

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
10.15.2025
1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

Dr. Luis Moreno called the FY2026 Budget committee meeting to order at 3:31pm and asked for a roll call.

Members present: Dr. Luis Moreno, David Adams, Larry Burns, Brian Vyncke, Johnnie Woods, Dr. Rodney Simmer, Chairman Brunk, Enyo Dewith, Kai Swanson.

Others Present - Jared VanTieghem, Jim Grafton, Nick Camlin, Bridgett Edgeworth, Patty Castro, April Palmer, Ryan Berger

Dr. Moreno called for public comment – no public comment

Chair Moreno asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting on 10.9.2025

Dave Adams moves to approve the minutes

Dr Simmer seconds the motion to approve the minutes

Motion Carries

Chair Moreno asked Ryan Berger to give an update on FY26 budget information

Item #4 Ryan Berger – At the last Committee Meeting you gave the green light for all of the requests to forward as they stood so there haven't been any changes from the offices themselves which is positive. That allowed us to come up with a proposal for levy rates but I will wait until we get to that part of the meeting.

Chair Moreno asked if there were any questions for Ryan at this time and there were none.

Item #5 FY26 Levy Rate Discussion

Ryan Berger – I am going to present to you the number part and let my colleagues explain the material. So, one of the general goals and the way that I sat down with the Board chair and the County Administrator was to collect the same amount of money as we did last year. So, with that goal in mind these are the numbers that we basically come up with. In some cases, fund balance is used. In those cases, there is definitely enough fund balance to handle the use of that so

we can start at the top with the corporate levy. Going up about 364 thousand, the total fund use balance that would be used is about 3 million there. Just to give you an idea of what that means last year at the end of the fiscal year we had 9 million general fund dollars that we budgeted for but did not spend so it goes back into the general fund. So, I'm assuming that there is going to be an estimated amount that we also don't spend by the end of this year so we are just going to tap into that.

Highway based on our discussion with them at the last meeting its going up about 171 thousand I think we talked somewhere around the 200 thousand mark, that allows them to tap into fund balance and purchase the equipment that they discussed with you.

Bridge is going up about 300 thousand dollars, they will be using a substantial amount of there fund balance to do a bridge project next year. And this also includes an additional 700 thousand dollars for them to put back into their fund balance to prepare for that 2030 bridge project that we talked about.

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
10.15.2025
1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

Veterans Affairs is just going up a slight amount, that is what they requested.

IMRF is going down pretty substantially, about 484 thousand, and the reason why is our rates are dropping, probably to some of the lowest that we have seen in a long time. Basic idea for this year the rate for regular IMRF is about 13.8 percent for next year it's 8.4 percent. There are a couple of folks too on the echo plan, our current rate would be 83 percent and it's dropping down to 79 percent and SLEP is the only one that is going up about a quarter of a percent so those decreases are why you're seeing that 484-thousand-dollar reduction.

FICA is going up that is just related to the salaries and wage increases that we saw with the union contracts that were passed

Health department is flat along with liability insurance. Again, liability insurance will be using the fund balance in the past you levied for that which includes our tort insurance in case there are any liabilities that the county may face so we will be using the fund balance in those areas which is standard to what we typically do every year.

Nursing Home you are seeing that also be reduced slightly. And Hopefully that will continue to happen. The interesting thing to note about that is that it may not go down as much as we would like to see it because the payments actually increase over time and kind of goes the opposite direction. It will go down but it won't keep going down that much until we pay it off.

Dr Moreno – How many years do we have left on that?

April Palmer – 26 and 27 then done

Ryan Berger – Mental Health there is a slight increase there our funding a couple of new agencies in this coming year that their board approved so that is why that is increasing.

There haven't been any changes to the university of Illinois extension or child advocacy

Our Jail bond lease levy is going down, that said the number of projects identified are increasing but they are using general fund portion instead of the jail bond lease to do those projects at the sheriff's office because in the past some money has been transferred from that levy at the end of the year and into the general fund so now we are just capturing what we had already done in the past. So that gets us to selecting the same amount, are there any questions about the numbers? Seeing none I guess I can yield to Jim to tell you what that would mean for some of our rock island county home owners.

Jim Grafton – I think that it's important that we have a message that we are sending out and we know that the concern is that we are collecting the same amount. that is scary because we have enough in our levy to pay bills, continue operating, Nick Camlin reports every time about how the fund balance is growing and growing and, in the meantime, we are collecting less and less and less. So, some things to maybe take away would be the fact that I took a look back at where we were in 2019 in 2019 we collected 2 million more than we did this year. In 2019 the tax rate was 1.3296 now this tax rate is going to go down to .9664 so that is a 27% reduction of the tax rate since 2019.

Dr. Simmer asks for numbers to be repeated, Jim Grafton repeats

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

10.15.2025

1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

Jim Grafton – So where does that compare to 2019, the value of the county has gone up 29.6% since 2019 it has gone up almost 30 percent but our rate has been reduced by 27 percent so the increase in EAVs goes up but the tax rate goes down. So, what does that mean to a taxpayer? So, this morning in a chamber board meeting the average value of a home in the quad cities is 205 thousand dollars. That is the average home. So, if I were to look at an average home back in 2019 it would have been worth about 85 percent of what it was worth today. So, go back to 2019 that homeowner at the rate that we had at 1.3296 that home owner would have paid 907 dollars in the county portion of the taxes. Now that home today is now worth 205 thousand. With our new tax rate that county portion is 659 dollars so from 2019 to today based on increase in property values and all that the average home owner is paying 250 dollars less to the county and those are the things that are important when we put together our levies and budgets so we are very mindful of that.

Some of the key things I want to hit home on, they are going to say their taxes have gone up, we have a story to tell and that story is, hey folks, who has gotten paid less than they did in 2019? We are.

Kai Swanson – that is very helpful information and I actually have a question, when we send out the bills, we often tell you what the previous year was right? Is there any way that we can customize those to show what a property would have paid in 2019? Because we are talking a 300-dollar difference.

Nick Camlin – On the bill its possible but I don't know if we can get another column in for 2019. We could compare the paychecks that way. Why 2019? Just because of the COVID stuff?

Jim Grafton – it looked like a crappy year

April Palmer – It was a crappy year, and we still owned the nursing home at that time. There are a lot of big differences between the two years.

Jim Grafton – Back in 2019 we paid a little over 2 million dollars in the levy for nursing home and we are still paying a million dollars so it wasn't the nursing home

April Palmer – we were supplementing it with general fund at the time.

Jim Grafton – I also wanted to point out have you had the vision of “lets just be conservative and have that same rate” If we would have kept that rate at the 1.3296 we are at 33 million? that number would have been 46 million 525 thousand. So, if we kept the same rate we would have collected an additional almost 13 million dollars per year. So being a good steward you can say hey well that's significant part and that is even a third of what we are collecting right now. I think that this is a story you can tell about how you are mindful of the spending and mindful of what is happening to our property owners that we have little to no control over the assessed valuations. But I know that Ryan is going to be very mindful of what happens to EAVs because at some point we are not going to be looking at, like last year it went up 9 percent, the year before it went up 8 percent, 3 years ago it went up 10.5 percent. That is pretty significant jumps in property values. And those jumps in property values have the biggest impact on your property taxes. So, this year we are getting hit with township assessment that is anywhere between 5 and 8 percent which we have no control over.

Dr. Simmer – if there is no need then why are they raising, because if everyone in turn would do it how we are doing it where would there be a need? Where would that money go if they keep saying they

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

10.15.2025

1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

need more? Whether it be the state differences or the township differences, does that money sit in a pool? Or if we don't need it do we not collect it? I'm getting a little peeved, and I know you are big on schools, I'm big on schools too, but I'm sick and tired of seeing the numbers go up but the education is not going up as far as I'm concerned. With what I'm seeing across the board with this stuff and its going to go up 1000 dollars the last two years. No, that is crazy, my house is a decent house but it is not 1000 dollars more in 2 years. Where is that coming from? Why is it driven like that? Their assessment I don't care what your assessment is if the schools don't need it if the townships don't need it. If we all budget correctly there should be this huge surplus. Do we still collect that money and put it in more CD's or how does that work? I know schools and cities they keep that percentage and don't drop it. Is it because they are using the funds?

Jim Grafton – I guess my answer to that would be that there is more money and they are going to spend more money.

Kai Swanson – Well if I could, when it comes to talking to our constituents, just personal preference I would rather not throw other people under the bus I want to draw attention because there are a lot of stuff and its not just the nursing home, I know my bandwagon in health care committee I mean when you look at health care costs with every other employer and we are basically staying the same. Its because the employees have worked very hard to put in different choices. So that all committees get great care and they don't have to pay a ton. There are just a ton of small decisions, I would rather talk about the good work that the county is doing rather than throw other taxing bodies under the bus.

Dr. Simmer – We need to put the positive out there about what we have done. But on the other hand, when I catch crap about and my taxes going up, I said this is what we have done to help you but you need to talk to your schools, you need to talk to your cities etc. because they are continuing to take that increase and maybe you need to discuss it with them. If they do the same thing we did, our taxes overall instead of taking that money, they should be able to lower it. I mean do they have the ability to lower it?

Multiple – yea sure

Jim Grafton – I didn't even touch on the fact that you can raise it 4.99 percent every year without having a hearing.

Chairman Richard Brunk – I was going to say, like we have done in recent years we will make sure that some of those details will be in a press release when the board approves the budget in addition to that I think Jim we can put that information together to include in a coming update for the members so that you can have conversations with people.

Kai Swanson- I have a question and this might lean more towards Ryan, the one very minor concern that I have, its great that we are keeping it exactly the same, I wonder how far back you have to go to see any body that kept the same rate let alone dropped. However, I think that both of our states have made mistakes in terms of budgeting. Iowa is spending their seed corn and they had a surplus for a while and they are just eating into it so I don't want us to go that way, Illinois has done other things that increased so their fiscal position and they have big billion-dollar hole they have. Are you confident that taking this strategy is also good if we look out 2 or 3 fiscal years?

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

10.15.2025

1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

Ryan Berger – I would say yes, because I think that one of the things we tackled this year is understanding why we have such a substantial fund balance in some of our funds. Some of it has to do with COVID, some of it has to do with the improvements and investments that the Treasurer has made, some of it is doing past practices, some of this has to do with levying for projects in past years but not actually having enough time to do them and so we have already levied for them and now we are able to utilize that fund balance instead of levying on top of it. I think if we continue down this rate we should be good and Jim's point about we are not going to have these big increases, and so we have to be aware of that potential change but I think overall, we are in a good position. Does that mean we should haphazardly start doing projects and not think ahead? No, the other thing that we are doing which is smart this year is with bridge for example. We are looking ahead for a project that is in 2030 and we are starting to plan now as opposed to in 2029 going, oh we forgot about this and now we need to raise the levy even more so as we start to do those things we are positioning ourselves for a decrease in the EAVs which probably will come in the future years.

Dr. Simmer – I know I talked to Jim and Richard about this, is the capital improvement stuff, I think, at what point is this going to need to be a line in the budget.

Ryan Berger – So we are starting to do that with the bridge concept, so you are going to see in the budget, you are going to be able to look into the highway fund and say, they are 700K in the green. That doesn't mean they are going to spend it that just means it is there and its going to be reserved. There is a better way to show that and I think we will keep working on that and towards it.

Dr. Moreno – In the last 6 years we talked about replacement cycles, we are comfortable doing it, we are getting caught up, there are reserves getting put in. and we have people that are now categorizing those so that we can have those purchase schedules so we don't get hit all at one year because this equipment went down. We are making great strides at every level so I applaud the budget committee for working with our staff and moving in that direction. I know we had some resistance in the beginning due to reserves but that helped us shave what was it? A million? Two million?

Jim Grafton – 3 million the first year

Dr. Moreno – so its that type of thought process that we need to continue and for this committee because we have to be mindful and the fact that we could keep the same rate is amazing, at what point might it have to go up again? We don't know but I think we have done our due diligence with our budgets for a number of years now.

Item #6 – Consider Recommendation of Proposed FY26 Budget

Dr. Moreno – Is there a motion to approve as presented?

Dr Simmer made the motion to approve as presented.

Vice Chair Vyncke seconded the motion.

Dr. Moreno – the only comment I have is I thought we were going to tackle at some point the animal control shelter.

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

10.15.2025

1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

Ryan Berger – I wanted to comment on that, we are tackling it, I did do a transfer of the budgeted amount that the board approved this fiscal year and it gets the number down closer to say maybe negative 150 thousand somewhere around there. So, I think as we move forward that number is going to get closer to 0 so maybe in the next couple of years there is also a consideration because they were using the general fund and they should have been using state funds, I worked with the auditor on that. And we worked together to understand what that number is so the animal shelter has changed the way they are doing that so we could actually determine what was negative fund balance vs what was not using the right pot. So, it looks like that number is going up pretty substantially.

Dr. Moreno – and we are working with them on the fact that they are not getting the food donations so we adjusted their budget for that.

Ryan Berger – That request is in this budget.

Hearing no other questions lets have a voice vote,

Motion Carries

Chair Moreno – Yes

Vice Chair Vyncke – Yes

Dr. Simmer - Yes

Mr. Adams – Yes

Mr. Burns – Yes

Mrs. Woods – Yes

Chairman Brunk

Mr. Dewith – Yes

Mr. Swanson – Yes

Dr. Moreno – We have nothing for closed meeting so with that we will have a committee member opportunity for brief comment. Anyone have anything they want to add?

Brian Vyncke – I just want to acknowledge everybody. Thanks for the hard work and getting this together. Our goal has been to keep taxes at bay, and like Mr. Swanson said we really cant control what the other taxing bodies do, hopefully they will be prudent with what they do and all we can do is watch our own Ps and Qs and its nice to see where we are at today vs where we were at 5,6,7 years ago, there were some really bad times that I don't ever want to see the county get back to that position and nobody does.

Dr. Simmer – and I would kiss the ring to but you already did a good job at it, its all true and its so much better than 15 years ago by far and it's a team effort, we are all working together towards the same goal. It was so much of a fiasco back in the day and the fact that its altogether, great asset here, I

FY2026 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

10.15.2025

1504 3rd Avenue Rock Island, IL --Room 210

appreciate you being here to give us a heads up on stuff and so I'm happy, everyone has done a great job and I appreciate this so much more.

Chair Moreno – I appreciate Chairman Brunk's foresight especially when he brought on Jim Grafton, and the agreement we have with Jim and the foresight to hire Mr. Berger and having both of those in house,

Dr. Simmer – we don't have to go out for head hunters, these guys right here locally are great.

Chair Moreno – So Kudos to both of you gentlemen and Richard for the foresight and direction.

Mr. Adams – I wanted to say thank you to the elected officials and all of the department heads, you guys worked on the budget and got it slimmed down and staff, just great job.

Motion to adjourn: Mr. Vyncke

Second: Mr. Adams

Voice Vote

Motion carried

Meeting Adjourned at 3:59pm

jcv