

Montgomery County Board Minutes **For Tuesday, July 8, 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, July 8, 2025. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 PM.

Roll call: 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 Jeremy Jones.

Mileage and Per Diem Approval: Claims for mileage and per diem were read by County Clerk Leitheiser. **Motion by Hughes and second by Whitworth 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 Young and second by Corso to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, June 10, 2025. 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** – No report provided, and Randy Leetham was not present.
4. **County Clerk and Recorder's Report** – Sandy Leitheiser was present for questions.
5. **Enterprise Zone Report** – Mike Plunkett said he had updated packets and had two Enterprise Zone requests from Litchfield and one from Nokomis.
6. **EMA & EPA Reports** – Dan Hough said in light of deadly flooding events in Texas, he would like the County Board to consider supporting a mass notification system.
7. **Health Department Report** – Hugh Satterlee was present for questions.
8. **Highway Department Report** – Cody Greenwood was not present.
9. **Maintenance Superintendent Report** – Phil Ernst was not present.
10. **Probation Office Report** – Bane Ulrici said Recovery Court recently celebrated four graduations.
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 not present.
14. **SOA Report** – Kendra Niehaus was not present.
15. **State's Attorney Report** – Andrew Affrunti was present for questions.
16. **Treasurer's Report** – Nikki Lohman was not present.
17. **VAC Report** – Cassandra Hampton was not present.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA:

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

LIAISON REPORTS:

- **CEFS Board** — Beason reported the meeting has been moved to Thursday, July 10, 2025.
- **708 Board** — Murzynski said the board will meet on Monday, July 14, 2025.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** — Bergen said the committee will meet Thursday, July 17, 2025.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth reported the next meeting had been moved to Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Hughes reported the corporation has partnered with Rivers & Routes at a cost of \$15,000 and has set the annual meeting for Monday, Aug. 11, 2025.
- **Planning Commission** — Ritchie had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported working on DCEO grant-funded projects.
- **UCCI** — Corso said he plans to attend the annual conference in Galena.
- **U of I** — Ruppert had nothing to report.
- **WCDC** — Jones had nothing to report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson stated IS Director Curt Watkins reported to the committee his department is working on concluding court grant upgrades, annual PC upgrades, and server upgrades. He said county employees need to continue to be diligent and on guard for phishing emails. His department is beginning work to upgrade the phone system and switches, projects funded by the DCEO Energy Transition Grant.
2. **EMA Report Update/Approval:** EMA/EPA Director Dan Hough reported to the committee he has hired an assistant who will begin work the second week of July. He has ordered a new grant-funded drone which will be an asset to multiple departments, and he is working on other grant opportunities.
3. **West Central Development Council/Job Center Board/CEO Board Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, 2025.
4. **Ad Hoc Committee to Address SB3455 Wooded Acreage Assessments Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 6:00 pm.
5. **Rules Committee Meeting Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, 2025 at 1:00 PM.
6. **Supervisor of Assessments Resignation Update/Approval:** Donaldson said the County Board received a letter of resignation from Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus on June 10, 2025. Her last day of employment will be July 11, 2025, and her last day in the office was Friday, June 27, 2025. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to**

accept the letter of resignation from Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus effective Friday, July 11, 2025. All in favor, motion carried.

7. **Deer Run Mine Update:** Donaldson said County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser shared a letter with the committee from IDNR to Deer Run Mine dated June 17, 2025, asking for numerous modifications to their application for Revision No. 1 to Permit No. 424 to increase an impoundment facility height. The letter gave Deer Run Mine one year to complete the application modifications. The county has also learned Deer Run had withdrawn its request to accept Springfield City Water, Light & Power (CWLP) coal combustion waste.

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

1. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Animal Control Warden Papin responded to 25 calls in June, and the facility is currently housing 12 dogs and 19 cats. Most of the county costs related to adoptions are for required spay/neuter services, and Papin is working on a plan to reduce those costs. Ruppert reported the contractual services to Litchfield is going well, and the committee discussed the plan of action for enclosing the porch at the facility, which is an improvement funded by Phase II of the DCEO Energy Transition Grant.
2. **CF IL Solar (Farmersville) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert said Pivot Senior Developer Brittney Krebsbach was present at the committee meeting and reviewed a written presentation addressing seven issues raised at the May 22, 2025, public hearing including vegetative management research, community partnerships, drain tiles, cooperation with neighbors, local labor, glare potential, and sound mitigation. Due to feedback from the hearing, Krebsbach said the developer has moved inverters to the center of the project, is working on shifting the entire site away from Mine Avenue, and has added a vegetative buffer to the east side. The committee will work on siting approval conditions, share them with the developer, and present them for a recommendation vote at next month's meeting.
3. **RDC IL N24th Solar (Harvel) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert said relatively few issues were raised at the June 23, 2025, public hearing. The committee's consensus was to honor the property owner's request to waive the vegetative screening requirement in favor of a mowing agreement. The committee will work on standard siting approval conditions and then present them for a recommendation vote at next month's committee meeting.
4. **Bluestar & Horseshoe agreements with Hurst-Rosche Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated the committee reviewed standard agreements with Hurst-Rosche for independent review agreements. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Beason to approve the independent engineer review agreements with Hurst-Rosche for the Bluestar Solar projects for fees not to exceed \$3,500. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to approve the independent engineer review agreements with Hurst-Rosche for the Horseshoe Solar projects for fees not to exceed \$3,500. All in favor, motion carried. (For copies, see Resolution Book 22, pages 219-221).**

5. **Atticus & Finch Solar (Route 127) Public Hearing Date Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the public hearing was Monday, July 7, 2025, in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro. Ruppert noted the two community solar projects are side by side, and the committee intends to reach out to a neighbor.
6. **Montgomery IL Solar 1 (Route 16) Public Hearing Date Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the public hearing date is set for Monday, July 28, 2025, beginning at 6 p.m. in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.
7. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert stated projects in Phase I are about 85% complete. The grant agreement for Phase II has been executed and projects are underway, and the initial application for Phase III was submitted to DCEO on Friday, June 27, 2025.
8. **Montgomery First Local Labor Initiative Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee continued to discuss the proposed Montgomery First Local Labor Initiative and Responsible Bidder Ordinance allowing local businesses who request to do so to reduce their bids up to a maximum of 5% if necessary to meet the low bid. The committee had been debating the \$20,000 cap. Matt Blankenship of Local 1084 told the committee according to his research, local labor initiatives have been utilized with success around the state, but suggested raising the cap to \$50,000. Roads & Bridges Committee Chairman Murzynski raised questions as to whether the Montgomery First Local Labor Initiative could apply to MFT-funded IDOT projects, and Ruppert replied affirmatively. Ruppert said it will be optional for local bidders to participate by utilizing this ordinance, which is simply a tool to promote local labor. Vice Chairwoman Whitworth said she fully supports local labor, but has heard questions from constituents if the Local Labor Initiative would be a disincentive for out-of-county companies to bid on county projects. Board member Jones said the point of the Local Labor Initiative is to encourage local bids. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Bergen to approve the Responsible Bidder Ordinance 2025-12 with “Montgomery First” Local Business Adjustment to Bid Award. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 222-225).**
9. **Montgomery County Wind Ordinance Update/Approval:** Ruppert said because the Montgomery County Wind Ordinance had no provision for extending the one-year deadline for construction to begin after siting approval, the committee discussed adding language allowing for an extension of up to two years, along with a \$250 per MW application fee for requesting the extension. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Hughes to amend the Montgomery County Wind Ordinance as presented, effective July 8, 2025, upon passage. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 226-249).**
10. **Secession Resolution Update/Approval:** Committee member Jeremy Jones is requesting an advisory referendum be placed on the March 17, 2026 ballot.
11. **Employee Handbook Distribution Update/Approval:** Before the full board meeting, Committee Chair Ruppert hosted a meeting between Bushue HR and Montgomery County department heads to explain changes in the newly adopted Employee Handbook, including new Bushue forms and the Illinois Paid Leave Act. Chairman Donaldson commended the committee for its work in producing an excellent handbook.
12. **Supervisor of Assessments Position Update/Approval:** With two resignations in the Supervisor of Assessments office along with two previous vacancies, Ruppert noted only

one person remains working in the office. Advertisements to fill the vacancies appeared in print on Monday, June 30, 2025, and were also posted on the website *Indeed*. The committee discussed contacting retired staff for short-term help and contracting with another county. Chairman Donaldson obtained a list of individuals who have already passed the qualifying SOA exam from the Illinois Department of Revenue, and a letter was mailed to each of them on Thursday, July 3, 2025. Chairman Donaldson said those who are leaving county employment need to give two weeks' notice excluding time off. Board member Young asked if the Farmland Assessment Review Committee needs to meet before their August 1 deadline, and Farmland Assessment Review Committee Chair Richard Lyons, who was present in the audience, said they have already met.

13. **National Primers Update/Approval:** Ruppert noted the committee reviewed a press release from the City of Litchfield dated June 19, 2025, regarding the announcement of a new primer ammunition manufacturing facility to be located in Litchfield's I-55 Commerce Center. Phase I of the project will begin in 2025, be operational in 2028, and create 85 jobs. Phase II will be operational in 2032 and create 75 more jobs.

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

1. **Historical Marker Update/Approval:** Hughes shared a photo of the Illinois State Historical Society marker to be placed on the southeast corner of the Historic Courthouse lawn in Hillsboro. Jeff Dunn told the committee a dedication for the marker is planned for Friday and Saturday, Aug. 1-2.
2. **Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes said the maintenance department completed 51 work orders in June, and Maintenance Director Ernst reviewed his report with the committee. The committee will advertise for Courts Complex boiler bids to be opened at the August committee meeting and be reimbursed through the DCEO grant. More recently, Hughes said the Maintenance department has been dealing with AC issues as well as plumbing issues at the Montgomery County Jail.
3. **DCEO Phase II Projects Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee reviewed the six items requested by Maintenance Director Ernst and funded by Phase II of the DCEO grant. Additionally, he said Ernst will take the lead in the VAC and ROE entrance repair and the Courthouse Annex rest room access.
4. **Elevator Update/Approval:** Hughes stated the committee reviewed a letter written by the County Board Administration to Otis Elevator detailing the issues encountered during the 10-week Historic Courthouse elevator outage.
5. **Generator Pad Bids Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee reviewed three bids ranging from \$5,600 to \$8,400 for concrete pad improvements for the soon-to-arrive generator replacement at the Courts Complex, plus two bollards to protect it. The low bidder has agreed to include a third bollard at no extra cost. **Motion by Hughes and second by Beck to award the low bid of \$5,600 for 6x10 one-foot concrete pad plus three bollards to RL Construction of Butler. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Window Cleaning Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee reviewed a proposal to clean windows for \$2,205 at the Historic Courthouse and for \$2,750 at the Courts Complex, but took no action. Hughes said the need remains, so the committee may revisit the proposal.

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

1. **Bid Opening for Section 23-07108-00-BR Harvel Township N. 26th Avenue Bridge Replacement Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee opened sealed bids ranging from \$314,955.03 to \$344,888. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Corso to award the low bid of \$314,955.03 to Yamnitz & Associates of Fielden for Section 23-07108-00-BR Harvel Township North 26th Avenue Bridge Replacement. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. **All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Harvel Drainage District #2 Drain Tile Improvements Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Murzynski said county policy regarding crossing county roads requires a bore, and cuts will only be considered on a case-by-case basis subject to the situation and conditions. Harvel Drainage District #2 had asked for such consideration due to the substantial grade change required at Black Diamond Trail. Engineer Greenwood gave the district specific conditions, such as pipe specifications and saw cut and fill requirements, and shared plans with the committee indicating the conditions will be met. Murzynski stated Engineer Greenwood said he intends to approve the request. Harvel Drainage District #2 Commissioner Richard Lyons said in order to receive Rural Development financing terms, the \$2.3 million project must be completed by Dec. 31, 2025.
3. **Coffeen Road/Seven Sisters Avenue Intersection Project Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the first layer of asphalt was laid on July 1 and the second on July 2. Dirt work and striping should be completed the following week before the intersection is opened to traffic.

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

1. **Bruce Harris Proposal Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated Bruce Harris & Associates Illinois Account Manager Alex Simpson presented a proposal for the board to upgrade its public GIS website, noting Bruce Harris currently has 18 active websites and 5 more in development. Simpson demonstrated the product using the Vermillion County's website. The proposal included a cost not to exceed \$22,878.16 for building the new website, which would take about two months, and the monthly fee would be \$752, which is substantially less than the current Beacon contract. Simpson said work could begin when a contract is signed, and the county could negotiate payment terms. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to accept the proposal from Bruce Harris & Associates to build and maintain the Montgomery County public GIS website at a set-up cost not to exceed \$22,878.16 and a monthly maintenance cost of \$752. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **SOA Report Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the resignation of the Supervisor of Assessments and Chief Deputy leaves one person in the office, and she is doing a great job. Vacancies have been posted, and the Illinois Department of Revenue allows a temporary SOA for 60 days. He stated the committee reached out to retired SOA Ray Durston to fill that temporary role, but he declined. He said another option is to contract

with a neighboring county for those services. The committee also discussed a possible stipend for the lone employee in the Supervisor of Assessments office and is requesting authority from the County Board to proceed. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Hughes to award a special stipend to the remaining Montgomery County Supervisor of Assessments employee Michaela Gray. All in favor, motion carried.**

3. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** According to reports furnished by Treasurer Nikki Lohman, Ritchie noted the May coal royalty payment was \$98,165.83. Also in May, \$346,000 in coal interest was transferred to the General Fund per the County Board Resolution.
4. **FY2026 Budget Process Update/Approval:** Ritchie said Treasurer Lohman told the committee she has been working with Bellwether on the FY2026 budget process. She anticipates budget hearings to be held in August.
5. **COLA Salary Increase for State's Attorney Update/Approval:** Ritchie said Treasurer Lohman provided the committee with a Notice of Annual Salary Reimbursement Cost of Living Adjustment for State's Attorneys and Public Defenders setting a 6.1% COLA increase for state FY2026, which began on July 1, 2025. The notice set the State's Attorney's salary at \$169,865.81 and the Public Defender's salary at \$152,879.23. According to state statute, the Sheriff's salary is to be 80% of the State's Attorney's, or \$135,892.65. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Beck to set the State's Attorney salary at \$169,865.81, the Public Defender's salary at \$152,879.23, and the Sheriff's salary at \$135,892.65 beginning July 1, 2025. All in favor, motion carried. (For copies, see Resolution Book 22, pages 250-253).**
6. **County Office Drinking Water Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated per request from the Coordinating Committee, the Finance & Budget Committee was asked to reconsider the prohibition of office holders vouchering bottled water. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to allow Department Heads to voucher bottled water from Office Supplies budget line items. All in favor, motion carried.**
7. **Pre-Approved Vendor List Update/Approval:** Ritchie said as recommended by the Finance & Budget Committee last month, the County Board Administrator, the Treasurer, the County Clerk, and the State's Attorney met to develop a plan to revamp the Pre-Paid Vendor List and report vouchers paid from the list. Ultimately, Ritchie said the list will be re-named the Pre-Approved Payment List and State's Attorney Affrunti will include statutory citations for special funds granting authority for payments from them. Additionally, committees will be furnished with monthly reports of payments made from this list.
8. **Animal Control Imprest Fund Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee discussed the need to reinstate an imprest fund with a \$500 cap at Animal Control for the more efficient purchase of dog food. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Murzynski to reinstate the Animal Control Imprest Fund. All in favor, motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES:

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SCHEDULE CHANGES:

1. The next meeting of the Wooded Acreage Ad Hoc Committee will be on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois.
2. The Rules Ad Hoc Committee will meet on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 1:00 pm in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois.
3. The Public Hearing for Montgomery IL Solar 1, on Route 16 east of Litchfield, will be held on Monday, July 28, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois.
4. The next Mayors Meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 30, 2025, at 5:00 pm in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois.

APPOINTMENTS: None

PAY BILLS AND PAYROLL:

Motion by Bergen and second by Corso 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, August 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Murzynski and second by Ruppert to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.