



McHenry County  
County Board - Committee of the Whole  
MINUTES

March 12, 2026, 9:00 AM  
County Board Conference Room  
Administration Building, 667 Ware Rd., Woodstock, IL 60098

Members Present: Pamela Althoff (D6), Carolyn Campbell (D3), John Collins (D2), Joseph Gottemoller (D4), 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)

Members Absent: Terri Greeno (D5), Eric Hendricks (D3), Chairman Mike Buehler

**Portions of these minutes may include content based on transcripts created by Generative AI technology (Otter.ai). Full comments on all agenda items are included in the video recording of this meeting.**

---

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

Also present: Scott Hartman, County Administrator; Kerri Wisz, Chief Financial Officer; Adam Letendre, Assistant County Administrator; Laura Scarry, Assistant State's Attorney; Suzanne Ziebart, Director of Human Resources; Sandra Salgado, Sheriff's Business Manager; Joe Korpalski, County Engineer; Scott Hennings, Assistant Director of Transportation; Darrell Kuntz, Assistant County Engineer; Ed Markinson; Maintenance Superintendent; Beth Skowronski, Maintenance Assistant Superintendent; Tom Annarella, Valley Hi Administrator; Adam Wallen, Director of Planning and Development; Sarah Ponitz, Community Development Administrator; Alejandro Benitez, Chief County Assessment Officer; Melissa Adamson, Health Administrator; Patricia Nomm, Director of Environmental Health; Alex Wall, County Admin Intern; Joe Clark, BOH; Kyle Marcussen, BOH.

**Mover:** Althoff

**Secunder:** Sager

To allow the remote attendance of Mr. Collins

Aye (14): Althoff, Campbell, Gottemoller, Kamienski, Kearns, Krieger, Kunkle, Sager, Shorten, Smith, Sullivan, Thomas, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Abstain (1): Collins

Absent (3): Greeno, Hendricks, and Skala

**Approved (14 to 0)**

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Brian Sager 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 00:05:01

Vice-Chair Gottemoller provided several comments to the Board. He first reminded members that the upcoming County Board meeting would be held on Wednesday, rather than the usual Tuesday, due to Election Day.

He then referenced a recent ruling issued by the Third District Appellate Court concerning a solar farm case in Grundy County. He noted that, although McHenry County is in a different appellate district, the ruling is currently binding unless contradicted by the Second District. He explained that the court determined the LaSalle factors are not applicable in evaluating solar farm petitions and that local governments are limited to considering only the standards outlined in the state statute. He stated that, under the current interpretation, considerations are limited to specific requirements such as maximum panel height of 20 feet, a 50-foot setback from roads, and a 150-foot setback from non-participating residences on agricultural or industrially zoned land. He further noted that broader concerns raised in the Grundy County case, including potential impacts to nearby airports and future development, as well as objections from local municipalities, were not considered under the court's ruling. He indicated that the State's Attorney's Office would likely provide further guidance on the implications of this decision.

Vice-Chair Gottemoller also referenced recent comments made during the Governor's State of the State address regarding potential changes to single-family zoning. He stated that a proposal under consideration could allow additional residential units on properties currently zoned for single-family use, based on a minimum lot size threshold. He noted that, if implemented, such changes could significantly increase residential density in areas currently zoned for single-family homes, though he acknowledged that practical limitations such as septic and well capacity would need to be addressed. He concluded by stating that these potential changes, along with recent state actions related to solar development, represent significant policy shifts, and he expressed concern about their potential impact.

### **5. MEMBERS' COMMENT**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting 00:08:45

Ms. Althoff provided several updates to the Board. She reported that the McHenry County Department of Public Health had previously received a \$350,000 Strengthening Illinois Public Health Administrative Grant in 2023, but the County was notified in February that the funding had been withdrawn. She explained that the grant had been issued as a lump sum with reimbursement requests submitted afterward. She further noted that a lawsuit had been filed and that a temporary restraining order had been put in place, allowing the grant to continue through March 12. She stated that additional information would be provided as it becomes available and emphasized the importance of understanding how the loss of funding could impact the County's budget.

Ms. Althoff also informed the Board that the Monarch battery storage project, which involves areas within Prairie Grove and unincorporated McHenry County, had hosted a webinar the previous evening. She noted that information from the webinar, including frequently asked questions, would be made available on the Monarch website. She stated that while the developer's preference is to annex the entire project into the Village of Prairie Grove, a significant portion of the project currently remains within McHenry County boundaries.

Lastly, Ms. Althoff shared that the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) had awarded its Vision of Hope honors, recognizing both a McHenry County court clinician, Sarah Roush, and the McHenry County Veterans Assistance Commission. She extended congratulations for their recognition.

Dr. Sager provided a clarification regarding earlier comments about the appellate court ruling on solar developments. He asked whether the ruling would still allow the County to rely on existing zoning designations that are not agricultural or industrial to help manage solar farm development. It was clarified that if a property is not zoned agricultural or industrial, the LaSalle factors may still be considered; however, if the property is zoned agricultural or industrial, those factors can no longer be applied under the current interpretation of state law.

## **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting 00:11:52

Renee Weigert, of Johnsburg IL, regarding Solar Farm

## **7. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **7.a Division of Transportation Township Bridge Program Discussion**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 00:15:09

The Board received a presentation from the Division of Transportation regarding the Township Bridge Program and the increasing challenges associated with funding, maintaining, and replacing aging bridge infrastructure. Staff noted that township road commissioners were present to provide input and that the discussion focused on safety, infrastructure needs, and the future of the program.

Mr. Korpalski, County Engineer and Director of Transportation, provided an overview of the program's history. He explained that for approximately 60 years, McHenry County has funded all phases of township bridge projects using county and federal funds. He noted that rising construction costs, environmental requirements, and larger project scopes have made this approach increasingly difficult to sustain, and many bridges are now nearing critical replacement needs.

Staff explained that while responsibility for roads and bridges is typically divided among state, county, municipal, and township governments, McHenry County has historically managed and funded township bridge projects. This long-standing practice is unique in Illinois and contributes to current financial pressures.

Assistant County Engineer Darrell Kuntz discussed rising costs, noting that while inflation has increased significantly, bridge construction and engineering costs have risen even more sharply. He explained that many bridges that once cost under \$200,000 now cost several million dollars. He also reviewed bridge conditions, noting that of 81 structures, about half are in good condition, while others require repair or replacement, with additional projects expected in the near future.

Staff noted that the County's five-year transportation program is fiscally constrained, meaning no additional funds are available for new township bridge projects. No new township bridges have been added in over three years, and without changes, there may be a period around 2029 or 2030 with no township bridge construction. They stated that maintaining the system would require replacing two to three bridges annually.

Funding was described as a combination of federal, state, and local sources. Staff explained that federal bridge funding has become limited and may not be available for new projects until at least 2028. While state funding has increased, it remains limited. Local funding has also declined, as the County's bridge and matching fund levies were reduced in the 2026 budget.

Mr. Condon, representing township highway commissioners, stated that all 17 townships have agreed to work together and formed a five-member committee to prioritize bridge projects and coordinate planning. He noted that townships will rely on County staff for technical support and funding assistance, particularly because many rural townships lack the financial capacity to complete large projects independently.

Public safety concerns were emphasized, with Fire Chief Linneman explaining that bridge restrictions can delay emergency response times. A local resident also highlighted the impact on agricultural operations, noting that limited access affects both safety and business activity.

Board members discussed funding limitations, the long-term impact of budget decisions, and the need to prioritize infrastructure. Staff confirmed they will continue assisting townships with project planning and grant applications. It was also noted that the State of Illinois is expected to take over bridge inspections beginning in 2028 due to federal requirements.

Members emphasized the importance of collaboration and expressed interest in restoring or increasing funding to address bridge needs and prevent further deterioration of the system.

## **7.b FY25 Budget Review & FY26 1st Quarter Report**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:27:04

Ms. Wisz presented a quarterly financial update to the Board, expanding on reports previously provided to the Finance and Audit Committee to improve transparency as the County closed Fiscal Year 2025 and began new budget discussions. She noted that Fiscal Year 2025 figures remain unaudited, though no significant changes are expected.

She explained that the report compares prior year actuals, the current budget, and future projections. Fiscal Year 2025 ended with a higher-than-expected use of fund balance, primarily due to personnel overages and increased operating transfers, including \$12–\$13 million for health insurance and additional transfers to the Capital Fund. The County used approximately \$4.7 million in fund balance, reducing reserves to about 5.87 months based on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, slightly ahead of earlier projections.

Ms. Wisz reviewed Fiscal Year 2026 first-quarter results, noting that spending is evaluated against a 25 percent benchmark. She stated that General Fund expenditures, particularly personnel, are generally tracking as expected, though encumbrances may temporarily increase percentages. She indicated that, based on current trends and prior year experience, personnel costs may exceed the budget by year-end due to reduced vacancy savings and staffing changes not fully reflected in the budget.

She also explained that the revised budget reflects Board-approved changes, including approximately \$100,000 in new grant-related funding, and clarified that purchase order rollovers for multi-year projects do not increase the overall budget.

During discussion, Board members requested clearer explanations of staffing changes, vacancies, and overtime costs. Administration confirmed that some positions have been eliminated or restructured, though none were formally frozen. Ms. Wisz noted that overtime is currently included within personnel costs and that efforts are underway to better track it separately.

She concluded by noting that Fiscal Year 2025 revenues aligned with budget expectations and invited feedback to refine future reports.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **8.a Review of the March 18, 2026 County Board Agenda Items**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 01:54:17

Vice-Chairman Gottemoller 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**

### **NEW & UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

13.a - Authorizing the County Administrator to Execute a Vacant Land Sales Contract to Sell 2.421 Acres of County Owned Property on Banford Road, Woodstock, IL (18), removed for discussion by Mr. Smith

#### FINANCE & AUDIT

16.b.2.1 - Resolution Rescinding Prior Notice Requirements Established by Resolution R94081750155 and Discontinue Equalization-Only Assessment Notices (5), removed for discussion by Ms. Von Bergen

16.b.2.9 - Resolution Establishing Remuneration and Authorizing a Monthly Stipend for McHenry County Board of Health Members (51), removed for discussion by Mr. Kunkle

#### **DISCUSSION**

#### NEW & UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13.a - Authorizing the County Administrator to Execute a Vacant Land Sales Contract to Sell 2.421 Acres of County Owned Property on Banford Road, Woodstock, IL (18)

Mr. Smith stated that Item 13.a involved the proposed sale of a parcel of land that had been owned by the County for many years and that the County had received an offer from an adjacent property owner. While he agreed that the property should be sold, he expressed concern about the process and questioned whether the opportunity to purchase had been adequately made available to the general public. He noted that proceeding directly with a neighboring property owner could appear non-transparent and suggested that the County consider additional steps to ensure openness, such as publicly advertising the sale or inviting competitive bids. He indicated that he intended to request that the item be referred back to Administrative Services for further review and discussion. Additional comments from members supported this approach, including concerns about relying on an outdated appraisal and interest in obtaining a new appraisal to ensure the County receives fair market value before proceeding.

#### FINANCE & AUDIT

16.b.2.1 - Resolution Rescinding Prior Notice Requirements Established by Resolution R94081750155 and Discontinue Equalization-Only Assessment Notices (5)

Discussion on Item 16.b.2.1 focused on a proposal to discontinue mailing certain property tax-related notices to taxpayers in non-reassessment years as a cost-saving measure. It was explained that these notices are not required by statute and that eliminating them would reduce expenses related to postage and certified mail. Staff noted that, in reassessment years, required notices would continue to be sent. As an alternative, information would be made available electronically through County and Treasurer platforms, with additional communication through social media, newsletters, and other outreach efforts to inform the public of the change. Members discussed the importance of maintaining transparency and ensuring residents remain informed, with questions raised about whether additional notification methods, such as optional electronic sign-ups or enhanced public messaging, could be implemented without creating additional administrative burden.

16.b.2.9 - Resolution Establishing Remuneration and Authorizing a Monthly Stipend for McHenry County Board of Health Members (51)

Regarding Item 16.b.2.9, Mr. Kunkle expressed appreciation for the individuals serving on the Board of Health and acknowledged their professional expertise and service to the community. However, he raised concerns about establishing stipends for board members using grant funding, noting that while the cost is currently supported by a grant, such funding is temporary and could eventually shift to the levy. He cautioned that even small stipends can grow over time and emphasized the importance of long-term fiscal awareness. In response, it was clarified that the stipend is authorized and limited by state statute, with a capped amount that cannot be exceeded. It was also explained that the stipend would be administered through the Public Health budget rather than directly through the levy and that the estimated annual cost is relatively minimal—approximately \$15,000 or less—and dependent on member attendance. Additional

clarification was provided that not all members may choose to accept the stipend and that the Board liaison is not eligible to receive it. Members also noted that the stipend structure was modeled after similar boards, such as the Zoning Board of Appeals, and was intended in part to offset increasing participation costs, including travel and time commitments associated with expanded responsibilities.

## **9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Full comments can be heard on the McHenry County website audio starting at 02:09:12

Mr. Hartman presented his first quarterly report as County Administrator and expressed appreciation to all department heads and elected officials for their contributions. He noted that the report includes significant and noteworthy updates from across County departments and is intended to keep the Board informed of ongoing activities and progress.

He also introduced the County's first Efficiency and Value Report, explaining that it is a companion document to the quarterly report and will continue to be developed over time. He stated that the purpose of the report is to highlight the ongoing efforts of departments and elected offices to improve operations, increase efficiency, reduce costs, and reorganize processes where appropriate. He emphasized that these efforts are continuous and represent the day-to-day work of County staff. He further noted that these initiatives have resulted in thousands, and in some cases millions, of dollars in savings and reallocations over time. He expressed enthusiasm about continuing to build upon this report and keeping the Board informed of these efforts.

Mr. Hartman also reminded the Board that the upcoming meeting would be held on Wednesday, March 18, rather than the usual Tuesday, due to scheduling adjustments. He noted that Ms. Schueller was not present at the meeting because she was representing McHenry County at a CMAP policy meeting, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the County's presence in those discussions.

During discussion, a question was raised regarding the potential impact of declining fund balance reserves on the County's ability to borrow. It was noted that Moody's had recently reaffirmed the County's AAA bond rating but emphasized the importance of maintaining strong fund balances. It was further noted that a decrease in reserves could jeopardize the County's rating, and that the County is currently near the lower end of the acceptable liquidity range for maintaining that rating.

Additional comments were made expressing appreciation to the McHenry County Conservation District representatives in attendance, noting strong support for their work and contributions to the community. Appreciation was also expressed for the quarterly report and the newly introduced Efficiency and Value Report, with members noting that the document would be a useful tool for communicating the County's ongoing efforts to control costs and improve operations.

## **10. OTHER**

None.

## **11. EXECUTIVE SESSION (IF NECESSARY)**

**Mover:** Sager

**Second:** Shorten

That the Board move to Executive Session at 11:12 A.M.

Aye (13): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Kamienski, Kearns, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Thomas, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Absent (5): Greeno, Hendricks, Krieger, Kunkle, and Sullivan

**Approved (13 to 0)**

**Mover:** Skala  
**Second:** Kamienski

That the Board exit Executive Session at 11:47 A.M.

Aye (13): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Kamienski, Kearns, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Thomas, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Absent (5): Greeno, Hendricks, Krieger, Kunkle, and Sullivan

**Approved (13 to 0)**

**Mover:** Skala  
**Second:** Van Hof

That the Board move to Regular Session at 11:48 A.M.

Aye (13): Althoff, Campbell, Collins, Gottemoller, Kamienski, Kearns, Sager, Shorten, Skala, Smith, Thomas, Van Hof, and Von Bergen

Absent (5): Greeno, Hendricks, Krieger, Kunkle, and Sullivan

**Approved (13 to 0)**

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mover:** Skala  
**Second:** Althoff

To Adjourn at 11:49 A.M. -TCCazares

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

Absent (3): Collins, Greeno, and Hendricks

**Approved (15 to 0)**