

RESUME OF MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
COUNTY BOARD, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS
December 21, 2023

The County Board of Champaign County, Illinois met at a Regular Meeting, Thursday, December 21, 2023, at 6:32 PM in the Shields-Carter Meeting Room, Brookens Administrative Center, 1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois, with County Executive Steve Summers presiding and Matthew Cross as Clerk of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed the following members present: Vanichtheeranont, Wilson, Carter, Esry, Farney, Fortado, Locke, Lokshin, Michaels, Peugh, Rodriguez, Rogers, Sexton, Smith, Straub, Taylor, Thorsland, and Patterson – 18; absent: Hanauer-Friedman and Stohr – 2; late: Cowart (arrived at 6:38, missing only the Approval of the Agenda/Addenda and the relevant amendment votes) – 1. County Executive Summers declared a quorum present and the Board competent to conduct business. Board Chair Patterson and Member Carter returned late from the recess and missed the Consent Agenda vote.

PRAYER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

County Executive Summers read a blessing for the holidays, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited.

READ NOTICE OF MEETING

The Clerk read the Notice of the Meeting, said Notice having been published in the *News Gazette* on December 7, December 14, and December 20, 2023.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDA

Board Member Farney offered a motion to approve the Agenda/Addenda; Board Member Michaels seconded.

Board Member Thorsland offered an amendment to separate Resolution No. 2023-354 into two separate resolutions as depicted in the handout with the new Resolution No. 2023-354 pertaining to the County Coroner and Resolution No. 2023-355 pertaining to the County Auditor; Board Member Esry seconded. The amendment carried by unanimous voice vote.

The motion as amended carried by unanimous voice vote.

DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETINGS

Standing Committees:

- A. County Facilities Committee
 - Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:30 PM
 - Shields-Carter Meeting Room

- B. Environment & Land Use Committee
Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Shields-Carter Meeting Room
- C. Highway & Transportation Committee
Friday, January 5, 2024 at 9:00 AM
1605 E Main Street, Urbana

Committee of the Whole:

- A. Justice and Social Services; Policy, Personnel and Appointments; *and* Finance
Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Shields-Carter Meeting Room

County Board:

- A. Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Shields-Carter Meeting Room

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John Bambenek, of Mahomet, spoke against a proposed sales tax increase to fund social services, noting that sales taxes are inherently regressive; he proposed instead either forcing township supervisors to increase their funding of social services as mandated by the Illinois civil code or to replace them with supervisors who will do so.

County Auditor George Danos spoke against the proposed sales tax increase to fund social services as unneeded and vague, and he spoke of the importance of an independent, elected County Auditor.

Jim McGuire, of Champaign Township, spoke against eliminating the elected Auditor and Coroner offices and questioned the decision process of the County Board.

County Clerk and Recorder Aaron Ammons spoke against eliminating the elected Auditor and Coroner offices, noting that the intended placement on the March 2024 Primary provides little time for community discussion of the ramifications and that it would be unfair to candidates to be on the same ballot as a referendum to eliminate the offices for which they are candidates.

Robby Walker, Stop the Violence program director, gave an update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded Healing Invisible Wounds veterans conference focused on trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder; he noted that they are planning their next conference and thanked the Board for supporting the program.

Cheryl Walker, District Commander of American Legion Post 2019, provided an update on the ARPA-funded homeless veteran Stand Down held in Rantoul in September 2023, and planning the next event for September 7, 2024. She presented a plaque in gratitude to the County Board for supporting the project.

Brian Brauer spoke on behalf of his wife and current Democratic County Coroner candidate Laurie Brauer. He spoke against eliminating the independent, elected offices of Auditor and Coroner and stated that the question needs more study and accountability.

Seon Williams, currently Democratic County Coroner candidate, spoke on the importance of the elected Coroner's office.

Ronald Vlach yielded his time to recently retired County Coroner Duane Northrup in an attempt to provide Mr. Northrup extended speaking time; County Executive Summers stated that any given speaker is typically limited to five minutes but agreed to give Mr. Northrup some leeway. Mr. Northrup spoke against eliminating the elected Coroner and detailed the importance of having an independent, elected Coroner, accountable to the voters instead of the county administration, noting instances where he was pressured by county officials to make determinations with which he did not agree.

James Quisenberry, retired County Board Member and currently Urbana City Council Member, expressed his preference for new county seal option #2 and spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner and questioned the desire to place the referenda on the primary election ballot as opposed to the general election.

Pastor Herbert Burnett, of Rantoul, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner and questioned the rushed process.

Steve Thuney, Interim County Coroner and current Republican County Coroner candidate, spoke against eliminating the elected Coroner office.

Jeremy Chase, of Mahomet Township, spoke against the rushed process of the referendum resolutions to eliminate the elected offices of Coroner and Auditor.

County Executive stated Public Participation had gone beyond the 60 minutes allotted by the County Board Rules (Resolution No. 2018-413), but he was willing to extend that time to allow all speakers an opportunity. The Board consented by a unanimous showing of thumbs.

Jim Allmon, Sangamon County Coroner, spoke against eliminating the elected Coroner's office and explained the importance of an independent, elected Coroner.

Susan Mantell, of Sidney Township, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Coroner and Auditor.

Bob Gessner, Kankakee County Coroner, spoke against eliminating the elected Coroner's office and explained the importance of an independent, elected Coroner. County Circuit Clerk Susan McGrath spoke against the rushed process to bring the referendum resolutions eliminating elected offices of Coroner and Auditor and spoke on the importance of independent, elected officials.

Nathan Smith spoke against the rushed process to bring the referendum resolutions eliminating elected offices of Coroner and Auditor.

Mark Joselyn, former Urbana resident, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner.

Ben Joselyn, of Urbana, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner and questioned the rushed process.

Al Kurtz, former County Board Chair, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner.

John Porter, Pastor at Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, spoke against eliminating the elected offices of Auditor and Coroner.

RECESS

County Executive Summers recessed the meeting for five minutes. Board Chair Patterson and Member Carter were late returning from the recess.

CONSENT AGENDA

Board Member Patterson offered a motion to approve the Consent Agenda; Board Member Locke seconded. The motion comprising 27 resolutions (Nos. 2023-323, 2023-324, 2023-325, 2023-326, 2023-327, 2023-328, 2023-329, 2023-330, 2023-331, 2023-332, 2023-333, 2023-334, 2023-335, 2023-336, 2023-337, 2023-338, 2023-339, 2023-340, 2023-341, 2023-342, 2023-343, 2023-344, 2023-345, 2023-346, 2023-347, 2023-348, and 2023-349) and one ordinance (No. 2023-16) carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

Yeas: Vanichtheeranont, Wilson, Cowart, Esry, Farney, Fortado, Locke, Lokshin, Michaels, Peugh, Rodriguez, Rogers, Sexton, Smith, Straub, Taylor, and Thorsland – 17

Nays: none

Not Present: Carter and Patterson – 2

COMMUNICATIONS

Clerk and Recorder Ammons presented an update on the Restrictive Covenants Project. Board Member Lokshin asked Clerk and Recorder Ammons to provide talking points information to board members for communication with constituents. Board Member Esry asked if they were finished investigating deeds; Clerk and Recorder Ammons stated the searching process should be finished. Board Member Carter thanked Clerk and Recorder Ammons for his work on the project. Board Member Vanichtheeranont asked about future research initiatives with the Champaign County Historical Society, the Champaign County Historical Archives, and other research facilities; Clerk and Recorder Ammons stated that the Restrictive Covenant Project Advisory Committee will investigate further resources. Board Member Rodriguez referenced the Edwin Washington Project in Virginia as an example and spoke on the significance of the Restrictive Covenants Project. Board Member Straub asked about

public accessibility of the results of the project; Clerk and Recorder Ammons suggested the possibility of creating a GIS layer in County maps. County Clerk and Recorder staff member Grant Chassy was invited to join the discussion; he spoke on the advisory committee and stated they will present to the County Board in January 2024 on mapping, public outreach, and engagement initiatives. Board Member Fortado suggested that Clerk and Recorder Ammons submit an ARPA funding request for generating the GIS layer. Board Member Cowart spoke about a recent personal experience with real estate redlining. Board Member Carter spoke about historical real estate redlining in the county.

County Executive Summers expressed his happiness for Board Member Cowart's returned attendance to the Board.

Board Member Thorsland provided information about the new Paid Leave for All act to take effect January 1, 2024.

Board Member Wilson expressed his impression with the Public Participation speakers regarding the elimination of the elected Coroner and Auditor, and he requested the Board either move up the consideration of Resolutions No. 2023-354 and No. 2023-355 or postpone them indefinitely.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board Member Straub offered an omnibus motion to approve the minutes of the Truth in Taxation Hearing of October 19, 2023, and the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the County Board of November 21, 2023; Board Member Carter seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

STANDING COMMITTEES

County Executive Summers noted that the Summaries of Action Taken for the County Facilities Committee on December 5, 2023, was received and placed on file.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

County Executive Summers noted that the Summary of action from the Committee of the Whole (Justice and Social Services; Finance; Policy, Personnel, and Appointments) on December 12, 2023, was received and placed on file.

NEW BUSINESS

Board Member Rogers offered a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-350 honoring retiring county employees; Board Chair Patterson seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Board Member Wilson read the entirety of the resolution, naming each retiree and their years of service with the County.

Board Member Locke offered a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-351 honoring county employees reaching milestone years of service; Board Member Farney seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Board Member Wilson read the entirety of the resolution, naming each employee achieving 5-year, 10-year, 15-year, 20-year, 2-year, 30-year, and 35-year milestones.

Board Member Michaels offered an omnibus motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-352 authorizing payments of claims and Resolution No. 2023-353 approving purchases not following purchasing policy; Board Member Lokshin seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Board Member Farney offered a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2023-21 granting a special use permit, zoning case 100-S-23 “Champaign Solar 1B” PV Farm including the decommissioning and site reclamation plan; Board Chair Patterson seconded. Board Member Thorsland explained that the ordinance will replace Ordinance No. 2023-18, correcting an error in the text but otherwise identical. The motion carried by roll-call vote.

Yeas: Vanichtheeranont, Carter, Cowart, Farney, Fortado, Locke, Lokshin, Peugh, Rodriguez, Rogers, Straub, Taylor, Thorsland, and Patterson – 14
Nays: Wilson, Esry, Michaels, Sexton, and Smith – 5

Board Member Cowart offered an omnibus motion for the annual renewal of Recreation and Entertainment Licenses for Gordyville, LLC, 2022 County Road 3000N, Gifford, IL 61847 for term 1/1/2024–12/31/2024; Hudson Farm Wedding and Events, LLC, 1341 County Rd 1800E, Urbana, IL 61802 for term 1/1/2024–12/31/2024; *and* Champaign County Fair Association, 1302 N Coler Ave, Urbana, IL 61801 for term 1/1/2024–12/31/2024; Board Member Sexton seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

ARPA Project Manager Kathy Larson was invited to join the discussion; she provided a brief update to various ARPA-funded projects. Board Member Straub asked that future Board Meetings have the APRA updates earlier in the Agenda, so Project Manager Larson does not have to sit through nearly the entire meeting to address the Board. Board Member Wilson asked for future funding of the Mahomet Area Youth Club. Board Member Carter thanked Project Manager Larson for her work and asked that she provide guidelines for promoting the Garden Hills project; Board Member Carter stated the importance of the Garden Hills project. Board Member Farney asked about delays in the Rural Broadband project; Project Manager Larson stated the progress is currently stalled because the contractors had applied for supplementary state grant funding and are waiting for the results of the grant applications. Board Member Smith asked about the masterplan funding line; Project Manager Larson stated that cost is included in the Finley fee.

County Director of Administration Michelle Jett was invited to join the discussion; she requested ARPA funding compensation for the 2024 American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees general contract bargaining. The Board expressed their approval through a showing of thumbs.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Director Jett presented three options for a new county seal. Board Member Michaels noted the potentially high cost of replacing the current county seal; County Executive Summers and Director Jett both stated that the new seal will be phased in as items are replaced. Various Board Members expressed their seal preferences. Board Members Farney expressed concern about the non-circular option #2 being used as a document embossment seal. Board Member Carter asked why all three options feature the County Courthouse, especially as it may not have positive connotations for all residents; Director Jett stated that the courthouse tower is a prominent, recognizable feature.

Board Member Farney offered a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2024 placing the question of elimination of the elected office of County Coroner in Champaign County on the March 2024 election ballot; Board Member Rodriguez seconded.

Board Member Wilson immediately offered a motion to postpone indefinitely the resolution; Board Member Peugh seconded. Various Board Members debated parliamentary procedures and the language of Robert's Rules of Order. Board Member Rodriguez expressed a need to define the differences between administrative and political roles of offices in county government and expressed support for a home rule governance. Director Jett stated that appointments to those offices would require County Board approval. Board Member Vanichtheeranont asked who would be empowered to dismiss the appointed Coroner. Board Member Esry called a point of order, stating the questions are not directly about the current motion to postpone indefinitely; Board Members Esry and Fortado debated what questions were and were not germane to the current motion to postpone. Various board members stated their preferences on postponement. The motion to postpone indefinitely carried by roll-call vote.

Yeas: Wilson, Carter, Cowart, Esry, Locke, Lokshin, Michaels, Peugh, Rogers, Sexton, Smith, and Patterson – 12

Nays: Vanichtheeranont, Farney, Fortado, Rodriguez, Straub, Taylor, and Thorsland – 7

Board Member Straub offered a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-355 placing the question of elimination of the elected office of County Auditor in Champaign County on the March 2024 election ballot; Board Member Farney seconded.

Board Member Michaels immediately offered a motion to postpone indefinitely the resolution; Board Member Locke seconded. Board Member Fortado stated her opposition to the indefinite postponement and a desire to debate the merits of the issue. Board Member Michaels stated that she did not want an immediate vote on the resolution but to have time to discuss it for possible inclusion on the November 2024 general election ballot. Various Board Members state that the indefinite postponement would disallow future consideration during current Board term. Board Member Michaels withdrew her motion to postpone indefinitely.

Board Member Thorsland proposed postponing the referendum until the 2026 general election, as that would give the necessary time to discuss, debate, and gather information. Board Chair Patterson suggested the Board vote on the resolution at hand. Various Board Members discussed the merits of voting now versus voting to postpone the vote. Board Chair Patterson stated that the board cannot postpone a resolution for consideration by a future board. Board Member Esry suggested that if the vote on the resolution were to fail, County Administration bring the discussion back at a later date. Board Member Cowart called the question on the resolution; the question was approved by unanimous voice vote. The motion to adopt the resolution failed by roll-call vote.

Yeas: Farney, Fortado, Rodriguez, Taylor, and Patterson – 5

Nays: Vanichtheeranont, Wilson, Carter, Cowart, Esry, Locke, Lokshin, Michaels, Peugh, Rogers, Sexton, Smith, Straub, and Thorsland – 14

ADJOURN

County Executive Summers adjourned the meeting at 9:33 PM.



Aaron Ammons, Champaign County Clerk
and ex-Officio Clerk of the Champaign County Board
Champaign County, Illinois