

**Building & Zoning Committee  
Meeting Minutes for February 3, 2026**

**Members Present:**

Mick Madison, Chairman  
Frank Dickerson  
Terry Eaker  
John Janek  
Fred Michael  
Bobby Ross

**Members Absent:**

Nick Petrillo

**Others Present:**

Chris Doucleff, Administrator  
Jen Hurley, Zoning Coordinator

**Call of Meeting to Order and Roll Call:**

Chairman Madison called the meeting of the Building & Zoning Committee to order at 5:00 p.m. and conducted roll call.

**Public Comment:**

Sam Walch, the developer for Arena Renewables, spoke about Resolution Z26-0003. He stated his company is a 20-person development team with an office in Illinois. He said they have over 90 projects in development across the state, and they also have developments in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Mr. Walch said that this project is a 3-megawatt solar project with no battery storage. He discussed the open house event for the community, and the many adjustments to the plans after feedback was given. Mr. Walch spoke about the tax revenue that will be generated from the site and how local Ameren customers can subscribe to the project for energy savings in the form of a credit of approximately 10% of their electric bill. He also discussed the environmental benefits of the project.

Sean Pluta, the lawyer for Arena Renewables, spoke about Resolution Z26-0003. He reiterated that the application turned in meets all of the zoning requirements. He discussed how the State Law guidelines state they are entitled to receive a permit for the project if they meet the zoning requirements. Mr. Pluta discussed the questions that the Village of Pontoon Beach had about the project and how Arena Renewables did their best to answer all of their questions. He stated they followed up with the Village of Pontoon after the last meeting even though this project is in the County's jurisdiction. Mr. Pluta believes Arena Renewables is entitled to a positive recommendation after meeting deliberations.

Eric Foster, a Township Supervisor for Nameoki Township where the subject property is located, spoke about Resolution Z26-0003. Mr. Foster disagrees with Arena Renewables meeting all the zoning requirements because on the east side of this development is a wetland and the Corps of Engineer has not received notification about the project. He states that the wetlands are a protected area and there is a permitting process they still need to go through with them. He also said that on the west side of the subject property there is an archeological study that is ongoing and the Archeological Society hasn't been notified of the project. Mr. Foster wants these items dealt with before the Special Use Permit can be given.

Ken Rogers, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition of Resolution Z26-0003. He doesn't want to look out his back door and see a chain-link fence with plastic slats taking up the view. He wonders why there has been nobody out to stake out the project location yet. Mr. Rogers reiterated that this area is a wetland and an archeological site. He hopes the project gets denied and doesn't think the possible tax revenue is worth disrupting the neighborhood for.

Jim Greenwald, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition of Resolution Z26-0003. He is a Board Member on the Home Owners Association for the neighborhood. He discussed the report from Juneau and Associates to the Village of Pontoon Beach about the project, and all of the questions and concerns they had. He respectfully asks for a “no” vote on the project.

Gary O’Neil, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition of Resolution Z26-0003. He is concerned about the stormwater that is currently retained and sits on the farmland field and not in the detention pond by the neighborhood. He feels that this project being located on one of the main highways through town is not a welcoming sight. He does not want this project or see the need for it and hopes it gets denied.

Evan Murray, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition of Resolution Z26-0003. He states he is not against solar energy, he is against where this project is being placed, as it will be directly up against his fence in his backyard. Mr. Murray said his family spends a lot of time in their backyard, and even his 12 year old son is disappointed about the proposed project. He said that the backyard views of the sunset were one of the main reasons for purchasing the home, and now that view might be changing. Mr. Murray said the people in the community are against this project and hope it gets denied.

Stacy Milster, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition of Resolution Z26-0003. Her property is across the street from the proposed project location. She takes pride in her home and property and knows it is her legacy, and doesn’t want this project to ruin everything she has built.

Stephanie Newton spoke about Resolution Z26-0004. She is one of the owners of BTO Distillers and has since reached out to a neighboring property owner who voiced her concerns at the last meeting. Ms. Newton explained that they don’t want a lot of bands at the property, so they are willing to add an addendum to their application stating they will not have any bands outside past 8pm in order to keep the peace with the neighbors. She discussed the options for having bands for special events. Ms. Newton stated she has reached out to other neighbors as well, including the Fire Department, and discussed making an emergency action plan with them. She said primary focus of the business is the Tasting Room with advertising on social media to get the word out about events and their products.

Linda Winfree Pickerill spoke about Resolution Z26-0004. She is a neighboring property owner to BTO Distillers and discussed the recent communication over her concerns. She agreed that she would like people to stay in the building as much as possible and not have bands on the patio past 8pm so she could have her quiet hour as requested. She also talked to the Chief of the Fire Department and knows they have come to an agreement off the books as well. She is hoping their new agreement works out and it doesn’t turn out to be a problem.

Caleb Russell spoke about Resolution Z26-0004. He moved into Meadowbrook in 2021 and quickly became a patron as well as a neighbor to Bluestem Distillery. He is aware of some complaints about the music later into the evening, but it has never been an issue for him. He stated there is a fenced off area to give privacy to the neighbors, and maybe one food truck at the location on Halloween, but no beer trucks on site to sell anything different than what they make and sell on site. He believes extending the business hours will be beneficial to their business as well as surrounding businesses in the area and knows the changes in hours have been highly requested by several patrons.

Lynette Pickerill spoke about Resolution Z26-0004. She lives next to Bluestem and thinks that the open hours on Sunday should not interfere with church hours since it may cause a problem with traffic in the area. She discussed other events at church that could conflict with the proposed hours and bands and is worried about the safety of people getting to and from the events.

Kathy Becker, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition to Resolution Z26-0003. She states she does not want this project so close to her home. Ms. Becker said she is still very concerned that the questions posed by Juneau and Associates have not been fully answered.

Kathleen Pinkus, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition to Resolution Z26-0003. She states her house sits up higher than the proposed project location and has seen the flooding that happens on the property and wetlands. She has seen the water in the retention pond overflow and go up to the backyards of the people in the neighborhood when it rains. Ms.

Pinkus said that she has read over the 300 page document and she still has many questions about the project. She is concerned about some of the questions in the application, such as if this application will cause injury to value of the other properties in the neighborhood it is located and whether this Special Use would be detrimental to the essential character of the district in which it is located. Ms. Pinkus stated this proposed project is in the middle of a residential area, surrounded by homes, and doesn't think it is a good location for the project. She also agrees with the Juneau Associates letter that has concerns about the project location. Ms. Pinkus thinks that the Corps of Engineers, Monks Mound, and IDNR, and Fish and Wildlife need to view and approve the project first. She is also concerned that some of the research included is over 10 years old and outdated. Ms. Pinkus feels strongly about getting a hydraulic report in relationship to Emerald Meadows detention pond.

Denise Wiehardt, a neighboring property owner and County Board Member for District #20, spoke in opposition to Resolution Z26-0003. She stressed her concerns of flooding and extra water runoff that will be created by the panels. She states the proposed project location is in the flood zone and is comprised of wetlands. Ms. Wiehardt is worried that construction of the project may include bringing in dirt to raise the elevation and cause increased flooding issues for the surrounding areas. She states the detention pond behind her home was engineered about 20 years ago, and manmade specifically for the residential area to collect storm water and then drains dry. Ms. Wiehardt reiterated the fact that this detention pond is designed to hold a specific amount of storm water that will prevent flooding in the neighborhood and worries that the solar panels were not factored into the engineering process when it was created. She is concerned that this change in runoff will lead to issues with the detention pond overflowing and causing flooding of yards and basements. She states she has heard that the panels will not increase runoff but doesn't know how that is possible when the water will be infiltrating the soil in a different manner.

Dennis Douglas, a neighboring property owner, spoke in opposition to Resolution Z26-0003. His property currently has an issue with flooding that is creating an issue with his home's foundation and knows that is the case with several neighbors. He is very concerned that the proposed project will add to the issues that homeowners already have to deal with. He works construction and is familiar with solar farms, but the ones he has worked on haven't been in town. Mr. Douglas also worries that someone is wanting to make a profit off of the land that doesn't live in the area.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

Chairman Madison asked the Committee if all members had reviewed the minutes from the December 2, 2025 meeting, and if they had any changes to be made. Chairman Madison approved the minutes.

#### **Zoning Resolutions:**

Jen Hurley, Zoning Coordinator, gave the overview of the five new zoning petitions and two subdivisions on the agenda.

Ms. Hurley introduced Resolution Z26-0003, petition of Arena Libra Solar, LLC, on behalf of Deborah Benzing and Rachel Benzing. She said the subject property is located in Nameoki Township, along State Route 162, about 1/10 of a mile southwest of the Intersection of State Route 162 & Lake Dr, Granite City, CBD #20, and zoned "A" Agricultural. Ms. Hurley stated they are requesting a Special Use Permit in order to develop a Commercial Solar Energy Facility on site and the proposal meets Commercial Solar Energy Facility requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. She stated there were no outstanding violations. Ms. Hurley said there was a letter of support received from the property owner and staff received a letter of opposition from a nearby neighbor and a petition of opposition signed by approximately 50 nearby neighbors. She said staff received a letter from the Village Engineers for Pontoon Beach expressing the Village's opposition to proposed solar farm as well as a response to this opposition letter from Arena Libra Solar. Ms. Hurley said the ZBA Recommended Denial 3-2.

Ms. Hurley introduced Resolution Z26-0004, petition of BTO Distillers, LLC, dba Bluestem Distillery. She said the subject property is located in Ft Russell Township, at 5313 State Route 140, Bethalto, CBD #14. Ms. Hurley stated the Applicant is requesting an Amendment to a "B-5" Planned Business District for proposed changes to the previously-approved hours of operation, which were 2pm-8pm, Tuesday through Friday, and Saturday from noon-8pm. She said the Applicant is proposing to extend those hours to 11am-10pm Tuesday through Saturday, and Sunday from noon-10pm to better meet the market needs and to cater to sports enthusiasts. Ms. Hurley said that because this is a Planned District, this change requires a hearing

with the ZBA and approval from the County Board, and the Applicant will still be required to adhere to the conditions of approval and use requirements contained in the 2016 resolution of approval. She stated there are no outstanding violations and staff received a letter of opposition from a neighbor and a neighbor spoke at ZBA to voice their concerns. Ms. Hurley said the ZBA Recommended Denial 4-0.

Ms. Hurley introduced Resolution Z26-0006, petition of Edward Lenhardt. She said the subject property is located in Wood River Township at 1356 11<sup>th</sup> St, Cottage Hills, CBD #5 and zoned "R-4" Single-Family Residential. Ms. Hurley stated the Applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit in order to place a mobile home on site for the occupancy of Edward Lenhardt and family. She said there are no outstanding violations, staff received a letter of opposition from an adjacent property owner, and ZBA Recommended Approval with Conditions 4-0.

Ms. Hurley introduced Resolution Z26-0008, petition of Rezy Road Solar, LLC, leasehold owner, on behalf of Lietz Irrevocable Family Trust. She said the subject property is located in Olive Township, along Rezy Rd, about 1 ¼ miles north of New Douglas Rd, New Douglas, CBD #3 and zoned "A" Agricultural District. Ms. Hurley stated that in November 2025, the Applicant was approved for a Special Use Permit to develop a Commercial Solar Energy Facility on this property and as a condition of approval the Applicant is submitting this variance petition for the project to be 20 feet from the west property line instead of the required 50 feet. She said the 30 feet relief from this setback would push the project farther away from residences along Rezy Road and allow for enhanced vegetative screening. Ms. Hurley said there are no outstanding violations and no opposition expressed. She said there were multiple letters of support for this variance from adjacent landowners, and ZBA Recommended Approval 4-0.

Ms. Hurley introduced Resolution Z26-0009, petition of Shelby Smith, on behalf of DHJ Holdings LLC I. She said the subject property is located in Collinsville Township at 2112 Barbara St, Collinsville, CBD #22 and zoned "R-3" Single-Family Residential. Ms. Hurley said the Applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit in order to keep 2 goats on site. She said there are no outstanding violations, no opposition expressed, and ZBA Recommended Approval with Conditions 4-0.

#### **Subdivisions:**

Ms. Hurley introduced the BBT-Klenke Lease Plat Vacation. She said the BBT-Klenke Lease - Minor Plat was approved in 2025 where the property was split into two lots – Lot 1 being 2 acres and a 30.42-acre remnant. Ms. Hurley stated the applicant planned to lease Lot 1 for a cryptocurrency/bit coin mining operation, however the lease area is no longer needed. She said the owner is requesting to have the plat vacated in order to combine the two lots back into one parcel.

Ms. Hurley introduced the Resubdivision of Lot 2 of Mill Creek Crossing. She said the property is 8.58 acres and zoned "A" Agricultural District and is a 4-lot minor subdivision. The proposed Lot 2A will be approximately 2.10 acres, Lot 2B will be 2.07 acres, Lot 2C will be 2.19 acres, and Lot 2D will be 2.22 acres. Ms. Hurley said the property is within the 1.5 mile growth area of the City of Troy, and they have opted out of the review process. She said the applicants are proposing a private roadway and utility easement along the east line of Lots 2A, 2B, and 2C that are to be maintained by and for the use of the owners of Lots 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D, as noted on the plat. Ms. Hurley said the proposed layout satisfies all zoning & subdivision requirements.

Chairman Madison discussed the Demo Resolution for 3315 Arlington Avenue in Collinsville. Building and Zoning Administrator Chris Doucleff discussed how this has been a problematic property for years in State Park.

#### **Pre-Application Presentation:**

None

#### **New Business:**

Chairman Madison brought in Resolution Z26-0003. John Janek made a motion to approve. The motion failed for lack of a second. Chairman Madison stated this Resolution will now be brought up at the County Board Meeting on Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

Chairman Madison brought in Resolution Z26-0004. He spoke about the concerns from neighbors around the Distillery and Tasting Room and how there was no mention of live music at the original hearing. He asked Ms. Newton if she would be able to commit to having no live amplified music outdoors, only indoors with the door shut, and acoustic only outside with a quiet mic. Ms. Newton stated the bands were brought in by a manager who is no longer around and it is not how they plan to run the business going forward and agreed to keep live music indoors. Terry Eaker made a motion to approve. Seconded by Bobby Ross. Roll-call vote. All nays. Denial overturned.

Chairman Madison brought in Resolution Z26-0006. Fred Michael made a motion to approve. Seconded by John Janek. Chairman Madison discussed how this was in his District and the community opinion is to keep mobile homes out of the area and favors more traditional, stick-built homes. Roll-call vote. All nays. Motion to approve failed.

Chairman Madison brought in Resolution Z26-0008. Chairman Madison discussed the changes to the original plans for the project and it was noted there was support from neighbors for this request. Fred Michael made a motion to approve the project. Seconded by Terry Eaker. Roll-call vote. Ayes: Terry Eaker, Fred Michael, John Janek, Bobby Ross, Mick Madison; Nays: Frank Dickerson. Motion passes.

Chairman Madison brought in Resolution Z26-0009. No motion was made regarding Resolution Z26-0009. Chairman Madison stated this Resolution will now be brought up at the County Board Meeting.

Chairman Madison brought in the Demo Resolution for 3315 Arlington Avenue in Collinsville, the BBT-Klenke Lease Plat Vacation, and the Resubdivision of Lot 2 of Mill Creek Crossing and the Purchase Order Report. Bobby Ross made a motion to approve. Seconded by Frank Dickerson. Roll-call vote. All ayes. Motion passes.

Chairman Madison brought in the Resolution to Authorize Green Schools Program Funding FY 2026, the Resolution Authorizing a Grant for Yearly Funding to the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District FY 2026, the Resolution Authorizing Environmental Grants FY 2026, and the refund requests Z26-0007 and B2025-1327. Building and Zoning Administrator Chris Doucleff discussed the various details and need for each Resolution as well as the reasons for the refund requests. Terry Eaker made a motion to approve. Seconded by John Janek. Roll-call vote. All ayes. Motion passes.

#### **Administrator's Report:**

Building and Zoning Administrator Chris Doucleff spoke about the Electronic Waste Program. He said they will take everything with a cord and there are four collection dates this year which will be April 11<sup>th</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>, August 15<sup>th</sup>, and October 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Doucleff stated that people can call and make an appointment to reserve a timeslot to bring their E-waste to the collection facility at CJD E-Cycling at 5257 N. State Route 157 in Edwardsville. He also spoke about the Household Hazardous Waste collection at the 249 N Old St. Louis Road in Wood River and said it was open the second Saturday of every month with an event coming up on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Doucleff stated there were 77 permits issued in January which was up sixteen permits over last year, and 4 of those were for new homes even with all of the bad weather.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

#### **Adjournment:**

John Janek made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Terry Eaker. Voice-vote. All ayes. Motion passes. Meeting adjourned.