

Montgomery County Board Minutes

For Tuesday, August 12, 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, August 12, 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

Moment of Silence: Chairman Donaldson deferred to County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser, who asked for a moment of silence in memory of Laura Cerven, an employee in her office who recently passed away at age 43. Leitheiser stated Laura Cerven began working in her office in December of 2022; and even though she served as a Deputy Clerk/Recorder for a short time, she was one of the most dedicated and proficient employees she's had the pleasure of working with in her 27 year tenure as Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder. Leitheiser said throughout Laura's brave battle with colon cancer, she consistently powered through her pain and chose to continue her work duties in the office until a few short weeks before her passing on Monday, July 21st, 2025. She said Cerven's work ethic and customer service qualities were second to none, and she was always willing to help her co-workers wherever she was needed. Leitheiser concluded by stating Cerven's legacy of strength and her dedication to service will be remembered by all who knew her, and her co-workers will be forever grateful for her service to the County Clerk/Recorder's office and to the citizens of Montgomery County. She extended her prayers to Cerven's family and friends. Members responded with a moment of silence in Cerven's memory.

Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by County Board member Ethan Murzynski.

Mileage and Per Diem Approval: Claims for mileage and per diem were read by County Clerk Leitheiser. **Motion by Hughes and second by Young 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 Murzynski to approve the minutes of the previous regular county board meeting held on Tuesday, July 8, 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** – 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 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** – filed by Michaela Gray. New Chief Deputy Assessor Tysha Mullen was present for questions.
15. **State’s Attorney Report** – Andrew Affrunti was virtually present for questions.
16. **Treasurer’s Report** – Nikki Lohman was present for questions.
17. **VAC Report** – Cassandra Hampton was present for questions.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON THE CONSENT AGENDA:

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

LIAISON REPORTS:

- **CEFS Board** - Beason reported due to funding cutbacks, Meals on Wheels is down \$50,000 in Montgomery County. He handed out a flyer soliciting donations.
- **708 Board** – Murzynski reported the board met Aug. 11, 2025, to review applications.
- **ETSB / 911 Board** – Bergen had nothing to report.
- **Health Department** – Whitworth reported the board will meet on Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025.
- **IL Association of County Officials** — Hancock had nothing to report.
- **MCEDC** – Hughes reported the annual meeting was Monday, Aug. 11, 2025. He noted an increased affiliation with Rivers & Routes, an MCEDC bank balance of \$195,000, and added County Board member Christine Daniels is now the liaison to the economic development corporation since he is no longer on the Development/Personnel Committee.
- **Planning Commission** – Ritchie had nothing to report.
- **Senior Citizens Board** – Daniels reported DCEO Round 2 grant items for new carpet and kitchen updates are out for bids.
- **UCCI** – Corso reported information was given about wind and solar legislation and projects at the annual meeting.
- **U of I** – Ruppert reported the 4-H season culminated in the Illinois State Fair.
- **WCDC** – Jones reported the next meeting will be held on Aug. 21, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Bill Schroeder asked the County Board to consider forming an Ad Hoc Committee as they are doing now with the topic of Wooded Acreage Assessments for limiting the number of solar projects in the county. He suggested capping solar projects, either by number, acres, or megawatts to preserve farmland for farming use and stated Montgomery County is currently being taken advantage of by solar farm companies.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COORDINATING COMMITTEE: Given by County Board Chairman Doug Donaldson:

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said IS Director Curt Watkins reported his department is working on court grant improvements and the mapping move to ArcGIS Pro. He has begun the planning portion of the telephone system upgrade which he anticipates will take place in September. His department has also completed the annual PC swap and a test phishing campaign and will be replacing older switches soon.
2. **EMA/EPA Report Update/Approval:** Donaldson said EMA/EPA Director Dan Hough reported participating in a National Weather Service conference in St. Charles, MO. He said Hough is working on pursuing a mass alert system, and Hough reported to the board the county was recently turned down in the second phase of the siren grant application process.
3. **Property Evaluation & Tax Advisors Contract Update/Approval:** Donaldson said Tysha Mullen has accepted the position of Chief Deputy Assessor and has enrolled in classes to become certified as Montgomery County Supervisor of Assessments. Ruppert added Mullen began work on Monday, Aug. 11, and has previously worked at the Montgomery County Housing Authority. Ruppert added after a meeting with Gary Twist and Stan Jenkins of Property Evaluation & Tax Advisors (PETA) for assessment field work and employee training, the committee voted to recommend a contract for their services. He expressed confidence PETA will keep the tax cycle on schedule. In answer to questions, Ruppert noted the cost of the contract will come from unspent funds in the SOA office salary line items. Donaldson added the monthly contract cost is \$14,583 and the contract can be terminated in less than six months if their services are no longer needed. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Beason to approve a six-month contract with Property Evaluation & Tax Advisors for a total of \$87,498. All in favor, motion carried. ROLL CALL VOTE:** Voting yes: Beason, Beck, Bergen, Corso, Daniels, Donaldson, Hancock, Hughes, Jones, Murzynski, Ritchie, Ruppert, Whitworth, Young. **All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 254-257).**
4. **Ad Hoc Committee to Address SB3455 Wooded Acreage Assessments Update/Approval:** Committee Chairman Russ Beason reported a successful meeting was held on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, which included several members of the public and the North Litchfield Township assessor. The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025, at 6 p.m. in the Conference Room on the second floor of the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.
5. **Rules Committee Meeting Update/Approval:** Committee Chairwoman Connie Beck reviewed recommendations from a Thursday, July 17, 2025 meeting, including a procedure to be used in the event of the termination of a department head. **Motion by Beck and second by Jones to approve the revised Montgomery County Board Rules of Order as presented. All in favor, motion carried.**
6. **Mayors Meeting Update/Approval:** Donaldson reviewed a successful meeting held on Wednesday, July 30, 2025. Agenda items included municipal and county responses to derelict properties, a presentation about electronic mass notification, and presentations from elected officials and department heads.

7. **Bluewave Solar & Silicon Ranch Solar Update/Approval:** Donaldson said companies have reached out to discuss leasing the County Farm ground for potential solar projects. The State's Attorney will review any offers to determine if the county is allowed to consider the leases under Illinois law.
8. **Closed Session Minutes Review Update/Approval:** The committee discussed committee closed session minutes from March 3, 2025, March 31, 2025 and June 4, 2025 and recommends all remain permanently closed. **Motion by Donaldson and second by Daniels for executive session minutes from the March 3, 2025 Development & Personnel Committee meeting, the March 31, 2025 Development & Personnel Committee meeting, and the June 4, 2025 Roads & Bridges Committee meeting remain permanently sealed. All in favor, motion carried.**

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

1. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Animal Control Warden Tricia Papin referenced her report and added the office had been on four calls that day.
2. **CF IL Solar (Farmersville) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert reviewed the siting application findings and proposed conditions. Buzz Becker of Pivot Energy was present virtually. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Jones to approve siting for CF IL Solar in Farmersville with 5 conditions. All in favor, motion carried.**
3. **RDC IL N24th Solar (Harvel) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert reviewed the siting application findings and proposed conditions, including a plan to row crop around the array for a vegetative buffer. Young asked how big this solar farm will be, and Ruppert responded it will include 28 acres. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Beason to approve siting for RDC IL N24th Solar in Harvel with six conditions. All in favor, motion carried (Young voted against).**
4. **Atticus & Finch Solar (Route 127) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert reviewed the siting application findings and proposed conditions, adding a "Good Neighbor" agreement had been signed earlier in the day. Keith Morel of Ironwood Renewables was present. **Motion by Ruppert and second by Whitworth to approve siting for Atticus Solar on Route 127 south of Hillsboro with six conditions. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Ruppert and second by Daniels to approve siting for Finch Solar on Route 127 south of Hillsboro with six conditions. All in favor, motion carried (Young voted against).**
5. **Montgomery IL Solar 1 (Route 16) Siting Permit Update/Approval:** Ruppert noted since the public hearing was the previous week on Monday, July 28, 2025, the committee should be ready to discuss and make a recommendation at their September meeting.
6. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported 83.1% of Round 1 reimbursements have been received totaling nearly \$1.9 million, and 1.1% of Round 2 reimbursements have been received totaling \$14,800. County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett added notification was received earlier that afternoon that the county was approved to move to the next phase of the Round 3 award.
7. **Montgomery First Community Solar Engagement Update/Approval:** Ruppert said the committee considered an initial draft specifying three community benefits: 1) the applicant will purchase as much as possible in Montgomery County; 2) the applicant will recruit project labor from Montgomery County; and 3) the applicant will make annual

payments to Montgomery County, the fire department who covers the project location, and the South Central Illinois Regional Workforce Training & Innovation Center in Litchfield. The committee discussed adding Montgomery County EMA for payments, as well as studying more Community Benefits Agreement templates. The current draft was forwarded to the State's Attorney for review.

8. **Secession Resolution Update/Approval:** Ruppert reported the committee debated an advisory resolution to be on the ballot asking Montgomery County voters if they would like to secede from Illinois and form a new state with other downstate counties, or become a part of Indiana or Missouri. Ruppert stated County Clerk Leitheiser said voters could petition the advisory referendum to be placed on the ballot with 860 signatures, and Ruppert said it is not in the best interest of the board to make a statement.
9. **Schedule Change for September Update/Approval:** Due to the Labor Day holiday, the next meeting will be on Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025, beginning at 5 p.m.

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

1. **Boiler Bid Opening Update/Approval:** Hughes reported the committee reviewed three sealed bids for a new boiler in the Courthouse Complex ranging from \$70,592 to \$103,929. Maintenance Director Phil Ernst reviewed the bids, noting the bid requested a specific make and model number. The county will be reimbursed \$47,152 through Phase 2 of the DCEO Energy Transition grant, and the apparent low bidder noted a \$3,500 grant available from Ameren. **Motion by Hughes and second by Beck to award the low bid of \$70,592 to Henson Robinson of Springfield. 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. **Jaytech Water Solutions Presentation Update/Approval:** Hughes said Jaytech suggested water treatment for closed-loop HVAC systems. He said the representative provided test results for water in the Courts Complex and Montgomery County Jail systems, and found an elevated copper level. The committee will continue to investigate.
3. **Maintenance Report Update/Approval:** Hughes summarized the Maintenance Report, noting three dying trees on the jail grounds need to be removed and said the committee is considering installing a split unit AC in Courtroom 3 at the Courthouse Complex.
4. **Ameren Illinois Energy Assessment Offer Update/Approval:** Hughes reported Alpha Electric in Litchfield is working on a proposal to replace inefficient lighting fixtures through an Ameren grant.
5. **NAGS Arches Rail Trail Request Update/Approval:** Hughes said NAGS representative Ray Luebbert reported a damaged area about 700-800 feet long unable to be mowed due to the deep ruts on the Arches Rail Trail between Hillsboro and Butler. NAGS has maintained the recreational trail through a 2011 contract with the county. Hughes said engineer Cody Greenwood is working on a remediation plan and estimated cost and the committee will continue the discussion next month pending cost information.
6. **Historical Marker Update/Approval:** Hughes said the Historical Marker was installed on Historic Courthouse grounds and dedicated on Saturday, Aug. 2, 2025. Rob Smith of RL Contractors installed the post, Hillsboro Rental donated a post-hole digger, and Jeff Dunn painted the pole, all at no cost. Donaldson said the marker is very impressive and encouraged members to visit it soon.

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

1. **Resolution 2025-7 appropriating funds for 50/50 culvert replacement on Hill Circle, Fillmore Township Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee reviewed the resolution and map for a 50/50 culvert replacement on Hill Circle in Fillmore Consolidated Township. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$26,000 with Montgomery County's share estimated at \$13,000 from the County Aid to Bridge Fund. **Motion by Murzynski and second by Young to approve Resolution 2025-07 to appropriate funds from the County Aid to Bridge Fund to pay one-half of an estimated \$26,000 project to replace a culvert on Hill Circle. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 258-259).**
2. **Arches Rail Trail Update/Approval:** Murzynski said Engineer Cody Greenwood will visit the site and develop a remediation plan to be potentially implemented this fall. The committee also discussed an ordinance prohibiting motorized vehicles so violators could be prosecuted.
3. **Walshville Road Improvement Project Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the Illinois State Archaeological Survey has informed the county the proposed Walshville Bypass site needs shovel testing. He said the county will notify landowners by letter, and construction could begin in the fall of 2026 at the earliest, but more likely in the spring or summer of 2027.
4. **Vacating Streets and Alleys in Zanesville Update/Approval:** Murzynski said the committee reviewed a Road Vacation Plat for Zanesville (originally Leesburg), a never-developed village in Zanesville Township. When asked, State's Attorney Affrunti said the vacation plan will need a petition signed by two-thirds of the impacted landowners and will need to be approved by a two-thirds vote of the County Board to proceed.
5. **Heavy Equipment Shed Update/Approval:** Murzynski said wiring has been roughed in and most of the concrete has been poured on the new building. He said some carpentry work remains, as well as trim work, and installing downspouts and overhead doors. Murzynski reported a change order removed \$22,000 in cost from the project.

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

1. **SOA Office Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee reviewed SOA Deputy Michaela Gray's report, noting the 2025 payable 2026 Board of Review session has been opened, 105 Certificates of Error have been completed, and a contract with North Litchfield has been executed for DevNet access.
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** Ritchie reported according to reports provided by Treasurer Lohman, the June coal royalty payment was \$170,361.72.
3. **Bruce Harris Contract for GIS Website Update/Approval:** Ritchie stated after County Board approval of a proposal from Bruce Harris last month, the committee reviewed a contract calling for an initial fee of \$22,003.31 and a monthly maintenance fee of \$752. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Daniels to approve the contract with**

Bruce Harris and Associates for the county GIS public website. All in favor, motion carried. (For copy, see Resolution Book 22, pages 260-277). Ritchie stated the transition date to Bruce Harris for the county GIS public website will be in the next six weeks to two months.

4. **Pre-Approved Payment List Update/Approval:** Ritchie said the committee reviewed changes to the Pre-Approved Payment List made by the State's Attorney. He added the Finance & Budget Committee is now reviewing monthly payments from the Pre-Approved Payment List. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Jones to recommend approval of the Pre-Approved Payment List. All in favor, motion carried.**
5. **Training Reimbursement Policy Update/Approval:** According to Ritchie, the committee reviewed the Christian County pre-employment contract requiring a 24-36 month commitment or training costs must be reimbursed. MCSO training costs are \$7,000 to \$8,000 per employee; enforcing training reimbursement could require civil court action. The State's Attorney is reviewing the idea, and County Clerk Leitheiser will continue to research this topic as well.
6. **Assessment Contract with Grisham/Walshville/East Fork MTA Update/Approval:** The MTA is now officially under contract with an assessor. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Young to recommend voiding the assessment contract with the Grisham/Walshville/East Fork Multi-Township Assessment District. All in favor, motion carried.**
7. **FY2026 Budget Process and Budget Hearings Update/Approval:** Ritchie said forms have been distributed and Bellwether has scheduled budget hearings to begin on Thursday, Aug. 28, 2025, at 8 a.m. He added he expects the General Fund budget to show a six-figure surplus for FY2026, noting most variables such as health insurance and pay increases have been decided. He noted the committee will look closely at over-appropriations.
8. **Supervisor Of Assessments Office Stipend Update/Approval:** Ritchie said a discussion on a stipend amount occurred in the Finance Committee's closed session. **Motion by Ritchie and second by Bergen to award Supervisor of Assessments Office employee Michaela Gray a \$3,000 bonus effective the next payroll. 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 next meeting with Bushue HR has been rescheduled for 10 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 15, 2025 in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.
2. The next Wooded Acreage Ad Hoc Committee meeting will begin at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2025, in the Conference Room at the Historic Courthouse.
3. There will be a special Finance & Budget Committee meeting for budget hearings beginning at 8 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 28, 2025, in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.

4. Due to the budget hearings, the Coordinating Committee meeting will be moved to Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025, beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.
5. Due to the Labor Day holiday, next month's Development & Personnel Committee meeting will begin at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025, in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.
6. The location of the fall Electronics Recycling Drive has changed to the former Montgomery County Highway Department at 1215 Seymour Avenue from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday, Sept. 13, 2025.

APPOINTMENTS:

1. **Amy Jeffers of Hillsboro, Hillsboro Area Ambulance Service Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Hughes to appoint Amy Jeffers of Hillsboro to the Hillsboro Area Ambulance Service to fill the term of Braunda Hopwood. All in favor, motion carried.
2. **Leonard Rovey to the Farmersville Waggoner Fire Protection District Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Beck to reappoint Leonard Rovey of Farmersville to a three-year term on the Farmersville Waggoner Fire Protection District beginning in September, 2025. All in favor, motion carried.
3. **Brett Holliday to the 708 Board Update/Approval:** Motion by Donaldson and second by Young to appoint Brett Holliday of Litchfield to the 708 Board to fill the unexpired term of Cory Bilyeu. All in favor, motion carried.

PAY BILLS AND PAYROLL:

Motion by Beason and second by Whitworth to pay all approved bills and Payroll. All in favor, motion carried. **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, September 9, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the County Board Room, Hillsboro, Illinois. Motion by Murzynski and second by Hancock to adjourn the Full Board Meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m. Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.