

# FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING AT

4:00 PM

MINUTES OF MEETING

Nov 25, 2025

## **CALL TO ORDER**

The Special Meeting of the County Board, was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman 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, Kevin Weston and Brad Wilson.

Also in attendance were Amanda Kink, County Board Office Manager; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer; and 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 were any public comment?

Tom Carter: At your last meeting, which a little over a week ago I brought up the fact that you were giving free office space to an independent company for tourism. Well, and I wanted to put my bid in first to get one of these free offices. Well, since then I found out Carbondale has quit funding all the 5 0 1 Cs in their area. So there's going to be a rampage trying to get over here to get free office space. So I'd like to be the first one in line. So are we going to keep free office space over here?

J. Larry Miller: Are you a 5 0 1 C3?

Tom Carter: Yes. 501C

J. Larry Miller: You are?

Tom Carter: Yeah. I sure am. President of our Corvette Club 5 0 1 C seven.

J. Larry Miller: What space do you need?

Tom Carter: Huh? That's why I asking about that free office space. You can throw in room and board if you want, but I'm saying that there's a lot of five o ones out there that would love to have free office space and funds and there's a lot of them in Carbondale. That'd be more than willing to head this away. Just for you guys.

Angela Evans: Do we appoint your boards?

Tom Carter: Huh?

Angela Evans: Do we appoint your boards?

Tom Carter: Don't you appoint their board? You still don't have say so, believe it or not.

J. Larry Miller: Are they the only 5 0 1 C3 that we?

Tom Carter: They're not a three. They're not a three. They're a six.

J. Larry Miller: Okay. But do we have any other board that we provide and nominate and provide a appoint? I'm sorry. I'll get it right. There are board that are that way too. Have you checked any of those out?

Tom Carter: The thing with you guys, you're supposed to be able to, the last few members that was appointed that board, Darby appointed them. Darby appointed the last couple of members that went on the board.

Brad Wilson: What members did she appoint?

Tom Carter: I don't know their names. Rocky keeps track of that. But you guys, you can't dissolve the board. Only thing you can do is withhold the tax funds from them and then they're nothing.

John Gossett: Tom, I'll be honest with you, we're looking at the one we have. I can't say more than that, but we're truly looking at it.

Tom Carter: Okay, of getting rid of this tax funds for this agency or about me getting the free office space.

J. Larry Miller: Okay, so you are saying that they have members on their board right now?

Tom Carter: I'm saying.....

J. Larry Miller: Let me ask the question here.

Tom Carter: Their a private agency, agency, the 5 0 1 C six is independent of this board, they have their own federal tax number? They have their own corporation of the state. I don't have that.

J. Larry Miller: Will you let me ask you a question. The question is, they have members of their board now that were not appointed by this board?

Tom Carter: Their original articles called for 11 members. All I can think of now is maybe five, that's on the board.

J. Larry Miller: You didn't answer my question you just said awhile ago. I thought you said there was two of them that were not appointed by this board.

Tom Carter: Well, I understand it there that she had a big hand in getting appointed to the board. The thing with it this board is though you don't have really the authority to dissolve that board because they're not under your rule. They're

independent.

J. Larry Miller: You watch, us.

Angela Evans: Yeah.

Tom Carter: Now you guys got control of everything with the tax money you do.

Curtis Overton: One quick follow up question. Were they a 5 0 1 whatever, six. Have they been that way the entire time?

Angela Evans: No.

Tom Carter: No, they were started off as a tourism group that was to be under the county board and you guys' guidance and when they went to be tax exempt and filed for their articles of incorporation, they got away from you guys and you just said no. I think the last one from Sesser, what was his name? Crocker.

Angela Evans: Yes.

Tom Carter: Crocker called them on it and said we're going to pull your funds. So then they started providing more information. The only incentive you guys got over that group is tax money. That's it. Thank you.

Angela Evans: Thank you.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Okay. Any Other public comment?

Mark Atkins: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Atkins. I am the Republican precinct committeeman for Ewing 2 and have been for over 10 years. I'll tell you more ordinarily, it's not a high stress job. However, I have been approached by one of my constituents to advise me of a matter that I find very hard to believe. This gentleman had his

property assessed for real estate taxes. He appealed it. My understanding, is that the appeal was resolved in his favor that this county owes him somewhere around \$10,000 and I understand that this award was either in April or August. I don't recall which, but it's been well over six months. Anyway, you look at it, and this board has not found a way to pay my constituent the refund and the money that he's owed. I'm certain you have heard multiple times people say, well if I owe the county that money, they're going to come after me. So I implore you on behalf of my constituent. Can he please have the refund that you owe him? That is my statement.

Angela Evans: Take the lead Brad, take the lead...

Brad Wilson: Let me answer that for you. So the people that are here every meeting, have I said that for the last month and a half? Everybody?

Angela Evans: Yes, yes you have.

Kevin Weston: You have two months.

Brad Wilson: So I have brought this up because that constituent also called me. It was April. Then Steve couldn't pay until he started getting the tax payments in August. But in August we had the money, the treasurer's office had the money. I've brought it up every meeting every to nauseam to the people that are here probably every single meeting to please pay him. Our treasurer stated I will get him paid at the end of November. Then this constituent, because he had been awarded the \$10,000 or close to it, had to go pay an attorney \$300 to send a certified letter to the treasurer's office, giving them 10 days. My understanding, the 10th day is today. The constituent has called me, has not been paid today.

So tomorrow a lawsuit will be filed on behalf of it, your constituent and he will be suing the county to get the \$10,000 that he has been owed since April. The treasurer's office had those numbers in

April. Cindy said that they took the assessment, the old assessment, the new assessment. Cindy did that. That was sent to the treasurer's office. The numbers were there. It still has not been paid this day as of right now, unless the check was in, in the mail and he just didn't receive it. Today still has not been paid. So, I appreciate your concern on behalf of your constituent. It has been an ongoing thing for this board to try to get this person paid, but it has fallen on deaf ears.

Mark Atkins: Alright, and in that case I would like to continue my statement as a concerned taxpayer of Franklin County because I have a passing familiarity with matters where the state owes money doesn't pay it. There are penalties that accrue to that. That is fees that accrue to that. So now this board, this county is going to be responsible for fees and interest and possible penalties for failure to pay this money, which is going to come out tax revenue, right?

Brad Wilson: Absolutely.

Mark Atkins: I certainly hope we don't see a tax increase because of that.

Brad Wilson: Well, you're not, but it is unfortunate that, it's not been taken care of. It's unfortunate that we can't force it to be paid, that an elected official has just chosen to not do that. It's been very frustrating as people in here know I've been red-faced upset, because it's not fair Mark, that when our tax bill is due and your tax bill is due, we're expected to pay that on time. If we're late there's a penalty. It seems to be that there's a different standard when you're the government and you owe the constituent money, you can pay them at your leisure. That's the way it seems to be.

Mark Atkins: That does not sound like a democratic process to me. Please help get this resolved as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Brad Wilson: Thank you.

Chairman Neil Hargis asked if there were any other public comments?

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Chairman Neil Hargis informed everyone this special meeting is to discuss the Franklin County Budget for 2026 and to appoint a County Clerk.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY  
BUDGET FOR 2026 -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the first item on the agenda is the approval of the Franklin County Budget for 2026 and I know it was we'll just finished up today, but it's been out to the basics of it's been out there for 30 days, so I don't know if Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer, wants to talk to any about it or not.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yeah, sure. Then Larry talked a little bit about kind of go over what you were kind of mentioning overall. So some things that were in it, things are not in it. So the provisional budget we had had the detention center, that 600,000 negative balance being put in there. We took that out, we put that back in. We've currently in this budget that's presented, that's taken out.

Angela Evans: So something.

Chairman Neil Hargis: Let me speak to that, Rhett, recommended he wanted to look into that. That's why we took it out. He says if it's necessary that we will have to amend the budget and put that back in. He wanted to take a closer look at that.

J. Larry Miller: As to whether we would get back to zero.

Angela Evans: Right.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: The process of

Chairman Neil Hargis: The process of it.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So that's not in this budget, something that is in this budget that wasn't in the previous one, the one that's posted the contingency line, there wasn't anything in there. There's now 210,000 in contingency. So in case we do have to spend additional money wasn't budgeted for, this isn't cash-flow related. This is just if we need some additional funds that we have to spend that's legally able to be spent because we have a contention line to do that. We've got \$210,000 to utilize that. So that's in there. Something that wasn't in there that's been talked about as far as the Campbell building, the first time it was renovated, there's 45,000 in there every year to pay down the payment. We put additional money in there to go ahead and pay the whole thing off. So come into December, hopefully we'll have another discussion saying Hey, this is what I'm doing.

We would put it in the budget to do this. I'm just telling you that I'm doing this. So that's reflected in this budget as the ARPA transfer that was already in there. It's a little bit less now because we spent some of the ARPA interest money, not the ARPA funds that were given just the interest that we earned. That's in the ARPA account. The goal was to go ahead in this new budget here, go ahead and zero that out. Put that in the general fund since it is our money to use how we see fit with anything that you guys decide to do. That transfer is reflected here. It's a little bit less than I think last time you saw the budget, we have spent some money from that account, the VAC having it last meeting we had, the understanding I had is that we would have them have their own levy and since they're going to have their own levy, the amount that we had been giving them out of our levy has been reapportioned into

the corporate fund and also as far as the seniors, you want to talk about that?

Chairman Neil Hargis: Yeah. One of the things, I think I've talked to everybody about this, about the senior bill, it's actually not the, what is that actually call It just senior services. Senior services. But no, it's not been adjusted in several years but it's been sitting at \$36,000 and they requested to bring it up significantly. I've talked to several of you that came up with the number, just bring it up to 50,000. So a little bit of with the price of inflation and everything, food prices astronomically over the last several years.

J. Larry Miller: But that's a zero fact on the budget, itself.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It does because since we're paying them more, it has to come from us.

J. Larry Miller: It comes out of our corporate.

Angela Evans: Yes.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So what I'm getting at...

J. Larry Miller: \$20,000, is that what it is?

John Gossett: 14.

Angela Evans: 14

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: 14,000. 14,000. That increase. So what I did is the 126, I didn't put the whole 126 in corporate because I shaved off a piece of it to give the seniors.

Angela Evans: Right.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So, it was like 112 that actually got put up there as additional revenue that wasn't in the past budget. So that was added there. Since the VAC is now its own levy. What we had done in the past is they were in fund 01, but they're separate department. Since they're now going to be a separate, that was more appropriate to go ahead and take them out of fund one entirely and put them in their own fund. So then they have 126 that they're going to get via the taxpayers that will be reflected in fund 79 here. Now how they spend that ultimately is their board, how they decide to do it. So you'll see that's kind of a big difference. So if you look at department 79, why is it all zero? Well if you keep looking at fund 79, it's all it just been transferred over.

J. Larry Miller: So help me here. The veterans that has a negative zero effect on board because we're going to levy a tax for them. That will cover their budget.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Correct. That's not, that's not PTEL related. So it doesn't impact our ability to levy up to the PTEL amount.

J. Larry Miller: But we can, the month that we we're taking that out, we're adding the 14 thousand. We have the ability to go back up because that gives us a little room because of PTEL? That be a little more?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: That order reflected 126 us giving it to them, which means I had already shaken down our number so now I'm just putting it back minus 14,000 because we're giving that to the seniors.

J. Larry Miller: So, in the corporate tax we will see an increase, we see an increase in income because the way we've done it a little bit. Is that correct? Am I saying that right? That

correct take out.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: I've added more in compared to what was posted originally.

J. Larry Miller: There's revenue from the corporate tax should be higher than for our use in the general fund.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yes, That's reflected. And as you mentioned, it does show the total amount for fund one is like negative 500,000 roughly. That includes the payment that we want to make for the Campbell building. So, that's intentional as far as a spend down, it includes contingency in there in case we need it. And then with those pieces it's still like 40,000 difference. What I was looking at this afternoon is when we went to, basically we had fund 01 almost done yesterday. We got the insurance rates. So then I built that in there. We updated that, we updated the OMC budget, took care of that. But when I was going into the other funds today, I looked at the anti-crime fund as far as because just like GS and these other funds, we've been using them fairly heavily and some of it intentionally spending them down because they have large balances for maybe four years ago.

So trying to get them at more of a level balance. When I looked at the anti-crime fund, what we had put in there, really there's two funds in the circuit clerks that we had saw that compared to budget this year are well below what we expect the revenue to be. When I looked at anti-crime, they have one funds, that one is well below two. So I had to reduce the revenue that I expected to receive there and then we've been getting down into their balance a little bit more than we expected this year too because the funds aren't as much as what we expected this year. So basically I took their office supplies, that was an anti-crime. I put it back to their department and then they needed 10,000 more for the medical because this

year they had quite a bit and they said they would intend to have that.

We boosted it up a little bit, but we had the other 10,000 in anti-crime. I had to move that back to their department. So they're talking that's the 40,000 that makes it or why is it even the things that we thought we had planned to do wise is additional 40,000. I had to go ahead and move some money over there because based what they have and what I thought they were going to take in, it didn't make the number going to be able to work as far as cash-flow wise for that fund. And I didn't want to run them negative. So I mean there's a lot of stuff in here. Fund 01 we've kind of talked about quite a bit and we talked with Rhett a couple times and we had the meeting went through most of Fund 01. The other funds are primarily kind of flowing into that. The courthouse one, I think that's changed since last time, but that's still showing us taking revenue in probably through September and then we can pay it off. That won't really, it shows paying it off here roughly, probably late spring.

J. Larry Miller: Well the question I was asking you earlier, see if I got this right on page 28 of the report where the final figures are at, the column says FY 26. That is what we're approving tonight, right?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yeah. It ends on page 28. The FY 26 11, 25, 25 final column. That's what we're approving.

J. Larry Miller: And, as I see it. Which since I talked to you done the math here that we actually, you take out the way I see it, about 309,000, we're paying that note off down there at Southern Illinois Bank, and you take that out and then you have 210. That's contingency. If we don't touch the contingency, but basically if we didn't touch the contingency we'd have a balanced budget.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Minus the 40,000.

Angela Evans: Yeah.

J. Larry Miller: I'll agree with you but we're not going to argue over that. Let me ask you this question. Where is the actual budget for last year? Is it in any of these columns here?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: So the actual budget last year. So, it's total amended budget. Okay. That's the same thing. That's just how it prints out.

J. Larry Miller: Okay. Well you made the statement that the loan over there wasn't the original. Well I guess it was to purchase the Campbell building and remodeled it wasn't it.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: That's my understanding. Yes, both. I think we already had 45,000 in the budget just as a normal payment. So it wasn't the 300 whatever thousand. We didn't have to add 300,000. It was 300,000 minus the 45 that we already obligated like we do every year. Now the benefit is next year that 45,000, we won't need to spend this anymore that can be allocated somewhere else or have additional contingency cushioning next year. But we're just trying to get through today.

J. Larry Miller: I don't think you'll have the number, but as I recall last year we changed, we raised our deductible on our health insurance the county did to lower to get a lower rate on our insurance bill. Correct.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Yeah.

J. Larry Miller: Has that proved to be a good move as far as how much it's cost us that we raised our, I mean this gets complicated for me, but we raised

that because that would lower our total premium that we had to pay and I assume we're still in that. I was just curious if you know whether that paid off or not.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: I don't have the answer to that. I know when we looked at it, it was almost like a no brainer to do that because it was near impossible for it to go the wrong way for us. But I don't have the exact calculations.

J. Larry Miller: So we had all health insurance that is 14% increase?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: 14.7%. So I built that in. But I mean I put 20 when you first, last time you saw it. So it's better.

J. Larry Miller: So our rate is Determined on our?

Brad Wilson: Usage.

J. Larry Miller: Usage

Brad Wilson: And on that Larry, I talked to Randy, he tried to shop the insurance. What they do, Blue Cross and Blue Shield was the only provider that would deal with us. Nobody else wanted to touch our insurance.

J. Larry Miller: I think it's a good budget guys, so I'm not happy with it that where we're, but another question, what are the biggest increases?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Biggest increases? I mean of course the paying off bill is so those, but those are hard. You've got contracts, meaning we've got to deal with all those across the board. Of course some departments have more people.

J. Larry Miller: So, there's nothing that just stands out that we're?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: I mean you only see that's a whole new animal, but you're also seeing the revenue side of it to offset it.

Brad Wilson: Our rate, we have that for two more years. Our electric usage is that two more years?

John Gossett: Electric runs out. This May.

Angela Evans: Yeah.

Brad Wilson: It's up this May?

John Gossett: Yeah, it does. President Promised by this may it's going to be down. So we'll see.

J. Larry Miller: The guy that was here said rates, are going to go down. We'll see. I do not believe that. You think your rates at Ameren are going to go down. I'm not on Ameren, Praise the Lord.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: They may not go up as much as what they could have.

J. Larry Miller: He said they wouldn't go up. He said they were actually going to go down. You remember that?

Angela Evans: I remember.

J Larry Miller: He said that.

Angela Evans: I don't believe it.

Chairman Neil Hargis: OK. Any other questions on the budget? Can I have a motion?

J. Larry Miller: I make that motion.

John Gossett: I will second.

Chairman Niel Hargis: Any further questions, please call roll. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said budget is made a part of these minutes as Ordinance No. 2025-04.

**COUNTY CLERK  
APPOINTMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis stated that the next item on the agenda is the appointment of a County Clerk to fill the unexpired term of Kevin Wilson ending November 30, 2026. And I talked to Jim Kerley, the Franklin County Republican Party Chairman and his recommendation was Paris Dunk. I agree with that and I think most of us up here, if not all of us do as well. So that's who my recommendation is.

Brad Wilson made a motion to appoint Paris Dunk to the office of County Clerk as presented. J. Larry Miller second the motion. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Chairman Neil Hargis congratulates Paris.

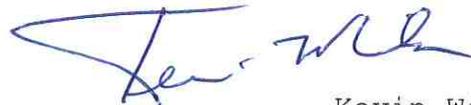
At the conclusion of this meeting Paris Dunk was sworn into office by his uncle Judge Evan Owens.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Neil Hargis asked the Board if there were any questions. John Gossett 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