



Kane County

KC Agriculture Committee

Meeting Minutes

Government Center
719 S. Batavia Ave., Bldg. A
Geneva, IL 60134

JUBY, Roth, Allan, Lenert, Penesis, Sanchez, Williams and ex-officio Pierog (County Chair)

Thursday, January 22, 2026

10:30 AM

County Board Room

1. Call To Order

Chairman Juby called today's meeting to order at 10:31 AM.

2. Roll Call

Chairman Juby announced that there was no quorum in the room for today's meeting. Until an official quorum is established, the meeting will proceed on to presentations and reports for informational purposes only.

PRESENT	Board Member Leslie Juby Board Member Bill Roth Board Member Deborah Allan Board Member Bill Lenert
REMOTE	Board Member Ted Penesis Board Member Rick Williams
ABSENT	Board Member Jarett Sanchez Ex-Officio County Board Chair Corinne M. Pierog

Also present: Co. Bd. members Bates*, Gripe, Linder*, Molina*; KCFB Mgr. Arnold; KDSWCD Admin. Gerdts; Sustainability Coordinator Powell; Northern Illinois Food Bank Mgr. Desio; Dev. Planner Tansley; Spec. ASA Shepro; ITD staff Peters; and members of the press and public including Former County Board Member, Mike Kenyon.

3. Remote Attendance Requests

Chairman Juby announced the remote attendance requests for today's meeting. She asked if there were any objections to Committee Members Penesis and Williams attending remotely. There were no objections.

4. Approval of Minutes: December 18, 2025

RESULT:	APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT
MOVER:	Bill Roth

5. Public Comment

Kane County Spec. Assistant States Attorney (ASA), Ken Shepro, referenced an 1860 map of the Kane County showing all of farmers and agricultural holdings. He indicated that there was a national news segment on the Kane County bison. Shepro provided a link of the news segment to the Committee.

6. Partners**A. Kane County Farm Bureau Updates (Steve Arnold, Manager)**

Kane County Farm Bureau (KCFB) Mgr., Steve Arnold, stated that he recently returned from the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) Annual Meeting held in Anaheim, California. There were 4,500 farmers from across the nation attended. Arnold noted that a survey data from voting delegates highlighted that nearly 99% operate family farms, with over two-thirds managing small to mid-sized operations. (Committee Member Allan arrived at 10:46 a.m.) Illinois Farm Bureau Dir., Joe White, served as one of the 400 alternate delegates for the policy sessions, as well as KCFB Dir., Michael Long of Kaneville, KCFB President, Dale Pitstick, also attended the conference. Arnold announced that the 20th Touch-a-Tractor Program will be held at KCFB's parking lot in St. Charles from April 10-12. The 25th Annual Shopping Spree will be on Monday, February 16 held at the Batavia Jewel Osco. Chairman, Leslie Juby, has agreed to participate in the competition. Confirmation on who else will be competing against Juby will be announced soon. Arnold stated that he received an email from Lakeside Energy in Naperville stating that they have been awarded a grant from the State to develop a non-for profit solar project supporting the Illinois Food Bank. They are currently looking for a farm partner interested in selling or leasing the land to be used for a Kane County agrivoltaics solar and farming projects. Arnold thanked Ellen Kamps for creating content on Kane County Connects in regards to the Heritage Prairie Market. He added that Kamps is a recipient of a grant from the Illinois Farm Bureau for the Pollinator Conservation grants in order to produce additional pollinators in 2026. Lastly, Arnold announced that the KCFB Board of Directors have hired Bona Heinsohn to succeed Steve Arnold's position upon his retirement. She is currently the Director of Government Affairs and Public Relations for the Cook County Farm Bureau. He noted that his last day will be June 1, and Heinsohn's official start date is March 16. He hopes to introduce Heinsohn to the Agriculture Committee next month.

B. Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District Updates (Kat Gerdts, Administrative Coordinator)

Kane-DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District (KDSWCD) Admin., Kat Gerdts, stated that the KDSWCD reviews any property that is scheduled or has requested a land-use change. She explained that if a property is moving from agriculture to solar, the district conducts a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI). The purpose of an NRI is to identify the area's soil type, water quality, biodiversity, and its geological features. She provided the Committee an NRI report for Kane County that was completed in December. Gerdts stated that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is currently accepting applications for 2nd Stage of Crop Disaster, Milk Loss, and On-farm Stored Commodity Loss Assistance. The deadline to submit applications is April 30, 2026. The Bureau of Land and Water Resources (BLWR) announced that the I-Cover Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) will be open soon. This is a state-wide sign up for cover crop implementation on a 3-year commitment. Details will be provided at the next meeting. The Illinois Department of Aging (IDOA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) has been closed. Acceptance notifications were sent out in late 2025, with responses due to IDOA by January 16, 2026. Applicants will be announced soon. The Cover Crop Premium Discount Program is also closed. Approved applicants will receive a \$5 per acre insurance premium discount on the following year's crop insurance invoice for every acre of cover crop enrolled and accepted. Gerdts announced that the Illinois Healthy Soils initiative has been newly added to KDSWCD's act. Framework has been developed for the IDOA and SWCD to promote farmer adoption of healthy soil methods through technical assistance and cost-share. District soil assessment reports are due to the IDOA annually starting September 2026. She announced that tonight at 5:00 p.m. the Celebration of County Farms event will be held at Emerald Acres in Elburn. As of January 16, a total of 32 people have been registered. The event will include BBQ served and keynote guest speaker, Farmer and Independent research agronomist, Jim Stute, will discuss rural myth busters and explain how conservation practices can have a positive return on investment (ROI). Lastly, stated that election day for the 2026 Board of Directors will be on Tuesday, February 10. Petitions for candidates were closed yesterday. Polling locations are open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at KDSWCD's office in St. Charles or 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at DuPage County Farm Bureau in Carol Stream. Discussion ensued.

C. Northern Illinois Food Bank Updates

Northern Illinois Food Bank Mgr., Rob Desio, stated that there is a projected 3% increase in benefits for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in May and June of this year. He noted that there are about 5,700 people at risk of losing benefits, and about 2,800 of those people will lose benefits. Desio noted that the average benefit amount per person is \$192 which is almost \$550K a month in lost benefits. He stated it is expected that 5% of Kane County would eventually lose benefits. The Northern Illinois Food Bank will continue to work with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) on the implementation of emergency funds to assist regional food banks, and over 2,600 pantries in response to federal SNAP benefit reductions.

7. Presentations/Announcements

A. Farmland Protection Program Update (Sarahy Castro, Farmland Preservation Administrator)

No report was made.

B. Growing for Kane Project Summary and Consultant RFQ (Matt Tansley, Planner)

Dev. Planner, Matt Tansley, stated that Ellan Kamps and her consulting team will provide project updates and an overview of the consultant request for qualification (RFQ) openings and activity at next month's meeting. He highlighted that the Soil Health and Economic Impact Assessment being carried out by consulting team, New Venture Advisors, is active and ongoing. Tansley noted that the University of Illinois Extension agreed to keep Local Foods and Small Farms Educator, Alexis Barnes, on staff as she is a great resource for farmers. He stated that the Food and Farm Resiliency Grant Program disbursed \$750K in grants to Kane County food and farm businesses.

8. New Business

A. Chicago Tribune: Livestock Methane Article, Author- Adriana Perez

Chairman, Leslie Juby, highlighted an article about Livestock Methane and how it can be part of a climate solution. Further discussion ensued.

9. Reports Placed On File

RESULT:	APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT
MOVER:	Deborah Allan

10. Executive Session (if needed)

None.

11. Adjournment

RESULT:	APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE
MOVER:	Bill Roth
SECONDER:	Bill Lenert

This meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Rachel Santora
Recording Secretary