

# FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD

## MINUTES OF MEETING

Aug 18, 2025

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### CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the County Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Neil Hargis. 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 Neil Hargis, Dave Bartoni, Angela Evans, John Gossett, J. Larry Miller, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, and Kevin Weston. Brad Wilson was absent.

Also in attendance were Amanda Kink, County Board Office Manager; Amos Abbott, E-911 Director; Kyle Bacon, County Sheriff; Matt Barnett, County Engineer; Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments; Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer; and other interested parties.

### PLEDGE

Chairman Neil Hargis lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Neil Hargis asked if there is anyone who wants to make public comments?

Rocky Morris: Here we go. An issue that we've recently come across was on private grants and we began to track one grant because we would go down the fair. It's not the fact that we're against private grant. It is how those grants are deposited. And to understand that we begin to track the money off of this grant that Kevin [Wilson, County Clerk] had. Now, first of all, we talked to Kevin [Wilson, County Clerk] on three different occasions. We discussed, Tommy [Carter] said, we talked about the other situation with the kids, but actually we discussed the application and the award of a \$50,000 grant. And the grant was specifically for private infrastructure. Well, inside the grant,

when we began to look, there was requirements.

One of 'em was that this grant is subject to financial laws and regulations, government management, public funds, which also includes depositing and accounting of these funds. So, the question that we had depositing public funds, does that include private funds? Yes. Do we deposit those funds into an official county account, which when you deposit the funds inside that account, we're guaranteed transparency. Steve [Vercellino, County Treasurer] gives it. Okay. We also get accountability. We know where the money goes when you take a grant, a private grant, and you move that grant to a bank. I have a question. Now, I don't know if that's legal. I think Steve [Vercellino, County Treasurer] has talked to Mr. Wilson, [County Clerk] on with the way Mr. Wilson said that Steve [Vercellino, County Treasurer], gave him two options when the money comes direct deposit into a private account at a local bank, which was Whittington State Bank, [State Bank of Whittington]. Now the turn we got with a private bank for private public funds could increase the risk of mismanagement or misuse of these funds.

Okay. Also, the other side of the, again, what's Steve's also the option was you can drop put it into the treasurer's account, which in the treasurer's account, that's where we have accountability and transparency. So, we begin to look at this grant, and like I said, we're not against Grant saves tax there, but this grant didn't come to, how can I put it? Our expectations, which we're pretty tight on stuff, but the grant was for \$50,000. And the question that we had directly with Mr. Wilson, [County Clerk] why did we spend \$40,000 on a truck? That was our question. And then we began to look at it more. What we began to see was more questions wrote, and those questions actually showed the grant was accepted August 9, 2024. The grant was not signed until October 28, 2024. So that was almost 11 weeks before the grant got signed. That was a question why if we needed the money for the grant, why wasn't it signed immediately? Why didn't we

disperse the funds? So, we still haven't got through that with Kevin [Wilson] on that. So, there was some questions there. On November 14, 2024, Mr. Wilson sent a letter to Alicia Edwards, a new account rep at State Bank [of Whittington], requesting the opening of a new account for the Franklin County Clerk, which was private. So basically, he took the second option that Steve [Vercellino] had given on public treasury department or private, which I don't get that because of transparency and accountability and where it got out to on November 22, 2024 after the election.

This would've been 14 days after the November six election. I'm sorry. The original deposit of the grant was wired directly to State Bank of Whittington. Okay. So, the actual money never got in place until after the election. This grant was specific on the election for detail. And it was a very specific public purpose. It says the grants must be used exclusively for the public purpose of planning, operationalizing reliable and secure election administration in Franklin County, Illinois for secure elections. We're all for that. And the election on November 6th, the grant expired on December 31, 2024. So, the money had to be taken by then.

So, the grant was actually signed again on October 28, 2024, almost 11 weeks after the grant was justified. If you look at this, the grant itself, the deposit of the money into State Bank of Whittington was I think in or around November 22nd. No, I'm sorry, yeah. On November 22, 2024, \$50,000 deposit from C-T-L-C-L. They were the originals of the grant. That was 10 to 15 days after the election on November 27, 2024, there was a \$39,000 five days after there was a bank transfer with a fee of \$35 for the truck. On December 16, 2024, there was \$919 for auto trim for the truck.

On December 18, 2024, there are \$6,821 to stiles office supply that was paid by cashier's check on 1230. You only got one day left on this grant was paid by \$2,753.13 was paid by the cashier one day before the grand deadline that went to computers.

So, after we looked at this, we felt was the security of the election office upgrades, updates or was the purpose of the grant for quite an interest of the truck? That's just our theory and that's how it all unraveled. It seemed like if the grant itself was for specifically the election and we're supposed to obey the law cited in the grant is if that grant is ever recovered, the first question that we would have, was the county board aware of this grant? Was there agenda? Was there a meeting that took place? Was the public involved? We couldn't find a minute. We couldn't find an agenda. We were looking for it. So, the question is, bottom line, when you deposit a grant \$50,000 into a private account, it seems like you're trying to limit transparency and accountability from the public and we just didn't agree with that part. We shared. That. Okay.

So also, the last thing is that I've got, if you look, most of you got, you look on the infrastructure grant application, it shows the expense of the grant, 7,500 for furniture, 2,500 to tech upgrade, \$40,000 used transportation truck and trailer. I don't think it got a trailer. So, the big major question that we had was on that. There was a spot that says, would you be interested in the other grant? And the answer is put yes. So, the only thing that we did was come to the board and find out is that an issue for the board to have open discussion on a grant, on a private grant. So, like I said, that's up to you. The truck was the issue. It seemed like we spent a lot of money that we could have put safety and security difference up in to the Campbell building.

But \$40,000 on the truck is almost 82% of the grant, which to me just becomes a question why. And if that's sufficient with this board, that's your fault. It isn't our fault. But there were people that was interested in this, so I just wanted to bring your attention to it. Most of the boards throughout the US right here, Oregon, all over, we pulled the most of it, went through the board to get tech approval and they voted on it. They passed a referendum for the money, and then the money was

allocated into the budget, which why not it's election budget should be allocated 50,000 into the election budget. It wasn't. So, these are just issues that I think need some type of clarity, either policy referendum issue that maybe can get this settled because this is only phase one of this. There are four other phases which will bring up next meeting, but this is a key right now. And if nothing personally against Kevin [Wilson], we met with him, he was understanding, but when we got to the grant, first question, we thought, did the board review this grant? Did you review the application? In my opinion, when you have money that's going be appropriated into a fund, a public fund, that's going to provide transparency. Okay, why wouldn't the board want look at it? I'm not saying you telling yes or no, and I think that's a big issue that we've got right now. What authority does this board have over elected officials other than budget?

John Gossett: That's it.

Rocky Morris: Hugh?

John Gossett: That's pretty much your answer.

Rocky Morris: Right? So that's where we're at with it. That's what we brought up. And any questions? Thank you.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay. Any other public comments?

Tom Carter: I'll make one quick one. I know I talked to you and I'll tell to the rest of the board, anytime you get a grant, if for some reason somebody complains that you're not living up to the terms of that grant and they call that money back, if the board did not approve it and the board did not sign off on it, then who pays that money back? And ~~that's what needs to be addressed by this board to prevent anything else like this in the future. Thank you.~~

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING** Kevin Weston made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 21, 2025 Regular County Board Meeting. J. Larry Miller second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**COUNTY CLAIMS** Ray Minor made a motion to pay the claims on file. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**DELINQUENT TAX PROGRAM - RESOLUTIONS** Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the first item on the agenda is the Delinquent Tax Program resolutions regarding authorizing my signature (Neil Hargis) 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 second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said resolutions are made a part of these minutes as Resolution No. 2025-42 and 2025-43.

**BI - COUNTY LEVY - RESOLUTION** Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the levy resolution for Franklin-Williamson Bi-County Health Department. Chairman Neil Hargis stated that this resolution was discussed at a Committee meeting.

John Gossett: When are we going to get some numbers on that?

Kevin Weston: Stays the same.

Curtis Overton: Stays the same.

Kevin Weston: They stay the same stays the same. The percentage of the amount of money was a little larger, but the percentage stays the same for both Franklin and Williamson County.

John Gossett: Thought you were going to show us all that, the comment with more than the actual cost for the program for the salary, I was surprised. Did you get anything on that?

Kevin Weston: Yeah, I did. They explained it that we originally had the TB test about the TB test. Money is no longer being allocated by that. We're paying part of that, but the IMRF funding is a little larger because they had gotten behind on that. They had to raise the funding in that for both Williamson and Franklin County. So, they've been raising that up a little bit to make sure they have enough money in IMRF.

Kevin Weston: I'll make a motion since I'm on the Bi-County Board.

Curtis Overton: Second.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any additional questions? Okay. Please call roll. On roll call vote, all vote yes.

Said resolution are made a part of these minutes as Resolution No. 2025-44.

**CHARGE TOWNSHIPS  
\$386.90 PER CHANGE  
COMPLETED BY JASON  
HEUMANN**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to charge townships \$386.90 per change completed by Jason Heumann for 2025 pay 2026 tax year.

John Gossett: I will make that motion.

Angela Evans: I've got a question. And that's for Cindy [Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments], it says per change.

J. Larry Miller: Let's get a second. And then we will question her.

Angela Evans: I. Oh, you can. Oh, okay. I thought usually you go with, is there any discussion?

J. Larry Miller: Well, you need a second. I'll make a second.

Chairman Neil Hargis: And now we're open for questions.

Angela Evans: Okay. Cindy? It says per change. So, if, say the assessor from Sesser, he brings you three changes. That would be \$386.90 times three?

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: Yes, times three.

Angela Evans: Oh, ok.

J. Larry Miller: My question is how many changes were how many?

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: What'd you say? I'm sorry.

J. Larry Miller: Well, how much will that generate? How many changes were there made that we're going to charge for?

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: Well, we don't know that yet. Last year he turned in.

J. Larry Miller: Oh, I thought we were doing it for the work last year.

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: No.

J. Larry Miller: Oh, okay.

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: No, we're moving forward. But I based it on, I have a print out.

J. Larry Miller: I don't care about that. So, it's going be, we don't know the number at this point.

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: Last year he turned in 45.

J. Larry Miller: 145?

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: No, just 45.

J. Larry Miller: 45.

Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments: But if you take 45 times this \$386.90 you come up with around 17,500. So, the county would have to come up with \$2,500, but 17,500 will go towards paying a salary.

J. Larry Miller: Thank you.

John Gossett: I'd like to comment on that. What had happened was we have to make all these changes by hiring this gentleman and the amount that we were going to charge the townships that aren't doing the assessments was minimal. This raises it to a point where we're almost at parity. That's all it does.

J. Larry Miller: Quite honestly, we are a crisis, in my opinion, on the way we are doing assessments here in this county. It is shameful and it will never be made everybody happy. I realize that. But I talked with Cindy today that I saw an individual had built a pole barn house. It's probably 24 by 40, very plain, nothing fancy. His taxes went from \$1,200 a year to \$3,600 a year for a pole barn. And so, it's assessed somewhere around \$150,000 for that fact. And then we've got these factors that are being added to this, and I've got the numbers here for that, and I was going to do a little figuring, but it multiplies pretty quickly. On the basis from the previous year of 21, 22, there's going to be some people, there are increases going to be 25%. And that's with no assessment change that wasn't done in the county.

But the reason it's done, if I'm correct, is because we're not getting it done in the county. So now Mr. Brad Wilson I know has been gouged, he feels like pretty hard, but guess what? He's going to get hit harder because his assessment is up pretty high and he thinks it's unfair, but he's going to get it worse than the guy who's low. That

needs to be up. And this stuff is all over the place. And then we've got so many of that are not even on the tax rolls. I mean, I see grain bins going up and farm buildings going, I don't know what they cost. They're a quarter million-dollar buildings and they're not even on the tax roll. I have a grain bin is going to be a hundred thousand. That's why I'm quitting, I think. I'm quitting building. I promise you that. But they've always been fair to me and I can't complain. But there's a lot of inadequacies out there and we need to try to get something done about it.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay, any other questions? Okay. Please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**SOLAR ORDINANCE -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the Solar Ordinance, but as I stated earlier, we are going to table this ordinance.

**SESSER PAVE & SEAL  
TO RE-SEAL JUSTICE  
CENTER PARKING LOT -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of Sesser Pave & Seal to re-seal Justice Center Parking Lot and the total estimate cost will be \$16,207.16.

Angela Evans made a motion to approve the cost as presented. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said estimate of cost is made a part of these minutes.

**ANIMAL CONTROL  
FLOORING  
ECO-ADVANTAGE -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of Animal Control flooring by Eco-Advantage Concrete Polishing & Epoxy Coatings with a proposal of \$5,850.00.

John Gossett made a motion to approve the proposal as presented. Curtis Overton second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis asked if there were any questions.

Angela Evans: Yeah, I am going to jump in this time. Where's that money coming out of? Is animal control going to contribute anything to towards that?

Chairman Neil Hargis: No, because I kind of said that they're going to need to buy some other things coming up. Like some issues with their fences. Fencing. Yeah. So, it helps them out a little bit. We'll just take care of that. And they've been, to be honest, they have spent a lot of money already out of their donations to upgrade some things.

Dave Bartoni: Yeah. They just bought \$4,000. Pressure washer.

J. Larry Miller: So, it's going to come out of contingency, I assume.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Yeah. So, any other questions? Please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said proposal is made a part of these minutes.

**ELECTRICAL WORK AT  
STORAGE FACILITY -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval for electrical work on the east end of the storage facility which is the EMA area portion by McCollum Electric for \$4,100. An email from Ryan Buckingham, Director of Emergency Management Agency was sent to the board members explaining what is needed at the EMA section of this facility.

Curtis Overton made the motion to do the electrical work at a storage facility for \$4,100. J. Larry Miller second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said email & estimate are made a part of these minutes.

**HSG MECHANICAL WORK  
AT COURTHOUSE -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval for HSG Mechanical work at the courthouse for a total proposal of \$6,000.

Kevin Weston made a motion to approve the proposal as presented. Dave Bartoni second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any questions?

Chairman Neil Hargis: Is this a continuation of a contract we already had with them? You said they

Kevin Weston: They've been doing it. We've been doing it since we opened. They've been on preventive maintenance.

Curtis Overton: Prices have stayed pretty consistent.

Kevin Weston: Same prices. Okay. We've paid for four or five years.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay. Any other questions? Okay. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said proposal is made a part of these minutes.

**ENGINEERING  
AGREEMENT FOR  
CONSTRUCTION  
ENGINEERING FOR  
FREEMAN SPUR  
BLACKTOP**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the Engineering agreement for construction engineering for section 24-00196-00-RS Freeman Spur Blacktop from Freeman Spur Road to Pershing Road with Hutchinson Engineering from Carbondale.

J. Larry Miller made a motion to accept the agreement as presented. Ray Minor second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said agreement is made a part of these minutes as Agreement No. 2025-15.

**RENEWAL AGREEMENT  
FOR DEVNET INC.  
PROPERTY TAX  
SOFTWARE LICENSE  
MAINTENANCE &  
SUPPORT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the renewal agreement for Devnet Inc. Property Tax Software License Maintenance & Support.

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the renewal of Devnet's agreement. Kevin Weston second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any questions?

J. Larry Miller: I assume that this is an annual thing we do and I assume that comes out of your budget. I mean that's in your budget, isn't it?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So, it is a five-year contract. So, five years ago we did the same contract. So, it's up for the contract. Some things that have changed, there's a couple things they put in there that we said no, we're not doing. So, we took those out. We had some concerns a little bit as far as the rep coming here a little bit more often. So that's been put back into the contract. They raised the rates, we told them no. So, we negotiated back down to what it was. So roughly they'll save here, almost \$30,000 over a five-year period. So, I would sign it before they changed their mind.

J. Larry Miller: My question was: is it in your budget?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yes. I mean it is in the general county budget.

J. Larry Miller: Okay. That is what I thought.

John Gossett: And how much is that sir?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So, it's roughly \$14,000 per quarter and they moved it to \$15,000 and we said no, we like \$14,000 and we were able to stay at that number. So, over the period it is, right now it's \$282. They were proposing three 10. So now it's going to stay at \$282,000,

## APPOINTMENTS

## BOARD - 3

## MOSQUITO ABATEMENT

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are three appointments to the Mosquito Abatement Board need to be reappointed which are Randy Brownrigg, Jeff Darneill & Jill Shelly for the next item on the agenda. So, any other questions?

Please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted Yes.

J. Larry Miller: I know that.

even live in Franklin County.

Kevin Weston: Jim Johnson, Administrator. Doesn't

Amanda Kink, County Board Office Manager: It's a different one because I questioned that.

one.

Chairman Neil Hargis: It's evidently a different

administrator?

J. Larry Miller: Well Jim Johnson, is he the

J. Larry Miller made a motion to accept these reappointments to the Franklin County Hospital Board as presented. Angela Evans second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are three appointments to the Franklin County Hospital Board need to be reappointed which are Mary Ellen Aikken, Jim Johnson and Brent Young for a three year terms ending August 31, 2028.

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the resolution for the County to adopt / join FACE, needs to be tabled at this time.

## APPOINTMENTS

## HOSPITAL BOARD - 3

## FRANKLIN COUNTY

## RESOLUTION

## JOIN FACE -

## COUNTY TO ADOPT /

Said agreement is made a part of these minutes as Agreement No. 2025-16.

Please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted Yes.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Other questions? Okay.

Total over that five-year period. Not cheap software, but without that we can't function.

another four year terms ending August 20, 2029. John Gossett made a motion to accept the reappointment of these three member to the Mosquito Abatement Board as presented. J. Larry Miller second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any questions?

J. Larry Miller: Yeah. That mosquito abatement group is in West Frankfort, isn't it?

John Gossett: Well, its kind of is.

J. Larry Miller: Well, the reason I'm asking is Randy Browning doesn't live, he lives in rural, I don't know how far that, I assume he lives in the district.

Kevin Weston: Frankfort Township.

J. Larry Miller: He does, but I don't know what that lives in district.

John Gossett: Where he lives in my district.

J. Larry Miller: So, it's the whole township that pays into that?

John Gossett: It's the whole county you pay that with your taxes.

J. Larry Miller: No, we don't. No

Kevin Weston: It is just district three.

John Gossett: Is it just three? I stand corrected.

J. Larry Miller: Okay.

Curtis Overton: Are these paid positions?

Kevin Weston: I don't think so. No. The person that sprays is paid.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any other questions? Please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**COUNTY CLERK,  
SHERIFF & CORONER -  
MONTHLY REPORTS**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated the next item on the agenda are the July, 2025 monthly reports from the County Clerk, Sheriff & Coroner reports.

J. Larry Miller made motion to approve the reports as presented. Kevin Weston second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said reports are made a part of these minutes.

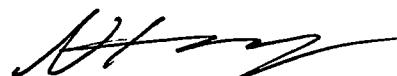
**CLOSED SESSION**

Chairman Neil Hargis informed everyone that we will have no closed session.

**RETURN TO OPEN  
SESSION**

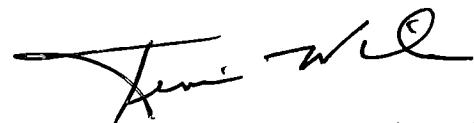
**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis asked the Board if there were any questions. J. Larry Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Curtis Overton second the motion. There being no further business Chairman Neil Hargis declared the meeting adjourned.



Neil Hargis

Franklin County Board Chairman



Kevin Wilson

County Clerk and Recorder