



JASPER COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2025

The Jasper County Board met in regular session on Thursday, November 20, 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 Chairman Warfel. Chairman Warfel 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: Addressed in Item A

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

Reports:

County Departments:

Ambulance Department - October 2025 Ambulance Report: 911 Transports 63; Transfers 19; Accidents 5; Discharges 2; Fire Standby 3; Refusals 25; Mutual Aid Standby 27. All Ambulances Passed DOT Inspections Weddell mentioned a demo ambulance to save money. Geier said they have been updating the inside of the building.

Highway Department – The mowing of county highway right of ways are complete. The Resolution for 2026 County Motor Fuel Maintenance 26-00000-00-GM is being presented to the Full Board for approval in the amount of \$438,585.00. This is County Motor Fuel Funds. We are working on the 2026 Township and County MFT Maintenance programs.

Health Department – Completed and moved into the west end of the building. Environmental is now located in the main building. Phone number and email address are the same. Call for vaccinations. Walk-in's welcome if a nurse is available. Next Cancer Support group meeting is December 11 from 5-6 pm at the Health Department. February 5th, 2026 the Health Department will be hosting the American Red Cross Blood Drive at the Knights of Columbus Hall. The annual Free PSA and Lipid clinic will be February 10, 2026 from 7 am to 1 pm. Next Board of Health meeting will be November 24th at 5:30 pm.

County Positions/Services:

Building Maintenance – Nov 5 Judson and Pickens looked at Annex Building health department has it cleaned out. Carpet needs to be replaced. Going to get an estimate on carpet. Nov 5 & 6 contacted Nick Seabagh Effingham and Bradford Moving & Storage from Ashmore to give estimate on moving the courthouse offices and to be stored. They have not been here yet. Nov 12 Gave Judy McClure permission for story book to be placed on courthouse lawn.

Jasper County Courthouse – Geier reported Circuit Clerk Jamie Blake made some recommendations. Still moving along.

Information Technology – There have been 451 tickets 4 tickets are still open. All devices are on Windows 11. Realizing increase in phishing attempts. They cannot stop all of them. Make sure everything is good before clicking on. They do send out emails for practice on phishing and if clicked on, more training needs to be completed. In March graphics software will not be supported by the current computers. Remote desktop is available it is being tested. Need to be involved in the courthouse move. The server is another item that needs replaced and it is budgeted and will need to take planning.

Animal Control – Alisha Wise gave report. Dog bite but delivery driver was warned by dog child in yard the dog was protecting inside inground fence. Vaccinated. Will be issuing tickets. Need to be vaccinated, kept on individuals' property and micro chipped. North end of county working on placement. Of 17-18 dogs. Remaining dogs spayed and neutered. Opening day of shot gun season please be Warfel brought up delivery driver does not have to Weddell reported Amazon sent dog deterrent devices.

Elected Officials:

Treasurer- Reports from Bigard were sent in the board packet. The total income for October was \$629,704.76. The expenses for October were \$380,219.90. Total income less expenses for October a net profit of \$249,484.86. Fiscal year 2024/2025 income was \$4,286,224.20. Less Expenses were \$4,198,848.81 with a net profit of \$87,375.39. Tax season has just completed. All monies have been distributed so all taxing bodies have been paid.

Other Elected Officials/Offices –
County Clerk – In Packet

Consent agenda. The following items were on the consent agenda this evening: Approval of Jasper County Board, October 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes; Adoption of Resolution for Maintenance Under the Illinois Highway Code [\$438,585 Motor Fuel Tax Fund]; Reappointment of Evan Semple to a 3-Year Term on the Jasper County E-911 Board; Reappointment of Mandy Reiman to a 3-Year Term on the Jasper County E-911 Board; File County Reports; and Allow Claims. There was no objection, the Consent Agenda was adopted.

Old Business:

Item A. – Community Donation Requests

The County has received two requests for donations: Jasper County, Illinois Museum - \$5,000 Annual Donation Request Anthea Zumbahlen and Jennifer Hinterscher were present. Hinterscher said library has not been included in their budget. They were required to move. They have a lease for 5 years. Rent is \$1,000 a month. Zumbahlen said the move has been completed. Bradford performed the move and they were accommodating. Going to be a nice museum. There are items that have not been displayed because of the size of the previous location. They have approached tourism. Library has no interest in being involved in museum they have not had a stake for 20 years. Weddell said the amount of money the library receiving for tax levy and not help support the museum. Judson said the timing of this, and we need to tighten our belts. Spiker said he does not want to support the library, but people have been discussing the amount of taxes. They would

like to change the exhibits so people will want to come back. They want to give education on the history of Jasper County. They are at ground level. They are going to work on grants. Library board has put the museum out. Pickens would like to see more on donations. They will be organizing fundraisers. Weddell would like to postpone and do year by year on a basis. Schackmann and Heltsley said we have made difficult decisions on the budget. The donation requests were discussed at the October 16, 2025, meeting, it was agreed to postpone any action until the November meeting. Spiker said it is an investment in the community. Weddell moved to approve the following donation request for 1 year donation of \$5,000. Spiker seconded the motion. Motion failed on a voice vote. Weddell said Tiffany Keller did a grant for the county. Weddell moved to donate \$1,000 to the Eagle Mural Project. No second. The mural has been completed on the side of Farley Insurance.

New Business:

Item A. - Approval Of 2026 Hopetrust Jasper County Employee Health Insurance Rates

The County has received the HopeTrust (County Health Insurance) 2026 rates. The rates increased by about 8% across the board. A detailed breakdown of the increased rates and proposed 2026 plans is included in the Board Packet. The proposal would be for the County to cover an additional \$19.50 a month per employee towards their HopeTrust insurance cost. The County would cover \$752.50 per month per employee on the HopeTrust insurance plan. Employees using the Health Reimbursement Plan (HRP) which they currently pay \$50 per month would be charged \$75 per month if they want to remain on the plan. Judson said an employee had come to him, said with the raise and cost of insurance employee. Pay employees more or more insurance. Judson county pays 50% of insurance. Like to see it given to the employees. County pays 25% increase if make 50% increase. Asked Bigard about where could get money, he is not able to come up, need to trim the budget some. Schackmann moved to approve the 2026 HopeTrust Jasper County employee Health Insurance Rates. Pickens seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. The 2026 Jasper County Employee Health Insurance Rates have been approved.

Item B. – Adoption of the Jasper County FY2026 Jasper County Budget

At October 16, 2025, Jasper County Board Meeting the board approved displaying the proposed budget until the November Board Meeting (required at least 15 days before a final vote). A full copy of the proposed budget was included in the board packet, and a copy of the full budget was available for public inspection via the County's website or in person at the Treasurer's office. Any changes or suggestions will be addressed this evening before final passage.

(55 ILCS 5/6-1001) Counties Code Annual Budget. The County Board shall adopt each year an annual budget under the terms of this Division for the succeeding fiscal year. Such budget shall be prepared by some person or persons designated by the County Board and such budget shall be made conveniently available for public inspection and provided to the public at a public meeting at least fifteen days prior to the final action thereon expect that nothing in this Act shall restrict a County Board from acting at a public meeting to amend a budget after making that budget available to the public and prior to the final adoption.

PROPOSED BUDGET BY YEAR

BUDGET YEAR	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	% Change
COUNTY'S CORPORATE/GENERAL FUND BREAKDOWN					
General Fund Revenue	\$3,475,532	\$3,552,397	\$3,665,117	\$5,510,962	↑ 50.4%
General Fund Expenses	\$3,647,799	\$4,521,283	\$4,646,721	\$6,446,974	↑ 38.7%
General Fund Total Difference	\$(172,267)	\$(968,886)	\$(981,604)	\$(936,012)	↓ 4.6%
TOTAL COUNTY BUDGET					
Grand Total Revenue	\$10,690,076	\$11,779,041	\$12,144,523	\$14,342,864	↑ 18.1%
Grand Total Expense	\$11,149,173	\$12,991,016	\$13,430,604	\$15,474,620	↑ 15.2%
Grand Total Difference	\$(459,097)	\$(1,211,975)	\$(1,286,081)	\$(1,131,756)	↓ 12.0%

As mentioned in previous years the County never has a “balanced budget” we are conservative on our revenue estimates and plan for the worst on the expense estimates. Typically, the budget submitted and approved will show a negative balance despite most years ending with a positive balance (see below).

GENERAL FUND ACTUAL REVENUE/EXPENSES

BUDGET YEAR	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025*
COUNTY'S CORPORATE/GENERAL FUND BREAKDOWN				
General Fund Revenue	\$4,559,944.53	\$4,325,632.61	\$3,961,325.86	\$4,286,224.20
General Fund Expenses	\$3,189,717.74	\$4,150,221.79	\$3,946,679.59	\$4,198,848.81
General Fund Total Difference	\$1,370,226.79	\$175,410.82	\$14,646.27	\$87,375.39

**FY2025 Figures are as of October 31, 2025.*

Budget Change Requests since Displaying the Budget are attached in the board packet on pages 244-246, they include: Several changes in County Building line items including: Increases in Jail Building Repairs, Maintenance Supplies, Maintenance Salary, Cell Phone Reimbursement, Contingencies, and Utilities. Decreases in Courthouse Building Repairs, and County Office Building Repairs. New Line Items for Storage, Building, Courthouse Project, and Remodeling of temporary offices.; Several changes in Animal Control line items including: Increases in Utilities, Food, and Supplies. Decreases in Salary and Miscellaneous lines.; Salary changes to Treasurer and State's Attorney budgets.; Health Department Administrative Fee.; Probation Department input all FY2026 budget numbers, budget was not received prior to budget being displayed in October; and Health Insurance Line Items corrected for Supervisor of Assessments, Sheriff, Coroner, Circuit Clerk, State's Attorney, Probation, Highway Department, Health Department and Ambulance Service.

The overall FY2026 Jasper County Budget has Total Revenues at \$14,342,864 and Total Expenses at \$15,474,620. The General or County's Corporate Fund shows Total Revenues at \$5,510,962 and Total Expenses at \$6,446,974. If you compare those figures to FY2025 you will notice a significant increase. At the request of the Auditor Year 1 and Year 2 of the Energy

Transition Grant in the amount of \$1,439,932 appears both as revenue and expenditure for FY2026 as these funds will be spent by June 30, 2026. Geier moved to adopt the FY2026 Jasper County Budget. Weddell seconded the motion. Motion carried on a roll call vote with Francis, Geier, Heltsley, Judson, Pickens, Shackmann, Spiker, Warfel and Weddell voting yes. The Jasper County FY2026 Budget has been adopted.

Item C. - Adoption of Jasper County Personnel Policy Resolution

At least every two years the Jasper County Board reviews and revises the County of Jasper Personnel Policy. The following changes/revisions are being proposed: Addition of Wage Scales for Clerical, Highway, and Ambulance Service; Elimination of Longevity Pay Clause – with the addition of set wage scales the longevity clause used to ensure increase in pay over a period of time will no longer be needed.; More clarification on IMRF required hours.; More clarification on use of vacation, personal leave, and sick days. (partial days used).; More clarification on accumulated sick days.; Uniformity on what constitutes immediate family as outlined in bereavement leave.; and Minor spelling and grammar corrections. If adopted the changes/revisions would take effect December 1, 2025. Geier moved to adopt the Jasper County Personnel Policy Resolution effective December 1, 2025. Spiker seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. The Personnel Policy has been adopted.

Item D. Approval of Energy Transition Community Year 3 Grant Proposed Use – Jasper County Courthouse

The County of Jasper received notice on October 22, 2025, that in Year 3 of the Energy Transition Community Grant, the County was awarded \$738,746.66. All applicants receiving notice must submit the Phase 2 application and all required documentation by December 19, 2025. For reference, in Year 1, the County of Jasper received \$565,615 and in Year 2, the County of Jasper received \$876,316. In the first three years of the Energy Transition Community Grant the County of Jasper received \$2,151,678 that will be put towards the Jasper County Courthouse Project. A public meeting was held this evening at 5:00 p.m. prior to the board meeting to allow the public and stakeholders an opportunity to offer input. Judson moved to approve Year 3 of the Energy Transition Community Grant to be used for the Jasper County Courthouse Project. Francis seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. Year 3 of the Energy Transition Grant will be used for the Jasper County Courthouse Project.

Item E - Adoption of Resolution to Place Advisory Referendum to Voters Regarding Federal Scholarship Tax Credit

An Illinois advisory referendum regarding a federal scholarship tax credit program is being pushed by advocacy groups and some lawmakers to encourage the state to opt into the federal program, which has been called "Invest in Kids" and is set to begin in 2027. The program could provide over \$100 million in scholarships for Illinois students, but the state must officially opt-in to participate. While Illinois previously had its own similar program called "Invest In Kids," it expired at the end of 2023, and the General Assembly declined to reinstate it.

Federal Scholarship Could Help Rural Illinois Students Find Education Options [Article from Illinois Policy by Hannah Schmid]

“A new federal scholarship tax credit program could be a lifeline to students in rural Illinois. They may have limited educational options, but the federal money could boost those options through tutoring or other services if the State allows it.

If you are a struggling student in rural Illinois, there are few options for a better education if the public school is a poor fit. But a new federal scholarship program could change that – if Illinois and state lawmakers allow it.

A study by the Learning Policy Institute found 90% of Illinois private schools are in urban or suburban areas. That means many families in rural areas have fewer options than their counterparts in Chicago or other metro areas.

Options are important, because many Illinois public school students are struggling to meet grade-level standards in core subjects: only 41% of students could read at grade level on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness in 2024 and only 28% were proficient in math.

The newly enacted federal scholarship tax-credit program offers those options to students: the federal scholarship tax credit program, established by the Educational Choice for Children Act, will provide donor-funded scholarships to both public and private school students to use for a variety of educational services. Public school students could use the funds for additional educational services such as tutoring, additional academic courses, fees for advanced placement or college entrance exams, books or online educational materials and therapies for students with disabilities.

There’s a catch: Illinois must opt into the program for students to benefit from the scholarships. Lawmakers must lead on that issue before any Illinois student can benefit.

Every child is different. That’s why the federal scholarship program is important. It allows parents to send their child to a local public school while also tailoring the child’s education to his or her individual needs.

Students would be eligible for scholarships if their family income is within 300% of the area median income. For Jasper County that would be family incomes of less than \$298,800. The program does not take money away from public schools. It will not divert federal money or state money from public schools to fund the scholarships – a false claim being made by teacher’s unions as they try to protect their education monopoly.

Instead, the scholarships are funded by private donors who will be granted dollar-for-dollar federal tax credits for donating up to \$1,700 each year to a scholarship granting organization, which is a tax-exempt organization providing scholarships to students.

That means the federal government simply gives up some income tax revenue. There is no cost to states. But if Illinois does not join the program, Illinois donors’ money will go to students in other states and Illinois students will be left out.

Illinois should opt into the federal scholarship program

Illinois families in urban or rural areas, or in public or private schools could benefit from the federal scholarship tax credit. It would provide a lifeline to thousands of Illinois students needing additional resources to grow academically, especially in areas where distance limits those options.

The only question is whether Illinois lawmakers will let Illinois students benefit.”

- Local action: : Some Illinois county boards, such as Effingham County Grundy and Ogle County, have already placed the advisory question on the ballot for the March primary election. Many others are considering the action either this month or next.

- Non-binding: Advisory referendums are non-binding, meaning the outcome does not legally obligate the state government to act. However, they can influence public opinion and may pressure lawmakers to consider future action.

BALLOT QUESTION:

“Should Illinois opt into a federal program that would provide Public K-12, private school, and homeschool students with privately-donated funds for academic needs, such as tutoring and test preparation, educational therapies for students with disabilities, tuition, books, exam fees or for other specified academic needs?”

_____ YES _____ NO

Geier moved to adopt the Resolution Placing an Advisory Referendum to Voters on March 17, 2026, Primary Ballot Regarding Federal Scholarship Tax Credit? Spiker seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote. The Advisory Referendum will be placed on March 17, 2026 ballot.

Board Comments: Francis reminded everyone shot gun season starting tomorrow, be alert and CEO class taking orders for the Monopoly board \$40.

Chairman’s Comments:

Upcoming Meetings

Chamber of Commerce Christmas on the Square – December 13, 2025 – Newton, IL
UCCI Regional Presentations on Wind/Solar, Battery Storage, Data Center Development & Grid Reliability. December 10 – Parkland Community College & December 11 Rend Lake Community College.

Upcoming County Holidays

Non-emergency County Offices and Departments will be closed on Thursday, November 27, 2025, and Friday, November 28, 2025 for the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Executive/Closed Session - The Board does have an executive/closed session to discuss: Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11). There will be no action taken following the executive/closed session and the board will adjourn the meeting from the executive/closed session. Francis moved for the board to enter an executive session under the following exception: Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11). Geier 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 7:09 pm.

Geier moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 pm. Schackmann seconded the motion. Motion carried on a voice vote.

The Next Board Meeting will be on Thursday, December 18, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Amy Tarr, Jasper County Clerk