



JASPER COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2025

The Jasper County Board met on Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Jasper County Building, Board Room, 204 West Washington Street, Newton, Illinois. The meeting was called to order by proclamation according to law by Sheriff Francis. Sheriff Francis led a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance. The following board members were present: Chairman Jason Warfel, Vice-Chairman Ron Heltsley, A.C. Pickens, Doug Weddell, Michael Geier, James Judson, Eric Spiker, Jessica Schackmann, and Austin Francis.

Public Comments:

The Jasper County 4-H Ambassadors came and gave a brief presentation to the County Board. The 4-H Ambassadors promote the 4-H program on a local and county level while taking advantage of opportunities to expand upon their leadership skills and become valued members of their community. They spoke about what they liked about 4-H, the projects they are taking and how long they have been 4-H members. They will having a Week-long Day Camp series to help promote general projects. A list of 4-H Programs and Activities was handed out to the board members. Accompanying the 4-H Ambassadors was Katie Turkal, Jasper County 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator. Katie gave an update on the new building they are moving into around the beginning of June. Kasey Kemme is the new Extension director for Clay, Effingham, Fayette and Jasper Counties.

Adoption of the agenda. There was no objection, the agenda was adopted as distributed.

Reports:

County Departments:

Ambulance Department - 911 Transport 70; Transfers 37; Standbys 28; Refusals 21; Discharges 4

Highway Department – The Electronic Recycling Event was held on March 29, 2025, we collected 22,471 lbs., with no extra charges incurred. A Resolution to be attached to a Joint Federal Funding Agreement for the 2025 Pavement Preservation Project - Section 22-00142-00-PP needs Full Board approval. This project consists of oiling and chipping on the Buck Grove Rd (1100E - south of Newton), Hatchery Road (100N-West of West Liberty), Lost Highway (600E- North of Gila) and Remsburg Road (400E - NE of Wheeler). The oil letting for Jasper County and the townships was held on March 31, 2025. The prices were like 2024. The Highway Department is planning to oil 31 miles using Motor Fuel Tax Funds and 21.78 with Federal and State Match Funds (Pavement Preservation Project). We received the 2024 Compliance Review from IDOT for County MFT, Township MFT and Township Bridge Funds. They certified the receipts and disbursements of these funds as documented by the county highway department and agree with the records maintained by the Department of Transportation. This must be

reported to the Full Board and kept on file at the county highway office. Weddell asked about a tire collection. There was a discussion on this and Andrew would investigate this.

Health Department – The last meeting was March 24th. Building update: all the east end of the building is now under construction. They're currently using the Annex building for their drug screening and moving over there for some of the different things that they're doing. The nursing staff was at the power plant for the outage April 4th through the 15th from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm each day. May 8th will be the next Cancer Support meeting at the health department from 5 to 6 pm, Susan Shall will be the guest speaking at that event. Also, the health fair is scheduled for May 28th at West End Event Center 10 am- 1 pm. Safe sitter program will be offered May 29th for students who are entering the 6th thru 8th grade coming this fall. The next meeting will be on June 2nd at 5:30.

County Positions/Services:

Building Maintenance – March 31st Reed Hardik, from Ameren gas set up natural gas installation in the next 6-8 weeks at no charge to the county with 61 feet to be installed. April 14th the ADA project started at county building on the south entrance of the parking lot.

Jasper County Courthouse – A committee meeting was held and plans will be recommended to the board.

Information Technology Consultant – Magoo and Associates met with department heads. Kemper and Magoo have been working together. Magoo will meet with department heads on concerns.

Animal Control – In board packet.

Elected Officials:

Treasurer- Reports from Bigard were sent in the board packet. The total income for March was \$248,762.15. The expenses for March were \$347,696.79. Total income less expenses for March a net loss of \$98,934.64. Fiscal year 2024/2025 income was \$1,090,045.23. Less Expenses were \$1,428,079.39 with a net loss of \$338,034.16.

Other Elected Officials/Offices – County Clerk and Regional office of Education in packet.

New Public Defender for Jasper County – Cole Hildebrand

Jasper County Public Defender Lindsay Savage resigned from her position on Friday, April 11, 2025. Chief Judge Martin W. Siemer (Fourth Judicial Circuit) at the recommendation of Jasper County Resident Judge Chad M. Miller appointed Clay County Assistant State's Attorney Cole Hildebrand to serve as the Jasper County Public Defender effective Monday, April 14, 2025.

Sheriff Francis spoke about adding a K9 unit to the department next year. Adam Bridges is projected to be the handler. Next year in March there will be training. There will be fundraisers to help raise funds along with the drug fund contribution. This summer fundraising is planned with a gun raffle and a pork burger sale. It has been about 4 years since the city had a K9, and it has been about 15-20 years since the county has had a dog. Francis wants this to be a positive thing in the community. He plans on using the dog at the school and possibly will hold demonstrations.

Consent agenda. The following items were on the consent agenda this evening: Approval of County Board March 20, 2025 Minutes; Adoption of Pavement Preservation Oil & Chip Project Resolution – (Highway Dept.); Authorize Opening New Account for Jasper County Sheriff K-9 Funding; Reappointment of Brock Kessler to the Jasper County Board of Review (2-Year Term); Reappointment of John Miller to the Jasper County Board of Review (2-Year Term); Appointment of Randy Ochs to the County Farmland Assessment Review Committee (2-Year Term); Appointment of Ron Zwilling to the County Farmland Assessment Review Committee (2-Year Term); File County Reports; and Allow Claims. There was no objection, the Consent Agenda was adopted.

Old Business:

Item A. – Jasper County Flag

An official Jasper County Flag was adopted at the March 20, 2025 meeting. Currently, flag production and price quotes are being sought. Updates will be provided when quotes are received.

New Business:

ITEM A. - JASPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE DESIGN

ADG (ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN GROUP, LTD.) and STONE & WAGGONER, PLLC have Courthouse plans ready. The plans were reviewed by the Jasper County Courthouse Design Committee (Thursday, April 17, 2025 @ 4:30 p.m.). The committee unanimously recommended sending the plans to the full board for final approval. All board members were present at the committee meeting to hear the proposed floor plan in detail. **Next Steps in the Process:** *[Board Action]* County Board Approval of Courthouse Design; Detailed Design Blueprints of Courthouse; Bid Process; *[Board Review]* Review Received Bids; *[Board Action]* Approval/Accept Bid; Demolition & Construction Begin

Geier spoke about the meeting before the board meeting. Judge Miller was happy with the design. There are some small changes to the offices that will be made prior to the detailed blueprints. Geier moved to approve the Jasper County Courthouse Design. Pickens seconded the motion. Francis, Geier, Heltsley, Judson, Pickens, Shackmann, Spiker, Warfel and Weddell voted yes with a roll call vote. The Jasper County Courthouse Design has been approved.

Board Comments:

Geier thanked the elected officials, Sheriff Francis, Jamie Blake, Dora Griffith probation officer, along with the judge on their input. He thanked the board members for carving out extra time today before the board meeting to attend the meeting.

Chairman's Comments:

Discover Downstate Illinois will attend an upcoming County Board Meeting.

Official Jasper County State Tourism Bureau <https://www.downstateil.org/>

2025 Visitors Guide https://issuu.com/illinoisouth/docs/2025_visitors_guide_web?ff

Jasper County CEO Trade Show – Wednesday, April 23rd from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Come out and support the Jasper CEO students as they showcase their businesses and products. This is your chance to see our young business owners' hard work, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit in action. The event is held at the Jasper County Community Unit #1 Office at 1401 Clayton Ave. Newton, IL 62448

JEDI - Meet, Greet & Learn – Wednesday, April 23rd @ 6:00 p.m. Jasper County Economic Development, Inc. will hold a Meet, Greet & Learn on Wednesday, April 23rd at 6:00 p.m. at the Newton Community High School Auditorium. Michelle Brooks with the Small Business Development Center with the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges will be presenting. RSVP by emailing or texting your name and number of people to jaspercountyjedi@gmail.com or 618-783-9405.

County Offices Closed for Good Friday – Friday, April 18th Non-Emergency Jasper County Offices and Departments will be closed on Friday, April 18th in observance of Good Friday/Easter Holiday. County Offices/Departments will resume normal business hours on Monday, April 21st.

In the Consolidated Election we had 1,227 registered voters out of 6,340 registered voters, so just a little over 19% of the registered voters came out for the consolidated election. Typically for those that are aware of the clerk and her office, elections are perpetual. There's an election every year. And in general election years, there's 2 elections, there's a primary and a general election at the end of the year. The general elections, which would be your gubernatorial elections, and presidential elections tend to garner. The turnout is somewhere in the 70%, almost close to 80% of registered voters turn out for those kinds of elections. These consolidated elections get considerably less voter turnout. Warfel pointed out that beginning in 2024 the state allowed for a permanent vote by mail option. A number of citizens in Jasper County took that option to permanently vote by mail. And what that means is that for every election they are mailed out a ballot. It is great if people utilize that, but for this consolidated election, for example, it was about a \$3000 cost to the county for ballots that were never returned. So, we ask of people if you signed up for that permanent vote by mail at least turn that back in because that is costing the county. The other thing Warfel mentioned is every two years the clerk's office is supposed to purge voter registration. If you have a good county clerk and staff, they'll do the voter register purge every two years. So, what that means is if you as an individual have not voted in the past four years, which in a four-year time frame you've got two general elections, two general primaries and 2 consolidated elections. If you do not vote in any of those elections over a four-year period, you're going to be removed from the voter registration, and you must sign up again. If you look at our voter total from our general election we had in November, a little over 6800 registered voters in Jasper County and it got purged down to 6300. People are removed off voter registration, and there's a lot of reasons, people moving and people pass away.

President Trump last week signed executive orders that dealt with coal. Warfel reached out to Vistra. This is the company that owns Newton Power Station. Brad Watson, who is their community affairs director, replied. As you may recall from our previous meetings or discussions with respect to Newton, the 2027 plant shutdown date was determined based on the deadline in the federal CCR rule to have all unlined CCR ponds and coal-fired units closed by October 2028. To meet this deadline, we need to cease operations at Newton in 2027. The Executive Order

issued last week does not in itself provide the regulatory certainty we would need regarding compliance deadlines in order to consider extending the operation date. In addition, it could also be helpful for the Administration to allow companies to begin closing their impoundments to lock in certainty regarding the closure standards that will be required by future Administrations, particularly if the facilities commit to continue operating under another dispatchable and abundant U.S.-based fuel source. Another factor under Illinois' CEJA law is we are required to close Newton no later than 2030. The Executive Order does not change that state law. We will continue to closely monitor actions by this administration and continue our efforts to provide reliable, safe, and affordable power to our customers.

Blessed Easter On behalf of the Jasper County Board and myself, I would like to wish all citizens of Jasper County a very Blessed Easter Season!

Executive/Closed Session - The Board does have an executive/closed session to discuss two matters: Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1) & Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(12). There will be no action taken following the executive/closed session and the board will adjourn the meeting from the executive/closed session. Geier moved for the board to enter an executive session under the following exceptions: Personnel (exception 1) and Litigation (exception 12). Weddell seconded the motion. Francis, Geier, Heltsley, Judson, Pickens, Shackmann, Spiker, Warfel and Weddell voted yes with a roll call vote. The Board entered an Executive Session at 6:39 pm.

Geier moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 pm. Francis seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned from executive session.

The Next Board Meeting will be on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Amy Tarr, Jasper County Clerk