

# **CLINTON COUNTY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**August 18, 2025 – 7 p.m.**

Bradley Knolhoff, Chairman

Nelson Heinzmann, Vice Chairman

## **1. OPENING PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

## **2. CALL TO ORDER**

Sheriff Dan Travous called the meeting of the Clinton County District Board to order at 7 p.m. on August 18, 2025.

## **3. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

Present: Haselhorst, Heinzmann, Hilmes, Jansen, B. Knolhoff, K. Knolhoff, Rakers, Rapien, Riechman, Schmitz, Schroeder, Strieker, Veizer. Absent: Arentsen (Clark resigned)

The record reflected there was a quorum.

## **4. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS AND GUESTS**

## **5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion – Rakers made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 21, 2025 regular meeting. Riechman seconded the motion. Motion Carried.

## **6. REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS**

## **7. PUBLIC MAY APPROACH THE BOARD**

- a. More than 50 people packed the board room opposed to a controversial “Proud Boys” billboard which was erected outside of Breese near Central High School over the prior weekend. B. Knolhoff said the board members first became aware of the billboard on Saturday evening and immediately sought legal advice. The board was advised that this is a “free speech” issue. Knolhoff noted that the county began regulating billboards in 2004 through zoning; however, the billboard in question was erected prior to the zoning regulations being enforced. Therefore, any county rules regarding the placement of the billboard would not apply to this one since it was grandfathered in. He added that current zoning rules would not allow a billboard in this location. Should the board decide to take action to regulate messaging, they would have to make sure any regulation falls within state zoning requirements and any other laws, including the First Amendment. Knolhoff said this billboard does not define Clinton County and all the good that is in this county. While the county may not be able to regulate the message, county officials will do everything they can to ensure the safety of local citizens. More than 30 people shared their concerns with the board. Key points included:
  - Bucky Miller noted that while speech is protected, the message on the billboard is paid speech. While the Proud Boys may be protected by free speech, communities need

to rally until the hate message is removed. Citizens asked for a non-binding resolution denouncing all hate messages.

-Sophie Yaunches said she knows from someone who works in the federal prison system that members of the Proud Boys actively voice their beliefs of hate toward anyone who is not a white American, and they act on those beliefs. They have caused problems in the prison system based on their beliefs. Obviously, not all members of this group are in the prison system, many are average people living in normal communities. Yet, they hold poisonous thoughts, and they will destroy the goodwill of this community by scapegoating and creating suspicion of neighbors. Violence doesn't just come by wielding knives in a prison yard.

- Bridget (no last name given) said that while society has sorted her to be "privileged," she has a disabled brother, family members who are of the LGBTQ community and family members who have skin color different than her own. She made a choice at a young age that she would protect the people around her. She said the Proud Boys, the KKK, Nazis, the Heritage Foundation, Patriot Front and America First are all different labels for fascism and white supremacy. While we have freedom of speech granted to us by the government, she stressed that we, as a community, have the opportunity to stop the hate speech. She asked everyone present to be louder and demand officials, local and federal, to protect children from the hate speech as they demand a better future.

- Maggie (no last name given) works at HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Breese. Her first reaction upon hearing about the banner was disgust. As a co-worker to people of color who serve patients who are people of color, she said she is mortified that they may drive down the road and see the Proud Boys signs located right above a HSHS billboard. She stressed that this issue isn't about politics, but rather about right, wrong and basic humanity. She said the hospital does not want to be associated with it and has already reached out to the billboard company.

-Sara Wellen, a teacher at Central High School, said she sees herself as an advocate for the county in many ways. Community, safety, love and faith are things that this county takes pride in. When visiting the website for the Proud Boys, she said you will find words like guns, drugs, chauvinism and, in quotes "we don't want you." She added that these are not the words that we want our community to be known for. This is an opportunity to learn and suggested replacing the sign to represent this county with the message to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

-Roman Becker asked how the idea of community can be promoted in Clinton County when we allow a message of such hatred and bigotry that actively denies residents' freedoms and safety.

-Dr. Deanna DuComb said the sign is posted in front of the largest high school in the county for a reason. She feels this may be happening across the country, and the billboard company that is making money from this sign is embedding and promoting racism in the community. She suggested that the company should no longer be supported.

-B. Knolhoff said he spoke with the mayor of Breese, and ultimately, taking the sign down does rest with the billboard company.

-Butch Stockmann said this sign is a slap in the face to all the World War II veterans who fought against such hatred and bigotry.

-Naomi Knapp said she is 18 and a recent graduate of Central High School. She finds it disheartening that the sign is in Clinton County. While she is disappointed, she said she is not surprised. She feels that most people in Clinton County don't follow the Proud Boy beliefs and most of this community is comprised of amazing people who believe in family, faith and community; however, she has heard racial and homophobic slurs in her high school. She asked the board to put pressure on the sign company to remove the sign before it creates more damage to this community, and she asked for a board resolution to condemn the sign.

-Carter (no last name given) said the sign is an attempt by an extremist group to normalize their presence and place their message in front of an impressionable group of young people in our community. He said the Proud Boys are not a harmless group. They have a record of intimidation and violence, and their leaders have been convicted of the Jan. 6 attack on our nation's capital. He said they have the right to advertise, but local citizens have the right to respond.

-Erin Hamilton moved here in 2007 and is the mother of teenage boys. She feels all parents, local leaders and legislators should be sending the same message. If they paid \$5,000 to erect the sign, she feels we should pay \$7,000 to take it down.

-Darby Kloeckner is a local bartender and warned that the presence of the Proud Boys is a lot closer than citizens may think. About 15 members of the Proud Boys were on a motorcycle ride over the weekend and went into a local bar. While none of the group members were local citizens, she said their presence did make the other customers uncomfortable.

-Sierra Tebbe said our community is safe and tight knit; however, this message is completely against those beliefs and is selling hate to the local students. She stressed that the board members listen to the community and take action.

-Christian Goebel asked why the billboard was erected in Breese. He said he thinks some of this has to do with disengagement of the youth. He warned that these messages could also be spread online, so parents should be aware.

-Eugene Hemingway said he moved to Carlyle about 10 years ago. Realistically, he said, the presence of the Proud Boys is already here and it was here before the sign was erected. He feels there are people in this community who are quietly supporting the Proud Boys. He said he has run into prejudice his entire life, and this group is an extension of the Klan. He stressed that this issue needs to be addressed and this county should not take the First Amendment as a reason to allow it.

-Rayma Alberts said all of us have a chance right now to tell our children, our communities, our towns, our state and our country that we've had enough and we won't take it.

-Dennis Middendorff said he has served Clinton County in the past as an assistant state's attorney, state's attorney, judge and County Board member. He said he understands the position the board members are in and he sympathizes with them. He noted that the sign was erected on property that the county has no control over; however, this is an opportunity for all officials to express themselves. He said this is not the first time something like this has happened in Clinton County. In the 1980s, the KKK came to Clinton County and somehow received a permit to hold a rally at Carlyle Lake. He was serving as state's attorney at the time when citizens came to the County Board to complain. He said he had to give advice he didn't want to give: the

group already had a permit; the county does not control the land; and the group has First Amendment rights. He told board members to look at it another way. He said this is an opportunity for every elected official in Clinton County to stand up and express themselves with a public vote.

-Richard Larimar of New Baden said this is the same group that planned and led the Jan. 6 attack on our nation's capital in which law enforcement officers died. He asked board members to go on record so the citizens know where they stand.

-Bob Brandkamp of Breese said the sign has been moved, but it's simply facing the opposite direction. He said there were two messages that bothered him on the billboard: "stand back" and "stand by." He stressed that local police can handle anything that happens in this county, and residents do not need a Proud Boys army marching in and taking things over.

-Shaylem Bittle said his great-grandfather served in World War II, and the sign is a disgrace to everyone who served in World War II along with their ancestors. He feels this group is trying to scare local citizens, and we need to stand together now more than ever.

-Dr. Frank Buckingham said this community's reputation has now been damaged. He noted that you can see it on the news that there is a hate message in front of the high school. He stressed that we have to teach our children better.

-Cory Brueggemann of Breese simply asked if the County Board is going to "stand back" and "stand by" or are they going to "stand up" and vote on the issue.

-Chuck Weiner, originally from Highland, said there needs to be more done in our communities to stop racial attitudes. He feels organizations target rural communities for a reason.

-Jane (no last name given) said there is a lot of "Midwest nice" going on in this building; however, she said she needs to address the elephant in the room in that this type of behavior has been permitted by the highest officials in this land following the Jan. 6 attack. She stressed that board members need to go on record stating that this is not acceptable.

-Amber (no last name given) said she has received messages from across the country wondering what is going on in Clinton County. She is a middle school teacher and the harmful words that she hears from school children are alarming. She stressed that his county needs to get together and stress that we treat everyone the same regardless of the color of their skin.

-Lynda (no last name given) from Marion County urged everyone to research the Proud Boys, and they will learn that the group's history is abominable.

-Nick Bowman urged the community not to take too long to act. He noted that he is afraid because he doesn't know if being reactive will be enough. He believes that this group starts with a test to see how the community will react. That follows with recruitment, then random acts of violence followed by targeted acts of violence and control. He stressed that a lot of Nazis didn't start out as Nazis but as Hitler youth. He said he is afraid for the citizens and for law enforcement fearing the violence that might come.

-Kim Haeplin has biracial children who are now part of the LGBTQ community and have moved away from the area. While she would love for them to come back, she fears that right now it's not safe.

-Laura Huff of Marion County said community stands for common unity, and that's what is represented in the boardroom. She stressed that the community should not stand down and allow racist people to rule. She added that the people in the room are unified in their fight.

-Whitney (no last name given) is a local attorney and an advocate for many youth in this county and Marion County. She said the most concerning thing about the billboard is its proximity to a local high school. She noted that children are impressionable and their brains are not fully formed. They're searching online for more information, and she urged the board to take action sooner than later.

-Danny Kampwerth is proud of Clinton County. He has four children with two who are foster children who are not white. He said he would never want them to have to worry about living in this county and feels that people of all colors should be able to be proud to be from Clinton County.

-Kira DuComb Buckingham reminded everyone of the power of physical presence in each other's lives. She said this is a time when we could lose those dearest to us to online echo chambers and the truths that they think they know. She stressed that we can immunize our own communities by listening to the most vulnerable members of the community.

B. Knolhoff expressed appreciation to everyone for attending the meeting and speaking up. He said this is emblematic of what a democracy should be with people speaking up for their beliefs and advocating for their positions. He said this issue is bigger than the County Board and is a community effort. This issue is with the billboard company and applying pressure on them is what needs to happen to take the billboard down.

Riechman thanked all the residents in attendance for speaking from their hearts and stressed that we are a close-knit community of faith and family.

Motion - Non-binding resolution stating that the County Board does not support hatred, bigotry, divisiveness or racism.

Riechman made a motion for a roll call vote. Rakers seconded the motion.

Arentsen (Absent), Haselhorst (Yes), Heinzmann (Yes), Hilmes (Yes), Jansen (Yes), B. Knolhoff (Yes), K. Knolhoff (Yes), Rakers (Yes), Rapien (Yes), Riechman (Yes), Schmitz (Yes), Schroeder (Yes), Strieker (Yes), Veizer (Yes).

Motion Carried 13-0.

B. Knolhoff stressed that even though the board is unanimously against the billboard, the vote alone will not fix anything. He noted that he has been on the phone with various people since he became aware of the sign on Saturday evening. He asked the public to rest assured that the county has some of the best police and sheriff's officers, state's attorney and judges who will do everything they can to keep the community safe.

- b. Rachele Smith, retired Army Colonel and chairperson of the board of the new Veterans Assistance Commission of Clinton County (VACCC), said she is honored to be part of a group that stands together for what they believe in. She introduced the new VACCC superintendent, Colbey Voss of Germantown. Voss has a vast array of military experience in the Army National Guard and the Air Force Reserves.

## **8. REPORTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS**

## **9. STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **a. Zoning and Subdivision Committee – Ann Schroeder**

1. Zoning Report – Jami Staser said the Zoning Board of Appeals met on August 6 with seven cases and the Subdivision Committee met August 7. There are three items on the agenda for board consideration.

- i. Motion – Map Amendment – Agricultural (A) to Commercial (C) in Carlyle Township for Michael Beard and Brent Beard. The Beards are requesting to rezone 1.33 acres from A to C to fix up an existing structure for a new business.

Haselhorst made a motion for a roll call vote to approve the map amendment. Schroeder seconded the motion.

Arentsen (Absent), Haselhorst (Yes), Heinzmann (Yes), Hilmes (Yes), Jansen (Yes), B. Knolhoff (Yes), K. Knolhoff (Yes), Rakers (Yes), Rapien (Yes), Riechman (Yes), Schmitz (Yes), Schroeder (Yes), Strieker (Yes), Veizer (Yes). Motion Carried 13-0.

- ii. Motion – Map Amendment – Residential (R-1) to Agricultural-Residential (A-R) in Lookingglass Township for Kyle Laux. The property is located on Court Road and the rezoning would allow Laux to build a small barn on the property with a few horses.

Strieker made a motion for a roll call vote to approve the map amendment. Rapien seconded the motion.

Arentsen (Absent), Haselhorst (Yes), Heinzmann (Yes), Hilmes (Yes), Jansen (Yes), B. Knolhoff (Yes), K. Knolhoff (Yes), Rakers (Yes), Rapien (Yes), Riechman (Yes), Schmitz (Yes), Schroeder (Yes), Strieker (Yes), Veizer (Yes). Motion Carried 13-0.

- iii. Motion – Kenny Woltering Subdivision – 1 Lot in Wheatfield Township for Joyce Woltering. A family split for Woltering was approved in July.

Veizer made a motion for a roll call vote to approve the subdivision. Rapien seconded the motion.

Arentsen (Absent), Haselhorst (Yes), Heinzmann (Yes), Hilmes (Yes), Jansen (Yes), B. Knolhoff (Yes), K. Knolhoff (Yes), Rakers (Yes), Rapien (Yes), Riechman (Yes), Schmitz (Yes), Schroeder (Yes), Strieker (Yes), Veizer (Yes). Motion Carried 13-0 with one member absent.

### **b. Economic Development, Tourism and Clinton County Enterprise Zone – Mike Rakers No Report**

### **c. Insurance/ICIT – Nelson Heinzmann**

1. The committee met August 11 with most members present. Expenses are 9 percent over budget without reimbursements and 30 percent under budget with reimbursements. Costs are down despite having 17 additional people on the plan compared to last year. There will be no meeting in September.



- d. Facilities Committee – Gary Arentsen  
No Report
- e. Animal Control – Ann Schroeder
  - 1. Schroeder commended Dr. Kenny Brown and animal control warden Tony Petrea for their hard work. Over the past two years the number of animals which have been spayed and neutered has nearly doubled.
- f. Finance – Kurt Schmitz

Schmitz reported the committee met August 13 and all bills were approved.

  - 1. Treasurer’s Monthly Report – Denise Trame

Trame said oil checks were received for \$2,270.04 and video gaming receipts totaled \$7,842.85. The Treasurer’s Office completed the first round of tax disbursements to the various taxing districts totaling \$36,448,873.85.
  - i. Motion – Monthly Budget and Financial Report

Riechman made a motion to approve the report. Schmitz seconded the motion.  
Motion Carried.
- g. Budget – Nelson Heinzmann
  - 1. The committee will meet on Sept. 17.
- h. Law Enforcement, EMA, Welfare, Safety and Liquor Control – Mike Strieker

Strieker said the committee held its quarterly meeting on August 12 and received updates from the sheriff’s department and the county’s Emergency Management Agency. Tony Petrea of EMA spoke about the heavy rainfall on July 19 and how EMA handled the flooding event. Several homes were impacted and EMA completed storm damage assessments on four homes. Sheriff Travous spoke about the increasing costs of food at the jail. He also spoke about the additional need for employees in dispatch and gave an update on a recent accident involving a vehicle fire. Local officers took immediate action to extricate a woman from the vehicle, saving her life. Knolhoff commended the officers involved for their heroic actions.
- i. Road and Bridge – Ken Knolhoff
  - 1. Monthly County Engineer’s Report – Dan Behrens
    - i. Behrens said the state opened bids on August 1 for a bridge replacement on Lake Road. C-Hill Civil Contracting submitted the low bid of \$729,988 which was more than \$64,000 under the next lowest bid. Beams will be ordered and the project will not start until next May. The contractor has completed work on Aviston Road. Regarding an issue that came up last month with the intersection of Aviston and Highline Roads, Behrens said a stop sign at the intersection has been moved back to allow a wider turn radius and the township will work on it when the weather cools down. Work on Walnut Street in Breese, near the approach to the roundabout, will begin after Labor Day.
- j. Personnel, Labor and Grievance – Mike Hilmes and Gary Arentsen

The committee met August 9 and approved minutes of the July meeting. The next meeting will be 6 p.m. on Sept. 9.

k. Executive Committee – No Report

1. Heinzmann said the committee met August 15 and finalized items for the agenda.

**10. SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

a. Radio – Curt Haselhorst

1. Haselhorst said the committee met on August 13 and received an update from project manager Kyle Markus. Steel should be going up at the tower sites next week. All tower work should be completed by later September with the installation of radio equipment starting in October. Haselhorst added that, finally, everything is moving on schedule after a very long delay.

**11. OUTSIDE COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS**

a. Board of Health – Kurt Schmitz

1. Motion - Health Department Monthly Report.

Health Department Administrator Chris Leidel reported that the department had positive mosquito batches for West Nile Virus in Hoffman and on the west end of Centralia. Test sites are located throughout the county, and testing will continue until October. A successful Health Fair was hosted last week with another one planned for Sept. 19. The department requests that Health Fair participants have a primary doctor established to send the test results to. Leidel said the department is still reviewing numbers for the feasibility of a dental clinic.

Schmitz made a motion to approve the Health Department Monthly Report.

Jansen seconded the motion. Motion Carried.

2. Sheriff Travous commended the maintenance crew for the great work on the landscaping at the health department as well as courthouse square.

b. 708 Mental Health Board – Greg Riechman

Riechman said the committee met August 14 to discuss the agencies seeking funding for the new grant year. Final funding decisions will be made at the next meeting on Sept. 11.

c. 911 ETSB Board – Bruce Rapien

No Report.

- d. Discover Downstate Illinois (Ann Schroeder), SILEC (Mike Hilmes), SCIGA, Greater Centralia Enterprise Zone (Greg Riechman), Southern Illinois Workforce Investment Board (Mike Rakers), SWIDA (Ann Schroeder), SIMAPC (Ann Schroeder/Mike Rakers), UCCI - No Report

**12. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

Heinzmann made a motion for a roll call vote for approval of Accounts Payable. Veizer seconded the motion.

Arentsen (Absent), Haselhorst (Yes), Heinzmann (Yes), Hilmes (Yes), Jansen (Yes), B. Knolhoff (Yes), K. Knolhoff (Yes), Rakers (Yes), Rapien (Yes), Riechman (Yes), Schmitz



(Yes), Schroeder (Yes), Strieker (Yes), Veizer (Yes). Motion Carried 13-0.

**13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**14. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

- a. Motion – Appointment of John Consolino as Regional Superintendent of Schools for Clinton, Jefferson, Marion and Washington Counties effective July 1, 2026. Current Regional Superintendent of School Matt Renaud will be resigning at the end of June 2026. He is recommending the appointment of his assistant superintendent Consolino. B. Knolhoff noted that three other County Boards must approve the appointment before it is official. Brad made a motion to approve the appointment. Schroeder seconded the motion. Motion Carried.

**15. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. B. Knolhoff commended the six recent graduates of Clinton County Drug Court as well as the county Probation Office for their dedication and hard work.
- b. Riechman gave an update on upcoming Honor Flights.

**16. ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

- a. Haselhorst made a motion to adjourn until Monday, September 15, 2025 at 7 p.m. Rapien seconded the motion. Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

ATTEST:



Vicky Albers  
County Clerk & Recorder