

Montgomery County Board Minutes **For Tuesday, August 11, 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, August 11, 2026. The meeting was called to order by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson at 5:30 p.m.

Roll call was taken – 14 members present, 0 members absent.

Members Present: Russell Beason, Connie Beck, Rob Corso, Chris Daniels, Doug Donaldson, Cody Gudgel, Keith Hancock, Mark Hughes, Jeremy Jones, Ethan Murzynski, Chad Ruppert, Roy Schieferdecker, Patty Whitworth, Evan Young

Members Absent: None

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by board member Mark Hughes.

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

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

Approval of Minutes of Previous County Board Meeting: **Motion by Beason and second by Corso to approve the minutes of the previous regular County Board meeting held on Tuesday, July 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 not present.
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 for questions.
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 present for questions.
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 and noted he had hired Assistant State's Attorney Tim Tighe, a former Macon County Assistant State's Attorney.
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 Whitworth 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 had met Monday, Aug. 10, 2026, to review applications for funding.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **Health Department** — Whitworth reported the board will meet on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026 to review the budget.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** — Gudgel had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** — Daniels reported on recent activities at the Senior Center.
- **UCCI** — Corso reported he gathered information about Data Centers at the recent annual meeting in Galena.
- **U of I** — Ruppert reported on a meeting to discuss the budget and personnel.
- **WCDC** — Jones reported the next meeting is set for Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

- Citizen Bill Schroeder questioned the board why they would issue an invitation to site a nuclear facility in Montgomery County because our county already has an active longwall coal mine with coal waste impoundment issues, active and potential solar projects, potential wind farms, a potential CO2 pipeline and sequestration, and potential of data centers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported annex key fob work is nearly finished and phone system updates are waiting on work from the vendor. He has been maintaining back-up batteries, working on the FY2027 budget, and interviewing for a new position in the IS office.
2. **EMA/EPA Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said Director Dan Hough reported he has been working on the FY2027 budget and volunteers have been in the field working on the commodity flow study. Hough reported that National Weather Service engineers were not pleased with the condition of the Cress Hill Tower for which they estimated a cost of \$350,000 to \$400,000 to replace. The issue was placed on the Finance & Budget Committee agenda. Donaldson added the present tower was not new when the county purchased it, but it has served well.
3. **Review Closed Session Minutes Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Murzynski to recommend forever sealing Buildings & Grounds Committee Executive Session minutes from Jan. 6, 2026; Jan. 13, 2026; March 2, 2026; and May 5, 2026; and Full Board Executive Session minutes from Jan. 13, 2026; Feb. 10, 2026; March 10, 2026; and March 18, 2026. All in favor, motion carried (Young voted no).

4. **Planning Commission Appointments Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed previous Planning Commission voting members whose terms expired between 2021 and 2025. County Board Coordinator Plunkett has made contact to determine who is interested in a reappointment.
5. **Resolution 2026-08 in Support of Nuclear Power Generation Update/Approval:** Donaldson reported the county learned on Monday, July 27, 2026, of Illinois Commerce Commission Notice of Inquiry 26-NOI-02, which solicited input from communities interested in hosting nuclear power production. The deadline for submission was May 25, 2026, but County Board Coordinator Plunkett learned on Tuesday, July 28, 2026, that the Illinois Commerce Commission would accept a submission from Montgomery County by Friday, July 31, 2026. The Coordinating Committee reviewed the Montgomery County submission and requested it be submitted that day, on Thursday, July 30, 2026. Donaldson also listed other counties, communities, and entities responding to the NOI. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beason to approve Resolution 2026-08 “A Resolution in Support of the Responsible Siting, Development and Operation of Nuclear Energy Facilities in Montgomery County, Illinois.” All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 24 pages 28-29).**

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

1. **Small Biz Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee heard presentations from Roy Dunning of Aaron’s, salon developer Samantha McFarlin, Matt Palazzolo of Palazzolo’s Prime Provisions, Jeremy Walk of 413 Rental & Storage, Tammy Flowers of Fillmore General Store, Karen Hemken of Massage Therapy & Bodywork by Karen, Wayne and Tina Jansen of The Awning, and Danell Fogle of Briar Rose. The committee scored applications and recommended the following awards: \$7,500 to Aaron’s, Samantha McFarlin, Massage Therapy & Bodywork by Karen, The Awning, and Briar Rose; \$3,000 to Twisted Trail Winery, 413 Rental & Storage, and Rooted Salon; \$11,106.42 to Palazzolo’s Prime Provisions; and \$15,000 to Fillmore General Store. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Daniels to approve Small Biz Grants as recommended. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported eight dogs and 18 cats at the facility, and also described an upcoming event Sept. 12 in Nokomis and thanked Saturday volunteers.
3. **MCEDC Update/Approval:** Ruppert said MCEDC Executive Director Kaitlyn Fath reported to the committee and provided progress on her program of work, including new business consultations, the community calendar, and work on forming a Panhandle-area volunteer group.
4. **MCEDC FY2027 Budget Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee discussed the previous MCEDC request to increase county membership dues from \$15,000. The committee consensus was the county is getting value from its membership. After consultation with the County Board Coordinator, Ruppert suggested contracting with MCEDC for community grant assistance and using the \$30,000 in Phase II of the DCEO grant for FY2027.

5. **Green Diamond Oil & Chip Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported a problem has arisen since the County Board transferred ownership of the recreational trail to the Village of Waggoner with the promise to reimburse up to \$22,000 to oil and chip. Since the village has no funds to pay for the work prior to reimbursement, the committee has recommended rewording the agreement. Finance & Budget Committee Chairwoman Beck reported she spoke recently with a Louis Marsch Inc. representative and requested bills up to \$22,000 be sent directly to the county. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Gudgel to amend the intergovernmental agreement to recommend reimbursement for services performed for the Village of Waggoner up to \$22,000 from Fund 375 to maintain the Green Diamond Bike Trail. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Wind & Solar Ordinance Update/Approval:** Ruppert noted the committee received draft wind and solar ordinance copies amended by Attorney Andrew Keyt with changes requested by the committee last month and will review them before next month's meeting.
7. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Round 3 Grant Update/Approval:** County Board Coordinator Plunkett reported DCEO has requested resubmission of several application items that have been lost at their level. Plunkett said the Governor's Office is involved in the unfortunate issue.
8. **Union Negotiation Update/Approval:** Ruppert said he will begin discussions with Local 1084 before initial meetings are scheduled.
9. **Pattern Energy Update/Approval:** Ruppert described an email and response from Diogo Botelho of Pattern regarding recording leases and a do not call list: "The statement previously provided to the county in regards to the 'Do Not Call' designation is an accurate representation of our process of contacting local landowners. We see having a 'Do Not Call' designation in our database, versus having a 'list,' as an apples-to-apples comparison. The end result is the same – we respect the landowner's wishes, and it is visible to all land agents and employees working on the project. We are following all applicable laws in regard to filing lease memos." Chairman Donaldson said he has been contacted by those who have asked not to be contacted, including those in assisted living facilities, but who still receive visits from Pattern Energy representatives. State's Attorney Brian Shaw pointed out those who trespass on private property after being instructed not to can be criminally charged and a report should be given. Board member Jones questioned why Pattern stopped attending County Board meetings.
10. **Elm Lawn Solar Project Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported on an email from the Litchfield City Administrator that anticipates the city "waiving jurisdiction of review of the Elm Lawn Solar Project."

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

1. **Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes reported Maintenance Director Phil Ernst reviewed the 69 items on his report.
2. **Animal Control Roof Report Update/Approval:** **Motion by Hughes and second by Jones to award the low proposal of \$5,990 to Sulco Buildings of Hillsboro to replace washers, screws, and cupolas on the roof of the Animal Control Facility. All in favor, motion carried.**

3. **127 N. Main Update/Approval:** Hughes said the committee reviewed three proposals to construct a concrete ramp on the north side of the building at an estimated cost under \$20,000.
4. **Outsource Mowing Services for FY2027 Update/Approval:** Hughes reported due to frequent mower issues, the county has paid \$210 per week for mowing services at the Historic Courthouse, Court Complex, and Montgomery County Jail. In comparison, Maintenance estimates their time costs \$305 per week for mowing. The committee voted to budget \$6,000 in FY2027 to outsource downtown mowing services; Hughes anticipates more discussion.

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

1. **Route 185 Closure Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported Route 185 closure for repairs from mine subsidence began and will last for approximately six weeks and said traffic will be detoured on county highways during that time. He said the committee reviewed the Detour Agreement in place from Oct. 11, 2022, along with \$3 million bond, and stated road repair costs for any damages to county roads will be submitted to Hillsboro Energy after the Route 185 repair is complete, and any necessary work will be finalized next summer.
2. **New Tandem Plow Trucks Update/Approval:** Murzynski noted the new tandem plow trucks are currently at Koenig Body & Equipment in Peoria and expected to be finished around mid-September.
3. **Township Road Subsidence Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee discussed the condition of township roads East 14th Road and North 7th Avenue that need repairs due to mine subsidence.
4. **Route 16 Highway Condition Update/Approval:** Murzynski reported the committee discussed the poor condition of Illinois Route 16 between Hillsboro and Litchfield and between Irving and Ohlman. Engineer Cody Greenwood said he will contact the Illinois Department of Transportation.
5. **Louis Marsch Voucher Update/Approval:** Murzynski stated a voucher to Louis Marsh for \$144,932.70 needs to be roll-called at a full board because it exceeds the \$50,000 threshold. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Young to approve voucher for \$144,932.70 payable to Louis Marsch, Inc. of Morrisonville for oil and chip. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Gudgel, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ruppert, Schieferdecker, Whitworth, Young. **All in favor, motion carried.**

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

1. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Beck noted a June coal royalty payment of \$128,562.45 and a total Fund 375 balance of \$10.9 million.
2. **FY2025 Audit Update/Approval:** **Motion by Beck and second by Whitworth to approve the FY2025 audit report. All in favor, motion carried.**
3. **Tax Sale Resolution Update/Approval:** Beck introduced Neal Wallace, General Counsel for Joseph E. Meyer & Associates, who described new Illinois tax sale law allowing previous owners to recover equity in property lost to taxes. The legislation allows counties to annually determine if they want to proceed with the Property Tax Sale

including tax buyers, or omit that process and go directly to the County Trustee. Wallace described advantages and disadvantages to each plan, including redemption penalties and timeliness. In response to a question, Wallace said going directly to trustee would reduce the number of sale-in-error certificates. **Motion by Beck and second by Corso to approve Resolution 2026-09 Authorizing use of the Trustee Program to administer the statutory requirements established under Public Act 104-0553. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy of Resolution, see Resolution Book 24, page 30).**

4. **FY2027 Budget Process Update/Approval:** Beck said Treasurer Nikki Lohman has compiled budget requests and distributed a first draft FY2027 budget that, as requested, predicts an \$800,000 general fund deficit including an anticipated \$1 million transfer from Fund 375. Beck stated driving factors include additional staffing requests and an anticipated 40% increase in employee health insurance costs. Beck said she asked Finance Committee members to thoroughly review the budget requests and be ready for some difficult decisions at Budget Hearings scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 18, and Wednesday, Aug. 19.
5. **FY2027 Tax Levy Discussion Update/Approval:** Beck said the committee also reviewed initial FY2027 levy requests, which predict a 7.5864% increase, not including known increases for IMRF, Social Security, and insurance levies. The committee concluded a Truth in Taxation Hearing will likely be necessary.
6. **Cress Hill Communications Tower Update/Approval:** Beck reported the National Weather Service has declined to place a weather radio on the Cress Hill tower due to the deteriorating condition of the 148-foot structure, essential for communications to 911, the Sheriff's Office, and Highway Department as well as the National Weather Service. EMA/EPA/911 Director Hough has secured cost estimates of \$300,000 to \$600,000 for a new 300-foot tower. The committee requested he continue to research prices and funding options. Board members also raised questions about the immediacy of the problem. Young asked why a 300 foot tower is needed when our current tower is 148 feet, and Hough stated more tower space is needed due to multiple band width requirements for each entity using it. Chairman Donaldson encouraged Hough to research the potential availability of grants to fund the new tower.
7. **Fund 375 Purchases Update/Approval:** Beck said the committee reviewed Fund 375 vouchers and requests, and determined that Waggoner should contract for any work needed on the Green Diamond trail and have bills up to \$22,000 submitted to County Board Administration for payment. **Motion by Beck and second by Hancock to approve payment of vouchers from Fund 375 of \$25.20 to Ace Hardware; \$4,936.67 to Hillsboro Electric; \$56.08 to Johnstone Supply; \$4,744.36 to Bondurant Plumbing; \$772.58 to Amazon; \$139.92 to Home Depot; \$1,402.04 to Jorn Sign Company; \$1,575 to Kirby Painting; \$3,649 to Tom Day; \$5,001.60 to Sutton Ford; \$4,995 to Dan Hough as reimbursement for vehicle equipment purchased from Midwest Aftermarket; \$8,802 from C&K Communications; and to approve requests for \$2,919 to HRC; and \$1,038 to Heise Plumbing. All in favor, motion carried.**
8. **Resolution Amending Fees and Assessments Collected by the Circuit Clerk Update/Approval:** Beck reported the resolution is not ready yet for County Board consideration.

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS & MINUTES:

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SCHEDULE CHANGES:

1. Donaldson stated Montgomery County Treasurer Nikki Lohman was awarded as ICTA Zone 2 2026 Treasurer of the Year, and members applauded her award.
2. Donaldson announced the next meeting with Bushue HR has been scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026, at 1:00 PM in the County Board Room.
3. Donaldson said Finance & Budget Committee Budget Hearings will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026, and Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2026 in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.

APPOINTMENTS:

1. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to appoint Kent Sorrells to a 1-year term on Raymond Drainage District No. 1 beginning Sept. 1, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**
2. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Hughes to appoint Joe Chappellear to a 2-year term on Raymond Drainage District No. 1 beginning Sept. 1, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**
3. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beck to appoint Garrett Fuchs to a 3-year term on Raymond Drainage District No. 1 beginning Sept. 1, 2026. All in favor, motion carried.**

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

ADJOURN: Until the next regular full board meeting to be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Schieferdecker and second by Murzynski to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.