

Lower Kaskaskia Stakeholders, Inc.
Wednesday, January 28, 2026 - Noon
BullPen Bar and Grill
201 Kaskaskia Street, New Athens, IL 62264

The regular meeting of the Lower Kaskaskia Stakeholders, Inc. was held Wednesday, January 28 2026 at BullPen Bar and Grill, New Athens, IL.

Joe Behnken, LKSI President, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. A sign-in sheet was available for attendees to sign. A total of 34 people were in attendance.

Minutes

Minutes of the October 22, 2025 meeting were distributed at the meeting. A motion was made by Norma Hall and seconded by Dave Holder to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Kevin Koenigstein presented the Treasurer's Report for December 2025. The checking account has a balance of \$7,138.78. The CD at North County Savings Bank has an amount of \$26,270.14, which will mature May 2026. The funds broke out include Operating Fund \$15,097.09, Barge Trip \$8,620.99, Eagle Fest \$2,328.00 and the New Athens fund at \$7,362.84 totaling \$33,408.92. A motion was made by Susan Harbaugh and seconded by George Obernagel to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried.

Election of Officers and Appointment of Directors

Norma Hall moved to approve the slate of nominees for the election of directors and the reappointment of officers. The motion was seconded by Dave Krebel and carried unanimously. Following George Andres' resignation at the December 2025 meeting, Brent Donovan was appointed to fill his position on the Board. The officers whose terms expired in 2025 will continue serving for an additional two-year term, concluding in 2027.

Vice President & Directors Reports

Governmental – Dave Holder

No Report

Agencies – Brent Donovan

Brent reported that the recent legislation for KRPD passed. On December 12, Governor JB Pritzker officially signed Senate Bill 1989 into law, marking a historic expansion for the District. The bill integrates the Southwest Regional Port District into KRPD, adding the townships of East St. Louis, Centerville, Canteen, Stites, and Sugar Loaf. Brent went over statistics, adding that KRPD is now the 3rd largest inland Port in the United States. KRPD now supports directly and indirectly over 16,000 jobs and the estimated revenue generated is \$1.03 billion. The total value added annually to the Illinois economy is \$1.73 billion. A signature was obtained for the loop track project at KRPD #1 from Lenzburg township, and bid letting will take place soon. The second entrance road and laydown project at KRPD #2 is near completion. As far as WaterStreet Bar and Grill, construction has been slow, but there are plans to open this spring.

Organizations - Jerry Phillips – No Report

Business - Dave Krebel – Dave reported that the Illinois FFA Alumni annual meeting was held in Springfield, Illinois last week, where \$20,000 was raised to support FFA programs and conferences.

Dave also attended a crop insurance update meeting, which included a presentation on crop carryover from one year to the next. The report noted that in 2024, corn carryover totaled 1.55 billion bushels and soybean carryover totaled 380 million bushels. In 2025, corn carryover increased to 2.23 billion bushels, while soybean carryover was reported at 350 million bushels.

At Large – Doug Sachtleben – Doug reported that on December 12, 2025, the Governor signed Senate Bill 642 into law, now known as Public Act 104-0452, which reflects assessment changes affecting senior citizens.

The legislation increases the income eligibility limits for the Low-Income Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption (“senior freeze”), allowing more seniors to qualify for a property tax assessment freeze. Beginning with tax year 2026 (payable in 2027), the maximum household income threshold increases from \$65,000 to \$75,000. Residents with questions are encouraged to contact their local assessor.

Doug also noted that farmland assessments are expected to increase approximately 15% per year for the next three to four years.

Corps of Engineers – Travis Little – Travis reported that Eagle Fest will be held on March 7, 2026, at the Jerry F. Costello Lock and Dam. The event will include two tents, vendors, and a food truck. He requested a \$1,000 donation from LKSI to help offset the cost of one of the tents. Kevin Koenigstein noted that sufficient funds are available to cover the full cost of one tent, which is \$3,491. Carl Tebbe inquired whether the New Athens fund could be used to support Eagle Fest. Kevin responded that those funds are designated for river activities and education in the New Athens area. Joe Behnken commented that the funds are not specifically restricted to New Athens. Norma Hall suggested reviewing prior meeting minutes to clarify how the funds are to be used.

A motion was made by Norma Hall and seconded by Carl Tebbe to pay \$3,491.00 for the tent needed for Eagle Fest. The motion carried.

Travis also reported that the river has been icy, with SITCO breaking up the ice, and river traffic is operating normally. The lock chamber has been cycled every two hours to prevent freezing.

The river level is currently 368.7 feet, slightly below the typical level of 368.95 feet.

He further noted that the downstream river culvert valve has been making noise. Engineers assessed the issue and determined that the seals will need to be replaced. The culvert valve will be dewatered next week so the seals can be replaced.

There is currently an opening for a lock operator position. Anyone interested should contact Travis Little.

Travis added that he is working with the State of Illinois to identify spoil sites along the upper reach of the river. The Kaskaskia River Project continues to receive funding for dredging north of New Athens. The next steps include determining the volume of dredge material, identifying placement locations and quantities, and establishing a priority list of spoil sites that need to be prepared to receive dredged material. Dredging could potentially begin around this time next year, depending on funding availability.

IDNR Report - Mic Middleton – Jesse Walter, Site Superintendent for the historic sites with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), reported that Fort de Chartres has several events scheduled this year, beginning with the Colonial Market Faire on April 11–13, followed by the annual Rendezvous on June 6 and 7.

He also noted that state funding has been secured to replace four privies at the Fort. In addition, the Pierre Menard Home was recently painted, and the steps connecting the Pierre Menard Home to Fort Kaskaskia were revamped.

September 11, 2026 Barge Trip – Anna Guebert reported the Barge Trip will be held September 11, 2026 and will depart from Hank and Lilly’s Water Street Bar and Grill in Evansville. Anna requested a planning committee be formed.

Old Business –

New Business –

Programs and Locations for 2026 LKSI Meetings – Joe Behnken reviewed the Programs and Locations for the 2026 LKSI meetings. The next regular meeting will be in March 25, 2026 for a Rock City Cave Tour in Valmeyer.

Approval of revised LKSI Bylaws – Kevin Koenigstein, Joe Behnken, Brent Donovan, Norma Hall, and Anna Guebert met to review and update the bylaws, incorporating several necessary revisions. Copies of the bylaws were handed out to the members. A motion was made by George Obernagel and seconded by Norma Hall to accept the revised bylaws. The motion carried.

Norma Hall announced the annual 23rd Kaskaskia Watershed Association Summit will be held March 2, 2026 in Carlyle. All are invited to attend.

LKSI membership dues must be paid by March 31.

Ed Pautler reported that a youth pheasant hunt is scheduled for March 21 at the World Shooting and Recreational Complex, and participants may register online.

Susan Harbaugh reported that several lots in the Red Bud Business Park are currently available and ready for bids. The park is seeking commercial and light industrial tenants.

Mark Wilson announced that a 250th celebration will be held on June 20 at Fort Kaskaskia from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Three bands have been scheduled to provide live music.

With no other business to come before the group, a motion was made by Susan Harbaugh and seconded by Mark Liefer to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Anna Guebert, Secretary