



2323 SOUTH FOURTH STREET

DEKALB, IL 60115

APRIL 21, 2026

MINUTES BOARD of TRUSTEES

The DeKalb Township of DeKalb, Illinois convened for a regular meeting on April 21, 2026 at the township building in the conference room.

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Supervisor Hess called the meeting to order at 6:06 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, and Trustee Greg Akers. Other in attendance included Highway Commissioner Craig Smith, Assessor Rich Dyer, and Township Attorney Matthew Walters, from the law firm Zukowski, Rogers, Flood and Mcardle. Absent was Trustee Nancy Bradlo.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Clerk Protano.

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Trustee Thurman moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Trustee McLaughlin. No changes or discussion.

VOTE: The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. PRESENTATIONS

a. Proclamation Recognizing Arbor Day

Supervisor Hess read the proclamation acknowledging Arbor Day, which has been recognized since 1872 as a day to plant trees.

b. DeKalb Township Employment Services and Passion Pursuit, Inc.

Danita Sims, executive director, of Passion Pursuit was present to share stories and statistics regarding the collaboration and employment contract with the DeKalb Township. The collaboration with Passion Pursuit began in 2022. They have been providing employment advice, advocacy, resume writing and upgrades and job information to township residents and to all applicants for financial assistance as warranted. Ms. Sims reported that Passion Pursuit has served 83 new clients via email, phone calls and Zoom conferences in the past year. The majority of clients have needed resume upgrades. Only 15 clients needed additional meeting or services; such as interviewing assistance. The number of no shows and cancelations was drastically reduced this year due to a change in how appointments were scheduled. The email list now has over 250 people, and includes employers as well as job seekers who receive a weekly listing of job opportunities. The weekly posting on our Facebook Page is the most visited and shared post. Ms. Sims will be collaborating with State Representatives to offer

presentations regarding changes with the SNAP program.

Questions from the board included the issue of job seekers not complying with the application requirements of employers and misconceptions regarding remote work realities and requirements. Per Ms. Sims, these issues continue to be problematic and seem to be a concern at all age levels. Ms. Sims and Supervisor Hess both shared success stories.

E. PUBLIC COMMENT None.

F. REPORTS

- a. Supervisors Report:** Supervisor Hess reported that she recently attended one of the best full day training sessions offered by Township Officials of Illinois (TOI). One session was on Artificial Intelligence (AI), which she found very beneficial. There is an upcoming session on AI and Government workshop in July, which she recommends taking if the members are able. IPASS and ICash event served 61 customers. They processed 80 stickers, 42 account updates, and 2 IPASS assists accounts were opened. At the request of the Township both ICASH and IPass will be participating in the upcoming Chamber Annual Showcase Expo. NIU students recently participating in giving back to the community at NIU Cares Day. Under the guidance of administrative assistant, Tiffany Martin, they cleaned up Oakwood Cemetery clearing debris and picking up sticks and large limbs. This task is time consuming and can be detrimental to the mowers and headstones. The Tree Initiative to honor the 250th anniversary of the USA has been well received with 94 applications submitted of which 79 were from eligible township residents. Those not in the township where disappointed and directed to their elected officials. The applications account for 410 trees and shrubs of which 114 will be available for planting this Spring. The remainder have been placed on a wait list for Fall planting. The planting was officially started today, with assistance, education, and guidance, from the Morton Arboretum. Over 40 volunteers planted 16 trees at Elder Care Services. Supervisor Hess shared photos of recent upgrades and construction at Peace Park. They broke ground the first of April. The Road District has been instrumental in providing labor and support during construction at a much-reduced cost to the taxpayers. Drainage issues will be address as well as the addition of a berm for privacy and aesthetics. Supervisor Hess answered questions regarding the pollinator garden. The Chamber of Commerce Leadership Academy, of which Casey Buchochin, who is a member and a key player, held a volunteer fair at the Egyptian Theater. Over 100 community member seeking volunteer opportunities attended. They anticipate that this inaugural event will continue in the future.
- b. Clerks Report:** Clerk Protano reminded everyone that the Statement of Economic Interest is due by May 11, 2026
- c. Highway Commissioner's Report:** Highway Commissioner Smith reported that Amy Connor has been hired to replace Karen Gumino and Jody Johnson both who recently retired. Nate Smith has tendered his resignation. Chad McNutt will be returning to assist with summer projects. Highway Commissioner Smith was invited to speak and present to other commissioners at the East Central Highway Commissioner Association and will be returning

in August to present again. He attests that he has gone from listening to presenting and considers this a badge of his longevity as commissioner.

- d. **Assessor's Report:** Assessor Dyer reported that Chief Deputy Andrew has attended the Annual Assessors conference and participated and received his continuing education. Field Representatives are now able to get into the field in order to make inspections. They are working on the list of properties assigned to them to complete assessment reviews and workbooks by the due date of June 15.
- e. **Trustees Reports:** Trustee Akers is very interested in the AI and Government Workshop and hopes employees and staff will be offered training.

G. Bill Paying

- a. **Approval of April bills to pay for Township in the amount of \$98,128.88 and for the Road District in the amount of \$28,853.03 and the March Audit Report for the Township \$136,352.70 and Road District for \$284,763.22.**

MOTION: A motion to approve the April bills as listed was made by Trustee Akers and seconded by Trustee Thurman.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: A roll call vote of those present was taken with AYES by: Supervisor Hess; Trustees Thurman; Akers; and McLaughlin. Clerk Protano declared the expenditures authorized.

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

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

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: A roll call vote of those present was taken with AYES by: Supervisor Hess, Trustees; McLaughlin; Akers; and Thurman. Clerk Protano declared the expenditures authorized.

H. Unfinished Business – NONE

I. New Business

- a. **Discussion and Authorization for Supervisor to Approve Contract Renewal with Passion Pursuit, INC. for continued employment services.**

MOTION: A motion for approval of the contract was made by Trustee McLaughlin and seconded by Trustee Thurman.

DISCUSSION: Passion Pursuit, Inc. made a presentation and the contract with them allow us to better serve residents with resume writing, resume updates and interview coaching as well as advise employers. In addition, they provide a valuable service by promoting available jobs.

VOTE: A roll call vote of those present was taken with AYES by: Trustee McLaughlin Supervisor Hess; Trustees Akers; and Thurman. Clerk Protano declared the motion passed.

b. Approval of Funds for continued support of DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC)

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

DISCUSSION: According to records we have been a member since 2013. Their mission is to drive more employers to the area, ensure business success, workforce excellence and community well-being. This helps our residents, and keeps property tax dollars stable. New executive director, Melissa Amedeo, is doing a great job and expanding services in several areas. In the past we have given \$2500, recently increasing that amount to \$3000. This year the recommendation is at the level of \$5000.00.

VOTE: A roll call vote of those present was taken with AYES by: Supervisor Hess; Trustees Thurman; McLaughlin; and Akers. Clerk Protano declared the motion passed.

c. Approval of Committee on Youth Funding Recommendations

REVIEW and DISCUSSION: Four applications were received by the committee with a recommendation for funding provided to two of the applications. The first recommendation was to the Heavy Metal Experience program which takes high school student applicants and introduces them to skilled trade opportunities. The provide tours of area participating trade businesses, information and hands on experience over a two-week period. The request was for \$5000. However, due to budget constraints the committee is recommending funding of \$3875.00. The second recommendation is to an inaugural applicant; Building Leaders Advocating for Change; B.L.A.C. They serve high school at risk youth and support them in the area of mental health, leadership, community service and academics. They do meet on campus at Northern Illinois University, exposing them to campus life as well. The recommendation of support is in the amount of \$3875.00. Both organizations support our mission of helping youth in our area.

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

VOTE: A roll call vote of those present was taken with AYES by: Trustees Thurman; McLaughlin; Akers; and Supervisor Hess. Clerk Protano declared the motion passed.

d. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Board of Trustees Meeting of March 17, 2026

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

DISCUSSION: It was noted by Supervisor Hess that item 'I' New Business, item 'e' Approval Minutes for the 2-17-2026 meeting. The voice vote passed with 4-0 vote, the minutes state 3-0 voice vote.

A motion to approved the amended minutes was made by Supervisor Hess and seconded by Trustee McLaughlin.

There was no further discussion

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

J. Old Business

- a. Office relocation update: Supervisor Hess noted that the cost of office relocation was in the range of \$10.00 - \$17.00 per sq ft. There are several options available and they are beginning to explore properties.

It was noted that Trustee Bradlo arrived at 7:00 p.m.

- b. Clerk vacancy update: The position has been actively posted in social media, newspapers, and flyers have been distributed. Trustee McLaughlin shared that while she was informing others of the opportunity, she looked more closing at the role. She advised the board that she was interested in applying for the position of Clerk and was considering submitting her application. Supervisor Hess queried Attorney Walters about procedure and protocol. Attorney Walters noted that if Trustee McLaughlin was to be appointed as clerk that she should submit her resignation as trustee prior to accepting the position of clerk. The board would have 90 days after her resignation to appoint a new trustee. Applications for the position are due May 1 and candidates will be interviewed at the next board meeting, May 19. A new clerk will be selected during an executive session and all candidates would be notified shortly after the meeting.

No further old business.

K. Executive Session

NONE

L. Other Business:

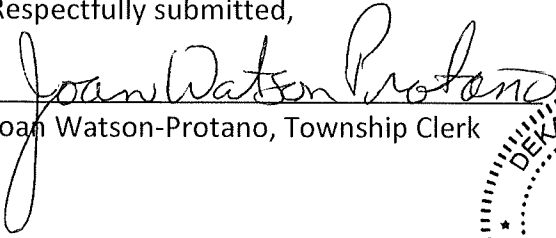
- a. Next Regular Board of Trustees Meeting May 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

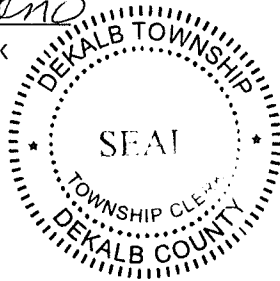
M. Adjournment:

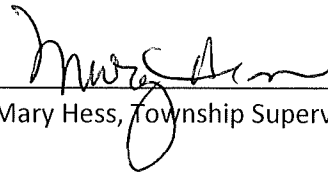
MOTION: A motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Thurman and seconded by Trustee Akers.

VOTE: An affirmative voice vote ended the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Joan Watson-Protano, Township Clerk




Mary Hess, Township Supervisor