

JO DAVIESS COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 26, 2026

I. Call to Order

Committee Vice-Chair Michael Dittmar called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, May 26, 2026 in the Jo Daviess County Board Room, Jo Daviess County Courthouse in Galena, Illinois.

II. Roll Call

Roll Call was answered as follows: Present – Michael Dittmar, Diane Gallagher (arrived at 6:30 PM), Lynn Gallagher, John Lang (arrived at 6:15 PM), John Schultz, LaDon Trost. Present: 6. Present electronically: 0. Absent – Robert Heuerman. Absent: 1.

III. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2026, Development & Planning Committee meeting was made by John Schultz and seconded by LaDon Trost. The motion carried by voice vote.

IV. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizens' comments.

V. Unfinished Business

FY2025/FY2027 Strategic Goals were not reviewed.

VI. New Business

The County Administrator explained that the draft ordinance was prepared in response to prior committee discussion regarding unsafe structures, including a burnt-out home in East Dubuque. The ordinance would provide a mechanism for the County to act when a property is deemed unsafe, including referral to the Building Code Board of Appeals. Members raised concerns about scope, enforcement capacity, and potential overreach, including whether dilapidated but non-habitable structures (e.g., sheds) could be subject to action. Discussion included enforcement challenges, how adopting and implementing DACRA could help, and whether the ordinance needs a clear designation of a hearing officer. Staff noted that the ordinance intentionally leaves flexibility for future administrative changes. Members also discussed property-rights implications and the complexity of situations involving depreciation schedules, abandoned properties, and court limitations. A motion to recommend the ordinance was made by John Schultz and seconded by Lynn Gallagher but later withdrawn. **A motion to postpone recommending an Ordinance Creating Title 5, Chapter 13 of the Jo Daviess County Code of Ordinances Regarding Unsafe, Dangerous, and Uninhabitable Structures to the next meeting was made by John Schultz and seconded by John Lang. The motion carried by voice vote.**

Discussion regarding ways the County could support municipalities and nonprofit corporations in applying for Rural Business Development Grants: The Grants Administrator reported on research into USDA's RBDG program. She noted that counties rarely apply due to administrative burden, match

requirements, and the need for a multi-year setup. The program is typically used by municipalities. She explained that if the County applied, it would effectively be administering the program on behalf of others, including all reporting, reimbursement processing, and loan servicing. Members discussed eligibility, statutory limitations, and whether the County would be assuming responsibilities better suited to municipalities or nonprofits. NWILED's capacity and SAM/GATA registration requirements were also discussed. Consensus emerged that the County should share information with municipalities rather than pursue the grant itself.

Chairperson Diane Gallagher arrived at this time and assumed control of the committee meeting.

Discussion regarding ways to encourage Economic Development outside of conventional loans and grant programs: Members discussed non-financial strategies to support economic development, including zoning modernization, infrastructure reliability, business retention visits, workforce alignment, and senior-services support. Staff emphasized that many supportive activities do not involve direct financial incentives. A broader discussion followed on population trends, housing shortages, workforce needs, trades vs. college pathways, and the challenges of retaining young residents. Members shared personal experiences and perspectives on economic drivers, property taxes, and the role of small business growth.

Members briefly discussed potential FY2027 program concepts, including reinstating a grant program, targeted economic-development incentives, and partnerships to support housing development. Due to the volume of materials and need for further review, postponing was suggested. **A motion to postpone possible action to recommend programs for FY2027 to the next meeting was made by Michael Dittmar and seconded by John Schultz. The motion carried by voice vote.**

VII. Reports

Building & Zoning Monthly Report: A written report was provided and William Meeker was available to answer questions, reporting 28 permits issued in April, totaling \$1.776 million in construction value. This included two new homes, six accessory structures, sixteen remodels/additions, and four renewable-energy projects. He noted significant preparation underway for the upcoming zoning amendment hearing.

Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) Monthly Report: A written report was provided.

Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) Monthly Report: No report was provided.

Economic Development Fund (018) Financial Reports: No reports were provided. Members discussed the upcoming budget cycle and the need to determine future program priorities.

VIII. Citizens' Comments

Steve Endress, County Board Member District #6 believes small business grants pay off over time because they help small towns grow, create jobs, add taxable property, and generate long-term revenue that ultimately returns the County's investment.

IX. Committee Member Concerns

Members discussed the grant program, equitable access, the need for clearer follow-up on prior agenda items, and upcoming zoning discussions. Several members emphasized the importance of supporting young families, strengthening social services, and addressing housing affordability. Others

noted the County's demographic challenges and the limits of local authority.

X. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:57 PM by John Lang and seconded by John Schultz. Motion carried by voice vote.

Next committee meeting is Tuesday, June 23, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.