

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING

Sep 15, 2025

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, Angela Evans, John Gossett, J. Larry Miller, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, and Brad Wilson. Dave Bartoni and Kevin Weston were absent.

Also in attendance were Amanda Kink, County Board Office Manager; Matt Barnett, County Engineer; Ryan Buckingham, Director of Emergency Management Agency; Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments; 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?

Tom Carter: Tourism. I got to say just a quick comment. There's an image problem here. Whenever we send a salary of \$60,000 or better to Chicago, when our own county employees make far less, and I know they put in a good day's work that they're good at their jobs. Some of them worked 40 years and make 40, 45,000 rather than 60,000. So, I think we need to pause and think about what we're doing right now. If this job was offered to anyone in the area or not. Most of the time I'd say whoever needs to move down here and live within Franklin County bounds. Thanks.

Rocky Morris: I won't be long. No, I can't go long. I got a new, Deal. I'm like Tom, we had nothing against that tourist group. We've met two or three times with Mr. Vercellino, face to face, asked questions. He was very cordial, provided a lot of good information, asked us for a five-day extension on the FOIA. We gave it to him. Told me tonight she stopped it. Correct.

Steve Vercellino Sr.: She told me to contact her.

Rocky Morris: Do what?

Steve Vercellino Sr.: To contact her, not me.

Rocky Morris: Oh, well she's FOIA, director? We don't know, but it was helpful.

Okay. And here's the issue. We don't know when we got into this. We're looking at salary, \$68,000. That comes from 1924. I mean, sorry, 2024. Okay. That was only records that we had access to. We don't have 25. John came over and asked me, can you, and we have bank statements and all. So, when you look at this, and we just looked at salary, okay? We had four people. We looked at hers, she was 68. The Litton's were 22, which great people did a happy job. There were others. One guy asked me not to say his name, so I won't, but his was in the neighborhood at \$18,000. Okay. That's not the point. I guess the point is, as Tom said, we've got men and women who are working in this county dedicated eight hours a day that don't even come close to that just being here 25 to 30 years, I think they need to readdress it. And they live here. They live in this Southern Illinois area.

She lives in Chicago. Nothing against Chicago maybe, but we haven't even touched the credit card. Okay, I've got them all right here. We're going to start. Some of it looks like Franklin Hospital all over again. So, we're going to dig into it. Who has access? Who has the authority to do that? Mr. Vercellino is correct. He said that that bed tax money is not public money. Well, I disagree. I

think the accountability and the transparency of that group, I know there's limitations to it by law, does this board have the jurisdiction over that or over tourism board? That's a question. Are you the one in authority? Because there are so many people that resigned off that board and we have talked to them. So, my point in this is, look, it's a salary. Look at the credit card used, examine it from that point. Good luck. And I mean that, I hope they can work it out some way or two people and I don't know, 25 because I didn't get access to 25.

John asked me that earlier, so I had to go 24. But we did go 23 and 22, which that's another deal. As we need money. Cindy's been fighting for a window. We got \$114,000 in appropriation. Is there some other way to let them do their thing, get grants, get whatever they want, re-appropriate that money. That's just a thought. So, it's up to you guys, ladies. So, to me, I think the employees of this county deserves an explanation from the board how that somebody who lives in Chicago makes that kind of money. Yeah. She could grant writer her because she tried to get another job at Benton, and that's great, but I still don't believe that can justify these men and women of this county being pushed aside and someone else pushed in. It's just my point any questions, thank you.

Ray Minor: I think that position is very, very, there's a lot of criteria for that position, but not just anybody can apply for that position.

Rocky Morris: What grants writer?

Ray Minor: No, the director of that tourism group. That's a credentialed position. I don't think that just any, I'm not disagreeing with what you're saying. I just think that there's a lot more to, there's just not that many people that are qualified to do that position and sit in that position.

Rocky Morris: So, you're believe she's justified in what's she's done?

Ray Minor: I didn't say that. I had no idea how much what she was making. What I'm saying is, is that we can't just hire anybody or they cannot just hire anybody off the street to take that position.

Rocky Morris: Well, she notified the board maybe Litton's did, I'll leave a copy.

Ray Minor: Litton notified the board what the criteria was for the job? Yep. I'd like to see that.

Rocky Morris: So, what she did try to apply it for another job in Benton been because she wasn't from Chicago, they turned her down. That's board members.

John Gossett: The way I understand this is being set up is the state set it up so that we could charge the bed tax and then with that money allow the new board to come in, not us, another board who's in this case board use that money on behalf of our county. Now I look at it and I think we could with all the money in the bed tax, but we cannot really run down. They pay what they pay because they choose to pay it. And unless we pull the funding, there's not much we can do about honestly.

Rocky Morris: Okay. That's all I needed. I found letters from Jim McPhail. Okay. I won't even get into that. And the attorney general lawyers back in 13. It's the nightmare. But if that's what you believe. I'm with you.

John Gossett: No, I'm, but I've looked into it and that's what I've come up with.

Rocky Morris: So, we don't have no say so over that. Trust tourism

John Gossett: Other than taking their money away from them. I don't see that.

Rocky Morris: Thank you.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Brad Wilson made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 18, 2025 Regular County Board Meeting. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

COUNTY CLAIMS

J. Larry Miller made a motion to pay the claims on file. Brad Wilson second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

ANIMAL CONTROL FENCING - APPROVAL

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the first item on the agenda is the approval of the Animal Control Fencing for \$13,900.00 being taken out of the donation fund. Chairman Neil Hargis stated that this item will be tabled at this time.

SUPERVISOR OF ASSESSMENTS SERVICE WINDOW - APPROVAL

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the Supervisor of Assessments service window taken from the 1% for a total cost of 8,185.13. Chairman Neil Hargis stated that this item will be tabled at this time.

2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE - APPROVAL

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the 2026 Holiday Schedule and the Administrative Order approved by the Circuit Judges of the Second Judicial Circuit, State of Illinois.

John Gossett made a motion to accept the holiday schedule as presented. Angela Evans seconded the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said 2026 Holiday Schedule and Administrative Order are made a part of these minutes.

CAMPBELL BUILDING PAINTING - APPROVAL

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval for painting the Campbell Building with the one percent fund with a total estimate cost of \$16,878.20. And Curtis who was again was the folks were going to do that?

Angela Evans: JW.?

Chairman Neil Hargis: J & W Painting & House Washing from Sesser will be doing the work. I need a motion for the painting of the Campbell Building.

Curtis Overton made a motion to approve the painting of the Campbell Building for the amount of \$16,878.20 using 1% as presented. Ray Minor second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any discussion?

J. Larry Miller: Well, I've expressed my concern. I think we need to paint it. There's no question about it. I just think that we're overstepping our bounds with the 1%. It's a maintenance issue. And I understand what you're saying Mr. Chairman, we'll not part company with this. Okay. I hope not.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay. Any other discussion? Okay please call roll.

On roll call vote, the voting was as follows: everyone voted yes except Angela Evans and J. Larry Miller voted no.

Said estimate is made a part of these minutes.

**COUNTY AUDIT FOR
YEAR ENDED NOVEMBER
30, 2024 - APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the County Audit for the year ended November 30, 2024. Chairman Neil Hargis stated that this item will be tabled at this time.

NEW K9 - APPROVAL

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of a new K9 and he read a letter from Sheriff Kyle Bacon requesting to purchased a K9 to replace K9 Riot who was medically retired and to make this purchase from the opioid fund with a total of \$14,388.00 from Vohne Liche Kennels Inc.

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the K9 purchase as presented. Brad Wilson second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said letter and estimate printout is made a part of these minutes.

**JUSTICE CENTER SIGN
- APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of the new Justice Center sign and he presented a letter and a before and after picture from Simple Solutions stating that the sign will be 7 ft x 4 ft, 2-sided, printed and laminated on 6mm maxmetal for a total cost of \$650.00 and using the contingency fund for this purchase.

Brad Wilson made a motion to approve the purchase of a new Justice Center sign as presented. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said letter and picture is made a part of these minutes.

**SOLAR ORDINANCE -
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval the Solar Ordinance. Chairman Neil Hargis stated that this item will be tabled at this time.

**UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS EXTENSION
BOARD - 1
APPOINTMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the University of Illinois Extension Board for a one year term, recommending Parker Hutchcraft to be reappointed for another term ending August 31, 2026.

Ray Minor made a motion to reappoint Parker Hutchcraft to the University of Illinois Extension Board as presented. J. Larry Miller second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**REND LAKE AREA
TOURISM COUNCIL - 1
APPOINTMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the Rend Lake Area Tourism Council, he read a letter of resignation from Rachel Gartner. Chairman Neil Hargis recommends Jason Johns to replace Rachel Gartner's unexpired term ending December 31, 2025.

Brad Wilson made a motion to appoint Jason Johns to the Rend Lake Area Tourism Council as presented. Angela Evans second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said letter is made a part of these minutes.

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

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

Curtis Overton made motion to approve the reports as presented. Brad Wilson 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. Brad Wilson 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