

FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING

Nov 17, 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 Kevin Weston. Dave Bartoni and Brad Wilson were absent.

Also in attendance were Amanda Kink, County Board Office Manager; Kyle Bacon, County Sheriff; Matt Barnett, County Engineer; Ryan Buckingham, Director of Emergency Management Agency; Lorie LeQuatte; Franklin-Johnson-Massas-Williamson Regional Superintendent; Cindy Miklos, Supervisor of Assessments; Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer; Alexis Williams, Animal Control Supervisor; 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: Just a couple questions. I got some information I'd like to submit to the board the numbers that brother Steve said I don't have. There could be a reason we were very limited on what we got, but 23 and 24. Now I'm talking bed tax. Were you talking bed tax?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: No, I think it's bed tax plus the grant. Right?

Rocky Morris: So, this grant wouldn't be in here?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Nope. Would not be.

Rocky Morris: Why?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Because, it goes directly to them.

Rocky Morris: Huh?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It goes directly to them. Goes to the tourism board.

Rocky Morris: Shouldn't we have some type of accountability it's on there.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: State grant tourism has a line there, but doesn't mean, I don't know if we ever used.

Rocky Morris: On this, what I've got is on he had 104,000 in Bed Tax. That's what I'm concerned with. Bed Tax, I talked to John, I talked to Mr. Vercellino. Still can't get any straight answers. On the 23/24, there was an additional \$50,000 placed at the bottom. We had \$104,000 in bed tax, \$50,000 and went to Rend Lake area tourism, which total a total of 154,000. But if you look, I should give you guys one of these, sorry, at the end of it, total expenditure was 154,000. That was 24. I'll give you a copy if you don't mind. Neil, may I approach. I'm not loaded for bear, but this is the only issue we've got. Okay? We're not against tourism. We're getting this. Okay. 24 on the how money was being spent. I also have bank statements, canceled checks. Anybody wants to review it. Be glad to do it with John. So, we've got a copy of your here. January 9, 2025. Request this one from Darby. Want me to show you?

John Gossett: Yes, I don't mind. Okay, yes, I have seen that.

Rocky Morris: Okay, so the county was on top of it somewhere. We've been trying to establish if an authoritarian line, okay, is tourism all by themselves and still draw public money or if there an oversight by the county board or have we surrendered that simple? You either regulate it, watch it or not. So, when we begin to look at this, we begin to see, and like I said, if you guys want to see the checks, I'll show them to you. 60,000 wasn't even close. We'll look at the credit cards that was left out. Okay. I would say in a range of 67 to 71,000 Darby made, checks written out to her as a personal check. There are no job responsibilities, there's no oversight on it. And I talked to her, I think she's very smart. I'm like Larry on this; she doesn't reside here.

That was the question and that's fine. I guess it was like who is going to oversee this? DCOE is right now under a big investigation. Okay, you can look at it. Pull it up. Guy named Thomas, ripped off 14 million. Okay. So, I think we just need to find out who is the responsible party. And John and I talk either they're private or they're public, okay. But even if you want to say they're a 5 0 1 C six private tax exempt, there's still got to be accountability because that is county money, even though it comes from taxes from hotels, private, it goes into your fund, right? Fund 26?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Bed tax. Yes.

Rocky Morris: Bed Tax, listen up. So that was the deal. One of the other questions I had was the \$5,000, it says county tourism interest on this.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yeah, I can answer that for you really quick.

Rocky Morris: Okay. Is that combined into the total of the bed tax?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So, what this is, is this is the same bank account is some of the other funds clean journal funds. So, when I reconcile, I did the month, but say for the whole month, that bank account earned 50,000, probably not that much. We'll just say it's 50,000. I'm going to look at the balances of every fund and I'm going to prorate what that fund should get as far as that interest. Okay. And so, fund 26 is in that bank account. So, they should, since that money's sitting there, it's earning interest and they should get its fair share of what that interest is.

Rocky Morris: I agree. I'm with you What that is, I'm with you. It's their money. I say give it, but we had \$5,000 here on 115,000 in 24 / 25. So, we went to 200,000 and I'm not disputing you \$200,000 and I've got three years bed tax money, which is funded by the motel hotel, bed tax, occupation tax, 110, then it went down to 104. I think you took 5,000 out. Correct. Can you count that interest as far as money?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It is money, but it's not just for the total.

Rocky Morris: It doesn't fall within the hotel motel bed tax.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yeah, you would have to calculate that separately. You just take number minus the five.

Rocky Morris: Got it, so we're talking a lot of money coming, not so much now, but if we started this way, no accountability, no responsibility. We've got a board that we can show conflict multiple times. So, I think you guys need to have involved, in my opinion, and or Abby make a decision. I know John, we've been, I know.

John Gossett: Let me speak on that. Just this what was a public body into a 5 0 1 c6, which means she does not have to answer foe shouldn't have to answer. And she isn't. On the other hand, if there's still supposed to be a public body, we have to have that decision. I'm waiting on the state's attorney. I've been waiting now about three weeks, but she's been on vacation. I'm not complaining. I'm just telling a fact. So anyway, I don't know about the amount of money that's going out. I really don't. I looked at once because it's been a while back and I wasn't looking for irregularities. I was looking for at that time, double payment and we found double payment and Mr. Vercellino and I took care of it and that money had been put back in. What happened? Went from a checking system to a direct deposit and they accidentally, as I understand it accidentally paid your people twice and supposedly that money is back one. I'm sure the other one did double check. So, you told me it's back. Right.

Steve Vercellino, Sr.: And that person no longer worked for us.

John Gossett: But my opinion on this is it's truly a public body and should never have been made a 501 C3, I don't, they're on being able to look in, that's my opinion. That's not a legal opinion; that's a personal opinion. We should know this soon and then we will have more for you.

Angela Evans: What gave her that? What gave her the okay to be able to do that.

John Gossett: I mean they have their own board. See what we set them up with was.

Angela Evans: So, you guys set them up.

John Gossett: So, we didn't really want to watch this agency other than make absolutely sure they're not seeing money other than that, do it. Find us

tourism, bring people in, make us money from the county. That's what we want and least be sure that's what they want. Unfortunately, it doesn't look quite right, especially when it becomes a 5 0 1 C3 and he can't FOIA them. That's where we're at.

Rocky Morris: Yeah, correct. And what she did, and Darby, I did what she asked. I know I'm kind of running over when she asked me, she said go to the county board. I got the letter John visit. Anyway, in that letter she told me, I don't have to, it's not my responsibility to provide you with any FOIA, because we're a private entity. Okay? So, she wrote back said go to your county board. So, I did. Went to Amanda, she's gone. No. Okay, so I went to Amanda and I'll for you two, a couple of them for you maybe. So anyway, we were very limited on what we found. We did find a bank statement. We found some bylaws. We found the sub recipient agreement that with two 19 with a five-year extension on it, which he seeded to 2024. Okay. From that point, that was it.

They used county facilities. Okay. They're using, I don't know if they've paid over there. City of Benton does, I don't know if the veteran association doing that. But my point is they're using taxpayer, public taxpayer dollars when they have office meetings, we don't know where they'll post that. Their meetings, one meeting that we did find public was not allowed. This has got to come somewhere to a halt and for them and for us. And for us that's, that's where we're at. I haven't seen the 25 I got, Steve gave me the 25 money. We're talking from 2023 to mid-July of 2025. 416,000. You guys have that handled rights here. The total on what you gave me on the deposit from your office to the tourism.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: I don't remember. I'm going to agree with what you said. I Dunno, if that's a scary thing to say, but you said it.

Rocky Morris: Good. No, it was and I appreciate that. So anyway, the point is we're talking about almost a half a million dollars, okay? Over a period from at the end of 2023 to mid-2025. And I think somebody needs to be accountable. If they don't want you, then you got to step out of it. But you've got to open the door for us, the public, because they're still using taxpayer money. I don't care if it comes from a private entity. You give an ordinance that was passed in 2019, now sometimes say it was modified. No, we don't believe that lawyers said that. No. So it is not the fact of steering that pot. It's trying to get answers. That's it. And if the 60 Steve volunteered told us what he made and we appreciate that. So anyway, what is her job description? What is her function? She's not a taxpayer here, but she's very qualified. I'm not saying that, but as a grant writer, I knew multiple grant writers that got more that don't make 60. So that's kind of where I'm at. And we got five, six people involved in this. So, it's kind of you guys' court, how do you deal with cut the thing, maybe pause the money, put a pause on. I'm not saying close it. I'm saying pause the money. Look into it. How can we fix it? We did that at Franklin Hospital and it worked. We did that at Benton Airport and it worked. So, that's all we're saying. If I got any question and if you got anybody you want this, you to turn it over. So, thank you for time.

Tom Carter: Well, I'm very familiar with 5 0 1 Cs because my club is one and these people here, they do not have no jurisdiction with you. They are private, got their own federal ID number. They got their own tax-exempt number. They are private. It wasn't set up to be that way, but it ended up that way. Now what I'm going to look at is if there's transfer of money for loans, if there's free rooms down there for office space, phones, heat and air condition, I'm 5 0 1 c, too. You got have no control over me. I'm want a room and I want some tax money. You won't have no control over me. But

lemma tell you, there's a lot of tax-exempt organizations out there. We'd like to do the same thing. These people are nothing more than in the, I should say, contract unit. We pay them with our tax money. That bed tax is our money. We can use it for anything we want. It doesn't have to go for tourism, it can go for anything. If this board wants, now, if all our money is going towards salaries, I say cut 'em loose just like we would a heat and air conditioner service if they're charging too much or you guys give me the word and I'll start moving in tomorrow and I'll give the word out and guys can give a lot of tax event organizations a worthy place to set up shop. Thank you.

Chairman Neil Hargis asked if anyone else had public comment?

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Kevin Weston made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 20, 2025 Regular County Board Meeting and the November 3, 2025 Special County Board Meeting. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

COUNTY CLAIMS

John Gossett made a motion to pay the claims on file. Ray Minor 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. Angela Evans second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said resolutions are made a part of these minutes as Resolution No. 2025-49 and 2025-55.

**EXPENSE TRANSFERS TO
CONTINGENCY -
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is to approve expense transfers to contingency. I think Steve talked about that in the earlier meeting. So, a motion for that.

Angela Evans made a motion to accept the transfer as presented. Ray Minor second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis asked if there were any questions?

J. Larry Miller: Yeah. Rehearse that for me so I know what we're doing. Okay, we're..... Go ahead.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So, we have some item expense line items that are over the budget that we had planned for those expense line items. What we need to do is make, and there's more of those than we actually have in contingency. So, I just picked ones that we had that would match up to what we have left to contingency. So, if it was \$10,000 over this expense line, I'm going to reduce that expense line by 10,000. But then in the contingency, that expense line, I'm going to add 10,000. So then when you look at the budget, those expense lines are going to match.

J. Larry Miller: What are you going to do with what is over? And you don't have any contingency.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It's going to stick out there. Nothing can do with it. It's just going to be out there.

J. Larry Miller: I'm good. Thank you.

On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY
AGREEMENT WITH BFW
ENGINEERING FOR
PEACH ORCHARD ROAD**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the Local Public Agency Agreement for section 25-00201-00-BR with BFW Engineering for Peach Orchard Road.

Curtis Overton made a motion we approve the Local Public Agency Agreement for section 25-00201-00-BR with BFW Engineering for Peach Orchard Road as presented. Kevin Weston second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said agreement is made a part of these minutes.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AGREEMENT BETWEEN
FRANKLIN COUNTY AND
KANE COUNTY JUVENILE
DETENTION CENTER**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the Intergovernmental Agreement between Franklin County and Kane County Juvenile Detention Center. And Sheriff Kyle Bacon explained the agreement in the Committee meeting earlier and have a motion to accept that agreement.

Ray Minor made the motion we accept the agreement. John Gossett second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said agreement is made a part of these minutes as Agreement No. 2025-17.

**KEVIN WILSON, COUNTY
CLERK LETTER OF
RESIGNATION - ACCEPT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is accepting the resignation letter for Kevin Wilson, County Clerk. Do you have your letter, Mr. Clerk?

Kevin Wilson, County Clerk: I'll email it to you.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay.

Kevin Wilson, County Clerk: December one.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay. So, to accept Kevin Wilson, County Clerk letter of resignation?

J. Larry Miller made a motion to accept the letter of resignation for County Clerk Kevin Wilson. Ray Minor second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said letter is made a part of these minutes.

Chairman Neil Hargis: We wish you well in your new endeavor.

Kevin Wilson, County Clerk: Thank you.

**FRANKLIN HOSPITAL
BOARD - 1
APPOINTMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the Franklin Hospital Board and recommendation to appoint Linda Volz to replace Don Cruz unexpired term ending August 31, 2026.

Angela Evans made a motion to appoint Linda Volz to the Franklin Hospital Board to replace Don Cruz unexpired term. Curtis Overton second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
HOUSING AUTHORITY
BOARD - 1
APPOINTMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is an appointment to the Franklin County Housing Authority Board.

Curtis Overton made a motion to reappoint Jim McPhail Jr. to the Franklin County Housing Authority Board for a five year term ending September 7, 2030. Ray Minor second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
COMMUNITY MENTAL
HEALTH "708" BOARD -
4 APPOINTMENTS**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda are appointments to the Franklin County Community Mental "708" Health / Centerstone Board and we're going to do three of the four. Those three are David Nolan, Theresa Renik, and Madonna Span. Got a motion to appoint those three to the Mental "708" Board on that motion.

Kevin Weston made a motion to reappoint David Nolen and Theresa Renik for a four year term ending December 31, 2029 and appoint Madonna Span to replace Cheryl Herron unexpired term ending December 31, 2026. Curtis Overton second the motion.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Any questions?

John Gossett: Yes. I have a question. Okay.
Why can't we put Curtis on there tonight?

Chairman Neil Hargis: Does Curtis, do you really
want on there?

Curtis Overton: What night do they meet on?

Chairman Neil Hargis: That, I do not know.

Kevin Weston: I think they meet mostly by phone or
by online.

Curtis Overton: I don't want any part of it.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Just think about anybody
interested in that we will get you on their next
time. Any other questions? 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 October, 2025 monthly reports from
the County Clerk, Sheriff & Coroner reports.

Ray Minor 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. Curtis Overton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Angela Evans 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