



MINUTES
DEKALB TOWNSHIP BOARD
Regular Board Meeting
2323 SOUTH FOURTH STREET - DEKALB, IL 60115
January 20, 2026

The DeKalb Township of DeKalb, Illinois convened for a regular meeting on January 20, 2026, at the township building in the conference room.

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Supervisor Hess called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Clerk Joan Watson-Protano called the roll, and the following members of the Board of Trustees were present: Supervisor Mary Hess; Trustee Dale Thurman; Trustee Katherine McLaughlin; Trustee Greg Akers; Trustee Bradlo. Other in attendance included Highway Commissioner Craig Smith and Assessor Rich Dyer.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, led by Trustee Bradlo.

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: A motion was made by Trustee Thurman and was seconded by Trustee Bradlo.

DISCUSSION: Supervisor Hess made a request to modify the agenda to include discussion on Peace Park construction bid as the first item under new business.

VOTE: The agenda was approved as modified by unanimous voice vote.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT None.

E. REPORTS

a. Supervisors Report:

Supervisor Hess reported that as typical, this is a little slower time for the department.

After years of effort, a stronger relationship is forming due to new leadership at Illinois Worknet. IL Worknet does want a more assessable location as there is no bus stop currently. In addition, they are aiming for a 'One-Stop Vision' to create a single location for employment services. In addition, Danita of Passion Pursuit continues to reach out to partner and refer to them in an effort to build relationship.

Supervisor Hess attended the third workshop in a series on watershed education which focuses on the environmental impact of salt on roads and sidewalks.

Northwestern Medicine has been hosting advanced directive planning workshops at the Township location; attendance has been low.

Prairie State Legal held its first session here with five appointments; we believe this is a strong indication that this service is needed.

Supervisor Hess is encouraging the trustees and board to investigate and begin the process of salary planning for the future board. She noted that the board must set salaries for the next term at least 180 days prior to an election. She suggested that data collection, both quantitatively and qualitative data be researched. Discussions should be done early, perhaps yearly, rather than waiting until the end of the term. In addition, she asked them to consider the full range and scope of duties that are required of the position and evaluate changes in the role and structure of positions. There are statute guidelines and then there are real world scenarios to take into consideration.

DISCUSSION: There was discussion by Highway Commissioner Smith and Trustee Bradlo about the salary planning that was done in the past. We were reminded that salaries are for positions and not the current elected official. Trustee McLaughlin inquired about 360 reviews, these are currently not in place and the board was open to implementation.

Supervisor Hess introduced the newly acquired language translation device that has been purchased. This will be instrumental in receiving and providing accurate information to and from non-English speaking residents.

b. **Clerks Report** – Clerk Protano shared information regarding Lobby Days hosted by Township Officials of Illinois (TOI) coming up on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, in Springfield. Supervisor Hess will be attending and encouraged everyone to notify the office if they would like to attend so reservations can be made. TOI's new training schedule is live, and the Township will cover registration and payment for interested officials.

The Metropolitan Township Association (MTA) also hosts a separate Lobby Day, noted as May 8th.

Clerk Protano shared Township History as we continue to celebrate our 150th Anniversary

- The area was originally called Huntley Grove before the Illinois Constitution established township government in 1850. 191 years ago.
- Townships serve as a local "safety net," providing social services, emergency relief, and bridge-gaps when other government levels fall short.
- Townships and road districts maintain a significant portion of Illinois thoroughfares—approximately 70% of all roads in the state (over 71,000 miles).
- DeKalb was first incorporated as a village in 1856 and it officially became a city in 1877

c. **Highway Commissioner's Report:** Highway Commissioner Smith reported that the new facility is near completion pending gas line installation, utility and final checks. They are not able to utilize the building until it passes all inspections. The township's salt supply is adequate. He shared a strategy to use Motor Fuel Tax funds by "renting" township equipment back to the township for MFT projects to generate \$25,000-\$30,000 annually. This will alleviate financial strains created by unfunded mandates and rising costs. Upcoming road projects include South Malta Road and Nelson Road once the weather permits. Mandatory DOT supervisor training is in February. He also shared that an unfunded state mandate requiring pipe mapping and location of all pipes under roads is underway.

d. **Assessor's Report:** DeKalb Township Assessor Rich Dyer stated that board of assessment review hearings for the township concluded on January 14, 2026, and his office is now awaiting official assessor workbooks. In the interim, Dyer and his staff are scheduling mandatory continuing education through providers such as the Illinois Property Assessment Institute (IPAI) and the Illinois Department of Revenue, including attending the IPAI State Conference in Normal, IL, from March 22–27, 2026

e. **Trustees Reports:** None

H. Bill Paying

a. **Approval of December Audit Reports and January Bills to Pay**

MOTION: A motion to approve the December audit report in the amount of \$961,926.71, and the January bills to be paid in the amount of \$141,328.6 was made by Trustee Akers and seconded by Trustee Thurman.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote of those present with all AYES by: Supervisor Hess; Trustees Bradlo, McLaughlin, Akers, and Thurman. Clerk Protano declared the expenditures authorized.

b. **Receive, File and Approve Treasurer's December Budget Reports**

MOTION: A motion to Receive, File and Approve the Treasurer's December Budget Reports was made by Trustee Thurman and seconded by Trustee McLaughlin.

DISCUSSION: It was noted that the budget line items have been revised to reflect the revised and approved budget at January's meeting.

VOTE: The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote with all AYES by: Trustees Thurman, Akers, McLaughlin, and Bradlo; and Supervisor Hess. Clerk Protano declared the expenditures authorized.

I. Old/ Unfinished Business - NONE

J. New Business (revised)

A1. Peace Park Bid review and Acceptance of Bid for Oakwood Cemetery Columbarium

MOTION: A motion for approval was made by Trustee Akers and seconded by Trustee Thurman.

DISCUSSION: The Township received eight bids, for Peace Park which Supervisor Hess described as an excellent turnout. Supervisor Hess provided a recap of the bids and a recap of the funds and expenses. The lowest bidder was O'Brien Civil Works (based in Mount Morris), whose quote aligned closely with the engineer's estimates. Local firms did submit bids. Illinois law typically requires awarding the contract to the lowest responsible bidder. Highway Commissioner Craig Smith noted that O'Brien Civil Works has previously done quality work for the Road District (e.g., a retaining wall on Health Services Drive).

The donor originally donated \$100,000 which covered the land survey, purchase of the land, engineering, and design of the park. Approximately \$13,000 remains from that fund. The donor has committed additional funds. The Township expects to absorb roughly \$89,000 in expenses. These will be funded through the Cemetery Capital Fund.

The Township has prepared a brochure of commemorative opportunities that can be used to offset costs for landscaping (trees, shrubs), furnishings (benches), and a brick paver plaza.

There was no formal vote on the Peace Park bid as this was a late addition to the agenda.

A2. Acceptance of Bid for Oakwood Cemetery Columbarium

REVIEW: Two bids were received for the Oakland Cemetery Columbarium project.

The first bid was from: Eickhof Columbaria (Based in Minnesota): the bid: \$32,600 (Supply only) / \$42,840 (Including installation/crane operator) Total cost of \$93,630.00.

This is a proven model used by other townships, specifically Dundee Township, which Supervisor Hess has visited. This firm has extensive experience with the "freeze and thaw" cycles of the Midwest, and they provided detailed engineering schematics and foundation requirements as requested in the bid proposal.

The second bid was from: Monument Warehouse (Based in Georgia): Bid \$27,100.00 (Supply only) / \$34,300.00 (Including installation/crane operator), total cost of \$74,700.00

Although this was the lower bid, the company provided only a computer rendering and admitted they had never actually built this specific model. They failed to provide engineering schematics and have no installation history in the Midwest.

DISCUSSION:

Supervisor Hess and the township attorney recommended rejecting the lower bid from Monument Warehouse. Under Illinois law, the board must select the "lowest responsible bidder." The lack of schematics, a short one-year warranty, and the unproven design in a cold climate led the board to determine Monument Warehouse was not a "responsible" choice for this project.

Highway Commissioner Smith noted the importance of a proper foundation to prevent shifting over time, adding that Eickhof Columbaria experience with Minnesota's deep frost was a significant advantage.

The project is estimated to take up to six months from contract signing to installation. The unit will be placed after the Peace Park infrastructure is complete, with care taken not to damage new landscaping. The township has allocated \$70,000 in the Cemetery Capital Budget to cover the purchase and installation of the Columbarium in this year's budget. There is space for additional Columbarium(s) to be installed in the future.

Supervisor Hess did reach out O'Donnell Crane Service in Cortland confirmed that the installation costs provided by Eickhof was competitive and accurate for the region. After all questions were answered Supervisor Hess requested a vote on the bid for the motion.

Trustee Akers recapped the motion to award the bid to Eickhof Columbaria which was seconded by Trustee Thurman and a roll call vote was taken.

VOTE: The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote with all AYES by those present: Supervisor Hess, Trustees; McLaughlin; Bradlo; Akers; and Thurman. Clerk Protano declared the motion passed.

b. Approval of COY Funding Requests of \$5,000 each to Rooted for Good and Project H.O.P.E.

MOTION: A motion to approve was made by Trustee Thurman and seconded by Trustee McLaughlin

REVIEW: Supervisor Hess provided a summary sheet of the applications from Rooted for Good and Project H.O.P.E:

Rooted for Good (\$5,000)

This funding supports the organization's hygiene items for youth project.

Township has funded this project previously, a review of the last funding cycle showed a portion of funds was used for diapers, which was outside the original scope. The committee set some conditions for the approval and is requesting an itemized list of all purchases and cost. In addition, the committee is asked to develop materials to educate families on "developmental assets" that foster positive growth.

Project Hope (\$5,000)

This grant supports the summer camp program affiliated with New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in the northwest part of the city. The "Safe in My Brother's Arms" and "Safe in My Sister's Arms" initiatives have operated for over a decade, focusing on overcoming obstacles and building individual strengths. Participation in the summer camp is earned; youth must demonstrate specific positive behaviors to be eligible to attend.

DISCUSSION: a brief discussion took place.

VOTE: a vote to approve the funding requests was made by a unanimous roll call vote with all AYES by those present: Supervisor Hess, Trustees; McLaughlin; Bradlo; Akers; and Thurman. Clerk Protano declared the motion passed.

Approval of Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of December 9, 2025

MOTION: A motion to approve was made by Trustee McLaughlin and seconded by Trustee Bradlo.

DISCUSSION: None

VOICE VOTE: A vote to approve the minutes was carried by a 4-0 voice vote with AYES by all present: Supervisor Hess, Trustees; Bradlo; McLaughlin; Akers; and Thurman. Supervisor Hess declared the motion passed.

K. Old Business - NONE

L. Other Business:

a. Next Committee on Youth Meeting is February 10, 2026 at 5:00 pm

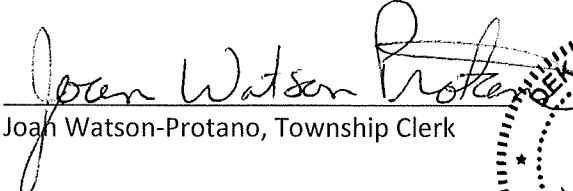
b. Next Regular Board meeting is February 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

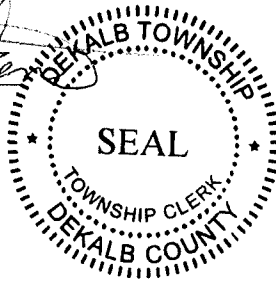
M. Adjournment

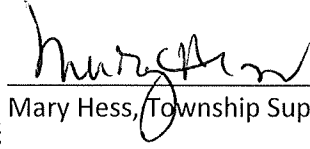
MOTION: A motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Akers and seconded by Trustee Bradlo.

VOICE VOTE: An affirmative voice vote ended the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Joan Watson-Protano, Township Clerk




Mary Hess, Township Supervisor