



JASPER COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 19, 2025

The Jasper County Board met in regular session on Thursday, June 19, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by proclamation according to law by Sheriff Francis. Sheriff Francis led a moment in 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: Angela Martin with Saved by Grace Animal Rescue read a letter on a recommendation of a candidate for the position of Animal Control Officer. The letter spoke about the candidate's qualifications.

Valena Patridge, MVP Happy Holler would like to see a boat ramp and the gravel road paved. People come from all over come to the dive bar. She would like the river promoted more for tourism. People kayak the river and there is a need for a boat ramp. Jeeps come from all over and they do not like to drive expensive Jeeps on the gravel road.

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

Reports:

County Departments:

Ambulance Department - 911 transport- 69; Transfer- 45; Accidents- 8; Refusals- 16; Discharges- 3; Mutual Aid- 29 New Stryker cot arrived partially paid for with Mary Heath Grant Funds. Two new employees hired, completely staffed at this time.

Highway Department – The mowing of county highway right of ways started in May and is approximately 50% complete. Oil and chip maintenance of both county and township roads will begin in the next month and continue throughout the summer. The bridge on County Road 500N over Big Muddy Creek in South Muddy township has been load posted at 5 tons due to settlement of a pier. The Highway Department will be performing increased inspections on this bridge as required by IDOT, working with a structural engineer from Civil Design Inc. to evaluate options/costs, and considering 5 services (FS and Equity). Preliminary / Construction Engineering services with Stone & Waggoner for Section 25-06124-00-BR for a bridge project in North Muddy township utilizing Township Bridge Program (TBP) funds will need full board approval. Austin Francis gave update on the railroad ties, it is completed.

Health Department – Total number of clients served for the month of May Nursing – 523, Behavioral Health – 468, Environmental Health – 53. Building update – East end of the building – Phase 1 Paint flooring prep, light fixtures and HVAC are in progress. Anticipated finish for phase 1 is still the middle of July. Punch list walk through for phase one is scheduled for July 10. Environmental Health Division had a state audit for the Food Protection Program. Audit went well with no findings and 100% compliance.

Next Cancer Support Group will be announced, working on a new grant. Next Board of Health meeting will be July 28th at 5:30. Judson had a few questions on a grant Wellness paying monthly fees to the pickleball rackets,

massages, facials etc. Heltsley will get the questions Judson would like answered at the next board of health meeting.

County Positions/Services:

Building Maintenance – May 20 - Tammy Michl requested the use of the courthouse lawn for “First Responders Appreciation Day”, Saturday Aug 16 from 11 am – 1 pm. June 3 Pickens with John Stone about the ADA parking at the south side of the county building. Pickens, Judson and other board members, Stone determined the best solution was to add an additional section of concrete to the east side of the parking spaces. He offered to do this at no cost to the county. June 7 – Waynes Tree Service removed a broken tree branch from the south side of the courthouse. Thanks to them for doing it on short notice.

Jasper County Courthouse – Jason Wright from ADG is working on final draft with the mechanical aspects and will be contacting the Circuit Clerk and States Attorney probably the 1st week of July.

Information Technology – Cameras are back up at the jail and wait to see if sufficient or need a new computer.

Animal Control – In board Packet

Elected Officials:

Treasurer- Reports from Bigard were sent in the board packet. The total income for May was \$424,380.56. The expenses for May were \$358,463.54. Total income less expenses for May a net of \$65,917.02. Fiscal year 2024/2025 income was \$1,768,150.92. Less Expenses were \$2,175,881.01 with a net loss of \$407,730.09.

Other Elected Officials/Offices

County Clerk – In Packet

Regional Office of Education – In Packet

Consent agenda. The following items were on the consent agenda this evening: Approval of County Board May 15, 2025 Minutes; Authorize Jasper County Circuit Clerk to Use County Funds for Court Modernization Reimbursement Grant; Adoption of Amended Jasper County Animal Control Officer Contract; Approval of Preliminary/Construction Engineering Services Agreement for North Muddy Township Bridge Project; Appointment of Austin Francis to the South Central Illinois Regional Planning & Development Commission; File County Reports and Allow Claims. There was no objection, the Consent Agenda was adopted.

Old Business:

Item A. – Jasper County Flag

The Jasper County Flag was adopted at the March 20, 2025, County Board Meeting. Flag quotes have been obtained from Judy McClure’s Sign and Graphics, Inc. and Borgic Designs. Both are in Newton and are willing to work with the County on this project. As with any flag flown outside, they will need to be replaced, probably yearly. The County has several locations: County Building, Courthouse, Sheriff’s Office, Highway Department and Health Department where a Jasper County Flag could be flown below the American Flag. Knowing the multiple locations, anticipating the replacement of the flag, and counting for some additional flags that may be purchased by residents, the quotes are for a quantity of 25 flags. Quotes were obtained right before May 15, 2025, County Board meeting and Board Members

were asked to review the quotes and decide at tonight's meeting. Weddell asked if Borgic Designs had a heavier grade for the flags. Spiker asked if they would get some sample of the materials to be used. The board will wait for more information and samples.

Item B. – County Building South Entrance/Parking Lot ADA Improvement Project

At the May 15, 2025, County Board Meeting there was a discussion of the County Building South Entrance/Parking Lot ADA Improvement Project. John Stone (Stone & Waggoner) in discussions with Board Members A.C. Pickens and James Judson indicated that to lessen the elevation change the new parking pavement could be extended to the east edge of the parking lot. Discussion on this item was postponed until additional information could be obtained from Stone & Waggoner. Since the meeting, John Stone in conversation with A.C. Pickens and James Judson has indicated that Stone & Waggoner will cover the cost of extending the new parking pavement to the east edge at no additional cost to the County.

New Business:

Item A. – Illinois Dceo Energy Transition Community Grant Letters Of Support

The State of Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity has opened applications for Year 3 of the Energy Transition Community Grant (ETCG). Just as in years past South Central Illinois Regional Planning & Development Commission worked on the initial application for Phase 1. It was submitted on June 13, 2025 (June 30, 2025 deadline). The next step is waiting for the award notification. If awarded, the County will move to Phase 2, which includes Board approval for the grant use.

Yearly, up to \$40 million is allocated to meet the needs of individual localities by addressing the economic and social impact of plant closures. In year one (2023) a total of \$12,213,478 was awarded to 36 entities, Jasper County received \$565,615. In year two (2024) a total of \$30,125,530 was awarded to 67 entities, Jasper County received \$874,316. The awarded amount is based on a formula of impact of closure based on the taxing entity and this formula was adjusted slightly from year one to year two, which explains why Jasper County received more in year two.

Any taxing entity within a 30-mile radius of a closed or closing plant or mine is eligible to apply. The leading entity is the County of Jasper, which is required to provide a letter of support for any entity applying for the grant using the Newton Power Station closure. The County of Jasper has previously written letters of support for Jasper County Community Unit #1 School District, Wade Fire Protection District, City of Newton and North Muddy Township. Additional entities have requested letters of support in the past and in March 2024 the County Board limited who received those letters to taxing entities within Jasper County.

The Village of Montrose has requested (6/9/25) a letter of support from Jasper County to apply for the Energy Transition Community Grant to be used to replace sidewalks in the village. The Village submitted a letter and map that is included in the Board Packet. The Village of Dieterich has also requested (6/11/25) a letter of support. There was a discussion on the topic for and against it. Spiker moved to approve a letter of support for the Village of Montrose to apply for the Energy Transition Community Grant. Heltsley seconded the motion. Motion failed.

Item B. – Jasper County Animal Control Warden (Officer) Position

Austin Ferguson, Jasper County Control Warden (Officer) gave notice on Thursday, June 12, 2025, that he would be resigning his position effective June 30, 2025. Mr. Ferguson recently accepted a new job and with the demands of his new job did not feel he could fulfill his duties to the County. During Wadern/Officer Ferguson's tenure, he has done a remarkable job and his attention and care to the Animal Control needs of Jasper County have been professional and compassionate. The County of Jasper is grateful for Austin's 5 years of service as our Animal Control Warden/Officer. Heltsley thanked him for his service. Austin recognized Saved by Grace and EARS who he has worked with. Needs to reach out to Save by Grace. 5 dogs in 5 years have been put down. The dogs have been rehomed. He thinks not having a no kill should not be supported because the dogs are rehomed better than in a no kill shelter and he does not think an animal needs to sit in a pen for months.

The Animal Control Warden (Officer) position opening and application were posted on the Jasper County Website on Thursday, June 12, 2025. Interested individuals may download the application or pick up an application at the Jasper County Clerk's office at 204 W. Washington, Suite 2, Newton, IL 62448. Completed applications can be returned to the Clerk's office or emailed to Ron Heltsley at rheltsley@jaspercounty.illinois.gov . **Applications Due Friday, June 20, 2025, by 4:00 p.m.** The Animal Control Warden (Officer) position is a contractual position and is not a County employee position. The Animal Control Warden (Officer) is paid an annual amount for services as well as compensation for mileage and cell phone use. Ron Heltsley, Jasper County Board Vice-Chairman will be the primary contact for filling this position and any questions should be directed to Ron at 618-553-9542 or rheltsley@jaspercounty.illinois.gov Heltsley has had several application and interviews will be next week.

(510 ILCS 5/3)

"The County Board Chairman with the consent of the County Board shall appoint an Administrator. Appointments shall be made as necessary to keep this position filled at all times. The Administrator may appoint as many Deputy Administrators and Animal Control Wardens to aid him or her as authorized by the Board. The compensation for the Administrator, Deputy Administrators, and Animal Control Wardens shall be fixed by the Board."

At the June 11, 2020 meeting of the Jasper County Board Dr. Chad Ely, DVM was appointed as Administrator of Jasper County Animal Control. At the July 9, 2020 meeting of the Jasper County Board Austin Ferguson was appointed as Jasper County Animal Control Warden (Officer). Warden/Officer Ferguson's initial contract was for \$22,500 plus mileage. Over the last five years, there have been slight increases in the compensation with the addition of compensation for cell phone use as well.

Duties of Jasper County Animal Control:

- Enforcing County and City Ordinances Pertaining to Animal Control.
- Impounding Animals (Dogs) found to be in Violation of any County or City Ordinance.
- Caring for Impounded Animals (Dogs).
- Maintaining County Animal Control Facilities and Equipment.
- Investigating Bite Incidents.
- Investigating the Inhumane Treatment of Animals.

Applications Due Friday, June 20, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

June 2024 – May 2025 Jasper County Animal Control Statistics

Month	Calls	Reported Bites	Pets Relinquished	Abuse/Neglect Reports	Dogs Impounded	Days Feed
May 2025	7	0	2	0	2	21
April 2025	7	1	0	3	1	20
March 2025	7	1	3	0	8	22
Feb. 2025	5	0	0	0	3	25
Jan. 2025	6	1	0	0	1	10
Dec. 2024	9	0	1	0	3	28
Nov. 2024	8	0	1	0	7	24
Oct. 2024	8	0	1	0	3	18
Sept. 2024	6	3	1	1	2	23
Aug. 2024	8	0	5	0	3	24
July 2024	10	1	2	0	9	15
June 2024	7	0	3	1	1	25
YEAR TOTAL	88	7	19	5	43	255
MONTHLY AVG.	7	1	2	0	4	21

Board Comments:

Francis was not sure if everyone is aware. However, here in the state of Illinois we are having a battle. The state made a motion and passed a law that has banned the purchase of assault style firearms. That ban started back in January of 2023. In 2024, there was an appeal to overturn this which it was ruled unconstitutional, and the ban was lifted by an East St. Louis judge. Then shortly after a Federal appeal was filed and a Federal Judge blocked that ruling. So, the ban is still in place. The ban has many different factors in it; the most notable being the ban of the rifles such as the AR-15 and the AK-47 just for an example. The ban also prohibits the sale and possession of magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds for long guns and more than 15 rounds for handguns. If you owned any of those style of firearms before the ban, those people were able to keep those weapons as long as they registered them with the state. On June 13th there was an Amicus put together to fight this ruling and make this a much bigger fight. Francis would like to announce and thank States Attorney James Treccia for getting Jasper County on this Amicus. We are 1 of 35 counties in the state of Illinois fighting this battle. Francis was only telling people this so the people of Jasper know that this board is working diligently to make sure that we are not losing any of our rights as citizens of Illinois. Not everyone may understand what this type of ruling does to hundreds of thousands of citizens. Whether you are a gun owner or not there are people trying to take away our rights. We are here to protect the citizens and the rights that we have been given since the Constitution was written. Just know that Jasper County is fighting this battle for everyone.

Sheriff has also been fighting for gun rights also.

Spiker wanted to remind everyone 4-H general show projects starts tomorrow come out and support the 4-Her's.

Chairman's Comments:

County Offices Closed for Fourth of July – Friday, July 4, 2025 - Non-Emergency Jasper County Offices and Departments will be closed on Friday, July 4, 2025, in observance of the Fourth of July Holiday.

FY2024 Audit Review – July 17, 2025 @ 5 pm - AnneMarie Clark from Kemper CPA Group, LLP will be present at 5 pm on July 17, 2025, in the Board Room to review the audit for the year ending November 30, 2024. All board members are encouraged to attend. Questions for Auditor Clark may be posed by board members during the review.

Upcoming Meetings - United Counties Council of Illinois Annual Conference July 27-29, 2025 – Galena, IL & Hope Trust Annual Meeting & Conference July 24-25, 2025 – St. Charles, MO

FY2026 County Budget Work Timeline -End June/Beginning of July Budget Worksheets Sent Out by County Treasurer's Office **August 8, 2025**, Budget Worksheets and Budget Narratives Due Back **End August/Beginning of Sept.** Budgetary Meetings with County Board **September [Sept. 30th Deadline]** Input & Review Proposed Budgetary Changes for FY2026 **October 16, 2025**, County Board Approves Displaying Budget **November 20, 2025**, County Board Approves Budget

Property Tax Bills Property Tax bills will be going out soon in Jasper County. The Due dates as in years past will be August 15, 2025, for the 1st Installment and September 15, 2025, for the 2nd Installment. While the County is responsible for the **Assessment, Calculation, and Collection** of Property Taxes, the County is just one of the many taxing entities that receives the funds from property taxes.

Upcoming Events

Jasper County Fair (154th) – June 22-28, 2025

Cork & Pork Festival – Sainte Marie, IL – Saturday, July 12, 2025 – Over \$257,000 donated back to the community since 2015.

Executive/Closed Session - The Board does have an executive/closed session to discuss: 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. Judson moved for the board to enter an executive session under the following exception: Litigation (exception 11). Francis 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 6:49 pm.

Geier moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:10pm. Schackmann seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned from executive session.

The Next Board Meeting will be on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Amy Tarr, Jasper County Clerk