

ST. CLAIR COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

19 Public Square, Suite 200
Belleville, IL 62220-1695
Phone: 618-825-3200
www.co.st-clair.il.us
Facebook: StClairCountyEconDev
Twitter: @SCCEconDev



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2026

Members Present:

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

Members Excused:

Robert Allen

Staff Present:

Rick Stubblefield, Executive Director

Others Present:

Darren James, MidAmerica Airport Director
Shanae Felske
Kevin Panovnpis
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 March 11, 2026, Committee Minutes (action required):

Chairman Sharkey called for action on the March 11, 2026, Committee minutes. Mr. Greenwald made the motion to approve the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Vernier. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business (Director's Report):

Mr. Stubblefield stated that Avina initiated discussions with Terminal Railroad Association (TRRA) regarding potential alternative uses for the East St. Louis property. The proposed concept, which did not include a rail component, was ultimately not pursued by TRRA. The alternative use under consideration involved development of a data center.

Planning activities for this year's Global Aerospace Summit remain ongoing. The event is scheduled to take place in August, with the agenda currently under development. The program is expected to include briefings from military and industry leaders, as well as a series of panel discussions.

Economic development efforts continue across St. Clair County, with multiple projects in various stages of progress. These include several initiatives in Sauget, a potential expansion associated with Cerro Flow, a project in Freeburg, and multiple developments in Fairview Heights. Additionally, two large-scale convenience store and fuel station projects are currently in development, with proposed locations in Mascoutah and Cahokia Heights.

Funding for homelessness services remains a critical concern, with projections indicating a potential reduction of approximately 40% in St. Clair County next year. Recent regulatory changes affecting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and housing assistance programs are also expected to have significant impacts. Areas such as downtown Belleville are already experiencing challenges related to homelessness, and an initial increase is anticipated as these policy changes take effect. Other communities, including Fairview Heights and O'Fallon, may experience similar trends.

Several municipalities are actively preparing applications for STAR Bond Zone designation. As previously noted, up to three projects within the region may be eligible for this funding mechanism. STAR Bond Zones are restricted to qualifying low-income areas and are intended to support developments that generate significant visitor activity, particularly from outside the region.

There were no further comments or questions.

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

New Business (MidAmerica Airport Director's Report):

Mr. Darren James reported a record-breaking March, contributing to a record year compared to the previous year. He also attended the Allegiant conference, where he met with the CEO, who expressed strong satisfaction with MidAmerica's performance. At this time, no significant changes to flight routes are expected. Allegiant's primary focus remains its merger with Sun Country Airlines, which has received tentative approval but is expected to take several years to finalize. MidAmerica is well positioned to benefit from this merger, particularly with the near completion of its new customs station.

There were no further comments or questions.

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

New Business (Military Affairs Director Comments):

Ms. Kimberly Huth was not in attendance due to conflict.

There were no further comments or questions.

Other Comments:

Shane Felske and Kevin Panovnpis of RWE were introduced. Mr. Felske provided a brief overview of a proposed battery energy storage project.

Adjournment:

Chairman Sharkey asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vernier so moved, and it was seconded by Mr. Allen. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously and the Committee adjourned at 5:14 p.m.