

# ST. CLAIR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2026

#### Members Present:

Ken Sharkey, Chairman  
Scott Greenwald, Assistant Chairman  
Robert Allen  
Marty Crawford  
Robert Trentman  
Rick Vernier

#### Members Excused:

Matt Smallheer

#### Staff Present:

Rick Stubblefield, Executive Director  
Becky Rose, Executive Assistant

#### Others Present:

Kimberly Huth, Military Affairs Director  
Darren James, MidAmerica Airport Director  
May Brown

#### Call to Order:

Chairman Ken Sharkey called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Public Comment Regarding the Agenda:

Chairman Sharkey asked if anyone present had a question or comment regarding the agenda. There were none.

#### Approval of January 14, 2026, Committee Minutes (action required):

Chairman Sharkey called for action on the January 14, 2026, Committee minutes. Mr. Allen made the motion to approve the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Greenwald. The motion passed unanimously.

#### New Business (Director's Report):

Mr. Stubblefield reported that efforts remain ongoing regarding the potential resurrection of the Avina project. However, the recently enacted Big Beautiful Bill has adversely impacted several initiatives. In addition to this project, Crystalys continues to face challenges in Sauget. The elimination of green energy tax credits is creating significant headwinds for organizations pursuing sustainable aviation fuel development, further complicating progress in this sector. We are actively advancing several additional prospects, discussions remain premature at this time.

Cerro Flow is proceeding as planned. The Intergovernmental Grants Department has successfully secured a \$2 million grant to support workforce training initiatives, which will encompass all 280 employees.

Mr. Stubblefield provided an update regarding a construction equipment company evaluating the former rebar plant in Cahokia Heights. Environmental assessments revealed unfavorable conditions, and the company is currently determining whether remediation efforts would be justified. Alternative sites are being explored. The company's requirements include a site of at least seven acres with a minimum 10,000 square feet of building space, 14-foot minimum clear height, grade level bays, and high energy three phase electrical service. The proposed facility would serve as a national testing center for HVAC equipment, including large scale chillers.

Mr. Stubblefield attended a meeting with Tracey Glenn of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and a company located in the Sauget Industrial Park that is looking to expand. The company recently acquired a similar business in St. Louis and intends to relocate that operation and its employees to St. Clair County. Additionally, the company is in the process of acquiring another St. Louis-based business that supports the MQ-25 aircraft. This larger acquisition is anticipated to require an expansion of existing facilities.

Mr. Stubblefield reported that Mr. Darren James assisted with coordinating a recent site selector visit. Greater St. Louis hosted an aerospace-focused site selector and requested a tour of Boeing, which Boeing was pleased to accommodate. Following the tour, Darren provided a comprehensive briefing on MidAmerica Airport, including current developments and available opportunities. The visit was productive and well received.

There were no further comments or questions.

Mr. Vernier made a motion to approve the Director's report and Mr. Greenwald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business (MidAmerica Airport Director's Report):

Mr. Darren James reported that the MQ-25 has achieved a significant milestone, with the aircraft completing its initial taxi operations across the full airfield. First flight is currently projected for the third week of March. Discussions are ongoing with the U.S. Navy regarding the potential installation of arresting gear; however, feasibility remains under evaluation and will require assessment and approval by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Boeing continues to be highly supportive of the County's initiatives and is working cooperatively to accommodate operational needs whenever possible.

January performance at the airport was notably strong, reflecting a 16.8 percent increase over the same month last year. Current projections indicate that activity levels are expected to be on par with, or slightly exceed, 2025 totals.

Following passage of the Federal Department of Transportation appropriations bill, the County received \$4 million earmark from Senator Duckworth to support Phase II of the Federal Inspection Station. This funding will advance completion of the facility and position the airport to accommodate international commercial traffic. We are currently coordinating with the FAA to determine appropriate timing to initiate the final phase of the project.

There were no further comments or questions.

Mr. Allen made a motion to approve the Director's report and Mr. Crawford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business (Military Affairs Director Comments):

Ms. Kimberly Huth reported that the Defense Personal Property Command will be constructing a new facility on the base, which is expected to generate approximately 150 to 200 jobs in the region. The Air Mobility Command

has been confirmed and is currently in Washington D.C.; however, no announcement has been made regarding a new Air Mobility Commander.

At a recent meeting, a representative from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) commended the partnership between the local community and the base in coordinating snow removal efforts, noting it was the strongest collaboration of its kind they had observed. During the recent severe weather, several pipes burst on the base, resulting in temporary facility relocations. It was suggested that potential grant opportunities be explored that could be utilized in future emergency situations to provide timely assistance when similar incidents occur.

Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton has convened an economic development committee focused on military installations and has expressed a desire for increased representation from Southern Illinois. It was further reported that Scott Air Force Base (SAFB) was not selected as a Main Operating Base for the KC-46 assignments Seven and Eight. The selection process for the Main Operating Base Nine is anticipated to conclude by next fall, and it was noted that the region's submission package remains competitive. Additionally, a meeting was held with the new Air National Guard Air Installation Mission Support Specialist, whose primary priority is securing the construction of a new hangar at the base.

There were no further comments or questions.

Mr. Greenwald made a motion to approve the Director's report and Mr. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Comments:

There were no further comments or questions.

Adjournment:

Chairman Sharkey asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vernier so moved, and it was seconded by Mr. Greenwald. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the Committee adjourned at 5:20 p.m.