



# Kane County

## KC Finance and Budget Committee

### Meeting Minutes

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

BERMAN, Lenert, Juby, Lewis, Sanchez, Surges, Tepe, ex-officios Roth (County Vice Chair)  
and Pierog (County Chair)

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**Wednesday, July 30, 2025**

**9:00 AM**

**County Board Room**

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**\*\*\*SPECIAL MEETING\*\*\***

**1. Call To Order**

Vice-Chairman Lenert called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

**2. Roll Call**

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| <b>PRESENT</b> | Board Member Bill Lenert<br>Board Member Leslie Juby<br>Board Member Anita Lewis<br>Board Member Vern Tepe<br>Ex-Officio County Board Vice Chair Bill Roth<br>Ex-Officio County Board Chair Corinne M. Pierog |
| <b>REMOTE</b>  | Board Member Dale Berman<br>Board Member Clifford Surges  |
| <b>ABSENT</b>  | Board Member Jarett Sanchez   |

Also present: Co. Bd. Members Allan, Bates, Gripe, Gumz\*, Linder, Molina\*, Penesis\*, Strathmann\*; Fin. Exec. Dir. Hopkinson; SAO staff Frank, Hunt\*; Chief Judge Villa; Court Admin. O'Brien & staff Mathis; Court Srvs. Fin. Mgr. Starkovich; KCHD Exec. Dir. Isaacson\* & staff Snowden\*; KDOT Dir. Zakosek & staff Rickert; Sheriff Hain\*; Circuit Clk. staff Herwick, Johnson; HRM Exec. Dir. Loblillo; Auditor Wegman; ITD CIO Lasky\* & staff Peters; and members of the press and public.

**3. Remote Attendance Requests**

Vice-Chairman Lenert announced the remote attendance requests for today's meeting. He asked the Committee if there were any objections to Committee Members Berman and Surges attending today's meeting remotely. There were no objections.

**4. Approval of Minutes: None**

**5. Public Comment**

Kane County resident, Denise Theobald, addressed County Board Member Gripe's feedback on her remarks made at the last Finance Committee meeting. She stated that her remarks about Treasurer Lauzen were not personal, but was public oversight. She explained that Gripe's attempt to paint her comments as personal attacks was a deflection from the facts. She stated that she is speaking today to back her remarks and to counter a strategic war on words that Lauzen and his far-right allies consistently bring up week to week at the meetings. She noted that the personal attacks can be

viewed on video. Theobald shared several examples on how Lauzen has strong armed financial means for political gain and/or other's demise. She stated that these are not personal attacks, but public knowledge that are on record.

Kane County resident, Victoria Davidson-Bell, explained that she has had the opportunity to be present at the last two Finance Committee meetings where the question of personal attacks on elected officials and/or employees of Kane County arose. At both meetings, an equivalency was presented during two different public comments. Davidson-Bell stated that both sets of comments were not equivalent attacks on public figures. She explained that public figures are subjected to public comment. She stated that persons elected to this Board and other elected positions in the Kane County Government are public figures. Those that sought election have signed on for this side affect of their position. Those that seek to fight defamation in court must prove actual malice by the defendant, meaning the disregard for the truth and/or knowledge that contested communication was false. Davidson-Bell stated that this is a high bar to reach in order to prove defamation. She defined the difference between an appropriate public comment versus personal attacks on public figures. She compared the comments made at the last two meetings.

Kane County resident, Jenine Mehr, stated that she is a tax payer and a concerned citizen. She expressed her discontentment with Madam Chairman Pierog's leadership. She expressed that every time a meeting is held to discuss the financial gap, the same story is being told that the solution is more taxes on the people. She stated that Kane County pays the highest taxes in the nation. First it was the sales tax that voters overwhelming denied. Then, it was the implementation of a Grocery Tax. Now, the County is seeking a 2.9% Consumer Price Index (CPI) based property tax increase. Mehr questioned the amount this increase would bring into the County. She stated that it could potentially bring in \$1.6M additional revenue to the County's General Fund. She explained that on a \$400K home, this would cost the homeowner an additional \$370 per year. She spoke on the future impact of this potential increase. She questioned if this was a permanent increase to property taxes. She explained that a \$500K homeowner would pay over \$2,400 more after five years, if the CPI increases continue at the 2.9% rate. Mehr questioned Pierog's leadership and her ability to adequately inform the County Board and constituents on the full financial picture and how choices will effect it. She stated that the community sees that the County Board has been led blindly by Pierog right into this financial mess that the tax payers need to pay for. She questioned what cuts have been made to the annual budget. She stated that residents are constantly hearing about more taxes, but not about spending cuts. She reminded the Committee that five years ago the County operated on \$80M. However, under this current County Board and Chairman, this County Board has increased the budget to \$138M. Mehr stated that this is not due to inflation, but is poor leadership.

Ginger Romano, Burlington Township, stated that in regards to the property tax increase, the public sector pensioners out-earn the taxpayers who subsidize them. This is not sustainable. She explained that the COVID pandemic brought in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds into the County, which created a large surplus of funds for County departments/offices to spend. However, it seems as if the County has

continued to spend as if that money is still being dispursed. Romano explained that in 2019 the Governor commissioned a Property Tax Task Force. It was found that Illinois pays the highest property taxes. (Madam Chairman Pierog arrived in-person at 9:14 a.m.) Additionally, Romano explained that since 2020, the County Board has created more non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She spoke on the 1% Grocery Tax that was removed during the COVID pandemic. She recalls the Finance Director stating that this did not have an affect on the overall revenue, but now there is no information. She noted that Illinois ranks eighth in State and Local Sales Tax at 8.92%. Lastly, she stated that she feels the Treasurer has done a good job at earning optimal interest for the County.

**6. Finance Director's Report (K. Hopkinson)**

**A. 2026 Budget Discussion**

Fin. Exec. Dir. Hopkinson stated that she did not have any new information to share. No report was made.

**7. New Business**

**A. Directing the Use of the Consumer Price Index Increase as Part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Process**

Vice-Chairman Lenert stated that his resolution is to direct the use of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase as part of the FY2026 Budget process. He mentioned that the CPI of 2.9% would equate to \$2M in additional revenue for the year.

Committee Member Juby asked what the average cost would be to a homeowner on a \$350K house? Lenert indicated that this answer would be provided at a later time.

Committee Member Surges questioned if the CPI was broken down into two components: New Construction and Non New Construction. If so, he asked if the increase would affect the non new construction. Lenert explained that the new construction has already been approved and moved forward. He stated that this resolution would increase the existing homeowner's tax rate by 2.9%. He noted that this was approved for last year's budget, as well. Secondly, Surges asked if there was a range of availability that the County Board could choose from. Lenert answered that the range is from one-tenth of a percent to 2.9%. He stated that this resolution is requesting the full amount. Discussion ensued. Lenert added that each year the County needs to look at what the CPI is set to by the State of Illinois and then decide on whether it all should be used, some used, or none used.

Madam Chairman Pierog explained that the CPI is no more than five percent to adjust for inflation. She stated that the County could not go higher than five percent. Pierog added that this resolution is not a final approval of the CPI. This will be brought forward as a separate vote in November. Further discussion ensued.

## KC Executive Committee

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE</b>               |
| <b>TO:</b>       | KC Executive Committee                               |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Vern Tepe  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Anita Lewis  |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Dale Berman, Leslie Juby, Anita Lewis, and Vern Tepe |
| <b>NAY:</b>      | Bill Lenert, and Clifford Surges                     |
| <b>ABSENT:</b>   | Jarett Sanchez                                       |

**B. Authorizing Expense Budget Amount to be Used for the 2026 General Fund General Account Budget**

Vice-Chairman Lenert explained that while he was looking over the County's expenses, he realized that it is up to the County Board to find a way to balance the budget. He stated that the County's anticipated revenue for FY2026 is \$112M. If the Board did decide to use the suggested budget proposals from County departments/offices, the County would be in excess of about \$144M, which would leave an unbalanced budget. Lenert explained that this resolution suggests that the FY2024 Actual Budget be used as a baseline to plan the FY2026 Budget. He noted that this baseline amount may fluctuate because of the County's limited revenues. He explained that the County will have \$112M in revenue and other limited sources of available funds that we know of. This resolution is requesting the County Board to recommend the department heads and elected officials use the FY2024 Actual expenses as a baseline for their proposals for the FY2026 Budget. Discussion ensued. Committee Member Tepe shared Exhibit A that depicted the FY2024 Actual expenses for all County Departments and Elected Officials.

SAO Chief of Civil Frank stated that a motion to amend will need to be made to adopt Exhibit A, once decided upon, into the resolution.

The Committee reviewed the General Fund - FY2026 Budget for all County Departments/Offices. Tepe spoke on the amount of work that was put into these numbers listed in the proposed exhibit and how they make sense in establishing the budget amounts for County managers and elected officials for FY2026. He explained that the FY2024 Actual Budget amounts include the added expenses from the SAFE-T Act and the equity pay increases. He stated that it is the County Board's responsibility to establish the budget amounts and the County managers and elected officials' job to stay within their allotment. He suggested that any financial changes that are proposed to these amounts, should only be done if there is additional revenue to cover the increases.

Lenert agreed with Tepe that every elected office and County department has

the right to adjust their expense allocations, if they have additional revenue. If not, the Committee is asking them to set their budgets to the FY2024 Actual Budget numbers. Secondly, Lenert spoke on behalf of himself, Madam Chairman Pierog, and all County Board members stating it is their wish to be able to grant every financial request asked for by each director and elected official. However, the County simply does not have the money to do so. Lenert stated that this is not a personal attack on certain departments/offices, but a fulfillment of the County Board's responsibility to present a balanced budget. He explained that the Board will not be able to accomplish this without lowering expenses. Discussion ensued.

Committee Member Lewis questioned the time frame in which the County departments/offices would present their FY2026 Budgets with this new guidance given. Lenert explained that it is the right of every department/office to present a budget that they feel is reasonable and necessary. However, the Finance Committee is requesting that they use the FY2024 Actual Budget as a baseline when preparing their budgets, which is what this resolution and Exhibit A is regarding. Discussion ensued. Lenert stated that after this resolution is moved forward, a timeline would need to be established for departments/offices to present their revised budgets. Madam Chairman Pierog stated that all departments and elected offices will present their FY2026 Budget to their respective committees in August. Further discussion ensued.

Linder asked what the \$21,789,756 categorized as "Total Other" is listed on the Exhibit A? Fin. Exec. Dir. Hopkinson explained that \$15M of this total is employee health and dental contributions and the other portion is countywide technology, such as servers and software that is utilized by everyone across the County, and debt service payments. Pierog requested that this category be itemized so that the County Board will be able to see what it entails. Further discussion ensued.

Frank asked for clarification regarding Exhibit A. He wondered if the \$85,211,232 is the actual number each department/office needs to get down to, or is the Committee partitioning out every elected official down to their individual number on the list. Lenert explained that the Committee is trying to set a starting point for every official. However, if the elected officials would like to work together as department heads have to meet the overall \$85M, that would suffice as well. Frank asked if the Sheriff is being requested to resubmit a budget on or around \$38,289,894, or is the Committee asking percentage cut off of the FY2026 Budget to get to the \$85M. Tepe explained that he feels as if the listed numbers for each department/office is their allotted budget amount. Discussion ensued.

Frank stated that the resolution reads, "Hereby recommends that the Offices and Departments revise their submitted 2026 budgets to be in accordance with the amounts listed on Exhibit A." He explained that the Committee needs to make sure that the resolution is clear for departments/offices on what they are

directing them to do and make an amendment stating such. Additionally, while departments are combining their budgets to reach a certain amount, he questioned if this is being formally done for the budget, or is it being done just for the purposes of this resolution. Lenert explained that the numbers presented are the ones that the Committee is asking all department heads and elected officials to meet. He added that down the road, if this resolution should be approved, if elected officials state that they can meet the \$85M, but want to change some financial numbers, that would be fine. He stated that the Committee is needing to get down to this number as a whole. Frank stated that an amendment would need to be made to state these changes due to procedural issue. He explained that all elected officials and department heads shall present their annual budgets to their standing committee per Kane County Ordinance. He stated that if this resolution were to be approved by the Kane County Board before the offices and departments are able to submit their budgets, there will be a timing concern. As long as the County offices/departments are able to submit their budgets, and then the Board decides to have them make revisions, that would be all within the appropriate timeline. However, if it does not happen this way, it will be seen as if the Board did not allow the offices/departments to present their proposed budget. Lenert suggested that this resolution be moved forward as is and make amendments at a later date, if needed. Further discussion ensued on the possible amendments to be made.

Pierog suggested that another amendment be made to Exhibit A. She requested that the County Board's budget be removed from the overall FY2024 Actual Total Elected number. Discussion ensued.

The Committee provided consensus to allow Frank time to revise the language of the resolution for a proper amendment.

The Committee took a brief recess at 10:02 a.m.

The Committee reconvened at 10:07 a.m. A roll call was taken and an in-person quorum was established.

Frank suggested that an amendment be made to this resolution that would remove the last WHEREAS clause. Additionally, the NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED clause should read, "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Kane County Board that it hereby recommends that the Office(s) and/or Department(s) revise their individually and/or collectively submitted 2026 budgets be in accordance with the individual or collective amounts listed in Exhibit A." Frank explained that this amendment will allow the \$85M and/or the individual amounts be the basis points of the departments/offices FY2026 Budget. It also allows the elected officials to submit a combined budget, if they wanted. Discussion ensued. Lenert explained that this amendment would be incorporating two options. Both options require that the total amount of expenses used as a baseline be the same. The second option allows the

departments and elected offices to work together to reach the combined goal of \$85M. Discussion ensued.

Committee Member Tepe motioned to amend the resolution to remove the last WHEREAS clause and have the NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED clause to read, "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Kane County Board that it hereby recommends that the Office(s) and/or Department(s) revise their individually and/or collectively submitted 2026 budgets be in accordance with the individual or collective amounts listed in Exhibit A, Juby seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

The vote was taken on the resolution with the amendment. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

#### KC Executive Committee

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>MOVED FORWARD BY ROLL CALL VOTE</b>   |
| <b>TO:</b>       | KC Executive Committee   |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Vern Tepe  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Anita Lewis  |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Dale Berman, Bill Lenert, Leslie Juby, Anita Lewis, Clifford Surges, and Vern Tepe |
| <b>ABSENT:</b>   | Jarett Sanchez   |

#### 8. Old Business

Madam Chairman Pierog requested that a copy of the last resolution with the amendments and Exhibit A be emailed to all County Board members, Department Heads, and Elected Officials.

Chairman Berman questioned if the total 2024 expense amount is less than the appropriated revenue for 2026. Lenert explained that the anticipated revenue for FY2026 is \$112M. Additionally, the Committee just passed a resolution approving a CPI increase of \$2M and has other additional revenue sources that would bring the County Board closer to the expense amount.

#### 9. Committee Chairman's Comments

None.

#### 10. Executive Session

The Finance Committee entered into Executive Session at 10:18 a.m. to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, and/or dismissal of specific employees on a motion made by Juby, Lewis seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 11:03 a.m. on a motion made by Juby, Lewis seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED BY ROLL CALL VOTE</b>  |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Leslie Juby  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Anita Lewis  |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Dale Berman, Bill Lenert, Leslie Juby, Anita Lewis, Clifford Surges, and Vern Tepe |
| <b>ABSENT:</b>   | Jarett Sanchez   |

#### 11. Adjournment

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE</b> |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Vern Tepe                     |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Leslie Juby                   |

This meeting was adjourned at 11:04 AM.

Savannah Zgobica  
Sr. Recording Secretary