



McHenry County
County Board - Committee of the Whole
MINUTES

June 12, 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), Paul Thomas (D7), Gloria Van Hof (D2), Tracie Von Bergen (D8), Chairman Mike Buehler

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1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Also present: Also present: Peter Austin, County Administrator; Scott Hartman, Deputy County Administrator; Adam Wallen, Director of Planning and Development; Kerri Wisz, Chief Financial Officer; Maureen Gates, Financial Associate; Alicia Schueller, Director of Public Affairs; Adam Letendre, Director of Procurement and Special Projects; Melissa Adamson, Health Administrator; Adam Letendre, Director of Procurement and Special Services; Laura Scarry, Assistant State's Attorney; Suzanne Ziebart, Director of Human Resources; Nicole Gattuso, Director of GIS; Joe Korpalski, County Engineer; Sandra Salgado, Sheriff's Business Manager; Seth Krause, Director of Court Services and Probation; Patti Nomm, Director of Environmental Health; Shannon Teresi, County Auditor; Jeffery Poynter, Director of Workforce Network; Kyle Kunz, Assistant Public Defender.

Mover: Althoff

Second: Sager

To allow the remote attendance of Mr. Hendricks, Mr. Kearns, and Ms. Von Bergen

Aye (15): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Greeno, Kamienski, Krieger, Kunkle, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Sullivan, Thomas, and Van Hof

Abstain (3): Hendricks, Kearns, and Von Bergen

Approved (15 to 0)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Larry Smith 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 00:03:34

Chairman Buehler stated that he had a handful of remarks to share before the board received the presentation on the development of the FY2026 budget and reviewed the agenda for the upcoming voting meeting scheduled for Tuesday. He noted that on Thursday, June 5, he and County Administrator Mr. Austin had the pleasure of joining McHenry County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Mark Piekos on a tour of General Kinematics in Crystal Lake, accompanied by representatives from World Business Chicago. Attendees included World Business Chicago President and CEO Phil Clement, Chief Growth Officer Kyle Schultz, and representatives from the City of Crystal Lake.

Chairman Buehler explained that World Business Chicago had brought together McHenry County, the collar counties, Cook County, and the City of Chicago to form the Greater Chicagoland Economic Partnership (GCEP). This coalition works to attract new businesses and investment by highlighting the region's unmatched infrastructure, economy, and skilled workforce. He emphasized that this collaboration creates an environment that encourages economic expansion, job creation, and new opportunities. He stated that McHenry County continues to work with GCEP to define the next phase of regional growth and development and expressed pride in partnering with such an important organization. He extended thanks to World Business Chicago for their visit and to General Kinematics and Project Management Group Vice President Randy Smith for graciously hosting the tour.

Chairman Buehler continued by sharing that the following day, Friday, June 6, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth visited to tour the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge in celebration of the recent addition of the 1,000-acre Tamarack Farms. He noted that what began 13 years ago with a single 12-acre conservation easement had grown into thousands of acres of preserved land throughout McHenry County and Walworth County, Wisconsin. He stated that this expansion would continue to draw visitors and boost the region's growing tourism and outdoor recreation economy. He congratulated Openlands, the McHenry County Conservation District, Friends of Hackmatack, The Conservation Fund, and the Illinois Audubon Society for achieving this significant milestone.

Chairman Buehler then addressed recent state legislative developments. He stated that House Bill 3363 passed along party lines during the final days of the General Assembly's spring session, which ended on May 31. If signed into law by Governor Pritzker, the bill would create a State Public Defender Office tasked with developing standards for local public defenders, providing attorneys and litigation tools, and allocating funding for improvements in the defense of litigants, subject to appropriations. He expressed opposition to the bill, stating that it would strip local control by removing the authority of McHenry County judges to appoint public defenders. Instead, he explained, appointments would be made by a State Commission based on nominations from a committee composed of representatives from the Chief Judge and the State Public Defender's Office. He further noted that the county would have no input in the makeup of the Commission, which would be appointed by the Governor, General Assembly leadership, and public defense stakeholders. If signed, the Commission would be established by July 1 of the following year, with implementation beginning in 2027.

He continued by reporting that the spring session concluded without action on proposals to fund mass transit or modify the structure of regional transit boards. He noted that Governor Pritzker and legislative leaders had committed to working on the issue over the summer ahead of the fall veto session, in an effort to avoid service cuts and layoffs at public transit agencies facing a fiscal cliff. Chairman Buehler stated that he had joined his fellow collar county board chairs in advocating for any changes in transit board governance to ensure fair and balanced representation for McHenry, DuPage, Lake, Kane, and Will counties.

He directed attention to the McHenry County Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR), noting that copies had been placed on board members' desks. For members of the public, he added that the FY2024 report was available on the Finance Department's webpage and had also been linked on the County's social media pages. He described the 16-page report as a clear, concise, and visually appealing summary of the county's budget, designed for public understanding. He extended thanks to Chief Financial Officer Carrie Weiss, County Manager Dodie Benisi, and the Finance Department staff for their hard work in preparing the report.

In closing, Chairman Buehler invited members of the public to join him at Lake Atwood in the Hollows Conservation Area on Saturday, June 14, at 10 a.m. for the McHenry County Conservation District's celebration of the lake's reopening. He noted that the project featured a newly paved and accessible path, fishing pier, and kayak launch. He informed County Board members that they would be receiving a sneak preview of the improvements that evening but encouraged them to also attend the public event on Saturday. He concluded by stating that, as he had said many times before, McHenry County Conservation District properties are second to none, and he urged everyone to explore what they have to offer. He then stated that he had no further comments for the morning.

5. MEMBERS' COMMENT

None.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:08:38

Stacy Lindsay, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Laurel Ksepka, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Chuck Kruse, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Steve Cuda, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Mike Murray, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Tyler Wilke, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Tina Jacob, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Nick Jacob, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

Rich Lindsay, of Woodstock IL, regarding Olague Farms Meat Packing Inc

7. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

7.a FY26 Budget Development

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:26:14

Kerri Wisz, Chief Financial Officer, presented the FY26 Budget Development.

Chief Financial Officer Kerri Wisz and Finance & Audit Committee Chair Mr. Skala presented the FY2026 budget overview, outlining key financial pressures and the need for early strategic planning. The County's total budget is approximately \$270 million, with the general fund at \$106 million and an unrestricted general fund balance of just under \$57 million.

While the County anticipates an estimated \$2.7 million in additional revenue from new growth and a 2.9% CPI increase, property taxes account for only 24% of total revenue. At the same time, expenses continue to rise—especially in personnel, with an 8% year-over-year increase and five union contracts up for negotiation next year. Major cost drivers include increasing IT costs, jail healthcare, and the need for equipment upgrades such as new Motorola radios.

The County is also facing the expiration of ARPA funding, which has supported several recurring expenses. Some funds, like FICA and IMRF, are underfunded and may require interfund loans. Staff noted the importance of maintaining 5–6 months of reserves, though projections show a potential drop below that threshold.

Department heads will be asked to identify mandated vs. non-mandated programs and explore possible reductions. A recent board survey showed a range of preferences for budget direction, including options such as a 3% overall reduction, no new growth or CPI, and combinations of both.

The presentation emphasized that difficult decisions are ahead, including potential cuts to non-essential programs and board benefits. A focus on transparency, financial sustainability, and clear direction from the Board will be critical as the County prepares for lean fiscal years in 2026 and 2027.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.a Review of the June 17, 2025 County Board Agenda Items

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:46:59

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

ZONING PETITIONS

10.a.1 - Z25-0012 (formerly 2024-055) Olague, A1-A1C, Hartland Twp (Requires majority vote of members present.), removed for discussion by Mr. Smith

FINANCE & AUDIT

17.b.2.1 - Reclassification of the Zoning Enforcement Officer Grade 14E position to a Planner Grade 8E position (10), removed for discussion by Mr. Smith

DISCUSSION

ZONING PETITIONS

10.a.1 - Z25-0012 (formerly 2024-055) Olague, A1-A1C, Hartland Twp (Requires majority vote of members present.)

FINANCE & AUDIT

17.b.2.1 - Reclassification of the Zoning Enforcement Officer Grade 14E position to a Planner Grade 8E position (10)

Mr. Smith opened the discussion on Item 10.a.1, noting that it was connected to Item 17.b.2.1, which concerned the reclassification of the Zoning Enforcement Officer. He explained that he had received several questions that morning—questions he would have normally directed to Ms. Renee Hanlon, who had since left the County. Since Mr. Wallen had taken over Ms. Hanlon's responsibilities, Mr. Smith invited him to provide comments.

Mr. Wallen confirmed he had assumed oversight of the Zoning Enforcement Division and stated that the department was undergoing a restructuring based on the volume of zoning petitions and related workload. He emphasized that the division had reviewed staffing needs and made adjustments accordingly. He was present to speak on the zoning petition and noted that the restructuring would result in a \$521,000 budget reduction tied to staffing.

Mr. Smith stated that he simply wanted to clarify why he would be asking certain questions and commended Mr. Wallen on the department's restructuring. He did not anticipate any additional questions

regarding the resolution on Item 10.a.1, but noted that a few questions had arisen during public comment. First, he asked whether the site plan had been amended after the public hearing. Mr. Wallen confirmed that the site plan had been amended to include an overall site view but stated that the legal description had not changed. He emphasized that the conditional use applied to the entire site, and the depiction with the gold ring and green shading was a visual aid that did not alter the area of approval.

Mr. Smith next inquired whether a formal letter of objection from Hartland Township had been received, as he had not seen it included in the packet. Mr. Wallen stated that if such a letter had been submitted, it should be in the packet, but he would verify its presence before the next meeting. He noted that all objections—emails, letters, and other documents—were usually compiled into a single file.

Mr. Smith's third question concerned a previously approved slaughterhouse in Marengo, which had received many objections at the time. He asked whether there had been any complaints related to its operation. Mr. Wallen responded that one complaint had been filed during construction, but it was found to be unfounded. Since the facility had opened, no further zoning complaints had been received. Ms. Nomm from the Environmental Health Department added that three complaints had been recorded. One was self-generated to track compliance with waste stream testing. Another, in 2022, related to animals being outside the building and manure handling, and was referred to the Department of Agriculture. A third complaint in 2023 concerned noxious weeds. All issues had been resolved.

Mr. Gottemoller clarified that, per state statute, a township objection to a conditional use petition—unlike a zoning petition or variance—did not trigger the requirement for a supermajority vote. Conditional use applications required only a simple majority to pass, regardless of township objections.

Ms. Althoff asked whether the proposed facility would involve new construction and whether the conditional use was limited to a 10-year period. Mr. Wallen confirmed both points and assured her that the petitioner was aware of the 10-year condition.

Ms. Greeno used the opportunity to share several comments and request clarifications. She stated that she had been researching the issue and reviewing input from constituents. She noted the backlog of meat processing appointments in the region, sometimes as long as 18 months, which required producers to go out of state. She cited data showing that only 50 USDA-certified meat processing plants existed nationwide, suggesting a potential monopoly in the industry. She emphasized the benefits of local meat processing, which included improved food access, reduced carbon emissions, lower costs, and more humane treatment of animals due to smaller facility sizes. She noted that the proposed 10,000-square-foot facility aligned with industry best practices and would be a welcome addition based on community need.

Ms. Campbell asked for clarification on the township's position. She noted that the township supervisor's attorney had stated the township opposed the proposal, but she asked whether that objection had been formally adopted by the full township board. Mr. Wallen said he was not certain whether a resolution had been passed and would follow up.

Mr. Kunkle stated that if a business met County requirements, followed licensing procedures, and complied with all rules, the County should not hinder its operations. He noted that the facility would create 14 new jobs.

Dr. Sager expressed concern regarding the township's stance. He reiterated his support for allowing local governments to influence planning decisions within their jurisdictions and stated that he would weigh the township's position heavily in his decision-making.

Mr. Skala asked whether the Board had the authority to change the conditional use period from 10 years to another term. Mr. Wallen confirmed that the Board could impose conditions, including modifying the duration or adding extensions.

Ms. Van Hoff commented on Dr. Sager's remarks and stated that she believed a petition opposing the slaughterhouse had gathered 400 signatures. However, it was clarified that the petition had not been formally included in the hearing record or testimony.

9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:57:42

Mr. Austin asked if Mr. Skala was ready to proceed and noted that if so, they would begin with the results from the presentation. Mr. Skala replied that four individuals were missing from the room but mentioned that three were participating online. Mr. Austin acknowledged the update and confirmed that the presentation could move forward.

Mr. Gottemoller then provided an update on the strategic plan. He stated that in the next day or two, board members would receive a draft copy of the strategic plan that had been under development. He explained that the Administrative Services Committee had reviewed and trimmed the latest version the previous week, and the staff had since returned it to Northern Illinois University for final formatting. He clarified that the plan was in its final draft stage, meaning it was ready to be distributed for review but still subject to change if needed. He added that the plan would not appear on the agenda for the upcoming Tuesday meeting but would return to the committee in July for formal consideration. Mr. Gottemoller concluded by noting that while some comments might still be incorporated, significant further revisions were unlikely.

Mr. Austin then thanked Mr. Gottemoller and reiterated that the draft strategic plan would return to the Administrative Services Committee before advancing to the full Board. He also expressed gratitude to Ms. Greeno, Mr. Skala, Mr. Letendre, Mr. Hartman, and especially Ms. Bough for producing a visually impressive presentation. He reminded the group that he had emailed a written report the previous evening and placed hard copies on their desks. He asked members to pay particular attention to three items within the report.

First, he highlighted that the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team had presented a resolution involving an intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Greenwood in the Wonder Lake area. He noted that a similar agreement had recently been completed with the City of Woodstock and expressed pride in the County's expanding support for local municipalities.

Second, Mr. Austin reported on the progress of the County's parking lot construction. He stated that, according to Tom Burroughs, Director of Facilities Management, the project was potentially six weeks ahead of schedule, assuming favorable conditions continued. He commented that it had been rewarding to observe the construction from his office and thanked everyone for their patience during the process.

Third, he drew attention to the section on procurement and special services. He explained that Mr. Letendre had provided a more detailed update than usual concerning broadband fiber projects. Mr. Austin noted that although funding was beginning to be released, there were delays and policy uncertainties at the federal level. He stated that they would be monitoring developments over the next few days to ensure alignment between federal administration goals and the disbursement of funding to local communities. He encouraged members to review that section of the report carefully, as follow-up questions were expected next month.

Mr. Skala then presented the results of the budget survey. He reported that six members favored reducing the budget by 3%, two supported taking no new growth and no CPI, four preferred taking only new growth, five favored taking new growth and some CPI, and one supported taking both new growth and all CPI. He noted that the total number of responses was 18.

Based on the survey data, Mr. Skala stated that he would like department heads to present to their respective committees a detailed breakdown of both mandated and non-mandated programs. He requested that each program be accompanied by cost data and its contribution to the department's overall budget. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of including personnel costs associated with those programs.

Mr. Skala suggested that once all committees had reviewed their respective department budgets, the Board should convene to evaluate the compiled data—specifically to differentiate mandated from non-mandated services, assess associated costs, and begin broader discussions on the County's budgetary direction. He

clarified that the current exercise was preliminary but served to guide both staff and department heads. He concluded by thanking everyone for their participation and attention.

10. OTHER

None.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF NECESSARY)

None.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Mover: Skala

Second: Greeno

To Adjourn at 11:01 A.M. -TCCazares

Aye (18): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Greeno, Hendricks, Kamienski, Kearns, Krieger, Kunkle, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Sullivan, Thomas, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Approved (18 to 0)