

# VILLAGE OF CATLIN

Commission Form of Municipal Government    Adopted 1914    MEMBER ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

JUSTIN BARGO, Mayor, AUTUMN LANGE, Village Clerk 217-427-2136 Fax: 217-427-8118

109 S. SANDUSKY    P.O. BOX 627    CATLIN, ILLINOIS 61817

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Village of Catlin  
County of Vermilion, State of Illinois  
July 15, 2025

The Council of the Village of Catlin met in the Village Board room in regular session at 7:00pm with Commissioner Fred Rinehart presiding. Fred Rinehart called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and instructed Village Clerk Autumn Lange to call roll.

Roll Call:

Mayor: Absent

Commissioners: Fred Rinehart, Wanda Schmit, Ross Wilson and Kevin Kirk

Village Clerk: Autumn Lange

Also Present: Mike Stiles, Greg Phillips, Dusin Heckerson, Mike Sacre, David McGee, David Nicholson, Patty Jones, Robert Jones, Tonya Hill, Carl Hill, Kristen Cox, Jeremy Swinson, Crystal Swinson, Ethan Swinson, Penny McConnell, Mike Denhart, Nick Anderson, Lisa Comrie and various others

A motion was made by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Wanda Schmit to approve the agenda for the meeting, July 1, 2025.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

A motion was made by Wanda Schmit and Seconded by Ross Wilson to approve the minutes from the regular board meeting held on July 1, 2025.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

A motion was made by Wanda Schmit and Seconded by Ross Wilson to approve the bills as presented.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Public Expression:

Glenn Bressner, Lions Club – Was present to discuss the Annual Fish Fry on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, from 4:00-8:00. They will be requesting their normal street blocking and request a donation from the Village for the Tent Rental for the event.

A motion was made by Ross Wilson and Seconded by Wanda Schmit to donate \$1,500.00 to the Catlin Lions Club.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Before the remainder of Public Expression was opened, Commissioner Fred Rinehart made a statement. That statement is included in these minutes as Exhibit 'A'.

Lisa Comrie – Speaking on behalf of many concerned residents and recognizes that the Village has not received any formal permit applications, she is present to be proactive in the situation and asks the Village board to uphold their 1.5-mile zoning authority

Tonya Hill – Expanded on what Lisa Comrie stated and broke down a piece of paper that was passed to people at the meeting that was created by Sloan Anderson and is included in these minutes as Exhibit 'B'. She asked the board to stand with them after reading through some of the information.

Jeanie Church – She questioned why there was an article in the Sidell Reporter prior to when our meeting minutes reflected the same information and the board stated that that

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was information shared in the Catlin Township meeting which is separate, and they were informed when it was presented on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Monica Meharry – She expressed that she does not feel it was right for Dave Biggerstaff to write an article in the Sidell Reporter as a Village Employee, and it can be viewed as a reflection of the Village board members/employees versus his own feelings. She would like the article to be reviewed by the board and documented.

Scott Church – He questioned how much Dave Biggerstaff's wages were, and he is a salaried employee who makes \$850.00 a month. He was very upset with Dave Biggerstaff's actions at the previous Catlin Township meeting. Commissioner Rinehart said that we would not discuss matters of personnel, if anyone would like to submit a complaint regarding any personnel to please submit it in a written form to the Village Clerk.

Becky Miller – She questioned whether the Village Board must vote the same way that the Zoning board will vote when this matter is in their hands. Commissioner Rinehart expressed that they are not mandated to follow the zoning board's recommendations, but the board will take their opinion very seriously. She also questioned if Earthrise Energy has offered any sort of incentives to the Village. Commissioner Rinehart has expressed that Earthrise Energy has not offered any sort of incentives to the Village.

David McGee – He expressed that he is the Chairman of the Zoning Committee for Catlin Township and discussed how the Village Board would have to have a Super Majority to reject the Zoning boards recommendations which would be 4/5 voting members.

Sherry Marrig – She expressed that she tried calling Earthrise Energy and she has not received a phone call.

Bob Jones – He expressed that these zoning authorities have been in place for many years and fears what could happen to our community if we were to break the "backbone" that is put in place. He believes that this whole situation is fueled by greed.

After Bob had spoken, Commissioner Ross Wilson wanted to make a comment. "I will tell you the exact same thing that I told Sloan Anderson a couple of weeks ago. This Village takes this matter as seriously as Commissioner Rinehart had stated. Our children live here, your children live here, and we want a safe community. This is not a decided fact. We do not know what we are going to do. We want to make the best decision for you. Not us, it is not about us. I might not be here in 30 years. We are up here; we wanted to do this to do what is best for all of you. We do not have anything in front of us right now. We are not hiding from anything or running from anything. It really feels like in this community that we are. I am an honest man and straight forward. I am not a liar. If any of you think we are hiding something, that is not a fact. Some of the things that I have heard throughout this village are deplorable and it has been ugly and disgusting. I thought our town was better than that. Until there is something right here and someone talking to us giving us facts, we will do nothing. I understand being proactive, but our hands are tied right now. I respect all your wishes, thoughts, and opinions but until there is something in front of us, we can do nothing."

Monica Meharry asked if the board would put out a statement whether that is on their website, addressed in a meeting, etc. when we receive an application from Earthrise Energy that will go to the Zoning Board. The Village Clerk stated that yes, we would make a statement that we have received an application. Commissioner Rinehart let everyone know to view the website, view the agendas, view the meeting minutes and there is also a reporter from the Sidell Reporter who will report on it as well when the application is received.

Patty Jones – She questioned whether the board members were aware of the meeting that Dave Biggerstaff and Mayor Bargo had on March 12<sup>th</sup> with Earthrise Energy and they



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stated they had not known about that. She read through the paper that Dave Biggerstaff passed out at the previous Catlin Township meeting and that is included in these minutes as Exhibit 'C'. She expressed that she would have no confidence that Dave Biggerstaff would relay the information needed to the board.

Commissioner Wanda Schmit wanted to make a comment "He (Dave Biggerstaff) does not make the decision. This is a five-person board. He does not make the decision."

Mike Denhart – He expressed that he feels like questions in this situation should not be looked down upon but rather encouraged and if he had said the same things that Dave Biggerstaff said in the Township meeting, he would have a meeting with his employer or be let go so he wants the behavior addressed.

Someone who did not express their name had expressed that Dave Biggerstaff's actions at the Catlin Township were unacceptable. Commissioner Rinehart expressed that this matter would be a Catlin Township problem and to be handled with them. This same person had stated that they just want transparency from the board and employees.

David McGee – He told everyone to review the township zoning ordinance and stated that back in 1974 and on the first page of the ordinance book it says "To protect and preserve the productive agricultural land of Catlin Township"

Scott Church expressed that he appreciated how Commissioner Fred Rinehart was running the meeting.

Commissioner Rinehart: Commissioner of Accounts and Finance

Motion to approve 2 building permits by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Ross Wilson.

103 Martin Ct (Malia Pelszynski) – Solar Panels

103 E Center St (Christine Anglemeyer) – Solar Panels

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Motion to approve 1 building permit by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Ross Wilson.

122 N Paris St (Gerald Card) – Fence around Swimming Pool

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Motion to approve Ordinance No. 792 – Amending Chapter 112 of Village Code pertaining to Alcoholic Beverages (Updating the Sale Hours for our Liquor Licenses) by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Wanda Schmit.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Motion to approve the demolition process at 113 Jackson St by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Ross Wilson.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Motion to approve the condemnation process at 101 E Fleming St by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Ross Wilson.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Commissioner Schmit: Commissioner of Public Health and Safety

Commissioner Schmit asked the Chief of Police, Tad Beddow, if there was any difference at the park since the bathrooms had been locked indefinitely. He said that there have not been any issues since. Commissioner Schmit stated that we will keep them locked unless they are rented and a rental fee has been received.

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Commissioner Wilson: Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvement

Commissioner Wilson received a quote from Ribbe Trucking to Tar and Chip various roads within the Village and the total was \$91,667.50. To use Motor Fuel Tax funds for the project, we will have to work with Chad from Fehr Graham to follow all the requirements.

Commissioner Kirk: Commissioner of Public Property

Commissioner Kirk expressed that there is regular maintenance going on at the Wastewater Plant and they are still continuing to work on the minor chlorine leak. At the Pump Station, there was a problem with Pump #2 again, but it is now resolved.

Mayor Bargo: Absent

Tad Beddow, Chief of Police:

Motion to accept the resignation of police officer Samuel Bernardi by Ross Wilson and Seconded by Wanda Schmit.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

Dave Biggerstaff, Property Manager: Absent

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:54pm by Kevin Kirk and Seconded by Wanda Schmit.

Aye: Wilson, Kirk, Rinehart and Schmit

  
Autumn Lange, Village Clerk

  
Fred Rinehart, Commissioner

Comments for Board meeting Tuesday-

Before we start public comments-

I want to remind you that the zoning board procedure is posted in the hallway.

The zoning board members are also posted.

I want to make some additional comments before I open it up for public comment.

First, I want to say that the most important role of government is to listen to the concerns of the residents and all of the people impacted by our decisions. The Village Board takes that responsibility seriously. We have heard you and we will continue to hear you.

However, you need to understand that we will not respond to your public comments concerning the solar farm.

We will not agree with you or disagree with you.

To do so would be inappropriate and irresponsible at this time.

We have a zoning board that will meet and do their own thing.

They will collect information, listen to anyone who speaks at their hearing and make up their own minds up as to the best decision.

It would undermine the zoning board for us to make public comments before they meet.



The zoning board is another layer of government that we rely on to make our decision.

The zoning board is made up of 7 citizens who give of their time and energy to decide what kind of community they want to live in.

We do not take their guidance lightly.

For us to agree or disagree with you publicly would indicate to the zoning board our thoughts ahead of their own findings and would invalidate their purpose.

And that would usurp the process.

We will not usurp the process.

We will follow the process as it was intended when it was written.

Chapter 153.25 Section C item 1 of the Village ordinances reads "The Village Council **shall not have the power to grant a variation** until a public hearing has been held by the Board of Zoning Appeals, pursuant to notice and upon receiving the board's report with a finding of fact."

We should not and will not influence them with public comments before they have the chance to hold their own meetings and a public hearing of which you are invited to attend.

The village board members took an oath of office when elected--to follow the law. The law in this case is the village ordinances.

The board does not take that oath lightly.

We will honor that process.

The process will begin when Earthrise submits a permit application for a variation within the mile and a half. We have as yet not received any applications from Earthrise.

When we do the process will begin.

We would hope that honoring this process would garner some respect.

Let me also remind you that everything we do is in open session and listed on the agenda and if a vote is to be taken, it will be followed by the word ACTION, which is posted on the Village web site and on the windows of the Village office.

All action is done in open session.

With that said, I will open it up for public comment.

Please stand.

State your name for the record.

You have 5 minutes.

## **Why Catlin Should Honor the 1.5-Mile Zoning Setback for the Proposed Solar Farm**

### **What is the 1.5-Mile Zoning Authority?**

Under Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5/11-13-1), villages like Catlin have the legal authority to enforce zoning and land use standards within 1.5 miles of their boundaries.

This power is intended to allow municipalities to manage growth, protect their borders, and ensure that developments nearby do not harm the health, safety, or welfare of the community.

Any developer proposing a project in this area is legally obligated to comply with Catlin's zoning ordinances and to seek approval from this board.

### **Why Does It Matter?**

The 1.5-mile setback exists to:

- Give residents a say in what happens around their homes and town.
- Preserve the character and rural environment of Catlin.
- Protect property values and the local economy.
- Prevent incompatible or harmful land uses from encroaching on the community.

### **Environmental Concerns of Large-Scale Solar Farms**

Loss of Prime Farmland:

Vermilion County has some of the most productive farmland in the country. Solar projects permanently remove that land from food production for decades.

Wildlife disruption:

In some areas, entire ecosystems have been altered because solar projects didn't adequately consider their impact on wildlife corridors and biodiversity.

Soil and Water Impacts:

Construction and long-term maintenance can cause erosion, flooding, and contamination of nearby water sources. Changes to drainage patterns can harm neighbors' fields and homes.

End-of-Life Waste:

Decommissioning is expensive and often falls back on taxpayers if companies go bankrupt.

### **Legal and Policy Risks**

Approving projects inside the setback undermines Catlin's legal authority and sets a precedent that future developers can ignore local zoning laws.

Weakening zoning protections opens the door to other industrial-scale projects incompatible with Catlin's rural and residential areas.

### **What We're Asking the Board to Do**

We respectfully urge the board to:

- Uphold the 1.5-mile zoning setback.
- Deny approval for any solar development that violates Catlin's zoning authority.
- Protect our farmland, water, property values, and community character.



**March 12,** Met with Earthrise reps and Mayor Bargo for the first time, they had questions for us about zoning and building code processes. They shared very little about this project because they said they did not have all the land leases in place, they did not have a map at that time and only said it was going to be between Catlin and Tilton. They did share general information about solar.

**March 17,** Went to open public Vermilion County Wind Solar committee hearing to try and learn about solar. Spoke with Chairman Steve Miller about the potential project and how zoning would work, he said to speak with Attorney Andy Keyt, that was who the county hired to process wind/solar projects.

**April 9** In the open public Township board meeting, reported to the board about the proposed project but that no specifics were known. See attached meeting minutes

**May 12,** Met with Earthrise reps, they shared the projects proposed map and discussed specifics about the project, size, economics, etc. They also stated they had never had a situation where there was multiple zoning authorities involved and overlapping zoning districts and they were not sure how all that would work that it would have to be researched.

**May 14** In the open public Township meeting: Updated the board on the specifics about the project as per the 5-12 meeting, provided the map. See attached meeting minutes

**May 19** I Sent a picture of the proposed solar farm map to the Sidell Reporter so it could be shared with the public in their story.

**May 20** In the open public Village board meeting spoke about the project and shared the map, spoke of zoning issues as per discussion with Earthrise reps with multiple zoning authorities. See meeting minutes.

**May 21** Emailed Andy Keyt asking questions about how the zoning would work with a project being across multiple zoning authorities. See attached emails

**May 27** Andy responded with the following: David – Sorry about my delay here. That is an interesting twist. Generally, the villages would have the zoning authority in an unzoned county within 1.5 miles *if* they have enacted zoning over those areas. If not, it would revert to the County. That said, I think there is a few ways this could be addressed, but the law is not particularly clear on who controls between the two villages.

**May 31,** Spoke with Attorney Andy Keyt regarding zoning with the Village vs Township and multiple jurisdictions being involved. He said the Township would not have authority for processing due to the state law. He also stated he only represented Vermilion county on such matters and something official would have to be submitted to the county for him to be involved on behalf of the county.

**June 11** Sat in on internet meeting with Earthrise, Jeff Fauver, Catlin Village Zoning board chairman, and Mike Marron, Vermilion Advantage Director to go over questions Jeff had regarding the projects scope, zoning, and concerns that had come up from the public. See attached meeting minutes.

Copies of all emails to Earthrise on multiple topics are attached.



David Biggerstaff

General - #246									
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	ADMIN SALARY JULY 3 2025				\$4,245.77	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	ADMIN FICA JULY 3 2025				\$317.99	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	ADMIN UNEMP JULY 3 2025				\$12.24	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	ADMIN IMRF JULY 3 2025				\$178.86	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	POLICE SALARY JULY 3 2025				\$7,621.42	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	POLICE FICA JULY 3 2025				\$583.08	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	POLICE UNEMP JULY 3 2025				\$23.48	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	POLICE IMRF JULY 3 2025				\$386.01	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	SRO SALARY JULY 3 2025				\$1,680.96	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	SRO FICA JULY 3 2025				\$128.57	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	SRO UNEMP JULY 3 2025				\$0.00	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	SRO IMRF JULY 3 2025				\$151.80	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	STREET SALARY JULY 3 2025				\$6,846.68	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	STREET FICA JULY 3 2025				\$515.57	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	STREET UNEMP JULY 3 2025				\$14.96	
7/2/2025	Check	88845	Payroll Clearing	STREET IMRF JULY 3 2025				\$489.57	
7/15/2025	Check	88846	GoodPwr, LLC	Reimbursement for Solar Building Permit - 103 Martin Ct				\$90.00	
7/15/2025	Check	88847	Illini FS	Fuel Charges - July 2025				\$641.89	
7/15/2025	Check	88847	Illini FS	Fuel Charges - July 2025				\$584.83	
7/15/2025	Check	88848	Spesard Culvert Sales LLC	Invoice No. 12812 - 8"x30" Steel Culvert				\$483.90	
7/15/2025	Check	88849	Cintas	Invoice No. 4235611791 - Building Maintenance/Refill Supplies				\$138.00	
7/15/2025	Check	88850	DTI Office Solutions	Invoice No. 155785 - Copier Base Rate & Overage Charge				\$112.59	
7/15/2025	Check	88851	Ray O'Herron	Invoice No. 2421021 - Training Ammo				\$342.76	
7/15/2025	Check	88852	Vermilion Co Dept of Animal Regulation	Invoice No. 1004-2506 - June 2025 Fees				\$25.00	
7/15/2025	Check	88853	Oil Changers	Customer No. 41067 - June 2025 Car Washes for Squad Cars				\$55.00	
7/15/2025	Check	88854	Fehr Graham	Invoice No. 132209 - Project 25-1099 (Manhole Project Phase 1)				\$482.00	
7/15/2025	Check	88855	SPARKLIGHT	Account No. *****2867 - Village Hall Internet & Phones				\$510.12	
7/15/2025	Check	88856	Daniel Ribbe Trucking	Invoice No. 48032 - Village of Catlin Clean Up Day				\$657.86	
7/15/2025	Check	88857	Ameren Illinois	Account No. *****5041 - Police Garage				\$75.03	
7/15/2025	Check	88858	Vital Education	Invoice No. 25-456 - New AED for Maintenance Building & Sewer Plant				\$4,801.28	
7/15/2025	Check	88859	Ameren Illinois	Account No. *****8009 - Generator at Village Hall				\$65.58	
7/15/2025	Check	88860	Ameren Illinois	Account No. *****0012 - Village Hall				\$68.97	
7/15/2025	Check	88861	Verizon Wireless	Invoice No. 6117445014 - Police Phone Bill				\$152.04	
7/15/2025	Check	88862	Vermilion Advantage, NFP	Invoice No. 20376 - Annual Membership Dues Vermilion Advantage				\$500.00	
								\$ 32,983.81	
								\$ 0.00	\$32,983.81

[illegible]



Wastewater - #588									
7/2/2025	Check	6971	Payroll Cleaning	WASTEWATER SALARY JULY 3 2025			\$	3,243.85	
7/2/2025	Check	6971	Payroll Cleaning	WASTEWATER FICA JULY 3 2025			\$	248.15	
7/2/2025	Check	6971	Payroll Cleaning	WASTEWATER UNEMP JULY 3 2025			\$	1.47	
7/2/2025	Check	6971	Payroll Cleaning	WASTEWATER IMRF JULY 3 2025			\$	280.28	
7/15/2025	Check	6972	Illini FS	Fuel Charges - July 2025			\$	99.85	
7/15/2025	Check	6973	Hawkins Inc	Invoice No. 7132801 - Supplies for WW Treatment Plant			\$	60.00	
7/15/2025	Check	6974	Locis	Invoice No. 49643 - Annual Locis Membership			\$	1,296.50	
							\$	5,230.10	
							\$	0.00	\$5,230.10