



Rail Authority Meeting

Thursday, April 24, 2025, 5:00 pm

Chicago Rockford International Airport auditorium

60 Airport Drive, Rockford, IL 61109

Minutes

Members Present: Paul Cicero, Chairman; Al Caruana; Pat Agnew; Leslie West; Mike Schablaske; Jake Castanza; Dianne Parvin

Others Present: Thomas Lester; Zack Oakley; Michael Dunn, Jr.

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, the meeting was called to order by Chairman Cicero at 5:05 pm

2. Roll Call

Absent: Pat Agnew

3. Public Comment

There were none present who wished to address the Board.

4. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of August 22, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Schablaske, seconded by Commissioner West, to **approve** the Consent Agenda.

Motion **approved** unanimously by voice vote.

5. Presentation

Charles Koontz, COO of Monarch Energy, gave a presentation on business development opportunities at the proposed rail-served industrial park. Mr. Koontz explained how the immediate opportunity in industrial site development has moved from sustainable aviation fuel to data centers. There is still some interest around SAF and momentum will return in time.

Mr. Koontz mentioned that there has been much more talk recently about investment in digital infrastructure. This sector comes with an unprecedented anticipated electricity growth of 50% in the coming years, which will strain utilities' capacity.

Mr. Koontz's proposed project is projected to consist of six million square feet of data halls, with an investment of well over \$1 billion. The project site would be located two miles south of the Chicago Rockford International Airport. His primary site will be located just north of Edson Road near the Omnitrax railroad, with the intent to acquire additional land to reach the 3455 kV



power line from the Byron nuclear plant. He estimates that \$78 million is needed to get the necessary power infrastructure built to accommodate the data site.

Mr. Koontz included a drawing of what the data center site could look like once fully built out. Monarch has site control of all the land shown in the diagram.

Mr. Koontz answered questions from the board regarding specifics of the project.

6. Action

a. *Vote on Resolution 2025-01*

Molli Naber presented a resolution to disburse funds from the awarded Megasite Development Program grant through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Commissioner Cicero requested amendments to the resolution.

Motion by Commissioner Cicero, seconded by Commissioner Parvin, to **amend** the resolution. Motion **approved** unanimously by voice vote.

Motion by Commissioner Castanza, seconded by Commissioner West, to **approve Resolution 2025-01** as amended.

Motion **approved** unanimously by voice vote.

b. *Vote on Resolution 2025-02*

Commissioner Cicero requested amendments to the resolution.

Motion by Commissioner West, seconded by Commissioner Schablaske, to **amend** the resolution. Motion **approved** unanimously by voice vote.

Motion by Commissioner Castanza, seconded by Commissioner West, to **approve Resolution 2025-02** as amended. Motion **approved** unanimously by voice vote.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Castanza, seconded by Commissioner West to **adjourn**.

Meeting adjourned at 5:48 pm.

Opportunities for public comment will be provided at all meetings. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the Region 1 Planning Council at 815-319-4180 at least two working days before the need for such services or accommodations.