

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING

Nov 18, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the County Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by J. Larry Miller. This meeting was held in the Franklin County Courthouse, County Board Room 133, 100 Public Square, Benton, Illinois.

ROLL CALL

Secretary, Kevin Wilson, called the roll. Members in attendance were J. Larry Miller, Dave Bartoni, Angela Evans, John Gossett, Neil Hargis, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, and Kevin Weston. Brad Wilson was absent.

Also in attendance were Gayla Prather, County Board Office Manager; Kyle Bacon, County Sheriff; Matt Barnett, County Engineer; Ryan Buckingham, Director of Emergency Management Agency - by phone; Lori LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent; Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments; Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer; and other interested parties.

PLEDGE

Ray Minor lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman J. Larry Miller asked if there is anyone who wants to make public comments?

Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk: Very quickly, I want to make you aware of a couple of dates to mark down this coming Friday, November 22nd. There will be a retirement going away, I guess event for Judge Tom Tedeschi and be here in the conference room down the hallway here from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM on that Friday afternoon. That is November 22nd, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM and then also on December the second, I worked with our county clerk, Kevin Wilson and with Judge Morgan. And there will be a swearing in ceremony on December the second. That is Monday of the next county

committee meeting, I guess, reorganization meeting on that. It would be at three o'clock. In courtroom A, Justice David Overstreet with Illinois Supreme Court. Justice is going to swear in Judge Elect Jim Giacone and then I suggested to Judge Giacone that I think he should go to work right after that and start swearing people in. So, the way I understand it is that Judge Overstreet will swear in Judge Giacone and then Judge Giacone will swear in the remaining people. I think there are six or seven to be sworn in following that. So that is on the 2nd, that is at 3:00 PM on Monday, December the second.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Anybody else?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Yes. Good evening. So, on Friday, November 15th, I sent an email to each of you, Ms. Evans, I did not have your email, and Mr. Bartoni, yours bounced back so I do not have yours. Okay, I did try to send it to everyone, but I just wanted to read the letter into the minutes and just to make sure that everybody did receive the email. So here it goes.

So, Dear Franklin County board members, I am reaching out to address an ongoing concern regarding the allocation of office space for the regional office of education. As regional superintendent, I am committed to ensuring that our office fulfills its responsibilities effectively. However, frequent requests to relinquish or reallocate our space have raised concerns about our ability to operate officially and serve the community's educational needs. I would like to highlight several examples that illustrated this challenge. Number one, in 2017, office space advocacy.

My predecessor Matt Duncan, strongly advocated to secure office space across the hall in Campbell building to meet our expanding operational requirements. Number two, temporary relocation for courthouse construction. During the construction of the courthouse, we were requested to allow the county board secretary to temporarily utilize our

office space after the courthouse was completed. However, our office remained unoccupied for several months while the board reevaluated its allocation, despite an existing agreement. Ultimately, Mr. Miller upheld the original terms allowing us to return to our designated space. Number three, the state's attorney's office request. The state's attorney's office later expressed interest in utilizing our office space, requiring further advocacy to retain our facilities. Number four, county clerk's requests and office reassignment on September 26, 23, the county clerk's office requested the use of our space, which was subsequently designated for the election offices storage needs, to accommodate this change, we adapted by relocating to the basement where we continue to conduct essential activities including professional learning trainings, staff workspaces, truancy meetings with families and school districts, and board of control meetings for the Franklin County Regional Delivery System grants.

This move involved additional expenses as we arranged for movers to relocate furniture, set up internet services, sorry, internet service, and add an additional server to maintain our operational efficiency. These costs were shared by the Franklin County, by Franklin County and ROE 21 and thoughtful planning for future space allocation will ensure that these investments are fully maximized to support our work and avoid unnecessary expenses. Number five, unanticipated office changes. Our office storage was recently replaced to meet the needs of another department without prior notification. This change reflects a broader pattern that undermines workspace stability for the ROE. Number six request for temporary space relocation for the city water department. Most recently I was asked to temporarily relinquish our newly reassigned office space in the basement to accommodate the city water department for an estimated period of one to three years. However, even a temporary relocation will significantly disrupt our ability to provide essential training and operational support to

educators and districts. Based on past experiences, a relocation risks permanent reduction in our already limited workspace.

The Regional Office of Education's mission directly supports Franklin County and Southern Illinois serving 22 school districts, three special education cooperatives and three private schools. Our office employs over 60 dedicated professionals, many of whom reside in Franklin County, providing valuable educational and support services. Through substantial grant funding, we deliver essential services to schools at minimal cost to the county. While cooperation with local entities is important, county resources should prioritize county offices like ours that serve a broad regional mission. This approach will allow us to continue delivering critical services efficiently. The Illinois School Code mandates the county board that the county board provides the regional superintendent with suitable office space including furnishings and supplies to support this important work. The continued requests for space reductions, however, undermine our ability to fulfill this mandate and carry out our mission to support educators, students, and families in the region. As an elected official, representing Franklin County, I urge the board to recognize the value of a stable and supportive workspace for the Regional Office of Education.

Our office's work enhances educational outcomes, creates jobs, supports grant funded initiatives, and fosters progress across the region. I ask that the board consider our regional mission as you evaluate space allocation decisions. Thank you for your attention and ongoing support to our work in advancing education across Southern Illinois. Respectfully, Lorie LeQuatte.

And then I did put on here to please share with Angela Evans, I did not have her email, but that is the end of the letter. But I would like to add that there has been talk in the past about moving the county server that is located in my office to the basement for security purposes. But I would like to bring your attention or make you aware that the ROE

recently experienced three incidents of Microsoft fraud and vulnerabilities in our STS financial and strike payment software. All stemming from a serious breach of network security.

This occurred after the county's internet vendor. I am not sure who that would be plugged directly into our network switch, which is a critical part of our internal system. Connecting an external device to our network without proper authorization is highly risky. It opened our systems to potential malware, unauthorized access, and other malicious activities. These were pretty serious. The action compromised the safety of our sensitive financial and operational data. So, to prevent further risks, we have locked, we have locked it up to ensure that only authorized personnel can access it. Safeguarding our network from future vulnerabilities, ensuring the entirety of our operations.

Angela Evans: Well, had I got that email, I would have told you, I apologize. What you just read was the first to my acknowledgement because we are not affiliated with the things that go on with the Campbell building. That is Kevin, Kevin's the chief.

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Yes, I am aware.

Angela Evans: So, I apologize that the insufficiency of always being asked to move and move and move with being in real estate and having three different locations, I know the constant struggle of things getting misplaced, this getting here. So, my apologies that this has hindered you and being able to follow through with the tasks that you must perform. Any questions?

Curtis Overton: How many counties do you serve?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Four.

Curtis Overton: Okay. And you have offices in all the counties?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Yes, I do.

Curtis Overton: You have offices in all?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: I do. Plus, so I have an office here in Franklin County and then in Johnson City. I have an alternative safe school in Eron County. I have an office in Johnson County. I have an office in Massac County I have an office and a regional safe school.

Curtis Overton: Would it be fair to say that this is your main office or do you not have a main office?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Well, legally, this is the home office, but Williamson County we have the most space and so that is where the majority of the staff is located. Well, I don't know that I would say the majority anymore. We have staff in many of our schools. We have staff out and about all the time. Many of them are landing here.

Curtis Overton: How many staff do you have here?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Let us see. So, I have truancy, CRDS, finance, Lisa eight at any given time, plus other staff who come here regularly and they often go to the basement and we have a desk down there in that space that we have also set up as, or the conference slash training room.

Curtis Overton: Okay, thank you.

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: You're welcome.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: So, the room down there that we are talking about, how often is it used?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: At least once a week.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: How much time?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Well, it can vary. Sometimes a full day, sometimes part of the day. Sometimes someone is just down there working. It just varies depending on it is a training or if it is truancy meetings or if it is a board meeting, it is just going to be for an hour. An hour or so. Utilize it for trainings. Sorry, interviews. There is a variety of reasons.

Kevin Westin: Do you use the break room, which is the formal board meeting room?

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: We do not. We were told not to use that anymore.

Kevin Weston: Well, I knew you were using it for truancy things.

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Well, until we got the basement and we do it in the basement now. There would be an expense removing my server and internet that we just paid for that.

Kevin Weston: We paid for that.

Lorie LeQuatte, Franklin-Johnson-Massac-Williamson Regional Superintendent: Well, we did too. Yes.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Any other questions? Nothing. Thank you. Alright, any other comments for the, from the public. We are going to move on to approval of the minutes.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Curtis Overton made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 21, 2024 Regular County Board Meeting and November 1, 2024 Special County Board Meeting. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

COUNTY CLAIMS

Kevin Weston made a motion to pay the claims on file. Ray Minor seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

DELINQUENT TAX PROGRAM - RESOLUTIONS

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the first item on the agenda is the Delinquent Tax Program resolutions regarding authorizing my signature (J. Larry Miller) to execute deeds on the parcels sold thru the County's Delinquent Tax Program.

Kevin Weston made a motion to accept the resolutions as presented. John Gossett seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said resolutions are made a part of these minutes as Resolution No. 2024-37 thru 2024-40.

2025 FRANKLIN COUNTY BUDGET - APPROVAL

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Franklin County budget for 2025. We have that before you. It has been on display. We have made some adjustments and those have been changed also on the website. So, is there a motion to approve the budget?

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the 2025 Budget as presented. Curtis Overton seconded the motion.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Any discussion? If not, we are ready to vote.

Kevin Weston: Have we gotten our audit in yet?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: No. Okay. No, I think it is close. I emailed Sarah the other day I think, but she had not responded. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said 2025 Budget is made a part of these minutes as Ordinance 2024-01.

**RANDY HOUSE &
ASSOCIATES INC. FOR
COUNTY EMPLOYEES
INSURANCE - APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Randy House & Associates Inc. for County Employees Insurance. The adjustment of our deductible of the county for individual from 3,500 to 5,500 and is there a motion to approve that?

John Gossett made a motion to approve the Randy House County employee's insurance with the raised deductible to \$5,500. Ray Minor seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I do remember when I first got a little bit aware of our insurance and what it was, I thought, man, we have exposure, our deductible and whatever, but as I have looked at this, I believe this is the right direction for us to go.

Said insurance information is made a part of these minutes.

**SECURITY ALARM AT
COURTHOUSE -
APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Security Alarm to correct landline to cellular upgrade and upgrade monitoring phone response at courthouse.

Kevin Weston: \$595 up to do the upgrade and then the monthly charge will be \$64 bucks.

John Gossett made the motion to approve the Security Alarm upgrade as presented. Angela Evans second the motion.

Curtis Overton: I have just got a question. Why do we need this? I mean, is our other system not working right and this is a correction or what are we doing currently?

Kevin Weston: There have been some false alarms and then the police are notified. With the fire department, notified. And with the current system, we need to upgrade to be able to call, make the call out and that is the issue.

Angela Evans: Steve, did you have an issue with it? If it was security go off and then it was on Facebook or something, everybody was like, oh, what is going on? Because they thought one of our buildings was getting locked into.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Any other discussion? If not. we are ready to vote. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said proposals are made a part of this minutes.

**NOVACOM QUOTE FOR
CONTROL ACCESS AT
JUSTICE CENTER -
APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Novacom Communications from Herrin quote for control access at the Justice Center. Anyone make a motion for that one?

Dave Bartoni made a motion to approve the Novacom quote as presented. Ray Minor seconded the motion.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Is there any discussion or any questions about it?

Curtis Overton: Just a quick question. Is this what they have already got is just outdated or what?

Kevin Weston: No, they will be upgrading to a card access. They'll swipe the card to get into the building and it will record when the specific person came in and that at what time?

Dave Bartoni: It is also my understanding this will allow responding deputies in case of emergency to have immediate access. Is that correct?

Kevin Weston: Yes. That is the best reason is that they do not have to fumble for keys or whatever. They just use their card and the same card will be working for all the buildings. So, the deputies will have access immediately.

Curtis Overton: What is the cost?

Kevin Weston: \$5,500. I think I remember. I do not have it in front of me.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Any other discussions? No. We're ready to vote. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said Novacom quote is made a part of these minutes.

**BROWNING TOWNSHIP
ROADWORK PROJECT ON
BENTON FIELD ROAD -
GRANT MATCH FROM
ARPA - APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the grant match of \$22,300, he presented a letter from Browning Township Highway Commissioner requesting this from ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding. We discussed this in the previous meeting, and so we need a motion to approve that from ARPA.

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the money for \$22,300 from Fund Road Project. Neil Hargis seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said letter is made a part of these minutes.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
COMMUNITY MENTAL
"708" HEALTH /
CENTERSTONE BOARD -
2 APPOINTMENTS**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the appointments to the Franklin County Community Mental "708" Health / Centerstone Board and he presented a letter request the reappointment of Ryan Patton and Tammy Weston to this board for another four year term ending December 31, 2028.

Curtis Overton made a motion to reappointment Ryan Patton and Tammy Weston to the Franklin County Community Mental "708" Health / Centerstone Board as presented. Neil Hargis seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all vote yes except Kevin Weston abstained.

Said letter is made a part of these minutes.

**COUNTY CLERK,
SHERIFF & CORONER
MONTHLY REPORT**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated the next item on the agenda are the October, 2024 monthly reports from the County Clerk, Sheriff and Coroner reports.

Ray Minor made motion to approve the reports as presented. Kevin Weston seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said reports are made a part of these minutes.

CLOSED SESSION

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated the next item on the agenda is a closed session to discuss personnel negotiations. If someone make a motion to do that.

John Gossett made a motion to go into closed session at 6:24 p.m. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.


Chairman J. Larry Miller: We will adjourn to the conference room. There will not be any action taken when we return. Thank you all for coming.

**RETURN TO OPEN
SESSION**

Dave Bartoni made a motion to resume the open meeting at 7:24 p.m. Angela Evans seconded the motion. All in agreement.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman J. Larry Miller asked the Board if there were any questions. Ray Minor made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kevin Weston seconded the motion. There being no further business Chairman J. Larry Miller declared the meeting adjourned.



J. Larry Miller
Franklin County Board Chairman



Kevin Wilson
County Clerk and Recorder