

Minutes
Governor's Rural Affairs Council Meeting
Illinois Department of Agriculture
December 9, 2004

1. The meeting was called to order by Carolyn Brown Hodge at 10:05 a.m.
2. The minutes from the November 20, 2004 meeting were accepted (Galligos/Podeski).
3. Norman Walzer reported on the progress of Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation wind monitoring project. A combination of 7 tip-up towers and other sites will be set up this year to determine wind speeds at various locations. This information will be placed on the Internet in conjunction with the Dept. of Geography at WIU.
4. Ed Feser summarized a report (*Illinois Online*) prepared for the GRAC to set up a broad framework for providing broad band access in rural Illinois based on the North Carolina experience. The report recommended a central clearinghouse agency to promote and coordinate locally-based initiatives. The telecom rewrite should not limit the ability of municipalities to provide telecommunication services.
5. LtG Pat Quinn discussed a project in Northern Illinois that includes Northern Illinois University, Rochelle, and other cities to enhance service through a Northern Illinois Broadband Triangle. Access is provided using fiber through the Tollway System and this could provide an opportunity for IDOT to become involved in these types of systems.
6. The *Blackout Solutions*, a report by the Special Task Force on the Condition and Future of the Illinois Energy Infrastructure chaired by LtG Quinn, was discussed with thoughts about how to implement the recommendations. Everyone was encouraged to review these recommendations.
7. LtG Quinn discussed a collaborative project between OLG, Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Illinois Municipal League to encourage use of LED traffic signals. Grants were provided to cities to install these lights and another round of competition will occur. The lights reduce congestion on the Grid. Cities are encouraged to participate and applications were distributed.
8. Dick Breckenridge reported on the Illinois Clean School Bus Program designed to provide funding to assist schools and districts to reduce emissions from diesel-powered school busses. This program also provides educational materials to help bus operators reduce pollution.

Dale Crawford encouraged the uses of soydiesel to both support clean energy and to create additional markets for Illinois soybeans. State tax incentives could make Illinois a leader on this issue.

9. LtG Quinn reported on activities of the GeoAlliance, a geothermal heat pump collaborative effort between the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Illinois Elective Cooperatives.
10. Steve Long reported on the possibilities for Miscanthus, a crop that could be a renewable energy source for Illinois. This crop is currently being promoted by the European Union and three trial plots have been grown by UIUC. The first results are encouraging. This crop requires no pesticides and can help renew the soil. It can be harvested during the winter using available agricultural implements. This crop could also be another industry in Illinois.
11. John Colgan reported on proposed revisions in the LIHEAP to move from a flat grant to one based on percentage of income spent on energy. People would pay 10% of income for energy and the rest would be paid by LIHEAP. They would have to participate in an educational program aimed at conserving energy. This proposal will be submitted in January. (no handout)
12. Debbie Bruce discussed the CREP in the Illinois River Basin designed to reduce soil erosion and to improve the quality of the Illinois River. The USDA ran out of acreage allotted to Illinois. The state of Illinois could leverage \$45 million with \$225 million from the federal government. LtG Quinn recommended focusing on this issue in the next General Assembly to the extent of using bonding powers to raises the funds.
13. Rep. Jim Watson presented the results of the Rural Water Task Force. The federal government has reduced funds for rural and there is now a backlog of projects. There is an issue with lack of easements to cross township roads and this issue must be addressed if all farmers are to have access to quality water.
14. Marianne Nixa reported on project to map the water systems. As many as 172 water systems have already been mapped but there are a total of 973 systems left to do. This is especially important for places of 5,000 population or less. If 250 were done each year for 4 years, all systems would be mapped. This project would cost \$2 million and state support for this project is needed.
15. Director Chuck Hartke, Department of Ag, extended a welcome and briefly discussed issues on which the IDOA is currently working.
16. Marc Miller reported that the largest water pollution issue is runoff. The large number of hard surfaces increases the force of the runoff creating more erosion. He presented a model buffer ordinance that could help alleviate this problem, reduce sedimentation and related issues. He also discussed the scenic byways

program designed to increase nature based tourism. Illinois River Country, 8 counties in the Peoria area, are seeking to designate highways on both sides of the Illinois River as scenic byways. From \$50K to \$60K is needed to help fund this program that will help diversify the economy by bring additional tourism dollars.

17. Gary Miller reported on the Illinois Waste Management and Research Center intended to help businesses reduce the volume of waste discharged. The WMRC provides testing, training, and technical assistance on a variety of waste management issues.
18. John Record discussed the need for mobile health clinics in rural counties and reported on a possible grant opportunity of \$375,000 from the Granger Foundation to purchase vans in Franklin County. The desire is to have mobile clinics in rural counties across the state.
19. Mary Ring described the current status of the Critical Access Hospitals. Hospitals that will adjust the number of beds and length of stay qualify for higher reimbursements. The intent is to encourage more hospitals to join the program. IDPH is helping small hospitals participate in telehealth programs as well. This system improves education programming opportunities and capabilities. 33 of the rural hospitals are connected through efforts by IDPH, OLG, and SIU. Want to add 9 this year and 10 next. Will need approximately \$400K for this effort.
20. Michael Glasser reported on a Health Education camp held in Macomb that attracted 35 campers. Others are planned. He also discussed the success of the RMED program in attracting rural medical practitioners back to rural Illinois. Efforts are underway to continue the National Center for Rural Health and make it permanent.
21. Matt Hunsaker discussed the need for secondary schools to promote more science education to prepare students for health careers. There will be a meeting in Springfield to better connect with high school students and interest them in these careers. Especially important is Emergency Medical Services.
22. Rep. Don Moffett report that IDPH should be encouraged to offer the basic test for EMS certification rather than forcing applications to take the national tests. There is a growing shortage of EMTs in rural areas as well as a need to make it easier for them to be able to take the tests and to have more sites. The Farm Bureau also supports this position. House Resolution 1130 makes this request formally.
23. Sheldon Keyser asked participants to be more involved Illinois Rural Health Association activities to promote quality health care access. In January, IRHA

will host a conference on Medical Malpractice. He also reported the history of ambulance service that formerly was provided by funeral homes.

24. Carolyn Brown Hodge distributed materials reporting on the need for more AEDs and related the story of Edgar County where Dee Burgin launched a program in which contributors provided funds to have 43 AEDs in the county and encouraged others to join this initiative.
25. Mary Ring reported on the status of federal funds for AEDs. Approximately 144 AEDs were purchased in the first year of the grants. The costs have decreased dramatically. High schools must have them in sports facilities that hold more than 1,000 people by 9/05.
26. A brief report was given on the Rural Health Task Force.
27. Bridget McCarte reported on Project ChildSafe which distributes gun locks. Since 2000, 200 students have been killed by gun accidents that could have been prevented. The OLG has many gun locks available and wants to help agencies distribute them.
28. Bill Pluta reported on the Employer Assisted Housing program that helps people find housing near employment. This can include 1st time buyer programs and walk to work programs. Several programs in Quincy and Rock Island were discussed. Training activities are underway and the 1st annual Comprehensive Housing Plan is being drafted. LtG Quinn indicated that linking this type of housing to state business grants would help with this effort.
29. Carolyn Brown Hodge discussed the Earned Income Tax Credit program next. Sessions will be held this year in Quincy, Macomb, LaSalle, Aurora, Carnok, Kankakee, Effingham in conjunction with the Center for Economic Program. The program last year was highly successful.
30. Pat Molitoris reported on the status of food banks across the state. Forty percent of the clients are kids. The demand for food assistance has increased dramatically. Most of the banks are run by churches that maintain food pantries. There are nine food bank distribution centers across the state and LtG Quinn intends to submit a bill allowing a checkoff for these systems to increase funding.
31. Joe Dunn reported on the Paul Simon Poverty Summit. Many people attended and if all of the people who are in poverty were in one place, it would be the second largest Illinois city. The summit had regional breakout sessions and there will be a series of follow-up sessions in various cities across the state.
32. Nancy Bitner described the status of the Child Advocacy Centers. These centers allow children to be interviewed in a child-friendly environment and may mean that they do not have to go to court. States' attorneys have reported

that these centers have increased their success rates. Currently 17 counties do not have access to these centers. A tax is available at \$1.33 per \$100K EAV and five counties have passed this levy. The counties that do not have CACs are rural.

33. Bridget McCarte reported on the phonelessness situation in Illinois which is worse than most states (138,502 HH without phones) and described the Universal Telephone Assistance Program services. In Vermillion County as many as 6 percent of the households don't have phones and this can cause problems in medical emergencies. Efforts are needed to more fully utilize this service and extend it to more households.
34. Wendy Bell distributed materials regarding the MAIN STREET program that was started in GRAC in 1993. There are now 58 cities in Illinois enrolled in this program. A revised tiered system has been introduced and the first level does not require a paid manager but participants can still receive training and materials. LtG Quinn spoke about the benefits of the program.
35. Rick Chapman provided materials on the Illinois Facilities Fund and an update on the revisions in the Community Reinvestment Act requirements that could reduce the required investments by banks in communities. He expressed concern about the fact that other agencies may follow suit in reducing the CRA requirements.
36. Norman Walzer reported on the status of the annual IIRA, Rural Partners, GRAC community development conference. Sessions will be held on a diversity of issues facing rural and excellent speakers have been lined up. The conference will be in Peoria on March 9-10.
37. Norman Walzer discussed the Annual GRAC report that is sent to the Governor and the General Assembly. It describes recent trends facing rural Illinois, summarizes programs provided by member agencies, highlights the legislation supported by the GRAC last year, and identifies issues to be addressed next year.
38. LtG Quinn announced that the next meeting is likely to be on June 2 or 3, 2005.
39. The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:25 p.m.

(Respectfully submitted by Norman Walzer)