

Minutes

Hardin County Fiscal Court Regular Meeting December 18, 2025 at 3:30 p.m.

County Judge/Executive Keith Taul called the meeting to order and requested a roll call vote.

Answering:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: here; Squire Larry Hicks: here; Squire Kenny Muse: here; Squire Aaron Pennington: here; Squire Kenny Saltsman: here; Squire EG Thompson: here; Squire Patsy Whitehead: here; Squire Chris Yates: here; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: here.

The Invocation was given by Squire Fred Clem.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Squire EG Thompson.

County Judge/Executive Keith Taul made opening comments welcoming those in attendance and previewing the agenda. He acknowledged the presence of West Point Mayor Richard Ciresi, Sheriff John Ward, and former Magistrate Bill Hay. He also recognized Gina Clear of the News Enterprise who is leaving her position at the newspaper and thanked her for her years of service.

Approve Hardin County Fiscal Court 12.09.2025 minutes

Motion to Approve by Squire Whitehead and seconded by Squire Yates.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.

Motion passed.

Informational Items

Department/Office Reports

Presentations

Clerk – Brian Smith

Written Reports

EMS – Mark Peterson

E-911 – Mike Leo

Planning – Adam King

Citizen's Concerns or Comments:

County Judge/Executive Keith Taul opened the floor for citizen comments. None were offered.

Ordinances/Resolutions/Agreements

a) Approve Hardin County Clerk CY 2026 Budget.

Motion to Approve by Squire Clem and seconded by Squire Pennington.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion passed.

b) Approve Hardin County Sheriff's CY 2026 Budget.

Motion to Approve by Squire Saltsman and seconded by Squire Yates.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion passed.

c) Approve Resolution 2025-249 related to amendments to the Hardin County Sheriff's CY 2025 Budget.

Motion to Approve by Squire Yates and seconded by Squire Thompson.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion passed.

Prior to passing the consent agenda, Judge Taul asked the magistrates if anyone wanted an item removed to be discussed separately. Squire Saltsman asked that Resolution 2025-243 be removed, and Squire Yates asked that Resolution 2025-246 be removed.

Consent Agenda

a. Approve Treasurer's Financial Report 11.2025.

b. Approve December Claims 12.18.25, December ACH Claims 12.18.25.

c. Approve November Payroll with Registers – (11.7.25, 11.10.25, 11.21.25).

d. Approve Resolution 2025-242 related to approval of Financial Transfers.

e. Approve Resolution 2025-244 related to approval of EMS Personnel.

f. Approve Resolution 2025-245 related to approval of Road Personnel.

g. Approve Resolution 2025-247 related to approval of Federal Equitable Sharing Program.

h. Approve Resolution 2025-248 related to approval of Kentucky Ambulance Block Grant.

i. Approve Public Works Committee Meeting Minutes 12.10.25.

j. Approve Emergency Services Meeting Minutes 12.11.25.

k. Approve Resources & Community Support Committee Meeting Minutes 12.15.25.

n. Approve Finance Committee Meeting Minutes 12.16.25.

Motion to Approve by Squire Yates and seconded by Squire Saltsman.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion passed.

Approve **Resolution 2025-243** related to approval of Solid Waste Surplus.

Motion to Approve by Squire Pennington and seconded by Squire Whitehead.

Squire Saltsman asked why this issue wasn't presented at a committee meeting, and why the trailer was being given away. Judge Taul stated that it is a very old trailer, and it didn't need to be on the books. He said they spoke with Meade County, and they were in dire need for it. He said Hardin County partners with Meade County on recycling, etc. Squire Yates asked if it was known how much it was worth. Judge Taul stated that he did not have that information in front of him. He said if there was a big concern it, could wait. Squire Clem said he's always in favor of helping our neighbors, and it does look like the cost of repairs may exceed the value. He said that in the future he would like to know the value before they decide to give something away. Judge Taul said he understands, and this was an oversight. Squire Thompson asked if there was a drawback to waiting. Judge Taul said there was not really, other than a small amount of insurance paid on it. Squire Clem reiterated that the main point was that in the future court should know the value. Judge Taul stated that he understood.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: no; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion passed.

Approve **Resolution 2025-246** related to approval of Engineering Personnel.

Motion to Approve by Squire Whitehead and seconded by Squire Hicks.

Squire Yates read the following statement into the record:

"We have had numerous discussions over the past several months regarding the GIS Coordinator position. Approximately a month and a half ago, myself and two other magistrates met with Judge Taul and recommended that this position be contracted through the Lincoln Trail Area Development District. During that meeting, we discussed that based on our conversations with the ADD, they could provide the same level of service our citizens have come to expect-while also saving the county money.

At that time, it was my understanding, as well as the understanding of the other Magistrates present, that this was the direction we would pursue. During that meeting, the Judge stated that he had already been in discussions with the ADD and would be bringing a contract to Fiscal Court for approval to provide GIS services. The contract was unanimously approved by the Court a few weeks later.

Since then, the Judge has placed the position back on the agenda for a vote to hire a full-time employee. Area Development Districts are a tool available to counties and are used across the state for a wide variety of services. With our budget being extremely tight and having promised

my constituents that I would fight against wasteful spending, I believe we owe it to the taxpayers to utilize every available option.

By contracting these services through the ADD, we have nothing to lose. If it does not work as expected, we can always revisit the option of hiring a full-time employee in the future. While the Judge has stated this is a full-time position, Lincoln Trail ADD currently employs our former County Engineer as well as our former GIS Coordinator and based upon discussions with them, I am confident that they can save us money.

Why not use every tool available to us? Why not look for ways to save our taxpayers money?

For these reasons, I will be voting no on hiring a full-time GIS Coordinator at this time. The financial future of Hardin County is worth fighting for, and every decision I make will be done with not only my district in mind, but the county as a whole.”

Squire Saltsman said he had a couple of questions. He asked how long we had been without a GIS position. The Judge said it was May. Squire Saltsman said it was June. Saltsman asked how many projects LTADD had done since they began a contract to do GIS work. Judge Taul explained that the former Hardin County GIS employee, now working for LTADD, has come in to work. He also said that the county engineer has worked some overtime on projects. He said he didn't have precise numbers on the jobs. Saltsman said that LTADD has done three jobs, about 40 hours of work. He added that if that had been a full-time person, it would have cost more and that person would have had idle time. Saltsman reiterated he questioned the need for a full-time GIS person.

Squire Whitehead explained the role of a GIS specialist. She said that contract work can be great, but it was her recollection that when fiscal court approved the LTADD contract, that it was a temporary solution. She stated that now that we have a candidate, we should fill the position. He said that the engineer has had to put in a lot of overtime hours. She said she didn't want to create a pattern to contract all kinds of county services. She said the contract had a cap of \$85,000 and asked what would happen if the county needed more. She said she would be voting yes on the resolution.

Squire Clem said that he has expressed that with the contract he has repeatedly questioned the need to hire for this position. The only answer he has received is that the position was needed full-time. He also said that there had been a revolving door in the engineering department. He said the contract was a good idea because the contractors know our county, have worked for our county and are doing excellent work. He said that since Vicky left, the planning department and 911 department each have their own GIS person. He said the contract saves taxpayer dollars and provides the services we need. He said that if the opinions expressed by magistrates in committee or in one-on-one meetings with the administration are ignored, we will find ourselves like today where an offer was made without support. He said we should continue with the contract. He said we need to concentrate on all expenses. He said he would make the decision based on his head, not his heart and will vote no.

Squire Muse said he agreed with Whitehead. He said in-house will serve the county better. He shared his experiences with contractors in his position at Fort Knox. He said because LTADD serves eight counties, and we may have to wait in line at times. He said that this position is in the budget and full-time. He said he would vote yes.

Squire Thompson stated he was conflicted over this, due to head and heart. He said it is his evaluation is that his heart goes with the offer, but remains conflicted.

Squire Hicks said the place he retired from used contractors, and it was a nightmare. They may say they will be there, but come two days later. He said he would vote yes, so that the county didn't have to wait on a contractor.

Squire Clem said that on the financial side of this he was very concerned. The new position would cost the county \$50 per hour, costing about \$105,000, but the contract would only cost \$85,000.

Squire Whitehead wanted it clarified, that the \$50 per hour was WITH benefits. The pay is almost \$29 per hour. Also, she said it was capped at \$85,000 but could need additional services. Squire Clem said it could be less than \$85,000.

Squire Pennington said he did his due diligence. Out of all the counties in the LTADD region, only two have an engineering department, Hardin being one of them. Out of all the cities in the LTADD region, only two have an engineering department. He said this isn't cutting someone's job because it isn't filled. He said that LTADD is clearly pro-Hardin County and located down the street. He said that the hiring process also costs time and effort. He said we should let the contract play out. He said he would vote no.

Judge Taul said that several members of fiscal court have decided to take over the engineering department and decide for themselves how we should proceed. He said he wanted to remind the court that it is the Judge/Executive's job to execute the day-to-day operations of county government. He said they have a tight budget and try to spend the money wisely. He said this position was in place under prior administrations. He added that just because service is available through contract, doesn't mean it isn't needed. He said his position is being disrespected and that the senior engineer is the real expert. He said the senior engineer is an important position and helps prevent the county from being fined. When his application came in it was impressive. Taul said it was expected that the engineer would have the staff needed to do the job. He said there has been no revolving door in the job, and only three engineers held the position in the last 20 years.

Taul continued saying that this budgeted position has already been hired, given her two-weeks' notice and will start January 5th. He said it was easy to say the work can be done by contract. He reiterated that the contract was supposed to be temporary until the position can be filled. He said this candidate can provide drone services. He said that Nick and Charlie with LTADD can come over, but he said that those two specific people may not always be available. He said his past experience with contract work shows that it is never a guarantee how things will work out or may require extensive training. He said that the suggested savings will not save money under the contract, but rather could cost more.

He said once he understood this would not pass, he questioned why there was an objection. He asked if it was to support LTADD's engineering department because it will not benefit the county. He said it may make sense for small counties to work with LTADD, but not for Hardin County. Hardin County is the largest county and has needs associated with growth. He said the only thing in the way of filling this position is those trying to manage the day to day operations of county government and gut the engineering department. He said that at the end of the day, there will be no decrease in cost for the government.

He said that the other person in the engineering department that reports to the engineer will be leaving and that position will also need to be filled. He said this action slashes the department of a good engineer who already works a lot of overtime. He said this decision will create a revolving door. He said that this will impact the work environment, and he will have to do damage control. He said it will affect services because there is a difference between an appreciated employee and one that is disgruntled. He said he would appreciate support rather than fight over this position.

Squire Saltsman asked to be recognized. He said after hearing how Judge Taul felt, that he did not appreciate the insinuation that his heart is with LTADD and not the best interest of the county.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: no; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: no; Squire Kenny Saltsman: no; Squire EG Thompson: abstain; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: no; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.
Motion failed.

Concluding Remarks:

Squire Yates wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He invited the public to attend the next meeting of the Emergency Services Committee.

Squire Whitehead wished a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone. She reminded everyone to be safe and hold their family close. She recognized Gina Clear of the News-Enterprise and thanked her for her work. She invited the public to attend the next meeting of the Resources and Community Support Meeting.

Squire Clem invited the public to attend the next meeting of the Finance Committee and the next Town Hall forum. He recognized former Magistrate Bill Hay who was present. Clem also offered congratulations to Gina Clear on her new position. He wished the public a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He reminded the public to neither drink and drive, nor text and drive.

Squire Pennington wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He also thanked Gina Clear for her hard work. He said that he wanted to add that it is easy to point fingers and pass blame, but in order to work together it is important to listen to the members of the court. If it's a split-decision, maybe more exploration is needed. He said he appreciated everything the Judge does for the county.

Squire Thompson wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He expressed his appreciation for Gina Ryan and her professionalism. He said it is a privilege to serve Hardin County, adding that this job is not easy. He asked the public continue to pray for our growing community. He stated that we must be guided by head and heart. When that is conflicted, it can be challenging which is why he abstained from today's vote. He urged more conversations and communication over the issues that come before the court.

Squire Hicks wished everyone a Merry Christmas and reminded everyone that Christmas is all about the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. He said it has been an honor to serve and hopes that 2026 will be a better year. He said he prays that personalities will get out of the way.

Squire Muse wished Gina Clear good luck on her future endeavors. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He invited the public to attend the next meeting of the Public Works committee.

Judge/Executive Taul invited the public to attend the next meeting of Fiscal Court. He highlighted the remaining holidays on the schedule. He then read scripture verse Isaiah 9:6. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Closed Session

1) Pursuant to

a. KRS 61.810 (1)(c) Discussion of proposed or pending litigation against or on behalf of the public agency.

b. KRS 61.810 (1)(g) Discussion concerning a specific proposal, if open discussions would jeopardize the siting, retention, expansion or upgrading of the business.

Motion to enter into closed session was made by Judge Taul and seconded by Squire Yates.

Voting:

Squire Fred Clem, Jr.: yes; Squire Larry Hicks: yes; Squire Kenny Muse: yes; Squire Aaron Pennington: yes; Squire Kenny Saltsman: yes; Squire EG Thompson: yes; Squire Patsy Whitehead: yes; Squire Chris Yates: yes; County Judge/Executive Keith Taul: yes.

Motion passed.

Upon returning from closed session, a motion to adjourn was made by Squire Pennington and seconded by Squire Thompson. Court was adjourned without objection, County Judge/Executive Keith Taul presiding.



KEITH L. TAUL
HARDIN COUNTY JUDGE/EXECUTIVE

ATTEST:


BRIAN D. SMITH
CLERK, HARDIN COUNTY FISCAL COURT