

DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

January 5, 2026

Commissioners Present: President James Miller
Vice President William Hartman
Vice President Kellen Dooley

Others Present: Auditor Susan Sleeper
Attorney Andrew Kruse

MATTER OF REORGANIZATION

Attorney Kruse opened nominations for President:

William Hartman motioned to nominate James Miller as President. Kellen Dooley seconded. Attorney Kruse closed nominations and called for the vote with the motion passing unanimously.

Kellen Dooley nominated both Kellen Dooley and William Hartman as Vice-Presidents. William Hartman seconded and all approved.

William Hartman read the following statement into the minutes:

'Before I hand the gavel over to Jim, I would just like to say it's been a privilege to serve as president for these past 6 years. It's been quite the ride to say the least. As I serve out the last year of my term, I want the people of DeKalb County to know I will not be coasting to the finish line. Sitting idle is not something I do well, just ask my wife Nancy. I will be engaging in every issue that comes before the Commissioners. One last thought, I have always relied on common sense and GODS help to perform the duties as commissioner president. I will never be the smartest person in the room, but I've been in the room the longest and that surely counts for something. Thank you'

MATTER OF 2026 BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Kellen Dooley made a motion for the following board changes among the Commissioners:

DeKalb Economic Development Partnership: *Kellen Dooley (replacing James Miller)*

Plan Commission: *Kellen Dooley (replacing William Hartman), Hartman and Miller are alternates*

DCCC Advisory Board: *James Miller (replacing Kellen Dooley),*

Solid Waste District Comm. Rep.: *William Hartman (replacing James Miller), Miller as alternate*

Remove Sunny Meadows from the Departmental appointment list.

William Hartman seconded, motion passed (3,0).

MATTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Steele Benefits: Everything is getting buttoned up and getting ready for the Health Insurance enrollment for the 2026-2027 plan year.

Recruitment: Morgan covered the open and closed positions for the County.

Maintenance/Facilities Director Position: Dotty gave a review of the process that a request for a job description review goes through that included the Job Classification Sub-Committee who

then sent it on to WIS for review. WIS suggested the position be in EXE-A, which is where it currently is, but the Job Classification Sub-Committee is suggesting to the full Council at their next meeting to move this position to EXE-B (higher than EXE-A) due to the duties and nature of the position.

Sunny Meadows: Dotty felt that Kellen's update of the events on the last day of Sunny Meadows that he sent to all Commissioners was very informative and she didn't have much to add. She explained a little on exit interviews and insurance, etc.

Kellen thanked Dotty for all the work with Sunny Meadows as it did get frustrating in the end. Commissioner Miller also expressed appreciation to Commissioner Dooley for taking on the project.

Attendance on Demand: HR appreciates working with the Auditor on the new timekeeping system, so they are ready to help our employees when it goes into effect.

ADA-GIS Maps: HR will be able to supply the State with the ADA plan since the maps were able to be recovered finally from the cyber incident.

ACA: Steele Benefits will be working with the County, LOW Associates and with any other data we may have on the information needed to meet our noticing requirements.

Wellness Benefit: Commissioner Miller asked where we are on the decision and that answer was 'in the Commissioners' hands and they need to decide if they are keeping the current \$50 discount per pay for completing a wellness dr. visit and bloodwork. The immediate change that must be different if they keep the current wellness discount is that the spouses either do not complete the visit or bloodwork, or there must be additional benefit offered (per our APEX team guidance).

MATTER OF SUMMER STREET RIGHT-OF-WAY

Amber Farrell: 202 Summer Street, Butler was in attendance on the property located at 202 and 206 Summer Street. Amber gave a history of how they decided to purchase this property, as they thought they were purchasing 6 lots with 2 wells, but the survey that was performed right before closing came back that one of the wells sits in the easement and now they cannot use the property as they had intended.

Chris Gaumer explained there had been intent of adding more lots, streets and believe the request is to vacate the right-of-way so that Amber can own the land and it would become taxable. There is also an alley that runs in the middle of the property as well and that is currently where Amber's propane tank is sitting. Discussion took place on the situation and the next steps. Amber's realtor and Amber will get in contact with Hampel Farms that owns part of the alleyway.

William Hartman made a motion for Attorney Kruse to move forward with preparing the documents for vacation of the right-of-way. James Miller seconded, motion passed (2,0). (Kellen had stepped out during this vote)

MATTER OF SUNNY MEADOWS DEMOLITION BID AWARD

William Hartman made a motion to reject all bids. Kellen Dooley seconded for discussion.

Hartman asked if the Asbestos study has been done, Kellen said the company was out last week and he was hoping to have the results by today. Hartman does not know how the Commissioners can move forward without this information. Hartman also wanted to make a motion to put the decision up for a public hearing at a later date, but the commissioners are still in discussion on the initial motion of rejecting all bids so this motion was not put into play.

Dooley does not have any comment until after there is public comment.

Attorney Kruse commented on how the results of the asbestos study could play into the cost or legalities of the bids.

Public Comment (NOT an actual Public Hearing):

Dave Holt: 1297 CR 19 | His concern on the demolition involves the cost and how the asbestos results will change the amount, as well as if there is anyone that is wanting to purchase the building.

Curt Hartman: 4169 CR 19 | Would like to see if there is anyone that is wanting to purchase the building and maintain it, as another facility was rehabilitated and developed into an apartment complex. He would really like to see if it can be developed into something to benefit the County. (in favor of other options other than demolition)

Chuck Knox: 2519 CR 68 | Read a letter into the meeting asking the Commissioners to preserve Sunny Meadows, our historic 1908 county home and farm, and to envision a bold, practical reuse of the building and its adjoining county-owned acreage. He frames this response around a simple yet powerful principle: Respect the past, freedom at present, and faith in the future. Knox ended his time saying, 'By choosing to respect the past, exercise our freedom at present, and invest with faith in the future, we can transform Sunny Meadows from a question mark into one of DeKalb County's greatest assets. (in favor of keeping building and for county use)

Shirley Randel: 1117 N Franklin St. here for her daughter Tammy Campbell: CR 8 Ashley | She would like to see someone purchase and her daughter is interested in purchasing the building. She feels that others would be interested as well.

Mary Diehl: 5113 R 54 | Here as a lifelong County Resident and taxpayer. She is not here to argue for a specific outcome, she is asking for a pause not a position. Her core request is simple; before making an irreversible decision, allow time for documented costs, defined plans, and clear governance. (i.e. decision-making processes, transparency and accountability).

To piggyback on what Leta said about a green space or a park, as we currently do not have a County wide park board and there are other county properties that volunteers are taking care of, so adding another area without a board who would fund that, many other questions need to be answered. The least expensive decision is that with the most incomplete information.

Leta Hullinger: 2207 Chandler Way | Leta has had the opportunity to spend many hours in the Sunny Meadows building. The building has been let go by prior Commissioners and someone

who purchases the building will have a great expense to use it. Leta's question to the Commissioners is this: if they delay a decision who will be taking care of the facility and at what cost for the County? Leta also stated that if the building is sold then the County will lose control of the middle of County owned property. She was part of the Sunny Meadows committee, and they suggested creating a green space. As a taxpayer, she does not care to put a whole lot more money into the building. Commissioner Hartman stated the Maintenance crew is located across from Sunny Meadows and would be keeping watch on the building. Hartman also feels that the insurance could be decreased due to residents no longer living there and utilities could decrease by turning heat down. Commissioner Dooley talked with Insurance Trustees and a vacant building could increase in cost.

Sara Nelson: 314 Widney St. | She grew up across from the County Home and is part of the Genealogy Society and they would ultimately like to see it saved and used in a historical way.

Frank Walker: 1707 CR 43 | If the building is structurally safe then he feels it would be better to sell it, and if it is sold then it becomes taxable and it seems that the County would be better off and make money for the County.

Andrew Provines: 3920 CR 75 | Commenting on the gentleman that mentioned someone being able to 'do with whatever they want to', but that is a loss for the County as the County would lose all control and would not have any idea how many times it will change hands or what kind of organizations will come and go. Selling could be a large detriment to the County

Steve Provines: 2347 CR 38 | Has been neighbors with the County Home and he feels he has a unique perspective compared to others in this room. He believes the County Home and barns should be maintained for the County. He feels demolition is not the last choice and not a choice at all. He is suggesting stepping back and forming a large group of county citizens to see what options there are and has visions of what could possibly be held at the facility.

Additional Commissioner Comments:

Hartman asked if the property is sold, can deed restrictions can be put on it? Attorney Kruse does not believe there can be permanent restrictions as this has been changed in legislation, but he would need to research that part of the law.

Dooley explained that his initial suggestion from the Sunny Meadows Committee was for a green space and the Commissioners agreed to get bids on a demolition. However, he is fine with looking into a committee to come up with an idea. There will be questions that come along as there is a budget for 2026 for Sunny Meadows so Council will need to know the plan to budget going forward.

Hartman said if they do decide to sell it, he knows someone that will do an appraisal, and he would like that done to know what kind of money they are looking at if it is demolished.

Miller believes that all three commissioners agreed to get the demolition bids and took that on the recommendation from the sunny meadows committee, maybe we jumped the gun a little quick, but they will live with it and move on.

Hartman does not feel it is a mistake to get the bids as they need the values in order to make decisions going forward.

After all comments above, the motion passed (3,0) to REJECT all bids.

Kellen Dooley motioned to set up a committee of 7 people to work with community leaders to generate ideas of what to do with the building and recommend having William Hartman as the chairman of that committee. William Hartman seconded if all three commissioners recommend someone to the committee. Motion passed (3,0).

MATTER OF HIGHWAY

Annual Materials Bid Award: Ben went through all the bids and sent the bid tab results to the Commissioners last week and handed out a hard copy today. Ben is recommending the Commissioners to award all bids.

William Hartman made a motion to accept and award all bids for the 2026 Highway Materials. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

Spraying of Spotted Lantern Butterfly: This was discussed in a prior meeting and Attorney Kruse had requested a release of liability form. Ben requested this from the DNR and it has been received back. Attorney Kruse is comfortable with the release provided.

William Hartman made a motion to approve the spraying of the Spotted Lantern Butterfly and to allow Ben to sign the digital format. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

DocuSign for CCMG and Countywide Bridge Inspection: Ben asked if Commissioner Hartman had signed for the CCMG and Bridge Inspections yet. Ben will get the contact info changed for James Miller.

Covered Bridge Roof: Hartman asked if this was complete, and it is not quite but most of it is and it looks very nice.

MATTER OF PAYROLL

William Hartman made a motion to approve payroll for the period of December 14-27, 2025. James Millers seconded, and all approved. (Kellen was not in the room for this vote)

MATTER OF CLAIMS

William Hartman made a motion to approve General Claims consisting of warrant #136642 thru 136646 in the amount of \$7,002.92 and wire transfer #34900 thru 35002 in the amount of \$334,883.33. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

MATTER OF MINUTES

Kellen Dooley made a motion to approve the minutes dated December 22nd, 2025, as presented. James Miller seconded. Kellen Dooley made a motion to amend the motion to include a correction. Motion passed (2,1) with Hartman abstaining.

William Hartman made a motion to approve the minutes dated December 31st, 2025, as presented. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

MATTER OF OTHER DISCUSSION

Tourism Board Appointment

Kellen Dooley made a motion to appoint Patrick Rowland to the Tourism Board for the term of 01/01/2026 - 12/31/2027. William Hartman seconded, motion passed (3,0).

DCCC Advisory Board Appointments

William Hartman made a motion to appoint April Winfield and Markeita Townsend to the DCCC Advisory Board for the term ending 06/30/2030. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

Ordinance 2025-O-7: DCC 16-7-2 | An Ordinance of Public Nuisance for Properties Located within the Unincorporated jurisdiction of DeKalb County, Indiana:

Kellen Dooley feels there is some confusion in the public believing the Commissioners were hiring a full-time compliance officer to drive around the County to look for non-compliance properties. The commissioners only increased the hours from 10 to 20 per week beginning January 2026.

Kellen Dooley made a motion to go back to the original wording from the 2023 Ordinance concerning complaints that said:

- (1) *Complaint Form.* Violations of this Ordinance shall be reported on forms to be provided by and submitted to the Code Compliance Official (Complaint Form). A Complaint Form may be submitted on an alleged nuisance by any resident of DeKalb County in the same neighborhood or community of the alleged nuisance.

Chris Gaumer explained that it was changed because the ordinance did not have a definition of what a 'neighborhood' or 'community' would consist of out in the County.

William Hartman seconded the motion.

Kellen commented that it was never his intent to hire someone to drive around 'looking' for properties, only to allow our code compliance official to educate other homeowners if they had seen a property with issues while on their way to a property that had already been reported.

Kurt Hartman: | Not knowing a lot about the ordinance and how it works, he is wondering how many in person meetings there are, how many violations, do we collect a fee, are we looking at the number of potential properties

Cathy Bierlein (Newcomer) 6585 CR 40 | Came to show photos as to what happens when a property is not taken care of but has had complaints filed with the Health Department. Chris Gaumer says this may be a health department issue. Commissioner Miller explained they are not discussing specific properties today. Cathy explained what she wanted to do is to show what would happen if the County would sell Sunny Meadows and not have control as this is a rental property and it has fallen apart. She intends to buy it and clean it up and not have anyone live on the property.

Commissioner Dooley explained that this is an example of why they increased the Code Compliance Officials hours from 10 to 20, to get caught up on these properties and be able to get to other properties that have been submitted for non-compliance.

Commissioner Hartman commented that the position is part time, and not a benefit offered position. They will work through this plan now and there could be other changes needed in the future.

Commissioner Miller commented on another reason for the increase in hours is since some properties end up going to court and that it takes many hours to prepare for, thus hours needed increased. Commissioner Miller explained the process that is currently set in place, and he has been made aware that people are making comments on social media that is not true and if they would read the ordinance or would have listened to the meeting, they would have heard that it was not a full time position only an increase of the hours from 10 to 20 per week.

After discussion, motion passed (3,0).

Commissioner Dooley appreciated everyone that had reached out about Sunny Meadows and Code Compliance, they were very respectful and made clear points, Hartman and Miller both agreed with the comment.

Jail Building Corporation Deed

Attorney Kruse explained that the Jail Building Corporation was set up when the bond for the jail was initiated, essentially the corporation owns the building until after the bond is paid off, then it should be deeded back to the County. Currently the 1985 jail still shows the owner as the Jail Building Corporation, and Attorney Kruse would like the Commissioners' approval to have Charles Hampel, who was one of the original members of the Building Corporation to sign a deed putting it into the name of DeKalb County.

Kellen Dooley made a motion to have Attorney Kruse move forward with the deed process. William Hartman seconded, motion passed (3,0).

Shadarobah Funds in 2026 Budget: Auditor Sleeper needed clarification on if the 2026 budgeted amount of \$2,700 was to be sent out as a lump sum or invoiced from Shadarobah.

William Hartman made a motion to request Shadarobah to send invoices to the Auditors' office to be paid up to the \$2,700 approved in their budget. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

W.W. Williams Generator Maintenance Agreement

William Hartman made a motion to accept the W.W. Williams Generator Maintenance Agreement #GA-74437, starting 02/01/2026 to 01/31/2027 in the amount of \$10,613.00 for the following generators. Kellen Dooley seconded, motion passed (3,0).

Courthouse Generator: Model #6R0150DS250 DCCC: Model#MTU10V1600 S450

Jail: Model #SR4 Health Dept.: Model #QT04842GNAN

Annex Building: Model #QT048742GNAN Central Dispatch: Model #IGLC350-2N

Highway: Model #D300GC

Sunny Meadows Combined Report for November THRU December 2025

Kellen Dooley made a motion to acknowledge receipt of the Sunny Meadows Combined Report. William Hartman seconded, motion passed (3,0).

Sunny Meadows update: All residents have been moved out, and employees were released on January 2nd, 2026, at noon. DCCC came out and took some remaining food that they could utilize and were very appreciative for the opportunity.

President Miller's Statement:

"As we begin 2026, I want to issue a statement to the County Elected Auditor, Susan Sleeper. From what I can find in Indiana Code you are responsible for the following:

- ~Attend and record County executive meetings
- ~Act as Clerk for Executive Meetings
- ~Provide treasurer's monthly report to executive
- ~Issue warrants allowed by executive
- ~Keep accounts and appropriate records.

I believe you not only fulfill these requirements but go above and beyond what is statutorily required of you. When considering that you are the "clerk" to the executive I must consider that you are also a duly elected County Official. We both find ourselves here as a matter of public support. To belittle your elected position would serve to also belittle my elected position. I want to thank you for what you have done, and I hope you will continue to do. Without your diligent work these meetings and the county, as a whole would suffer. Thank you, Susan."

DCCC Visitations Report:

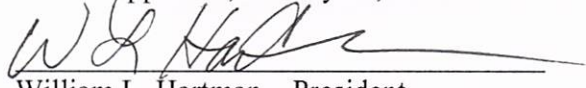
All 3 Commissioners acknowledge receipt of the report submitted by Michelle Fosnaugh on the results of their biennial Residential Guidelines Audit.

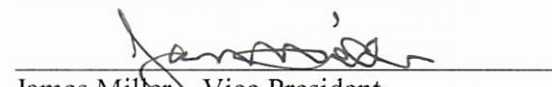
Master Service Agreement with Sontiq:

Discussion took place on the agreement, pricing, etc. The Commissioners would like to get more information for next meeting.

Courtney Butler's email: The Humane Shelter committee will be meeting with her to discuss her proposal.


Approved, January 20, 2026


William L. Hartman – President


James Miller – Vice President


Kellen Dooley – Vice President

Attest:


Susan Sleeper, Auditor