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MINUTES

SANGAMON COUNTY BOARD

JUNE 9, 2026

The Sangamon County Board met in Regular Statutory Session on June 9, 2026 in the County Board Chambers. Chairman Van Meter called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Mr. Hall gave the Invocation and Mr. Miller led the County Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Van Meter asked the County Clerk to call the roll. There were 23 Present – 4 Absent. Ms. Fulgenzi, Mr. Krell, Mr. Tjelmeland and Mr. Truax were excused.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNTY BOARD MEMBER FOR DISTRICT 12

Chairman Van Meter announced the appointment of Sheila Feipel to County Board District 12. A voice vote was unanimous.

SHERIFF CROUCH PRESENTATION

Sheriff Crouch recognized several court security officers and a civilian for their lifesaving actions during a medical emergency at the county building on April 9. After receiving reports that a woman, Sharon James, had collapsed near the elevators on the sixth floor, Court Security Officer Nate Hedrick responded and found her in distress. Other court security officers—Alec Votava, Aubrey Kirkman, and Enrique Ayala—along with Sergeant Ryan Kelly and civilian Jeffrey Bone quickly arrived to assist. When Ms. James lost consciousness and no pulse could be detected, the group immediately began CPR, retrieved and applied an AED, and continued lifesaving efforts until emergency medical personnel arrived and took over.

Sheriff Crouch reported that the quick and coordinated response of the officers and Mr. Bone was instrumental in saving Ms. James's life and contributed to her successful recovery. Certificates of Excellence were presented to the individuals involved in recognition of their actions and compassion. The sheriff also shared that she and others had recently visited Ms. James at her home, where she expressed her gratitude to those who helped her. In closing, Sheriff Crouch praised the court security

officers for their daily work in maintaining safety at the courthouse and noted that they frequently receive compliments from the public for their professionalism and service.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. DelGiorno, seconded by Mr. Madonia, for approval of the Minutes of the May 12, 2026 meeting. A voice vote was unanimous.

MOTION CARRIED
MINUTES ADOPTED

CORRESPONDENCE

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. DelGiorno, to place correspondence on file with the clerk. A voice vote was unanimous.

RESOLUTION 1

1. Resolution approving the FY2026 County Highway motor fuel tax material contracts.

A motion was made by Mr. Fraase, seconded by Ms. Lathan to place Resolution 1 before the Board. Chairman Van Meter asked the Clerk to call the roll. Upon the roll call vote, there were 23 Yeas – 0 Nays. Resolution 1 was adopted.

MOTION CARRIED
RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2

2. Resolution approving the FY2026 Township bituminous material motor fuel tax contracts.

A motion was made by Mr. Fraase, seconded by Mr. Miller, to place Resolution 2 before the Board. A motion was made by Mr. DelGiorno, seconded by Mr. Madonia, to consolidate Resolutions 3 – 4 with Resolution 2. Chairman Van Meter asked the Clerk to read Resolutions 3 – 4.

RESOLUTIONS 3 - 4

3. Resolution approving an Engineering contract with Martin Engineering Company for a hydraulic study to be performed on CH 45 – Loami Bates Road in the amount of \$62,870.
4. Resolution approving a Letter of Understanding with the Illinois Department of Transportation for Job No. C-96-502-97 involving jurisdiction of a future Bradfordton Road Extension.

On the motion to consolidate, a voice vote was unanimous. Mr. Madonia moved that the roll call vote for Resolution 1 stand as the roll call vote for Resolutions 2 - 4. A voice vote was unanimous with the exception of Mr. Schackmann voting Present on Resolution 4. Resolutions 2 – 4 were adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 5

5. 2026-006 Whisper Walk LLC, Dr, 1300-1500 Block of Lenhart Road, Springfield – Granting a Siting Approval Permit. County Board Member Cathy Scaife, District #29.

A motion was made by Ms. Scaife, seconded by Mr. Forsyth to place Resolution 5 before the Board. The Chairman asked if there were members of the audience who wished to speak in opposition or in support of the proposed rezoning and variances. There were individuals from both sides present to speak.

The Chairman asked professional staff for a procedural history of the case. The petition is requesting approval of a commercial solar energy conversion facility siting permit under Chapter 17.37 of the county code. Planning Commission staff reviewed the application materials submitted by the applicant and determined that the proposal complies with Sangamon County's regulations governing commercial solar energy conversion facilities.

Based on its review, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the permit request. The matter was then forwarded to the county's zoning authorities and county board for consideration, with staff indicating that the proposed solar facility met the applicable siting and regulatory requirements established by the county ordinance.

The Chairman established the rules stating the proponents will have two minutes for a presentation and then the opponents will have two minutes. Each side will then have one-minute rebuttals.

Brendan Urban, 19001 Scott Road, Mt. Vernon, OH, representing Whisper Walk Drive LLC and its parent company, Summit Ridge Energy, spoke in support of the proposed Whisper Walk Solar Project. He explained that Summit Ridge Energy is one of Illinois' largest commercial solar developers and owner-operators, with dozens of projects in operation across the state totaling approximately 700 megawatts. He emphasized that the company intends to retain long-term ownership of its projects and become a lasting presence in the communities where they are located.

Urban stated that the proposed solar facility complies with all requirements of Chapter 17.37 of the county code as well as applicable state laws. He noted that the project received favorable recommendations from Planning Commission staff and was approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals on May 21. Throughout the development process, the company conducted outreach efforts that included mailings, phone calls, community meetings, and opportunities for residents to visit existing solar facilities to better understand what the project would look like.

In response to community feedback, Urban said the company made modifications to the site plan. The proposed facility was moved approximately 200 feet farther from Lenhart Road to increase the distance from nearby homes, and additional screening was added along the southern boundary at the request of neighboring property owners. He concluded by stating that the company had worked to address local concerns and respectfully requested approval of the solar project.

Mr. Cahnman asked whether the proposed solar farm is located near a major electric utility line and, if so, which utility would serve the project. The applicant explained that the facility would interconnect with the distribution system of Ameren Illinois. Existing electrical infrastructure is already located along the east side of Lenhart Road, where an underground single-phase line currently exists. The project would add a new underground three-phase line running alongside the existing infrastructure, crossing Lenhart Road before connecting to the solar facility.

The applicant confirmed that proximity to existing utility infrastructure was a significant factor in selecting the site. He explained that solar projects are typically located based on the availability of electrical infrastructure needed for interconnection, as well as whether the property lies within the appropriate utility service territory. In this case, the site's location within Ameren's service area and its access to nearby distribution facilities made it a suitable location for the proposed solar development.

Mr. Mendenhall asked for clarification about ownership of the property involved in the proposal. It was explained that the property is owned by Standard Investment Company, which is in turn owned by Mark Roberts, a resident of Springfield. The speaker noted that Mr. Roberts does not live on the property, and that the family has owned the land for decades before forming the current ownership entity.

When questioned about Mr. Roberts' absence at the meeting, it was stated that he is currently out of the country and therefore unable to attend or testify. However, it was also noted that he has communicated directly with county staff, including Kathy, at various points during the process, even though he was not present for the hearing itself.

Opponent George Hinton, 8 Ted Lane, addressed the Board. He explained that his property is immediately adjacent to the proposed site, sharing a boundary line of roughly 200 feet, and that many nearby homeowners initially reacted with concern when they learned about the proposal.

His primary concern was the potential impact on surrounding property values. He stated that he researched studies on solar facilities and property values, citing sources such as Virginia Tech, UC Berkeley, and findings summarized by the National Academy of Sciences. Based on those studies, he argued that the most significant negative impacts tend to occur in rural, low-density, agricultural areas—conditions he believes describe his neighborhood.

He concluded that because the surrounding area is rural, agricultural, and sparsely developed with only a small number of nearby homes, he believes the project would fall into the category of developments most likely to negatively affect property values in similar communities.

Mr. Cahnman raised a question about past county decisions on solar farms and whether there is any evidence that previously approved solar projects in Sangamon County have impacted nearby property values. He recalled earlier cases where solar proposals were initially rejected but later approved, and asked both staff and opponents whether any data existed on local effects.

County staff responded that they are not aware of any documented negative impacts on surrounding property values from existing solar projects within Sangamon County. However, they clarified that the county has not conducted formal studies on this issue for its current or past solar installations, and therefore does not have specific local data to confirm either positive or negative effects.

When pressed further, staff confirmed that there is no available county-level information regarding property value changes near previously approved solar farms in Sangamon County, meaning no official analysis has been done to track those impacts locally.

Ms. Scaife stated that while she did not have a formal question, she wanted to make a general comment in opposition to the proposal. She noted that many residents had attended earlier meetings but were not speaking at this hearing, despite sharing similar concerns.

She argued that local residents have seen their property tax bills increase and expressed skepticism that taxes would ever decrease. She also pointed out that many nearby homeowners have lived in the area longer than the property owner involved in the solar proposal. She concluded with a request that the board vote against approving the project.

Mr. Urban offered a brief rebuttal in response to public comments and concerns about property values. He acknowledged George Hinton's remarks and noted they had previously discussed the project through town halls and email correspondence, expressing mutual respect despite differing views.

He explained that research on solar projects and property values can be conflicting, with some studies suggesting negative impacts in certain contexts while others find little to no effect. He suggested that the available research can be interpreted in different ways depending on the source.

Mr. Urban emphasized that, regardless of the debate over studies, the project team has made efforts to minimize potential impacts on the surrounding community. He pointed to design changes such as added vegetative screening along property edges near residential areas, stating that these measures are intended to improve aesthetics, act as a buffer, and help ensure the project is a good neighbor that does not negatively affect nearby property values.

Mr. Mendenhall questioned the siting of the proposed solar project, asking whether developers have actively searched for alternative locations in Sangamon County that would avoid removing prime agricultural land from production. He suggested that there are likely many other suitable sites, including areas such as industrial or previously disturbed land, and asked why those options were not chosen.

Mr. Urban responded that siting decisions are driven primarily by technical and practical constraints, including proximity to existing electrical infrastructure, substation capacity, and whether a

location is within the required utility service territory. He explained that developers must work where the grid can physically support interconnection, and where landowners are willing to lease property for development.

When asked specifically about alternative locations, including areas on the east side of the county and former industrial or munitions sites, Mr. Urban said he was not fully familiar with that specific parcel but noted that such sites may still present limitations related to grid capacity or service territory restrictions. He emphasized that project siting is complex and not simply a matter of selecting any available land.

Mr. Mendenhall expressed frustration with what they perceived as a passive approach to site selection, arguing that developers often rely on landowners contacting them rather than actively identifying less impactful locations. The exchange highlighted a disagreement between the board's concerns about land use impacts and the developer's explanation of infrastructure-driven site selection constraints.

Mr. Hinton provided a brief rebuttal opposing the proposed solar facility. He urged the board to apply a "golden rule" perspective, arguing that if residents would not want a similar facility located next to their own homes, they should not approve it for this neighborhood. He respectfully requested that the board vote against the project.

He also referenced a visit he and other community members made to an existing solar facility near Jacksonville and Maryville. He explained that they were invited to view the site as an example of how such projects operate. However, he described their experience as disappointing, stating that the facility appeared unmaintained, with weeds growing around the perimeter and an overall appearance he considered unsightly.

He concluded by using this example to reinforce his concern that similar outcomes could occur with the proposed project and reiterated his opposition to the solar development.

Mr. Cahnman asked legal counsel about the potential legal consequences of denying the zoning request for the solar project. Specifically, the member asked whether the county could be sued by the petitioner and whether the county would likely lose such a lawsuit if the application were denied.

Legal counsel responded cautiously, explaining that while the petitioner could certainly file a lawsuit against the county if the request were denied, it is difficult to predict the outcome of any litigation in advance. Counsel noted that recent appellate court decisions suggest that a project proponent may have a strong legal case if all applicable legal requirements have been met and a permit is still denied without sufficient justification.

When pressed further about whether the application appeared to meet the required standards, counsel stated that he had not personally reviewed all the materials in detail during the meeting. However, he referenced the findings of professional staff and the Zoning Board of Appeals, both of which determined that the project meets the applicable requirements under county regulations.

Mr. Hall raised a broader question about legal risk, asking whether nearby homeowners could sue the county if the zoning request were approved and they believed it harmed their property values or quality of life. The member framed the comment partly as a statement of concern for residents over outside developers.

Legal counsel responded that, in theory, homeowners could file a lawsuit against the county, but such claims would generally not be successful. He indicated that while litigation is always possible, courts typically do not support claims based solely on perceived impacts to property value or quality of life when a project has been properly reviewed and approved under applicable zoning laws and procedures.

Upon seeing no further questions, the Chairman directed the Clerk to call the roll. The vote was 8 Yeas and 15 Nays. The Resolution was defeated. Those voting YES were Cahnman, Deaner, DelGiorno, Feipel, Lathan, McGuire, Schackmann and Stumpf. Those voting NO were Constant, Davsko, Deppe, Douglas Williams, Forsyth, Fraase, Guyton, Hall, Madonia, Mendenhall, Miller, Rader, Scaife, Sheppard and Small.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTION DENIED

RESOLUTION 6

6. 2026-009 Joel Johnson, 1300-1400 Block of Horan Road, Mechanicsburg – Granting a Rezoning and Variances. County Board Member David Mendenhall, District #3.

A motion was made by Mr. Mendenhall, seconded by Mr. McGuire to place Resolution 6 before the Board. The Chairman asked if there were members of the audience who wished to speak in opposition or in support of the proposed rezoning and variances. A motion was made by Mr. Mendenhall to waive the staff report. A voice vote on the adoption of Resolution 6 was unanimous. Resolution 6 was adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 7

7. 2026-010 Spencer and Tulissa Pulliam, 4133 Old Jacksonville Road, Springfield – Grant a Rezoning and Variances. County Board Member Abe Forsyth, District #27.

A motion was made by Mr. Forsyth, seconded by Mr. Mendenhall to place Resolution 7 before the Board. The Chairman asked if there were members of the audience who wished to speak in opposition or in support of the proposed rezoning and variances. A motion was made by Mr. Mendenhall to waive the staff report. A voice vote on the adoption of Resolution 7 was unanimous. Resolution 7 was adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 8

8. 2026-012 MR Lawn Care and More Incorporated, 3750 & 3754 East Cook Street, Springfield – Granting a Conditional Permitted Use with Conditions and a Variance. County Board Member Tom Madonia, District #9.

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. Mendenhall to place Resolution 8 before the Board. The Chairman asked if there were members of the audience who wished to speak in opposition or in support of the proposed rezoning and variances. A motion was made by Mr. Mendenhall to waive the staff report. A voice vote on the adoption of Resolution 8 was unanimous. Resolution 8 was adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 9

9. Resolution amending the Sangamon County Fixed Asset Policy.

A motion was made by Mr. Stumpf, seconded by Mr. DelGiorno, to place Resolution 9 before the Board. A motion was made by Mr. DelGiorno, seconded by Mr. Madonia, to consolidate Resolutions 10 – 15 with Resolution 9. Chairman Van Meter asked the Clerk to read Resolutions 10 – 15.

10. Resolution Establishing a Policy for the Acceptance of Cash Donations by Sangamon County.
11. Resolution approving a grant application for the Child Advocacy Department from Children’s Advocacy Center of Illinois for the DCFS program in the amount of \$305,002.68.
12. Resolution approving a grant application for the Child Advocacy Department/CASA from Illinois CASA for the DCFS program in the amount of \$146,739.40.
13. Resolution approving a grant application for the Child Advocacy Department from Children’s Advocacy Center of Illinois for the VOCA Program in the amount of \$233,413.16.
14. Resolution approving a grant application for the Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for the PY ’26 WIOA Formula Grant program in the amount of \$2,595,092.00.
15. Resolution approving a grant application for the Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for the PH ’26/27 Apprenticeship Specialist Grant program in the amount of \$136,552.00.

On the motion to consolidate, a voice vote was unanimous.

Mr. Cahnman commented on Resolution 9 which involved amendments to existing ordinances or policies. He reiterated a previous request that any new or changed language in such documents be clearly marked, such as by underlining, so that differences from the existing language can be easily identified.

Mr. Cahnman acknowledged that the auditor or drafter of the resolution had followed this request in the current document by presenting the new language in both underlined and bold format. They expressed appreciation for this improvement, noting that it made the changes clearer and easier for the board to review.

Mr. Madonia moved that the roll call vote for Resolution 1 stand as the roll call vote for Resolutions 9 - 15. A voice vote was unanimous. Resolutions 9 – 15 were adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

WAIVER OF TEN-DAY FILING PERIOD

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. DelGiorno, to waive the ten-day filing period. A voice vote was unanimous.

MOTION CARRIED
TEN-DAY FILING PERIOD WAIVED

RESOLUTION 16

16. Resolution approving the procurement of goods and/or services for Building and Grounds from Wiley Interiors for the purpose of the State’s Attorney’s Office remodel – furniture in the amount of \$670,117.33.

A motion was made by Ms. Deppe, seconded by Mr. Davsko to place Resolution 16 before the Board. A motion was made by Mr. DelGiorno, seconded by Mr. Madonia, to consolidate Resolutions 17 – 23 with Resolution 16. Chairman Van Meter asked the Clerk to read Resolutions 17 – 23.

RESOLUTIONS 17 - 23

17. Resolution granting an easement to Ameren Illinois for the installation of gas service to The HUB.
18. Resolution approving the procurement of goods and/or services for Building and Grounds from Mid-Illinois Companies for the purpose of remodel work in the Public Defender’s Office in the amount of \$49,398.00.

19. Resolution approving a grant application for Public Health from Start Early (a contractor to DHS Healthy Families division) for the Start Early program in the amount of \$623,322.00.
20. Resolution approving a grant application for Public Health from Illinois Department of Public Health for the Illinois Breast & Cervical Cancer program in the amount of \$279,625.00.
21. Resolution approving a grant application for Sangamon/Menard Area Regional Transit (SMART) from Illinois Dept of Transportation for the Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP) in the amount of \$989,850.00.
22. Resolution approving a grant application for Sangamon/Menard Area Regional Transit (SMART) from Illinois Dept of Transportation for the 5311 Program Grant in the amount of \$152,586.00.
23. Resolution approving an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Springfield and Sangamon County, Illinois Regarding Proactive Crimes Unit Assignments, Training Opportunities and Mutual Aid.

On the motion to consolidate, a voice vote was unanimous.

Mr. Cahnman had a question about Resolution 23. He asked whether the proposed agreement with the sheriff's office was a replacement for an existing intergovernmental agreement with the Springfield Police Department or a new arrangement. Sheriff Crouch explained that the county has had prior mutual aid agreements with Springfield Police, but the new agreement expands on that relationship.

Under the updated arrangement, the sheriff's office would assign a deputy to work directly with the Springfield Police Department's proactive crime unit. The sheriff explained that this is intended to help offset staffing shortages that previously forced the county to pull deputies away from its drug enforcement ("DIRT") team. By embedding a deputy with Springfield's unit, the county would regain some of the investigative capacity focused on drug-related offenses.

The agreement also includes provisions allowing sheriff's office personnel to participate in joint training with the Springfield Police Department. This includes shared in-service training sessions as well as use of Springfield's shooting range for qualifications. The sheriff noted that while the county has previously used the range for a fee, the coordinated training effort represents a more formalized collaboration.

Mr. Madonia moved that the roll call vote for Resolution 1 stand as the roll call vote for Resolutions 16 - 23. A voice vote was unanimous except Mr. Cahnman voted NO on Resolution 16. Resolutions 16 - 23 were adopted.

MOTIONS CARRIED
RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business.

A. Appointments

Appointment of Brent Ellis, to the Historic Preservation Commission, for a term expiring June, 2031.

Appointment of Joe Powell, filling an Unexpired Term of Don Dufour, to the Auburn Fire District, for a term expiring May, 2027.

Appointment of David Racine, to the Community Mental Health Board, for a term expiring June, 2030.

Appointment of Michael Gaines, to the Community Mental Health Board, for a term expiring June, 2030.

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. DelGiorno, for approval of the appointments. A voice vote was unanimous except Mr. Madonia abstained on the Board of Review vote.

MOTION CARRIED
APPOINTMENTS ADOPTED

The nominations for approval in July were also submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Van Meter stated there were 13 people signed up for public comment and they are limited to four minutes.

Speaker 1: Alex Payne is a 16-year-old student entering her senior year of high school, addressed the board regarding concerns about artificial intelligence and its potential risks, particularly to children and young people.

She argued that generative AI poses serious safety threats, especially in relation to the creation and distribution of synthetic explicit material, including child sexual abuse imagery and non-consensual content. She cited reports from organizations such as the Internet Watch Foundation, claiming that AI-generated harmful content is becoming more realistic and widespread, and warned that such technology could make exploitation easier and more accessible.

The speaker also raised concerns about broader harms from AI, including misinformation, automation in sensitive decision-making areas, and negative mental health impacts. She referenced examples of individuals allegedly receiving harmful or inappropriate responses from AI chatbots, arguing

that insufficient safeguards could put vulnerable users at risk. She expressed concern that young people could be particularly affected by cyberbullying enhanced by AI-generated content, such as fake explicit images.

She concluded by urging the board to consider these risks seriously, arguing that approving developments tied to large-scale AI or data infrastructure could have harmful community impacts, particularly on children's safety and well-being.

Speaker 2: Justin King. He was not present.

Speaker 3: Kathleen Campbell, a resident of Glenarm, Illinois, addressed the board. She is requesting that Sangamon County review and strengthen its ordinances related to data centers, particularly concerning noise regulations. She referenced ongoing state-level attention to data center development and expressed concern that current proposals may not adequately address noise impacts on nearby communities.

She stated that she had reviewed Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Pollution Control Board guidance and argued that existing project submissions—specifically referencing CyrusOne—do not fully demonstrate compliance with state noise standards. She raised concerns about technical aspects of noise measurement, including octave band analysis, frequency testing, baseline monitoring, and ongoing reporting requirements, stating that these elements are necessary to ensure accurate compliance with state guidelines.

The speaker further argued that a complaint-driven enforcement system would be insufficient and potentially burdensome for nearby landowners. She suggested that ordinances should require scheduled testing, enforceable reporting, and clearer accountability mechanisms, including ensuring that backup generator noise remains within allowable limits under state rules.

She concluded by urging the county to take additional time to develop stronger, more detailed data center regulations before approving projects, emphasizing the importance of protecting residents' quality of life and ensuring full compliance with state noise control standards.

Speaker 4: George Hinton. He spoke earlier.

Speaker 5: Kendra Barlow-Johnson. She was not present.

Speaker 6: T'Ericka Stelivan delivered a personal account reflecting on her recent experience being jailed following a traffic-related warrant. She described being arrested after what she felt could have been resolved with a warning, and explained that she was held in the Sangamon County Jail before being transferred to Logan County in connection with a prior warrant.

She detailed her experience in jail, describing overcrowded conditions, including a cell holding seven women designed for fewer occupants, with some individuals forced to sleep on the floor. She also described concerns about ventilation, facility conditions, and tense interactions between inmates and deputies, including threats to use force during disturbances.

The speaker further recounted witnessing the treatment of other incarcerated individuals, including a woman experiencing a mental health crisis and another who had been without medication for several days. She expressed concern about what she described as inadequate medical care, harsh treatment, and the use of derogatory language toward incarcerated individuals, particularly those experiencing mental illness, addiction, or other vulnerabilities.

She concluded by acknowledging that while accountability for criminal behavior is necessary, she urged the board to consider the importance of maintaining human dignity within the jail system. She encouraged officials to reflect on the circumstances and backgrounds of individuals who enter the justice system and to consider how those experiences impact vulnerable populations.

Speaker 7: Jill Krippel. She was not present.

Mr. McGuire had a question for Sheriff Crouch. He asked staff about the jail's process for identifying and managing inmates' medication needs during intake, following concerns raised during public comment.

Sheriff Crouch explained that intake begins with gathering information directly from the individual, including medical history and current prescriptions, through intake and classification forms. However, they noted that this process depends on the inmate providing accurate personal information and cooperating with staff. In the specific case referenced during public comment, staff stated they were unable to immediately locate a matching booking record under the name provided, suggesting the individual may have been booked under a different name or provided incomplete information.

Staff further explained that, in that incident, the person in question reportedly refused to provide identifying details and later also refused medication once it was offered. They clarified that the jail cannot forcibly administer medication to inmates. The identification and medication verification process relies on information provided at intake and subsequent classification procedures.

Mr. McGuire acknowledged that delays in receiving medication—particularly for certain prescriptions like antidepressants—can have serious health impacts, and indicated they may follow up with the Sheriff further outside of the meeting.

Speaker 8: Sontae Massey addressed the board in an emotional statement, explaining that he has become more accustomed to public speaking out of necessity as he advocates on behalf of his cousin, Sonya Massey, who was killed on July 6, 2024 by a former employee of the county building.

He stated that speaking publicly about the matter remains difficult but necessary, and that he feels a responsibility to preserve his cousin's memory and seek accountability. He referenced her family's ongoing efforts to keep attention on the case and expressed frustration with what he described as continued negative or inaccurate portrayals of his cousin.

The speaker referenced the work of the "Massey Commission," thanking local officials involved in its creation and emphasizing the importance of continuing that effort. He stated that the commission was

intended to improve trust between the community and local government, but expressed concern that progress has not been sufficient and that public attention to his cousin's death is fading.

He concluded by urging the board to continue acknowledging his cousin's name and legacy, and to remain focused on reforms related to mental health and community trust in law enforcement, referencing the creation of the 708 Mental Health Board as part of that broader effort.

Speaker 9: Ken Pacha expressed concern about recent public comments made by leadership associated with the Mental Health Board, arguing that some remarks appeared to equate the challenges faced in rural areas with those experienced in communities affected by systemic issues such as racism, mental illness, and substance use. He emphasized that, in his view, the creation of the Mental Health Board was driven in large part by concerns raised in the wake of the death of Sonya Massey and broader calls for reform in law enforcement and mental health response systems.

The speaker criticized what he perceived as a minimization of those underlying issues and questioned whether institutional leaders fully understood the community impact of past events. He referenced ongoing concerns about systemic problems within local law enforcement and correctional systems, arguing that despite commissions, boards, and public discussions, meaningful outcomes for affected individuals have not sufficiently changed.

He also spoke about conditions in the county jail, referencing both personal experience and recent public testimony, and argued that individuals held on low-level offenses such as traffic warrants should not be subjected to overcrowded or difficult conditions. He urged board members and appointed officials to consider firsthand experiences of incarceration and to focus on real-world impacts rather than statistics or reports alone.

He concluded by encouraging continued reflection and accountability from county leadership, emphasizing the importance of addressing systemic issues in law enforcement, mental health response, and incarceration practices, and thanking the board for their attention.

Speaker 10: Jordan Shaw addressed the board and began by objecting to earlier public comments that she felt unfairly compared rural communities and individuals to broader systemic issues related to crime and mental health. She specifically argued that it was inappropriate to link the murder of Sonya Massey with discussions about rural populations or to generalize responsibility across different communities, stating that doing so was harmful to her legacy.

She then shifted to concerns about data center development, referencing prior board decisions and expressing strong opposition to recent approvals. She stated that she had spoken with local landowners and community members near the proposed CyrusOne project and believed many residents were frustrated and felt they had little control over the outcome. She warned of potential social, environmental, and health impacts associated with data center expansion and criticized the board for supporting such projects, suggesting financial incentives were driving decisions.

The speaker also referenced broader historical and economic grievances in nearby communities, including Virden, and expressed distrust toward large institutions and developers. She concluded by

warning that the decisions being made would have long-term consequences for the region and urged the board to reconsider its approach to data center development, thanking them for their time.

Speaker 11: Salem King addressed the board and began by commenting on shifting levels of public opposition to a proposed data center project, noting changes in attendance and perceived sentiment over recent meetings. He described conversations with residents during recent outreach and canvassing efforts in Springfield and Chatham, including interactions at the Old Capitol Farmers Market, stating that many residents were willing to stop and engage in discussion about the project.

He characterized this engagement as a meaningful sign of increased public awareness and suggested that it should be viewed as progress by the board. He urged the board to take public concern seriously as the project moves through permitting and potential future votes.

The speaker then shifted to the “Massey Commission” and its recommendations, stating that while he supports the creation of the commission, he believes its effectiveness depends on whether its recommendations are fully implemented. He emphasized that symbolic support is not sufficient without concrete action and urged the board to follow through on the commission’s stated goals and “calls to action.”

He concluded by encouraging the board to implement all recommendations from the commission and reiterated opposition to approving the data center permit, thanking the board for their time.

Speaker 12: Gary Schulze argued that the proposed CyrusOne project should be viewed as a large-scale hyperscale AI data hub rather than a typical data center. He expressed concern that public officials and project supporters have minimized the project's scale and potential impacts by comparing it to small data centers such as those used by hospitals. Schulze pointed to the facility's substantial power demands and questioned whether residents have been given complete and accurate information about its effects on local infrastructure, particularly water resources. He also raised concerns about reports of differing water-use estimates being presented to the public and suggested that local water systems could face increased strain if the project moves forward.

Schulze further criticized what he sees as a lack of transparency and insufficient independent study of the project's impacts. He questioned whether adequate research has been conducted on issues such as property values, environmental effects, and the consequences of locating a large industrial facility near residential areas. While some of his claims regarding cooling-system maintenance and potential chemical discharges have not been substantiated by publicly available evidence, his broader message was that residents deserve more complete information and independent analysis before decisions are made about a project of this size and significance.

Speaker 13: Cathy Bettis. She was not present.

Mr. Guyton asked the sheriff about jail booking capacity and inmate housing procedures following a recent incident involving an inmate who remained in the booking area for an extended period. Mr. Guyton noted that the jail is currently undergoing renovations and wanted to better

understand how many people the booking area can accommodate and how inmates move through the intake process. The sheriff explained that booking cells vary in size and occupancy, making it difficult to provide a single capacity number, but noted that it is common for six to eight people to be housed in a booking cell and for some inmates to sleep on cots during busy periods.

The sheriff further explained that inmates generally remain in the booking area until they appear before a judge. Because many detainees are released shortly after their court appearance, the jail typically does not complete the full classification and housing process until it is known whether they will remain in custody. The sheriff also described how staffing needs, inmate behavior, safety concerns, and transfer arrangements can affect housing decisions. In the specific case discussed, the inmate was being held on a warrant from another county and remained in booking while awaiting transfer.

Mr. Guyton acknowledged the challenges involved in jail operations but expressed concern that even a single incident can highlight opportunities for improvement. In response, the sheriff described recent efforts to strengthen inmate classification procedures through a review conducted by correctional consultant Dr. Patricia Hardiman. After evaluating the jail's existing policies, facility layout, and housing arrangements, she developed a new classification tool that staff have begun using to help determine appropriate inmate placement. Mr. Guyton expressed interest in reviewing the work and emphasized the importance of continually evaluating procedures to improve safety and operations within the jail.

Ms. Lathan followed up by requesting additional details from the sheriff's office regarding jail booking operations. Specifically, she asked that when the sheriff provides information about the recently completed classification review, she also include data on the booking area itself.

Ms. Lathan's request focused on transparency about the facility's capacity, including the total number of booking cells and the maximum occupancy of each cell. She also asked that the information be broken down by gender, indicating an interest in understanding how male and female detainees are housed and whether capacity limitations differ between the two populations.

The sheriff acknowledged the request and indicated that she would make note of it for follow-up. The exchange concluded with the sheriff confirming that she had recorded the request and would provide the information along with the other materials related to the jail classification review.

Mr. Hall was a former correctional officer and spoke in support of the jail's inmate classification system, noting that he had worked at the county jail for approximately five years and played a key role in developing its original classification policies and procedures. He explained that before the system was implemented, inmates were often assigned to housing units simply based on available bed space, resulting in individuals with minor offenses being housed alongside inmates charged with violent crimes.

Mr. Hall described how the classification system was designed to improve safety and inmate management by assigning points based on factors such as criminal history, the nature of current charges, violent behavior, and gang affiliation. This process allowed jail staff to make more informed housing decisions and reduce the risks associated with mixing different inmate populations. He expressed satisfaction that the county continues to review and improve the classification process decades after its initial implementation.

He also highlighted the broader impact of Sangamon County's work, noting that other counties had looked to Sangamon's classification model when developing their own jail programs. Concluding his remarks, he praised the sheriff's commitment to discussing and updating the classification system, stating that it was encouraging to see the issue still being addressed in a positive and proactive manner more than 30 years later.

Sheriff Crouch took a moment to recognize Mrs. James, who was present at the meeting. The official noted that court security officers had assisted her and expressed appreciation that she was able to attend despite the circumstances.

Sheriff Crouch publicly acknowledged Mrs. James's presence and thanked her for making the effort to come to the meeting. The remarks served as a gesture of recognition and support, while also highlighting the assistance provided by the court security officers.

The brief acknowledgment concluded with a warm welcome and gratitude toward Mrs. James for attending the meeting that evening.

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS, REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES, REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES, COMMITTEE REPORTS ON CLAIMS

A motion was made by Mr. DelGiorno, seconded by Mr. Madonia, to put reports on file with the County Clerk. A voice vote was unanimous.

MOTION CARRIED
REPORTS FILED

RECESS

A motion was made by Mr. Madonia, seconded by Mr. DelGiorno, to recess the meeting to July 14, 2026. A voice vote was unanimous.

MOTION CARRIED
MEETING RECESSED

Don Gray
Sangamon County Clerk