

JO DAVIESS COUNTY
AD-HOC COMMUNITY GROWTH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 5, 2025

I. Call to Order

Committee Chairperson Dittmar called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 in the Jo Daviess County Board Room, Jo Daviess County Administrative Offices in Galena, Illinois.

II. Roll Call

Roll Call was answered as follows: Present – Laura Edmonds, Michael Dittmar, Angela Kaiser, Daisha Boehm, Jacob Ambrosia. Present: 5. Present electronically – LaDon Trost (6:13 PM). Present electronically: 1. Absent – John Creighton. Absent: 1. Also present was Diane Gallagher, Chairperson of the Development & Planning Committee.

III. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve minutes of the June 3, 2025 Ad-Hoc Community meeting was made by Daisha Boehm and seconded by Laura Edmonds. The motion carried by voice vote.

IV. Citizens' Comments

Invited guests included River Ridge Superintendent Colleen Fox, River Ridge board member Amy Finn, Stockton Superintendent James Bunting, Scales Mount Superintendent Mary Beth Delamar, Stacy Kloss of Little Learner's Academy, Elizabeth President Scott Toot, and Hanover President Ned Flack.

V. Unfinished Business

VI. New Business

Discussion and possible action on Childcare Incentives:

Chairperson Dittmar talked about ideas that he and other committee members have workshopped which include grants and low interest loans. He talked about interviewing two in-home childcare providers from Stockton to try to get a sense of what type of incentive would increase providers in the county. One stated that the income from her daycare barely provides an income after paying expenses, that she receives a quarterly grant from the state and without it, would not be able to continue. She says a provider can have up to 3 kids in home without a state-issued license, 8 kids with a license, and 12 kids with an assistant. She charges \$24 per day, but receives \$39 per day for children that are subsidized by the state. Even with help, she would not open a bigger facility. The second in-home childcare provider is a single mother. She stated the main start-up expense would be beds in the home, play equipment, etc, When asked which type of assistance she personally would prefer, she stated a grant would be better than a loan.

Dittmar asked the committee members and invited guests to share their personal experience with childcare,

Colleen Fox: Made sacrifices to be able to stay at home while her children were small. As Superintendent, River Ridge is looking at doing an extended preschool.

Amy Finn: Ran a daycare out of a church basement when her kids were small.

Stacy Kloss: Opened the Little Learners Academy at the CTE in Elizabeth for ages 3 and up. Because they are located within a school and do not accept infants, they are not required to have a license.

Laura Edmonds: Has many friends and family members that have struggled with finding childcare; she would love to see a new brick and mortar facility built in the county.

MaryBeth Delamar: When Scales Mound school expanded their facility, the school board included space for a daycare and a fitness center, as these were identified as community needs. They started with a partnership with the Galena ARC and now operate as a stand alone program. Their biggest challenge is finding lead teachers to be able to operate at full capacity. Children 3 and over are funded through school programming, but children under 3 are completely funded by fees paid by parents.

James Bunting: His wife stayed home when their children were small. Stockton school plans to continue their partnership with the YMCA by providing them space to offer a childcare option in the area,

Scott Toot: There currently isn't anything offered in Elizabeth, but he is open to the concept. He knows of only 1 licensed childcare provider in Elizabeth currently. He believes any childcare center should be spearheaded by the River Ridge school district/board members.

Jake Ambrosia: Has 3 children and used friends and family when they were under 3, then used the Little Learner's Academy, with whom he's been very happy. Early on, he and his wife determined that staying home or working and paying for childcare was an equal expense, so they made the decision to stay in the workforce, as that made the most sense for their family.

Daisha Boehm: Has 1 child that has various childcare providers for different times that include family and in-home, but will take her to Dubuque next year. She is in favor of a brick and mortar facility coming to the county that provides that early education option. She'd like the programming expanded at the CTE, and to put focus on the Stockton/Warren area, early education. She worries about the people that don't have family/friends as a support system, and wonders how we attract young parents to the county without childcare options.

Mike Dittmar: Had an in-home provider for his children.

Ned Flack: Hanover provides nothing in the way of childcare, but wonders about the old school, which is owned by the park district. Kloss cautioned against using old buildings for new facilities, as there was a reason schools relocated and those problems would be difficult and expensive to mitigate...out of reach for someone starting out in the childcare field.

LaDon Trost: Would like to see a feasibility study done that pinpoints exactly what type of childcare is most needed, i.e. in-home, school located options, brick and mortar facilities, etc

Discussion and possible action on Industrial Park Incentives:

Chairperson Dittmar spoke of the goal to invest and encourage the development of Industrial Parks to create jobs. He'd like to see grants and low interest loans made available for these things.

Discussion and possible action on Subdivision Incentives:

Chairperson Dittmar would like to see grants and low interest loans made available to new subdivisions.

Discussion and possible action on UTV routes:

Chairperson Dittmar shared discussions he's had with the mayor of Warren, who states since they opened the road between Warren and the Wisconsin state line, they see 20-30 UTV's parked in the Community Building lot. The mayor also stated they would help pay for UTV trail signage, if a trail is established.

Discussion regarding the Economic Development Fund (018):

Chairperson Dittmar talked about the current balance in the fund and how any suggestions this committee might have for incentive programs would be presented to, and considered by the Development & Planning Committee. Although a revenue stream has been diverted to this fund for FY2026, he doesn't think Development & Planning should budget expense against it, due to the uncertainty of when it would be received, but that will be a decision for that committee and the County Board.

VII. Citizens' Comments

Diane Gallagher: NWILED recently sent out postcards to encourage in-home childcare and the Ad-Hoc Zoning Committee has discussed changes to the county code that might address current limitations for occupancy.

VIII. Committee Member Concerns

None.

IX. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn was made at 7:52 PM by Jacob Ambrosia and seconded by Laura Edmonds. Motion carried by voice vote.

Next committee meeting: Monday, September 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM