** -- Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** -- Daniels highlighted Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath’s report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** -- Daniels reported flooring and security cameras are installed.
- **UCCI** – Corso had nothing to report.
- **U of I** – Ruppert had nothing to report.
- **WCDC** – Jones had nothing to report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

1. **Ethan Marley, Katelyn Marley, and Fallon Knodle of the Montgomery County 4-H Youth Leadership Team** thanked board members for funding 4-H through the Extension tax levy and highlighted the past year’s activities. Team members described life-long lessons learned through 4-H activities, community service, and skills leading to career opportunities. In closing, team members along with advisor Cheralee Vohlken presented treat bags to each board member.
2. **Linda Liebscher** had questions regarding Opioid Settlement Funds under authority of the State’s Attorney. She said she sent a FOIA request on March 27, 2026, regarding the amount awarded to Montgomery County and how it has been spent, but the request has gone unanswered. She asked the board to help her obtain the information.
3. **Jason Goby** said after meeting with Pattern Energy Representative Diogo Botelho on April 14, 2026, after last month’s County Board meeting, he calculated Pattern would pay \$6-\$7 million in property taxes the first year. He said he believes the county deserves a full 25-year projection of anticipated property tax revenue for every taxing body.
4. **Dan Mulch** thanked the County Board for hosting Pattern Energy last month, but said their repeated promise of transparency has been “laughable,” noting only two new leases have been recorded since February, 2026. After reading an internet post from Wisconsin, he said his group is working on its own public map and reminded the board that land owners who have not signed leases have rights.
5. **Heath Houck** said his centennial family farm is on the proposed transmission line part of the Pattern Energy project, and information from his neighbors contradicts information he has been provided by the company. He said he would like to educate himself about the project, but it is difficult when the company won’t respond to requests for information.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Chairman Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported his department has been working on updating door access in the Court Complex and will finish PC installs this week. He will soon have a date for switching to the new phone system; he has been involved in planning for use of the building at 127 N. Main, and he stated the move into the new building at the Cress Hill tower will begin the week of May 11, 2026. He said he also intends to have a department manpower request ready for budget hearings.
2. **EMA/EPA Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported EMA/EPA/911 Director Hough distributed an action report from the March 30, 2026 tabletop exercise. Donaldson said Hough has been busy responding to weather events this spring. Hough told members he met with the National Weather Service recently, and they are very receptive to the county's proposed tower site for a weather radio transmitter. Hough said the State's Attorney will review the agreement when it is ready.
3. **HELP Safety Committee Update/Approval:** Chairman Donaldson said the committee recommended the approval of two policies. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beck to approve the Montgomery County Slip/Trip/Fall Prevention Policy. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 272-276). Motion by Donaldson and second by Ruppert to approve the Montgomery County Safe Lifting Policy. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 277-280).**
4. **Committee Assignments Update/Approval:** Chairman Donaldson referred to a list of new committee assignments he was recommending. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beason to approve the Montgomery County Board Committee and Liaison assignments as presented. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Donaldson, Hancock, Murzynski, Ruppert, Young. Voting no: Beck, Corso, Daniels, Gudgel, Hughes, Jones, Whitworth. **Motion failed 6-7.** Donaldson informed members all committee assignments will remain the same for next month.

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

1. **MCEDC Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath had reviewed her monthly report for the committee, which included attending 24 meetings and working on all 11 priorities. She also noted the community calendar is now live on the MCEDC website and added she has been working on encouraging more AT&T cell towers throughout the county.
2. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported the number of dogs at Animal Control is down to 11. He stated the recent Kitten Yoga event went well; a Puppies and Pints event is on the schedule; and the front porch of the building has been framed.
3. **Surplus Ram 1500 Bid Opening Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee opened three sealed bids for the surplus Animal Control 2008 Ram 1500 ranging from \$927 to \$1,515.05 and voted to sell the vehicle for \$1,515.05.

4. **Health Insurance Renewal Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Tony Johnston of Assured Partners Gallagher told the committee because of skyrocketing insurance costs, renewals have called for between 18% and 28% increases. He said with Montgomery County's loss ratio currently running at 127% (although it's trending down), the board could anticipate a renewal quote with an increase of 30-40%. Ruppert said renewal numbers should be available in early September, and the board should anticipate making a final decision at the October meeting.
5. **MCSO Additional CO Request Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Sheriff Tyson Holshouser requested another full-time jailer and moving a part-time jailer to full-time, citing state inspection failures for staffing only one jailer on the midnight shift. Holshouser also requested adding an administrative assistant, citing extensive FOIA requests and the need for secretarial back-up. The committee discussed options for 708 and 911 helping with costs and deferred to the Finance & Budget Committee as to whether any of the requested staff can be added in FY2027.
6. **Route 66 Pilot Corridor Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported John Warga of Mt. Olive presented packets to committee members requesting the County Board authorize a feasibility study to determine if 9.35 miles of Historic Route 66 between Litchfield and Mt. Olive could be repurposed as a recreational trail. He stated the abandoned right-of-way is the property of the State of Illinois, and the committee suggested Warga first seek state input.
7. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert noted the committee reviewed follow-up letters sent to seven Small Biz Grant recipients who have yet to open. The county is awaiting the finalization of state paperwork that would allow future Small Biz Grant awards.
8. **Code of Conduct for Land Agents Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported the committee reviewed a draft Resolution Establishing a County-Wide Code of Conduct for Land Agents and Energy Project Representatives. He said the resolution references the in-force criminal code regarding trespassing, sets out a code of conduct similar to the one posted on Pattern's website, a no-contact list requirement, mandatory registration, and enforcement. Ruppert read the resolution in its entirety, adding explanations for each requirement. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Young to approve the Resolution Establishing a County-Wide Code of Conduct for Land Agents and Energy Project Representatives. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 23, pages 281-282).**
9. **The Shoals Wind Project Update/Approval:** Ruppert displayed a map he was provided by an outside source depicting parcels in which lease agreements with Pattern have been signed. The map also displayed tower locations submitted to the FAA which the company had previously described as "random." Ruppert said he was displaying the map to clear up misrepresentations about who has and has not signed lease agreements. He also noted President Trump's plan to halt all wind projects due to national security concerns regarding potential radio interference. He stated the committee also discussed the 1.5 mile municipal Extra Territorial Jurisdiction that can be exercised by communities with zoning ordinances.

10. **Elm Lawn Solar Farm Public Hearing Reminder Update/Approval:** Ruppert reminded the board the public hearing for the proposed Elm Lawn Solar Farm is set for Wednesday, May 27, 2026 at 6:00 PM in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.
11. **UKA Wind Project Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported he received information recently stating UKA is no longer pursuing any wind projects in Montgomery County.

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

1. **Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes noted 101 items on the monthly maintenance report, including problems with both riding mowers and an issue with the Historic Courthouse boiler that filled the basement with smoke on Saturday, May 2, 2026. Hughes stated the boiler has since been shut down and is scheduled to be replaced by using this year's DCEO Energy Transition Grant funds.
2. **EMA Building Bid Opening Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee opened five sealed bids for the first phase of work on the EMA building at the Highway Department. After review, the low bidder appeared to meet the bid requirements. He stated the grant reimbursement amount will be \$144,749, and the difference can be paid through the EMA budget. **Motion by Hughes and second by Jones to award the low bid of \$150,187.19 to Thomas Hapner Construction of Hillsboro for the first phase of work on the EMA building. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Gudgel, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. **All in favor, motion carried.**
3. **127 N. Main Update/Approval:** Hughes said Maintenance Director Ernst reported contacting an engineer who said the building meets ADA compliance as-is due to its grandfather status. He also described completed work at the building and quotes totaling \$27,743.73 primarily for electric, lighting, sewer, and HVAC work. Later in the meeting, the committee discussed a budget of up to \$100,000 from Coal Fund 375 for repairs and upgrades to the building.

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

1. **County 2026 MFT Oil Letting Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee opened and reviewed the bids for 2026 County MFT oil letting. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Whitworth to award the low County MFT bids as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Township 2026 MFT Oil Letting Update/Approval:** Murzynski stated the committee opened and reviewed the bids for 2026 Township MFT oil letting. **Motion by Whitworth and second by Corso to award the low bids as presented. All in favor, motion carried (Daniels and Murzynski abstained).**
3. **Plains Solar Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported the RUA was not yet ready, and Ruppert expressed concern that the entrance point proposed in the document may pose a safety concern. Murzynski reported the committee agreed to take no action on the road use agreement until next month so discussion can continue on potential ways to increase visibility at the entrance point from the county road.

4. **New Western Star Plow Truck Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the first of two 2027 Western Star 47X Tandem Dump Trucks with snow plows and tailgate spreaders has arrived in Troy. Engineer Greenwood has already inspected and approved the new truck, which will be sent off to have the snow plow and tailgate spreader attached. The second 2027 Western Star Truck should arrive this summer with both ready for road use by the fall of 2026.
5. **Guardrail Damage from Uninsured Motorist Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported an uninsured motorist damaged a guardrail in Walshville Township. State's Attorney Shaw added a ticket is pending in court and his office is asking for restitution.
6. **Resolution 2026-06 appropriating funds for 50/50 culvert replacement on N. 23rd Ave., Raymond/Rountree Township Update/Approval:** Murzynski reviewed the resolution for a 50/50 culvert replacement on North 23rd Ave. in both Raymond and Rountree Townships. Since the culvert lies on the border between Raymond and Rountree Townships, the townships have agreed to split their half of the culvert replacement. The cost of the project is estimated at \$16,000 with Montgomery County responsible for half the cost. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Hancock to approve Resolution 2026-06 to appropriate funds from the County Aid to Bridge Fund to pay one-half of an estimated \$16,000 project to replace the Culvert on North 23rd Ave in Raymond and Rountree Townships. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy of Resolution, see Resolution Book 23, pages 283-284).**
7. **Resolution 2026-07 appropriating funds for 50/50 culvert replacement on E. 17th Rd., Irving Township Update/Approval:** Murzynski said he is not asking for County Board approval of the resolution at this time because Engineer Greenwood is researching costs for a box culvert instead of the previously proposed double-pipe culvert.
8. **Secretary/Payroll Clerk Resignation Update/Approval:** Murzynski stated due to the recent departure of the front lobby secretary at the Highway Department, the search has begun for a replacement. He said the job notice will continue to be posted until the job is filled.

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

1. **SOA Office Update/Approval:** Beck said SOA Tysha Mullen reported her office has completed their assessment portion of the property tax cycle and sent the data to the County Clerk. County Clerk Leitheiser added her office has now completed their office's tax extension portion of the property cycle and sent the data to the Treasurer, thanks in large part to the diligent work of Chief Deputy Tricia Maulding.
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Beck noted a March royalty payment of \$177,964.86, bringing the Coal Fund balance to \$10.989 million.
3. **MCEDC Update/Approval:** Beck reported both the Finance & Budget Committee and the Development & Personnel Committee will continue to research the possibility of increasing the county's annual \$15,000 contribution to the corporation heading into the county's FY2027 budget cycle.
4. **Frerichs ICash Update/Approval:** Beck was happy to note that Treasurer Lohman has filed claim forms requesting nearly \$6,000 owed to Montgomery County in response to a recent letter from Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs' Unclaimed Property division.

5. **Fund 375 Purchases Update/Approval:** Beck reported the committee reviewed monthly requests from Coal Fund 375 and considered a recommendation by the Buildings & Grounds Committee to set a budget not to exceed \$100,000 from Coal Fund 375 for repairs and improvements at 127 N. Main Street. **Motion by Beck and second by Hughes to approve Coal Fund 375 expenditures of \$6,300 to Reid Baugher Century 21 Realty; \$450 to Lipe Architecture; \$273.47 to Ace Hardware; \$2,060 to Dan Heise Plumbing; \$11.97 to Ace Hardware; \$93.75 to Mac's Fire & Safety; \$91.92 to Johnston Fire & Safety; \$21,312.05 to GTSI; \$1,672.92 to Motorola; \$594.97 to Paragon Micro; and \$7,400 to replace the transmission in the Sheriff's vehicle. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Beck and second by Corso to approve a Coal Fund 375 budget not to exceed \$100,000 for repairs and improvements to 127 N. Main Street. **ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Gudgel, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Energy Contract Update/Approval:** Beck reported after the County Board decided to not approve the new 36-month energy contract at the April meeting to allow Highway Department and Health Department accounts be removed due to their solar energy use. The committee reviewed a new 36-month contract without those accounts and signed by County Board Administration on April 17. **Motion by Beck and second by Murzynski to approve a 36-month contract with Direct Energy for electricity and natural gas. All in favor, motion carried.**
7. **FY2027 Wage Changes & Salary Adjustments Update/Approval:** Beck said the committee continued a discussion began last month to recommend FY2027 wage increases for county employees not covered by collective bargaining. Three union contracts currently in place require 5% wage increases in FY2027, and health insurance premiums are expected to increase substantially in FY2027, which may impact employee contributions. **Motion by Beck and second by Whitworth to budget 5% increases for non-union county employees for FY2027. 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: The Development & Personnel Committee will conduct a public hearing for Elm Lawn Solar on Wednesday, May 27, beginning at 6 p.m. in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.

APPOINTMENTS: Motion by Donaldson and second by Jones to reappoint Michael Broaddus as Trustee to the Raymond Community Fire Protection District for a three-year term from March 2026 to March 2029. All in favor, motion carried.

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

ADJOURN: The next regular full board meeting will be on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Murzynski and second by Ruppert to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.