

RESUME OF MINUTES OF STUDY SESSION OF THE
COUNTY BOARD, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS
January 27, 2026

The County Board of Champaign County, Illinois met at a Study Session, Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 6:06 PM in the Shields-Carter Meeting Room, Bennett Administrative Center, 102 East Main Street, Urbana, Illinois, with Board Chair Jennifer Locke presiding and Matthew Cross as Clerk of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed the following members present: Thorsland, Arres, Farney, Fortado, Hanauer-Friedman, Lokshin, Peugh, Rogers, Sullard, and Locke – 10; late: Vanichtheeranont (arrived at 6:25 PM at the beginning of the Presentation) – 1; absent: Wiggs, Wilson, Cagle, Carter, Cowart, Crane, Esry, Fava, Rodriguez, Settles, and Sexton – 11. Board Chair Locke noted the lack of quorum but stated the meeting would continue as planned due to the lack of actionable items on the Agenda.

READ NOTICE OF MEETING

The Clerk read the Notice of the Meeting, said Notice having been published in the *News Gazette* on January 13, January 20, and January 26, 2026.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/ADDENDA

Board Member Thorsland offered a motion to approve the Agenda; Board Member Sullard seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Susan Monte, Champaign County Environmental Stewards Executive Director, asked the County to increase the solid waste disposal fund.

Sanford Hess, Democratic candidate for County Executive, spoke about the County budget and finances and suggested the Board look at service expenditures for savings.

County Clerk and Recorder Aaron Ammons stated that he and other department heads had not received the meeting documents nor were they made publicly available either before or at the meeting. He also asked how departments are expected to create a budget without audits to reference for recent years.

COMMUNICATIONS

Board Member Peugh raised the possibility of raising county fees, such as marriage license, to generate further revenue.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

County Budget Director Travis Woodcock, accompanied by County Director of Administration Michelle Jett, gave a brief presentation on county budget planning, noting the depleting General Fund and its structural deficit. Board Member Arres asked how much the County would need to reduce spending to close the structural deficit; Budget Director Woodcock stated it would require a 6% reduction without drawing on Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST) funds and 2% with PSST funds. Board Member Farney asked specific questions about justice expenses and the impact of cash bail elimination; Budget Director Woodcock stated it would need further analysis. Clerk Ammons was invited to join the discussion, asking how departments are to budget without data from the prior year's audit; Budget Director Woodcock stated the majority of 2025 expenses have been entered and budget projections are based on a number of different factors and data sets. Clerk Ammons asked why the structural deficit dropped in 2023; Budget Director Woodcock and Director Jett stated the reduction was the result of new debt, construction, and the infusion of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Budget Director Woodcock spoke about the various Budget reports available; various Board Members and Clerk Ammons asked about specific budget lines and for clarification of budgetary terminology. Board Member Rogers requested a list of all the various county fees and their cost history to explore the possibility of raising some fees; Board Member Thorsland noted that the State of Illinois has caps and restrictions for some of the fees; Board Member Hanauer-Friedman added that fee increases would not significantly address the structural deficit. Board Member Fortado spoke about the complexity and nuances of various funds, noting that a General Fund deficit is dangerous and the County's use of PSST funds to cover General Fund deficits is unsustainable. Clerk Ammons asked if County departments can invest their unused funds; Director Jett confirmed and suggested he consult with the County Treasurer; Board Member Farney added that the Circuit Clerk has invested surplus funds. Director Jett raised the issue of rising cost of County employee healthcare plans, predicting significant increases in the near future; various board members spoke about healthcare costs and trends, both the County's and other employers in the area. Board Member Hanauer-Friedman spoke about the initial, 2027 Budget planning process, and asked board members to consider the needs and priorities of the county. Board Member Arres raised the possibility of increasing revenue by offering services, such as Information Technology services, to non-county entities; Director Jett and Board Members Hanauer-Friedman and Fortado discussed the potential pitfalls of offering county services as an out-sourced service for a fee. Director Jett spoke about the need for long-term budgetary planning. Board Members Thorsland and Peugh proposed a referendum for a Veterans' Assistance Tax; County Executive Steve Summers was invited to join the discussion, where he and various board members discussed the potentiality and specifics of such a tax. Board Member Thorsland also raised the possibility of a referendum to revoke the Property Tax Extension Law Limit, which restricts property tax revenue for the county. Board Member Thorsland and County Executive Summers spoke about potential unused ARPA funds; County Executive Summers requested the Board establish an ARPA spending deadline, where the unspent funding would be revoked. Board Members Fortado, Hanauer-Friedman, and Thorsland discussed the possibility of holding more

County Board Study Sessions in the future, determining it would be best to hold the next meeting after the March primary election.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Locke adjourned the meeting at 7:57 PM.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Ammons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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