APPROVED

HEATHER BOWMAN
HAMILTON COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR HAMILTON COUNTY BOARD MEETING ON: SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

The Hamilton County Board convened at the Hamilton County Courthouse in the City of McLeansboro, State of Illinois, on Wednesday the 16th day of September, at 6:00 p.m. and was called to order by Chairman Kelly Woodrow.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

On roll call, the following board members responded as being present, which represented a quorum: Kelly Woodrow, John Mead, Adam Little, John Carrell, and Landon Vaughan.

Coroner Robert Miller, Circuit Clerk Beth Sandusky, State's Attorney Sarah Mead, and County Highway Engineer Rick Coronado were also in attendance.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Carrell, to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2026 Regular Hamilton County Board Meeting as presented. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Chairman Woodrow thanked everyone for coming and invited their first guest, Scott Groux with Zelestra Energy, to address the board. Scott introduced himself and their proposed Seedbox Solar project in the Twigg/South Twigg townships. He said their company has been working on their application over the last year with hopes to deliver by the end of the week. The proposed farm would be a 300-million-dollar project on 2,000 acres, with construction projected at 2029. Scott also provided an economic impact handout for the members, which highlighted an estimated increase of 18 million in local taxes over the life of the project. Last, Mr. Groux told the board how much he has enjoyed learning about our community and attending the recent fall festival. He said he hoped their application shows all of their hard work so far. Chairman Woodrow thanked Scott for his time.

Next, Paula Hatfield requested to give the board a 4H update. She brought 5-year member Gracie Walker to talk about her experience and opportunities afforded through the 4H program. Gracie introduced herself as a member of the Illinois State Livestock Quiz Bowl Team, qualified through her knowledge on livestock and the ag industry. She said she has been meeting with her teammates to study for two big upcoming events. One would require traveling to Nebraska to compete in the largest stock show in America. Gracie said the second event was the largest in the world, the North American International Livestock Expo. The board encouraged Gracie to keep up the good work and wished her luck on her upcoming events. The crowd applauded her.

Chairman Woodrow confirmed there were no other public comments.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Treasurer's Report: Chairman Woodrow noted that Treasurer, Sarah Kelly, provided her written monthly report and a copy was in the board packet.

Sheriff's Report: No update.

County Clerk & Recorder's Update: Clerk Bowman said the board packet included a copy of her monthly financial report and other miscellaneous correspondence. She said she also included an extra report, found on the Department of Revenue website, giving a breakdown of the sales tax revenue by category. Bowman also briefly touched on print deadline changes for the local newspaper, annual sexual harassment training, and the start of early voting. This concluded her report.

EMA Report: EMA Director, Jason Stewart, said they had a slow month. He reported their recent participation in the fall festival parade and noted that they were still working on the estimates for the building.

ETSB Report: ETSB Chairman, Dorothy Smith, said they had just finished their monthly meeting. She said they received the signed paperwork from Hamilton County Water allowing them to place a repeater on the tower near brush harbor. Dorothy also noted their application for another grant to be used for dispatch upgrades, but said they had not heard back on the funding decision. This concluded her report.

Health Department Report: There was no update.

Animal Control Update: Adam Little said he noticed that the County's Animal Control vehicle was no longer being driven home and it now stays parked at the City building overnight.

Ambulance Service Update: Chairman Woodrow noted that the board packet included a copy of the resignation letter from Connie VanWinkle. Next, he invited Ashley Camden to give her update to the board. Ashley reminded the members that the ambulance contract was expiring soon and suggested working with a committee or a couple board members. Camden said they hoped to give employees a raise next year and noted that they had not had one since January of 2024. She gave the current pay rates for both EMTs and Paramedics and reviewed all financials given to the board in a handout. Ashley also discussed things they have done to save on labor costs, billing software transitions, the low Medicare/Medicaid payment amounts, and the overall need for additional funds to support their services. Bailey Gass was also in attendance to support and gave a few examples to the board. All board members asked questions to further understand the financials provided and the transition of billing services. One question of significance from Landon Vaughan was regarding their goals for the monthly amount in the next contract. Ashley said they are proposing roughly $50,000. After all questions were answered, Chairman Woodrow thanked both ladies for their time.

Administrative Services: Dustin Harmon, with Bellwether, said they were still in budget season and working to update the draft and levy strategy. He also noted that the Q3 Variance Report would be coming out soon. Last, Harmon said he was still working with the County Clerk and IEPA on the county's waste management plan. He felt the County could produce a plan without spending $20,000 to have it designed. He noted their plans to file for an extension as well.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Carrell, to approve the department reports. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda was read by Heather Bowman, County Clerk.

1. Accept checks from the Hamilton County Health Department for the month of August, 2026. Salaries: $14,755.70 Fringes: $1,735.27 Insurance: $1,158.14

2. Accept check # 8237 in the amount of $285.00 from the Hamilton County Health Department for the reimbursement of Kunce Managed Services through the end of August 2026.

3. Accept check # 48766 in the amount of $5,208.33 from the City of McLeansboro per the Central Dispatching agreement for the month of September 2026.

4. Accept check # 6013774 from Hamilton County Coal, LLC in the amount of $45,873.88 for the product of lease dated 12/01/2007.

5. Accept check #154821 in the amount of $5,000.00 from Peoples National Bank as a donation for the Courthouse Sign Project.

6. Review the 1% school facilities tax schedule in the amount of $76,824.64.

7. Review the Hamilton County Public Safety Tax Payment received in the amount of $76,861.59. This is liability MO- June 2026, Collected MO- July 2026, Vouchered MO- Sept 2026.

8. Approve accelerated payment statement from IMRF in the amount of $5,454.24.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by John Carrell, to amend the agenda and to move consent agenda item #5 to follow new business item #7. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, Adam Little, John Carrell, John Mead, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Carrell, to approve the updated consent agenda. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Adam Little, John Carrell, John Mead, Landon Vaughan, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Woodrow said they were going to move over item #1 for old business. He said the board needs to look into the item more and revisit at a later date.

1. *Discussion and possible approval: Late bid submitted by H.E. Mitchel Construction for the Courthouse Bathroom Project.*

NEW BUSINESS

2. The board was presented with a request from Rick Rubenacker with Rocking for a Cause, Inc for "Local Authority Approval" of their fundraising event to be held November 13-14, 2026 at Rubenacker Farms Shop.

Chairman Woodrow noted that the letter and proof of insurance was included in their packet.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by John Carrell, to approve the "Local Authority Approval" for the November 13-14, 2026 Rocking for a Cause event as requested. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, John Carrell, Adam Little, John Mead, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

3. The Board was presented with a draft of the 2027 Courthouse Holiday Calendar.

John Mead asked if the holidays were the same as the prior year. Clerk Bowman said all holidays were per the union contract and court order.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Carrell, to approve the 2027 Courthouse Holiday Calendar. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

4. A proposal for changes with the courthouse fax and elevator phone service was provided to the board by Clerk Bowman.

Chairman Woodrow asked the Clerk to go over the proposal. Bowman said she put together a cover page with her notes and included it with the quote in the board packet. She said she knew the board was looking to cut expenses in the next budget and felt the change could save up to $400 per month. She said the bill for the 3 fax lines and elevator phone is much higher than what they are paying for the rest of the courthouse phones. She noted that the bill has reached over $700 per month at times and must continually be negotiated to keep costs down. Bowman said the option to do an e-fax service is available through their other phone carrier and noted

that many businesses in the area use this type of service already. She gave a brief explanation of how an e-fax service works. The Clerk also noted that she had checked with Otis Elevator Service to confirm the elevator phone could be switched to an internet-based phone as well. She said the board did not have to move forward or make a decision on the item at this time. John Mead said it sounded like a good plan to him and asked if the Clerk knew how many incoming and outgoing fax calls are made each month. Bowman said they would need to check with each office holder. Circuit Clerk Beth Sandusky was in attendance and commented that she does use her fax quite a bit and agreed they should check with each corresponding office. She said she would like to look into the service more before the board makes a decision. The members agreed they should table the item.

MOTION was made by John Carrell, seconded by John Mead, to table the proposal for fax and elevator phone service until more information could be provided. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

5. A copy of Ordinance #2026-09-01 Hamilton County Budget Amendment was provided to the board.

Dustin Harmon reminded the board that the amendment would make corrections to the transfer amounts for the coal fund. He noted that they were missed during last minute changes when the budget was approved last year.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Carrell, to approve Ordinance #2026-09-01 as presented. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Adam Little, John Carrell, John Mead, Landon Vaughan, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

6. The board was provided with invoice #14079 from Kelly Electric in the amount of $2,160.00.

Chairman Woodrow noted that the invoice was for moving and cleaning the mini splits during the recent concrete work on the northeast side of the courthouse. Chairman Woodrow recommended paying the invoice from the Special Projects line in the coal fund. Landon Vaughn discussed some recent claim fund corrections that would allow them to utilize the Courthouse Repair line item instead.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by Adam Little, to approve invoice #14079 from Kelly Electric and to pay the full $2,160 from line item #1141. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, Adam Little, John Carrell, John Mead, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

7. Updated sign proposals from T Ham Signs were presented to the board.

Chairman Woodrow said a donation of $5,000 has been made by Peoples National Bank for the project, which they moved from the consent agenda earlier in the meeting. Woodrow said he understood there may be another donation coming soon and noted that the entire project came in at $6,978.95. John Carrell asked if they should wait to see if they get another donation before deciding. Adam Little suggested moving forward with the project and to use the Special Projects line in the Coal Fund to cover the remaining expenses not covered by donations. Landon Vaughn noted that the donation check would be deposited into the Coal Fund anyways and they could vote to pay the full amount from there. He also clarified that the single bronze stair sign was no longer included in the quote and was replaced by 3 aluminum signs that looked very similar.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by Adam Little, to accept the proposal for the 3 aluminum stair signs and the courthouse parking lot sign for a total of $6978.95 to be paid from the Special Projects line in the Coal Fund. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, Adam Little, John Carrell, John Mead, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

Note: The next item was separated and moved from the consent agenda earlier in the meeting. Motion was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by John Carrell, and approved to insert the item after New Business #7.

Consent Agenda Item # 5: Accept check # 154821 in the amount of $5,000 from Peoples National Bank as a donation for the Courthouse Sign Project.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by Adam Little, to accept check # 154821 in the amount of $5,000 from Peoples National Bank as a donation for the Courthouse Sign Project. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, Adam Little, John Mead, John Carrell, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

8. The board was presented with an agreement from Bellwether, LLC for solar application review.

Dustin Harmon, with Bellwether Administrative Services, explained that this service is something separate their company can offer. He noted that the average solar application review takes approximately 80 hours and provided the members with a copy of their application checklist. He said they would waive their standard $6,000 initial fee, but cost of the review would be 20% of the application fee; noting which it is already based on the size of the solar farm. Chairman Woodrow asked Dustin to confirm that the Solar Company is basically paying for the review. He agreed. The board looked at State's Attorney Sarah Mead for advisement. Mead said she would recommend seeking outside council in addition to Bellwether's solar review services and would work with Dustin to gather some names. Landon asked if there was a term length on the agreement. Dustin said it would just be on an as-needed basis.

MOTION was made by Landon Vaughan, seconded by John Mead, to approve the agreement with Bellwether, LLC for solar application review as presented. On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Landon Vaughan, John Mead, John Carrell, Adam Little, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

9. The board was provided with a list of Claims including any Late Claims and Highway Claims.

MOTION was made by Adam Little, seconded by John Mead, to approve all Claims as presented.
On roll call the vote was as follows: Yes- Adam Little, John Mead, John Carrell, Landon Vaughan, and Kelly Woodrow. 5 yes, 0 nays, motion carried.

HIGHWAY RECOMMENDATION

10. A copy of the Memorandum of Understanding/Partnership Agreement with the ARIA Project Team was provided to the board.

Chairman Woodrow reminded the members that our Highway Engineer, Rick Coronado, covered this item during the highway meeting. Rick noted that the project would collect road condition data with google and came at no charge to the county.

MOTION was made by John Mead, seconded by Adam Little, to approve the presented Memorandum of Understanding/Partnership Agreement with the ARIA Project Team. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

The following motion was also made in accordance with the Chairman's recommendations:

11. **MOTION** was made by John Carrell, seconded by John Mead, to appoint Heather Bowman to the Hamilton County Ambulance Service Board to replace Connie Van Winkle for the remainder of her (3) year term to expire November 30, 2026 and for the next term beginning December 1, 2026 through November 30, 2029. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

Chairman Woodrow asked the board what they thought of the concrete work on the north side of the courthouse. He said he has heard several compliments about it and asked if they would like to get a quote to do more. Landon Vaughan said he would really like to do some benches and tables on the current area, but felt they needed to hold off on any further projects until the budget was settled. Adam Little thought it wouldn't hurt since the price of concrete keeps going up. Woodrow said he felt the concrete would save on the wear and tear of the mini splits due to the grass clippings and leaves that get blown around them. Mary Anne Hopfinger spoke

up from the crowd and asked if they would consider doing the sidewalks, especially on the west side. Chairman Woodrow agreed they could check into that too.

MOTION was made by John Mead, seconded by Landon Vaughan, to adjourn the meeting. Vote by acclamation. All voting aye, none nay. Motion carried.

MINUTES APPROVED ON:_____

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COUNTY CLERK **CHAIRMAN**