

Montgomery County Board

Property Tax Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Historic Courthouse
#1 Courthouse Square, Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Time: 6 p.m., County Board Room

Roll Call: **Members Present:** Russ Beason, Chris Daniels, Andy Ritchie, Chad Ruppert, Jesse Boehler, John Lentz, Doug Donaldson **Members Absent:** None

Others Present: County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett, Illinois Realtors Government Affairs Director Ron Deedrick

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** was led by Committee Chair Beason
2. **Public Comments:** None
3. **SB3455 Review and Discussion Update/Approval:** Chairman Donaldson thanked committee members for serving, and said he anticipated appointing a third public member. He said the committee's purpose is to review SB3455 and HB1496 and make a final report to the Montgomery County Board, who will then send that report to legislators. Committee Chair Beason will update the county board on the process by reporting to the Coordinating Committee. Beason provided the committee with information about SB17, the wooded acreage legislation enacted in 2007, as well as SB3455 which he read. Plunkett provided synopsis of both SB3455 and HB1496. Regarding SB17, Deedrick said the original intent for timberland was different 17 years ago and focused on wooded acreage that potentially produced revenue. The committee spent substantial time discussing how woodland management plans can be submitted without the certification of a State Forester, the difference between state and federal Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) requirements, and the higher standard required for subsidies in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
4. **HB1496 Review and Discussion Update/Approval:** According to the synopsis provided by Plunkett, HB1496 was introduced by Rep. Brad Halbrook on Jan. 21 and assigned to the Revenue & Finance Committee on Feb. 18. It provides that, beginning with the 2026 assessment year, the valuation of property in any general assessment year may not exceed 101% of the value of the property in the previous tax year if it is residential, or 102% if the property is not residential.
5. **Committee Goals Update/Approval:** The committee spent substantial time discussing goals. Boehler recommended researching best practices to submit to the Supervisor of Assessments (SOA) office. Before the next meeting, Ritchie will research SOA practices in Macoupin County, Lentz will research Bond County, and Daniels will research Logan County and Williamson County. The committee will also research each of the six items to be studied by the Illinois Department of Revenue according to SB3455. To begin, Daniels will research the Cook County classification system, Ruppert will research preferential assessments and their economic impact, and Plunkett will provide local data on the state's reliance on property taxes and the historical growth in levies.
6. **Next Meeting Date Update/Approval:** The committee scheduled the next meeting for 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 19, in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse in Hillsboro.

Motion to adjourn by Ruppert and second by Daniels. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m. The summaries of minutes were respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett, as Deputized by Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.

Montgomery County Board
Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes
County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Historic Courthouse
#1 Courthouse Sq. Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025

Time: 8:30 AM – County Board Room

Roll Call: Members Present: Doug Donaldson, Mark Hughes, Ethan Murzynski, Andy Ritchie, Chad Ruppert, Dr. Patty Whitworth **Members Absent:** None

Others Present: Board members Russ Beason and Christine Daniels, County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett, Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus, Engineer Cody Greenwood, IS Director Curt Watkins, Hillsboro Community Planner Sarah McConnell, EMA Director Dan Hough, Treasurer Nikki Lohman, County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser

Pledge of Allegiance: was led by Chairman Donaldson.

Public Comments: None

Coordinating Committee: Doug Donaldson, Board Chairman

1. **Information Systems Report Update/Approval:** IS Director Curt Watkins reported Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins had secured \$132,925.51 from a court grant that will be used to improve security cameras, monitors, PCs, and server cooling systems. He also reported county board room tech work is complete pending tweaks, he is working on video camera and server upgrades, and is continuing multi-factor token installation.
2. **EMA Report Update/Approval:** EMA Director Dan Hough reported over 50 county employees had thus far completed the ongoing AED/CPR training. He has met with Buildings & Grounds Committee Chair Mark Hughes regarding the block building at the highway department, met with IEMA directors in his office, and was told by Deer Run mine officials that no fly ash was entering from off site.
3. **West Central Development Council/Job Center Board/CEO Board Update/Approval:** The next meeting is in April.
4. **Ad Hoc Committee to Address SB3455 Wooded Acreage Assessments Update/Approval:** Chairman Donaldson reported the first meeting was on Feb. 19, and public member Ron Deedrick cannot be a committee member because of his lobbyist job description. Donaldson is working on a replacement, and noted the next meeting scheduled for March 19 will need to be rescheduled. He also referenced new pending legislation SB2320, HB3217, and Supervisor of Assessments Niehaus added HB3747. Ad Hoc Committee Chair 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.
5. **Resolution in Support of National Ag Day March 18 Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and discussed the resolution of support.
6. **Other Business:** County Clerk Leitheiser drew the committee's attention to the new voting booth on display at the meeting that will be used for the April 1 Consolidated Election. Leitheiser added that 130 of the 170 booths had been delivered so far.

Development & Personnel Committee: Chad Ruppert, Chairman

1. **Small Biz Grant Application Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss six new applications received to date.
2. **Nextlink Update/Approval:** The committee anticipates an update from Nextlink.
3. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Ruppert reported the power washer at animal control is not working, the Ford vehicle was involved in an accident, and the Department of Ag was recently at Animal Control and gave a positive report. Chairman Donaldson noted the county does not make personnel decisions based on allegations.
4. **Tourism Grant Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss application forms.
5. **City-Wide Clean-Up Update/Approval:** The committee will review three new applications received to date.
6. **Montgomery Springs Solar Update/Approval:** The public hearing has been set for Monday, March 24, beginning at 6 p.m. in the County Board Room.

7. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss any updates.
8. **Employee Handbook Update/Approval:** Chairman Ruppert asked Plunkett to inquire from Bushue HR if the next draft will be available for the March 3 committee meeting.
9. **Historic Courthouse Notary Update/Approval:** The committee will continue to discuss.
10. **Other Business:** None

Buildings and Grounds: Mark Hughes, Chairman

1. **Maintenance and Cleaning Issues and Report Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss.
2. **Tuck-pointing Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Hughes believes further work may be needed in the VAC building basement and on the east wall of the Historic Courthouse. The committee will review photos and discuss.
3. **Generator Waiting List Update/Approval:** The committee will discuss a recommendation from Maintenance Director Phil Ernst.
4. **Cinric VAC Wall Painting Proposal Update/Approval:** The committee will discuss a recommendation from Maintenance Director Phil Ernst, and would like to have input from Jeff Dunn.
5. **Solar on Earth Proposal Update/Approval:** The Finance & Budget Committee will review two proposals for participating in a community solar project.
6. **Old Highway Department Property Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Hughes will invite the Hillsboro School District to the committee meeting to discuss.
7. **County Board Room AV Work Feb. 3-7 Update/Approval:** Work is complete.
8. **New Hire for Cleaning Position Update/Approval:** The committee expects to review multiple applications.
9. **Other Business:** None

Roads and Bridges Committee: Ethan Murzynski, Chairman

1. **UKA Virden Wind Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Murzynski reported Engineer Greenwood is reviewing a draft.
2. **County & Township MFT Oil Letting Update/Approval:** Lettings will be in April.
3. **Resolution Appropriating Funds for Engineer Salary Update/Approval:** The resolution from the state remains pending.
4. **Other Business:** None

Finance and Budget Committee: Andy Ritchie, Chairman

1. **SOA Report Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss.
2. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss.
3. **Ambulance Service Agreements Update/Approval:** All were signed last month.
4. **County Travel Ordinance Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss the updated ordinance drafted by County Clerk Leitheiser.
5. **Resolution to Transfer Coal Rights Parcel 01-07-100-301 in Bois D'Arc Township Update/Approval:** The committee will review and discuss.
6. **Other Business:** An ARPA ordinance for the ETSB data room will also be on the committee agenda. County Clerk Leitheiser reported the new Litchfield TIF has been filed using 2023-2024 tax values as the base year, and the Nokomis TIF remains pending due to the submitted legal description including parcels outside city limits.

Appointments:

1. Daniel Fenton as Shoal Creek Fire Protection District Trustee from May 1, 2023, through May 5, 2026
2. Donald Sturgeon Jr. as Shoal Creek Fire Protection District Trustee from May 1, 2024, through May 3, 2027

Motion to adjourn by Murzynski and second by Hughes. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m. The summaries of minutes were respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett, as deputized by Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.

Montgomery County Board
Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting Minutes
County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Historic Courthouse
#1 Courthouse Square, Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Time: 8:30 AM – County Board Room

Roll Call: Members Present: Mark Hughes, Connie Beck, Russell Beason, Keith Hancock, Evan Young, Doug Donaldson. **Members Absent:** None

Others Present: County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett, Maintenance Director Phil Ernst, Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins, Hillsboro Community Planner Sarah McConnell, Hillsboro School Board President Matt Lentz, Hillsboro Superintendent David Powell, Hillsboro Curriculum Director Hope McBrain, Hillsboro School District Maintenance Director Fred Butler, Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus, VAC Superintendent Cassandra Hampton, Illinois State Historical Society Director Jeff Dunn, Information Services Director Curt Watkins

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** was led by Maintenance Director Phil Ernst.
2. **Public Comments:** None
3. **Maintenance and Cleaning Issues and Report Update/Approval:** Maintenance Director Ernst reviewed his report, noting 71 work orders completed last month and an elevator entrapment in at the Historic Courthouse on Monday, March 3. The new elevator service contractor, Otis, has been notified, however Ernst said Schindler did not leave keys to the elevator control box or schematics.
4. **Tuck-pointing Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Hughes shared photos and major concerns with 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. Maintenance Director Ernst shared a proposal from RL Construction of Butler for \$12,400 total; \$7,550 for VAC work and \$4,850 for Historic Courthouse work. Ernst said the funds are budgeted, and Rob Smith of RL Construction said work would be completed within three weeks when weather allows. **Motion by Beck and second by Beason to recommend awarding \$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.**
5. **Generator Waiting List Update/Approval:** Maintenance Director Ernst expressed concern that since the DCEO grant agreement for Phase II remains pending, the price of the Cat generator he applied for will increase beyond the 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.
6. **Cinric VAC Wall Painting Proposal Update/Approval:** The committee discussed whether or not the proposal to paint the north wall of the VAC building in preparation for a mural was still needed. Illinois State Historical Society Director Jeff Dunn reported that he had been acting as a go-between for The Walldogs mural artists and the City of Hillsboro. He said Walldogs walked away from the project and the in-place funding because the city's Historical Preservation District needed to approve the project. The committee agreed the wall did not need to be painted if there is no mural. Dunn said funding could be raised again, but Walldogs artists do not disclose their plans prior to their work.
7. **Old Highway Department Property Update/Approval:** Hillsboro School District Maintenance Director Fred Butler said 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. Supervisor of Assessments Niehaus estimated each house built on the property would generate \$6,000 per year in property taxes. Chairman Donaldson said asbestos

abatement has been completed, and the county could consider turning the property over to the school district as-is after EMA has vacated the building. Discussions will continue.

8. **New Hire for Cleaning Position Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed four applicants for a New Courthouse part-time cleaning position. Committee Chair Hughes, Personnel & Development Committee Chair Chad Ruppert, and Maintenance Director Ernst will interview all four and offer the position to the best qualified candidate. National Maintenance & Cleaning remains under contract for cleaning through March 14.
9. **Other Business:** Ernst suggested making contact with Imagine Hillsboro about maintaining summer flowers on the Courthouse Grounds. Committee Chair Hughes will do so.

Motion to pay the bills by Beason and second by Hancock. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn by Beason and second by Hancock. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 a.m. The summaries of minutes were respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett, as Deputized by Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.

Montgomery County Board
Development & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes
County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Historic Courthouse
#1 Courthouse Square, Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Monday, March 3, 2025

Time: 5:00 PM – County Board Room

Roll Call: Members Present: Chad Ruppert, Bill Bergen, Chris Daniels, Jeremy Jones, Doug Donaldson

Members Absent: Russell Beason

Others Present: County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett, MCEDC Executive Director Bill Montgomery, Circuit Clerk Daniel Robbins, Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus, Hillsboro Community Planner Sarah McConnell, Sheriff Tyson Holshouser, Chief Deputy Lance Weitekamp

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** was led by Committee Chair Ruppert.
2. **Public Comment:** None
3. **Small Biz Grant Application Update/Approval:** 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. **Motion by Jones and second by Bergen to recommend Small Biz Grant awards 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.** The awards finishes the DCEO funds for Small Biz grants, and committee members expressed interest in renewing the program with future grants.
4. **Nextlink Update/Approval:** Karson Kinard of Nextlink reported 10 active towers and six active users, with 11 more towers planned by the end of 2025. A presentation will be made to the full board on March 11.
5. **Tourism Grant Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and approved the annual Tourism Grant Application. Completed applications must be submitted by March 28 and will be awarded in April. Applications are available on-line and in the County Board Administration office.
6. **City-Wide Clean-Up Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed three more applications. **Motion by Jones and second by Bergen to recommend awarded \$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.**
7. **Montgomery Springs Solar Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Ruppert reminded the committee the public hearing for the project will begin at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 24, in the County Board Room.
8. **DCEO Energy Transition Grant Update/Approval:** The Phase II grant application remains pending, and a Grant Agreement is anticipated soon.
9. **Employee Handbook Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Ruppert reviewed changes in the latest draft, and added that Bushue HR will be on site at 1 p.m. Thursday, March 13, for the next meeting. The draft will remain under review until next month.

10. **Historic Courthouse Notary Update/Approval:** The committee continued a discussion that began last month about the possible need for notaries in the Historic Courthouse. After discussion about the need Daniels suggested checking with each office on the number of documents requiring notary services. Plunkett will do so and report next month.
11. **Animal Control Update/Approval:** Committee Chair Ruppert reported the Animal Control Warden has been suspended pending the result of criminal charges. In the meantime, the facility is operating as usual. **Motion by Daniels and second by Bergen to enter executive session at 6:25 p.m. to discuss personnel issues. All in favor, motion carried. Motion by Jones and second by Daniels to re-enter open session at 7:13 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.**
12. **Other Business:** Committee Chair Ruppert shared electronic recycling dates of Saturday, May 3, in Litchfield and Saturday, Sept. 13, in Hillsboro. Jones asked the committee to consider a session proclamation next month, and Daniels asked to share the research she has done on requiring local labor next month.

Motion to pay the bills by Bergen and second by Jones. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn by Daniels and second by Bergen. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m. The summaries of minutes were respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett, as deputized by Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.

Montgomery County Board

Roads & Bridges Committee Meeting Minutes

Conference Room, County Highway Dept.
11159 IL Rte 185, Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Wednesday, March 5th, 2025

Time: 8:30 AM – County Highway Department

Members present: Ethan Murzynski, Bill Bergen, Patty Whitworth, Chad Ruppert, Keith Hancock, Rob Corso

Members Absent: Doug Donaldson

Other Present: County Engineer Cody Greenwood, County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett

The committee met today to discuss the following:

1. **Public Comments:** None
2. **UKA Virden Wind Road Use Agreement Update/Approval:** Engineer Greenwood reported the consulting attorney has provided a draft road use agreement. Greenwood will continue to review it and anticipates asking the committee to review a draft next month.
3. **Resolution 2025-1 appropriating funds for 100% county culvert replacement at multiple locations Update/Approval:** 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 Whitworth and second by Corso to recommend approval of Resolution #2025-01 appropriating \$101,500 from County Aid to Bridge Fund 235 for 13 pipe culverts. All in favor, motion carried.**
4. **Resolution 2025-2 appropriating funds for the payment of the County Engineer’s Salary for 2025 Updated/Approval:** Engineer Greenwood said still no word from the state.
5. **Other Items:** Engineer Greenwood reported Stutz Excavating anticipates beginning work on the new building at the highway department the week of March 24. The committee also viewed a video on the Stepp SPHD 3.0 hot box pothole patcher, a towable piece of equipment Greenwood said he had anticipated budgeting \$60,000 next year to purchase new. He has discovered, however, a used 2015 available in Indianapolis for \$29,000. His department has inspected the equipment and reports it is in “like new” condition. The committee consensus was positive, and Committee Chair Murzynski requested the purchase be on the full board agenda for consideration.

Motion by Whitworth, second by Bergen to Pay Bills. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion by Ruppert, second by Whitworth to adjourn the meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 a.m. Minutes respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett as Deputized by the Montgomery County Clerk and Recorder, Sandy Leitheiser.

Montgomery County Board

Finance & Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Historic Courthouse
#1 Courthouse Square, Hillsboro, IL 62049

Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025

Time: 8:31 AM – County Board Room

Roll Call: **Members Present:** Andy Ritchie, Connie Beck, Rob Corso, Chris Daniels, Dr. Patty Whitworth, Evan Young **Members Absent:** Doug Donaldson

Others Present: County Board Administrator Mike Plunkett, Hillsboro Community Planner Sarah McConnell, Supervisor of Assessments Kendra Niehaus, Treasurer Nikki Lohman, County Clerk Sandy Leitheiser

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** was led by committee member Young.
2. **Public Comment:** None
3. **SOA Report Update/Approval:** Supervisor of Assessments Niehaus reviewed her report, noting 907 senior homestead exemptions have been received and processed so far, and 146 disabled person and disabled veteran exemptions have been received and processed so far. She added the 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. Niehaus said she is working with Information Services Director Curt Watkins on the possibility of township assessors entering their own information into the DevNet software from the field.
4. **Capital Improvement & Coal Fund Reports Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and discussed the reports, and Committee Chair Ritchie noted a \$162,645.73 coal royalty payment in January.
5. **Community Solar Proposals Update/Approval:** The committee heard a proposal from Nathan McCarthy of Solar on Earth that would allow the county to save between 12% and 20% on electric bills through community solar credits. The Solar on Earth proposal would require a 10-year commitment but allow for an opt-out with 180 days notice. McCarthy estimated the deal would save the county \$16,000 in electric charges. County Board Administrator Plunkett said he anticipates another community solar proposal. McCarthy said he could not guarantee the same terms for his proposal next month. **Motion by Whitworth and second by Corso to forward the non-binding application and Solar on Earth proposal to the full board. Motion carried 4-2 (Beck and Young voted against).**
6. **ARPA Ordinance for ETSB Data Room Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and discussed the ordinance for ARPA funds previously assigned. **Motion by Daniels and second by Whitworth to recommend approval of the ordinance to appropriate \$25,000 ARPA funds for ETSB Data Room upgrades. All in favor, motion carried.**
7. **County Travel Ordinance Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and discussed possible changes to the County Travel Ordinance, and County Clerk Leitheiser described the changes printed in bold, including 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 by committee member Young to add a pre-travel approval process, and ultimately decided to do so by referencing the process in Illinois statute. At the recommendation of Leitheiser, the committee will continue the discussion next month when the State's Attorney is available to participate.

8. **Resolution to Transfer Coal Rights Parcel 01-07-100-301 in Bois D'Arc Township Update/Approval:** The committee reviewed and discussed the resolution. **Motion by Whitworth and second by Beck to recommend a resolution to transfer Coal Rights Parcel 01-07-100-301 in Bois D'Arc Township to Keyrock Energy. All in favor, motion carried.**

9. **Other Business:** Committee Chair Ritchie announced the next Property Tax Ad Hoc Advisory Committee meeting has been set for 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 26, in the County Board Room at the Historic Courthouse.

Motion to pay the bills and payroll b Ritchie and second by Young. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn by Ritchie and second by Beck. All in favor, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:06 a.m. The summaries of minutes were respectfully submitted by acting secretary Mike Plunkett, as deputized by Montgomery County Clerk/Recorder Sandy Leitheiser.