Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals

MINUTES
June 18, 2026

A regular meeting of the Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Thursday, June 18, 2026 at 6:00 p.m., at the Menard County Courthouse, Petersburg, Illinois. The meeting was called to order by Dan Robertson, Chair.

A. THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Robertson, Karen Stott, Steve Wilken, Steve Ozella, Chris Becker

MEMBERS ABSENT (note if excused):

OTHERS PRESENT: Zoning Administrator Joseph Crowe.

C. MINUTES

Minutes from the Thursday, May 28, 2026 meeting were presented for approval.

MOTION: To approve the minutes as presented. ZBA Member Wilken motion, ZBA Member Becker second.

ROLL CALL

__4___ in Favor: Karen Stott, Steve Wilken, Steve Ozella, Chris Becker

__0__ Opposed:

MOTION CARRIED

D. ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Zoning Administrator Crowe introduced the case by stating:

We have an application from Ms. Betsy Burris on behalf of Prairie Roots Schoolhouse regarding a special use permit in the A. Agriculture District, utilizing the category private school as an accessory to the principal use, and she's acting on her own behalf. I am seeking to obtain the change to operate Prairie Roots Schoolhouse on the property on Hackman Road in Athens. Zoning Administrator Crowe then presented a document of conditions to apply to the requested usage.

Public Hearing Opened

The board discussed sanitation and infrastructure. It was clarified that Sangamon County oversees septic and wells. The applicant confirmed the property uses city water. The public hearing was formally opened, and the applicant confirmed agreement with the proposed conditions.
Board members discussed provisions regarding events exceeding 500 attendees. These were based on temporary use provisions in the zoning ordinance, with a limit of 10 events annually for the school to balance flexibility and regulation.
The proposed enrollment cap of 50 students was discussed. The board confirmed that future expansion would require an amendment to the special use permit, allowing flexibility for growth.
The board debated whether the special use should run with the land. Concerns about unintended consequences led to a motion to strike Condition #25. The motion passed unanimously.

Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals Questions

Betsy Burris explained staffing plans, including background checks for all staff and volunteers. She intends to maintain a 1:10 teacher-to-student ratio and operate initially with one classroom. She noted limited capacity to serve special needs students at this time but plans for future accessibility improvements.

A motion was made and seconded to attach the revised conditions to the application, excluding Condition #25. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Robertson then closed the public discussion.

Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals Deliberation

Following closure of the public hearing, the board discussed concerns about enrollment growth and oversight. Members agreed the conditions provided appropriate safeguards.

E. DETERMINIATION OF ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals members determined the following and published their findings of fact.

1. Whether the proposed design, location, and manner of operation of the proposed special use will adequately protect the public health, safety and welfare, and the physical environment.

   Chairman Robertson stated: “On the first point, it reads, whether the proposed design, location, and manner of operation of the proposed special use will adequately protect the public health, safety, and welfare, and the physical environment, what say you? With the Board agreeing he went on, do you believe there is any exceptions to be found under that one? No. If not, we find that this special use permit application adequately meets point number one.”

2. The effect the proposed special use would have on the value of neighboring properties and on the County’s overall tax base.

   Chairman Robertson went on: “Point number two, the effect of the proposed special use, let me, I have the emphasis on the wrong syllable. The effect the proposed special use would have on the value of neighboring properties and on the county's overall tax base. I do not think that really applies”.

Discussion ensued by the members, “It's a 501C3. Yeah, is this, will there be a property tax on this, with it being a school? No. It's not a 501C3, I don't think.

No. So it doesn't apply to tax base one way or another. Nope, nope.

I mean, where it's located on Betsy's property, they already pay property taxes, land taxes. But for the building, a new building. Right.

It won't increase or decrease tax base. I'm talking about neighboring properties, though. Yeah.”

Oh, the effect of the proposed, yeah. Well, I mean, it's a two-part thing, the value of neighboring properties and the county's overall tax base. So no impact on neighboring properties, as you can tell. Yeah, no. Okay, so it meets that requirement.

3. Whether there are any facilities near the proposed special use (e.g. schools, hospitals, etc.) that require special protection or consideration.

   And lastly, Chairman Robertson discussed the last point: “Whether there are any facilities near the proposed special use, e.g., schools, hospitals, et cetera, that require special protection or consideration”?

   I'm not aware of that. Yeah, there are none. So the special use permit application meets all three findings of that, with no exceptions.

Member Becker motion, Member Wilken second.

ROLL CALL

__4___ in Favor: Karen Stott, Steve Wilken, Steve Ozella, Chris Becker

__0___ Opposed: none

__0___ Abstain: none

MOTION CARRIED

Public Hearing Adjourned

F. RECOMMENDATION TO THE MENARD COUNTY BOARD

Menard County Zoning Board of Appeals members determined the following and published their findings.

“The board tonight has unanimously passed an amended special use application to include the list of conditions with the exception of condition number 25, and we recommend that the county commissioners pass this”.

ROLL CALL

__4___ in Favor: Karen Stott, Steve Wilken, Steve Ozella, Chris Becker

__0___ Opposed: none

MOTION CARRIED

G. **OLD BUSINESS** – There was no old business to be discussed.

H. **NEW BUSINESS** – There was no new business to be discussed.

I. **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

The Zoning Board of Appeals voted unanimously to recommend approval of Burris 2602SU to the Menard County Board, recognizing that the Special Use Permit be approved with the exception of omitting item #25 from the attached conditions document prepared by the Zoning Office.

J. **ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

There was no Zoning Administrators report.

K. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at _6:32___ p.m.