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For Immediate Release
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**Township Assessor Ends Employment of Chief Deputy Assessor
and Commits to Open Hiring Process for Staff**

Responding to concerns from the Township Supervisor, Mayor of Urbana, and the Township Board, the new Cunningham Township Assessor, Wayne Williams, has agreed to end the employment of Joe Meents and conduct a transparent hiring process for his staff positions. Williams will form a hiring committee that includes Cunningham Township Supervisor Danielle Chynoweth and City of Urbana Mayor Diane Marlin. Former employees of the Cunningham Township Assessor’s Office are welcome to apply for open positions.

“I have reasons for the decisions I made,” Williams said, “but I understand that it is essential for government officials to serve with openness and transparency. It’s critical for the people we serve to trust that we are acting in the public interest.” Williams also said it was important for Township officials to maintain a collaborative relationship with the Mayor and Township Board.

“The Supervisor and Assessor are independent elected positions, so neither I, nor the board, have ultimate authority over hiring and firing of the Assessor staff,” said Township Supervisor Danielle Chynoweth. “I am glad to see my colleague do the right thing to restore public trust. The role of the Township to serve low income people and provide independent property assessments in essential. And while people who have made mistakes deserve a second chance, in the case of Joe Meentz, it is best to wait until after his court case is resolved.”

Mayor Diane Marlin said she was pleased to learn that Williams was taking steps to address the situation. “People were understandably upset with this hiring decision and the process by which long-time employees were let go. I expect Mr. Williams will work to manage his office with integrity and maintain a high standard of service to property owners and taxpayers in Urbana.”

The Cunningham Town Board will meet with Township officials in closed session at a special meeting beginning at 6 pm on Monday, January 8, to discuss personnel issues.