



Village Hall
211 S. Seminary St,
PO Box 18
Downs, IL 61736

Village of Downs Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes February 12, 2026, 7 p.m. @ Village Hall & via TEAMS

1. Mayor Mike James called the February 12, 2026 Village of Downs Board of Trustees Regular Meeting to Order at 7:10 p.m.
2. Roll call was taken. Trustees present were Maureen Roach, Diana Reynolds, Brian Warfel, and Toby Twyford. Trustees absent were Stephanie Adkisson and Sarah Gassaway. There was a quorum present. Also present were Mayor Mike James, Clerk Rachel Eagles, Treasurer Julie Bakewell, and Village Attorney Dawn Wall.
3. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
4. A Motion to Approve the Agenda and Order was made by Twyford and seconded by Warfel. Approved 4-0
5. Presentations – none this month
6. Events – Update given by Mayor James. The events committee met to discuss Easter Breakfast (March 28), Laurie Aldridge will help with the event due to some members being away at a the TransWorld conference on that date. A replacement easter bunny was found.
7. Engineer & Development Report – presented by Greg Crowe and Matt Tosh
 1. Downs Water Plant Improvements
 - a. Punch list items have been corrected by Leander
 - b. Only remaining outstanding item is the front driveway concrete entrance. The concrete is cracking and does not look good—so it will need to be resolved.
 - c. Water treatment plant is operating well: removing iron, organic color/staining and hardness reduction.
 - d. Mayor had a question about who will put the fence back up? The answer is inconclusive, but he will check into it.
 2. Downtown Streetscape and Parking Lots Project
 - a. Knapp was out today and is correcting punch list items
 - b. Bollard was fixed and street light brightness was improved
 - c. Signs have been fixed and railing is being installed early next week on the east side
 - d. Knapp should come in 30K under the initial contract amount
 3. Downs Crossing Water-main Extension
 - a. Work was completed on the telemetry from radio to cellular as previously discussed. The change order also increased the contract time to complete the work due to weather related issues with filling the tank.
 - b. IEPA request #10 has been submitted
 - c. Attempting to make provisions to start filling the water tank next week if the chlorine for the tank can be procured by Tuesday.
 - d. Elevated storage tank – tank area rock was completed. A change order was submitted to revise the completion date to May 1, 2026, due to weather constraints.
 4. S. Lincoln and Colleen Lane Road Project (no new updates)
 5. Other Engineering or Development Updates
 - a. W Main Street Sidewalk – DCEO grant for \$20,000. Knapp has completed the West Main Street Sidewalk Project. MSA is working on the final reporting submittals to DCEO.

- b. MFT 2026 program submission will happen soon.
 - c. Village Hall – approval request to enter Step 2 is on the agenda tonight. Rex from Morton Buildings described the concept plan with some small changes of room names and drive-up lane. Step 2 takes us to the next level of getting engineers going on our project, specific site plans, etc. Once Step 2 is complete, then the Village will know the exact amount needed for the mortgage of the new building. Twyford asked for approximate timeline—Rex answered that it varies but that if all goes well, it would take 4-6 months to complete the new Village Hall. \$65,000 (refundable less expenses incurred) payment is required to enter Step 2.
8. Mayoral Report – Presented by Mayor James
- 1. Ordinance 2025 -__ Amending the Municipal Code of The Village of Downs by the Addition of Article[Chapter] __Establishing Standards for the Construction of Facilities on the Rights-of-Way
 - a. Mayor explained that we are putting into place a new application for ROW applications.
 - 2. Policy Handbook
 - a. Whistle Blower, Credit Card, Confidentiality, Data and Technology Policies - Add or merge in the Handbook
 - b. Leave of Absence Policy
 - c. Health Care benefits changes
 - i. Treasurer Bakewell explained changes with BCBS health insurance for the employee plans. Usually 10% increase to premiums, which we pay 100% for all of our FT employees. This year the increase is just slightly over 14%. We currently offer a platinum level plan for our employees. We are looking at moving to a gold level plan which the cost savings is about \$1,000/month. The deductibles and copays slightly increase from the current plan. Employees could keep the platinum level and pay the difference in cost. The VOD is also discussing a 70% (Village)/30% (employee) split to cover dependents of full-time employees. Also looking at WEX HRA option for employees in lieu of health insurance coverage.
9. Trustee Reports
- 1. Building Report – reported by Reynolds
 - a. 11 FOIA’s last week. GFL has been shorthanded, so they have not pinned down a time to deliver new trash and recycling bins yet.
 - 2. Water and Sewer Report – reported by Twyford
 - a. Nothing new to report this month.
 - 3. Police Report – reported by Roach and Chief Dingler
 - a. Roach said there is an update regarding the new officer offer that was previously made that Chief will report about. Working on budget and strategic plan.
 - b. Chief mentioned that a new officer offer was rescinded due to things falling through with a new officer candidate. Chief had questions about FOIA requests that are overlapping and being received monthly. Chief reported on criminal and traffic cases from the past month. He also mentioned that he worked on police policy updates that he sent to Roach and Attorney Wall for review to be in line with current laws. Mayor had a question about the radar system we use for speeding enforcement and Chief said that they are accurate and work well for the current needs. Chief did mention an option for upgraded technology that could be looked at in the future. Mayor asked if the ordinance booklet with violations citations could be completed by spring? Attorney Wall said by end of March it could be complete to be voted on in April.
 - 4. Streets Reports – reported by Warfel
 - a. Nothing new to report this month.
 - 5. Parks, Community Center and Food Pantry Report – Mayor reported that Adkisson will need help taking down Christmas lights from as many volunteers as possible.

6. Finance and Services Report – reported by Treasurer Bakewell
 - a. Bakewell discussed unique items on the bills to pay report. She also explained the cash on hand, balance sheet, and profit and loss reports that were provided to the trustees.
 - b. Mayor mentioned that Morton Buildings payment for \$65,000 could be paid out of TIF 1 to start Step 2 of that process. Mayor will validate with TIF attorney if that is in line with those funds.
 - c. Budget process will start soon and Bakewell will be reaching out to trustees to see if they need help with their budget preparation.
 - d. Year end is complete, all W2's have been sent out
 - e. Bakewell has been working with local banks (Bank of Pontiac is one) to seek out information on loans that are being looked at for the new Village Hall. Busey said they do not currently offer the type of loan we are needing.
 - f. Bakewell talked about possible electrical agreements with Ron Slagel at Prudent Community Action to seek reduction of electric bill rates. Information gathering at this point for the board to decide at a later board meeting.
10. Discussion
 1. Mayor asked Attorney Wall to send a follow up invoice to the business owner of the water theft invoice that got returned to us due to an invalid mailing address. Attorney Wall will send a letter by Monday.
11. Public Comment – none this meeting
12. A Motion to Approve Items Contained within the Consent Agenda was made by Twyford and seconded by Reynolds. Approved 4-0
13. A Motion to Approve Consent Agenda was made by Twyford and seconded by Warfel. Approved 4-0
 1. Motions
 - a. Motion to Approve the January 8, 2026 Village Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Motion to Approve Right of Way Permit Application
 - c. Motion to Approve the Treasurer to Attend the 2026 Annual IMTA Conference
 - d. Motion to Approve Wages Increases for Village of Downs Employees: Ryan Lee, Caleb Smith, and Jill Combs
 - e. Motion to Change Employment Status of Julie Bakewell to Full-Time Treasurer, Budget Officer & TIF Administrator for the Village of Downs Reporting to Village President with Hourly Wage of \$49/hour Starting 2026-03-01 with Full Eligibility of Benefits per the Village Handbook
 2. Ordinances
 - a.
 3. Resolutions
 - a. Resolution 2026-R03 Authorizing and Approving Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Benefits for Village Employees
 - b. Resolution 2026-R04 Authorizing and Renewing Guardian Vision and Dental Benefits for Village Employees
 - c. Resolution 2026-R05 Authorizing and Renewing Humana life and AD&D Insurance Benefits for Village Employees
 - d. Resolution 2026-R06 Authorizing and Approving Agreement Between the Wex, INC and Village of Downs to Establish an EBHRA
 - e. Resolution 2026-R07 Authorizing and Approving Step 2 for Village Hall Between Municipal Development and Funding, Morton Buildings Inc, and the Village of Downs
14. New Business (no action this meeting)
 1. Motions
 - a. Motion to Approve Village of Downs Bulk Water Rate

- b. Motion to Hire _____ as a Part-Time Public Works Seasonal Maintenance Worker for the Village of Downs at \$__ per hour Starting _____, 2026, Reporting to the Public Works Supervisor Subject to Background Checks and 3 Month Evaluation Period
 2. Ordinances
 - a. Ordinance 2026-__ Approving and Adopting Amendments to the Village of Downs Policy Handbook for the Employees of the Village of Downs
 3. Resolutions
 - a. Resolution 2026-R__ Authorizing and Approving Franchise Agreement with Cornbelt Energy Corp and the Village of Downs
15. Old Business (no action this meeting)
1. Motion to Continue the Village of Downs Regular Board of Trustees Meeting on _____, @ 7 pm at the Village Hall
16. A Motion to Approve Payment of Bills was made by Warfel and seconded by Reynolds. Approved 4-0
17. A Motion to Enter Executive Session at 9:02 pm was made by Roach and seconded by Reynolds. Approved 4-0
1. Semi-Annual Review of Meeting Minutes
 2. Annexation Agreements
18. The board returned to regular session at 9:16 p.m. Roll call was taken. Trustees still present were Maureen Roach, Diana Reynolds, Brian Warfel, and Toby Twyford. Trustees still absent were Stephanie Adkisson and Sarah Gassaway. There was a quorum present. Also still present were Mayor Mike James, Clerk Rachel Eagles, Treasurer Julie Bakewell, and Village Attorney Dawn Wall.
19. Action on Executive Session Items
1. A motion to approve Resolution 2026-R08 Authorizing the Village Clerk to Destroy Executive Session Audio Tapes Over Eighteen Months Old was made by Reynolds and seconded by Warfel. Approved 4-0
 2. Resolution 2026-R__ Authorizing the Village Clerk to Release Specific Executive Session Audio and Minutes of the Village of Downs (no action)
 3. Resolution 2026-R__ Authorizing the Village Clerk to Keep Sealed Specific Executive Session Minutes of the Village of Downs (no action)
20. Other Business (none this meeting)
21. A Motion to Adjourn at 9:17 p.m. was made by Warfel and seconded by Twyford. A quorum remained. Approved 4-0

Respectfully submitted,



Rachel Eagles, Village of Downs Clerk