



McHenry County
County Board - Committee of the Whole
MINUTES

January 16, 2025, 9:00 AM
County Board Room
Administration Building, 667 Ware Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098

Members Present: Pamela Althoff (D6), Carolyn Campbell (D3), John Collins (D2), Joseph Gottemoller (D4), Terri Greeno (D5), Eric Hendricks (D3), Carl Kamienski (D6), Jim Kearns (D9), Deena Krieger (D5), Matt Kunkle (D1), Brian Sager (D7), Mike Shorten (D4), Michael Skala (D9), Larry Smith (D8), Patrick Sullivan (D1), Gloria Van Hof (D2), Tracie Von Bergen (D8), Chairman Mike Buehler

Members Absent: Paul Thomas (D7)

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at: 9:00 A.M.

Also present: Peter Austin, County Administrator; Scott Hartman, Deputy County Administrator; Adam Wallen, Director of Planning and Development; Sarah Ponitz, Community Development Administrator; Norman Vinton, Chief, Civil Division; Kyle Bruett, Assistant State's Attorney; Kerri Wisz, Chief Financial Officer; Alicia Schueller, Director of Public Affairs; Adam Letendre, Director of Procurement and Special Projects; Suzanne Ziebart, Director of Human Resources; Sandra Salgado, Sheriff Business Manager; Joe Korpalski, County Engineer; Scott Hennings, Assistant Director of Transportation; Darrell Kuntz, Assistant County Engineer; Thomas Annarella, Valley Hi Administrator; Tom Sullivan, Director of Information Technology.

Mover: Kunkle

Second: Smith

To allow the remote attendance of Mr. Hendricks.

Aye (16): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Greeno, Kamienski, Kearns, Krieger, Kunkle, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Sullivan, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Approved (16 to 0)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

John Collins led the County Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. INTRODUCTORY ROLL CALL

Kathie Bough, Administrative Manager, called the Roll.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:03:41

Chairman Buehler began by offering a heartfelt tribute to Bob Blaser, a longtime community champion in Crystal Lake and McHenry County, who passed away at the age of 98. He praised Blaser's significant contributions to the community throughout his life.

Chairman Buehler also acknowledged the passing of a board member's mother and called for a moment of silence in her honor, reflecting on the loss.

He then discussed the January 13 Law and Government Committee meeting, where McHenry County's delegation met to address various legislative issues that could impact the county in the coming year. Chairman Buehler expressed his appreciation for the representatives from the Office of Joe Sosnowski and others who participated in the Green Drinks event, which facilitated important community and legislative discussions. He also announced that he would deliver the annual State of the County address at the February 13 Committee of the Whole meeting, highlighting the importance of the event for providing updates on the county's status and future plans.

Lastly, Chairman Buehler reminded everyone that all county facilities would be closed on Monday, January 20, in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, encouraging reflection on the significance of the day.

5. MEMBERS' COMMENT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:07:31

Ms. Althoff encouraged members to listen to the Law and Government meeting if they had not already, highlighting important information shared by elected representatives from the Senate and House. She emphasized concerns about the potential vulnerability of local government-distributed fund monies, particularly as Illinois faces a \$3 billion shortfall next year. She urged members to take a few minutes to review their comments.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:08:19

Jeff Sebert, of Marengo IL, regarding concrete plant

Kathy Baumann, of Marengo IL, regarding concrete plant

Joel Kyriazes, of Marengo IL, regarding concrete plant

7. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

7.a Recognition of Kelly Scimeca & Courtney Knopp

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:18:22

Dan Wallis began introducing Kelly Scimeca, Director of Special Projects, and Courtney Knopp, Financial Associate, and expressed pride in the work for the court system, highlighting their exceptional achievements over the past year. Together, they secured over \$4 million in grants to expand key programs such as the drug court, mental health court, and a new assisted outpatient treatment program aimed at diverting individuals to treatment rather than the criminal justice system. Dan emphasized that their efforts would save lives and have a lasting impact. He recognized their dedication with plaques, praising their commitment to enhancing critical services and fostering recovery, accountability, and hope for individuals facing mental health and addiction challenges, ultimately benefiting the community.

7.b Strong Transitions Program

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:23:35

Mark Piekos, Director -MCEDC, John Mink, ISBDC, and Catherine Jones, AVP of Workforce Development at MCC, joined to discuss the presentation.

The presentation introduced the Strong Transition Program, a new initiative developed with funding from the Advanced McHenry County Grant Program. This program focuses on helping business owners in McHenry County navigate business transitions, ensuring the retention of local jobs and the continuation of the region's diverse economy. The two-pronged approach includes one-on-one exit planning counseling for business owners looking to sell, and an interactive, eight-week workshop for entrepreneurs interested in buying existing businesses. The program aims to bridge the gap by training potential buyers while assisting sellers in preparing for successful transitions. Additionally, experienced advisors will guide participants throughout the process, with the goal of creating a sustainable and impactful resource for the community

7.c Mental Health Sales Tax Update

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:42:19

Peter Austin, County Administrator, and Kerri Wisz, Chief Financial Officer, joined to discuss the presentation.

The presentation introduced a new model designed to help the Mental Health Board project and manage future funding for mental health services. The tool was created to provide flexibility in forecasting, using property and sales tax data to project income and assess the financial health of the fund. Key highlights included the ability for the board to manipulate assumptions, set reserves, and adjust expenses, with the flexibility to make future changes as the board sees fit. While the exclusion of vehicle sales from the Mental Health sales tax was noted, the tool is expected to provide a better method for managing mental health funding moving forward. The model was presented with the goal of empowering the Mental Health Board to make informed, long-term decisions for service funding and sustainability.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.a Review of the January 21, 2025 County Board Agenda Items

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:10:18

Chairman Buehler asked for any items that Board members will remove to allow staff that is not necessary for questions to return to their departments.

ITEMS REMOVED FOR DISCUSSION

10.a.2 - 2024-064 Heartleaf Solar LLC, Greenwood Twp, A1-A1C (Requires majority vote of members present.), removed for discussion by Ms. Greeno

16.b.2.3 - Resolution Adopting the Fund Balance and Reserve Policy (18), removed for discussion by Mr. Skala

16.b.2.22 - Resolution Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement with Metra for the Design Engineering of a Rail Yard in Woodstock and Appropriating Funds (82), removed for discussion by Mr. Hendricks

DISCUSSION

10.a.2 - 2024-064 Heartleaf Solar LLC, Greenwood Twp, A1-A1C (Requires majority vote of members present.)

The discussion focused more on the broader concerns board members had regarding the county's lack of control over the solar farm approval process rather than the specifics of this item.

Mr. Kearns and Mr. Shorten requested to be registered as "no" votes on this item.

Ms. Greeno expressed frustration that the current process put the board in a difficult position, forcing them to either vote against something they opposed or potentially face litigation. She wanted the county to stop having to vote on solar farm agreements.

Ms. Althoff explained that the county did not have the authority to waive the public hearing process for solar farms, as it was dictated by state statute. However, she noted ongoing efforts at the state level, through a task force, to address this issue and potentially return more control to local governments.

Ms. Campbell acknowledged that rejecting solar projects did not necessarily mean the land would remain in agricultural use, as other development proposals could arise for the property.

16.b.2.3 - Resolution Adopting the Fund Balance and Reserve Policy (18)

Mr. Skala explained that he pulled this item, a fund balance and reserve policy, for informational purposes. He stated that the Finance Committee wanted all board members to have a printed copy for reference during budget discussions and financial deliberations. The policy outlined the county's guidelines for maintaining appropriate fund balances and reserve levels. There was no further substantive discussion on the specifics of the policy. Mr. Skala simply wanted to ensure board members had access to this document as a resource.

16.b.2.22 - Resolution Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement with Metra for the Design Engineering of a Rail Yard in Woodstock and Appropriating Funds (82)

Mr. Hendricks raised concerns about approving \$11 million in funding to expand the Woodstock rail yard. He questioned whether this was the best use of RTA sales tax dollars, given that public transit ridership remained 30–40% below pre-pandemic levels. He felt the funds could be better used for other purposes, such as offsetting unfunded state mandates, rather than expanding rail infrastructure. While he acknowledged that ridership was recovering, he expressed skepticism about whether it would return to pre-COVID levels, especially with ongoing discussions about a potential "fiscal cliff" for public transit agencies. Given the county's increasing financial pressures from unfunded state mandates, he believed the \$11 million would be better spent addressing those challenges.

In response, several board members defended the project. Mr. Kunkle and Dr. Sager emphasized its long-term vision and economic development benefits for Woodstock and the broader county.

Mr. Gottemoller noted the critical need for additional rail yard capacity to accommodate future service increases on the Northwest Metra line.

Dr. Sager also highlighted how the project could support transit-oriented development around the Woodstock station.

9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:31:20

Regional Training Center Presentation:

- AEMA was originally scheduled to present on the National Incident Management System but was unable to do so due to personnel changes.
- County staff members David Christensen and Brooke Lloyd provided the presentation instead, which was well-received.
- Attendees included representatives from:

- Coroner's office
- Auditor's office
- Algonquin Township
- McHenry Township
- Village of Lakewood
- Village of Huntley
- Village of Lakeland Hills
- City of Harvard

Technology and Badge Issues:

- A recent technology change affected the interior door badge system, causing issues for some users.
- Attendees were asked to check their badges and report any problems to Christy or Kathy for resolution.
- The administrator emphasized that, while a minor issue, it still required prompt attention.

10. OTHER

None.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF NECESSARY)

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Mover: Skala

Second: Kamienski

To Adjourn at 10:31 A.M. -TCCazares

Aye (17): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Greeno, Hendricks, Kamienski, Kearns, Krieger, Kunkle, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Sullivan, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Approved (17 to 0)