

Minutes  
**Governor's Rural Affairs Council Meeting**  
December 9, 2005  
(Illinois Department of Agriculture Building)

1. Carolyn Brown Hodge (CBH) opened meeting at 10:05 a.m. Lt. Governor Pat Quinn welcomed participants via conference call from Chicago. He cited the progress made by GRAC in rural Illinois and recognized that much is left to do.
2. The minutes of the meeting on 6/2/05 were approved (Pluta/Stein).
3. *All American Energy*. Carol Timms discussed efforts of Illinois schools to reduce energy costs and teach about local environmental issues. Meridian and Rhodes, Keith (Winnebago Co.) and Proviso (Maywood) schools are leaders. Abingdon H.S. has organized a consortium of schools to start a wind farm. Streamwood H.S. and East St. Louis are considering how Project Based Learning helps learning disabled students. Two teachers involved in these efforts have received special awards from the Lt. Governor.
4. *All American Energy Legislation Initiatives*. A handout was distributed with no updates or discussion.
5. *Wind progress in Illinois*. Chris Merrett, IIRA, presented five issues related to wind energy. 1) Why wind energy 2) Global perspective 3) Geographic distribution 4) 4 year program through IIRA 5) 2006 forecast of projects; working with school, conference on March 29, 2006. He explained how to obtain wind information on the IIRA web site ([www.iira.org](http://www.iira.org)).
6. *Illinois Finance Authority*. Jim Seneca, Illinois Finance Authority, discussed the Renewable Energy Development fund that had received a \$4 million grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation to lend to farmers and small developers to build wind towers. He also presented information on loan financing programs available (handout).
7. *Rural Health Task Force*. John Record, SIU School of Medicine, presented results of a Health Care Summit addressing the lack of accessible health care to rural residents. A task force was created to study issues of importance in improving access to health care for all residents, in providing adequate well-trained workforce to deliver health care, and in presenting findings and recommendations on ways to improve health care in rural communities. He gave an update on a mobile school health center project in southern Illinois, mobile school health center in and around Franklin Co. The van will be delivered in late January 2006 to provide health and mental health services to students.

8. *Update from the Illinois Rural Health Association.* CBH discussed the first Doc Hollywood Day, based on the movie, to honor rural area doctors. A draft of proposed EMS legislation facilitating delivery of EMS in rural areas was distributed.
9. *School Based Health Centers.* Kari Bruce, Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition, distributed a brochure on the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers with background info on school health; lack of health care for children, and how school health centers provide comprehensive health care for students. Currently 49 schools (20 in rural areas) offer school health centers. The Governor's All Kids program will be an asset to this effort. A 10% increase in budget is needed and there is no money to start new school based health centers.
10. *All Kids.* Gretchen Grieser, Outreach Bureau, Department of Healthcare and Family Services, discussed the *All Kids* program in Illinois, the first program in the nation to offer all kids comprehensive health care regardless of income or medical condition. There are about 250,000 uninsured kids in Illinois, 130,000 are currently eligible and the rest will be eligible in July. The current *Kid Care* program will become *All Kids*, with a stipulation that the child must be under 18 years old and live in Illinois. There are no income requirements but some families must pay a premium. The Illinois Farm Bureau is helping to reach the rural population.
11. *Mental Health Report.* A strategy for building a comprehensive for children's mental health care in Illinois will be discussed the next meeting.
12. *Update on child Psychiatrist in Southern Illinois.* Ashok Van, Executive Director, Choate Mental Health and Development Center, discussed the need for child psychiatry programs especially in rural southern Illinois. Most (75%) psychiatrists are in Cook Co. and relatively few are in the south. He highlighted the differences between psychologists and psychiatrists and the need for more money. Telepsychiatry will provide more opportunities. A Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship at SIU will provide some training funds and more training is needed.
13. *Licensing requirement for out of state doctors.* Ben Winick, Paul Simon Fellow, explained that out of state doctors must be licensed in Illinois to provide telemedicine services and this has been an obstacle to development of telemedicine. Legislation to amend the problem is under consideration.
14. *University of Illinois National Center for Health Professions.* Matt Hunsaker, UI National Center, discussed the shortage of oral health professionals. Several agencies are trying to cause more dentists to take Medicaid patients. A NIH grant is funding several projects including summer sessions for youth interested in the rural health professions and the Office of Lt. Governor Quinn is supporting this effort. Unfortunately, public schools are not pushing students to enter scientific fields and more work is needed.

15. *Center for Rural Health Update*. Marcia Franklin, Center for Rural Health, IDPH, stated that educational scholarships were awarded to 190 students and health professionals who agree to practice in underserved areas. IDPH awarded 17 educational loan repayment grants to dental and medical health professionals selected to practice in rural areas and J-1 Visa waivers were sought for 10 primary care foreign-born medical graduates to practice for a minimum of three years in rural or downstate communities. 52 small rural hospitals have converted to Critical Access Hospital status which enables them to receive enhanced reimbursement to support improvements to facilities and offer more services to meet health care needs of the area, increase patient safety, and to purchase medical error reduction programs. Grants were provided to purchase 148 AEDs funded through the federal Rural Access to Emergency Devices Program and 200 primary care provider sites were certified as Clinics.
16. *Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network*. CBH, GRAC. Of the 50 Critical Access Hospitals 18 still do not have telemedicine connectivity. One is a for-profit and doesn't qualify for most funding programs. GRAC is currently working with the ICAHN, USDA Rural Development, the Illinois Facilities Fund, the Illinois Finance Authority, SIU School of Medicine – Rural Downstate Health Initiative, and others on funding packages to help the 17 not-for-profits obtain telemedicine connectivity. The GRAC grant is \$2,000 to each hospital and low interest loans can cover the remaining costs.
17. *New Homeownership Opportunity Program*. Kay Gregg, Rural Partners, is trying to secure funding to increase homeownership which will increase local consumer spending and tax dollars, as well as community development, workforce development and resident retention. Numerous financing mechanisms exist so individuals can access whatever fits their needs. Need a strategic plan for rural areas in Illinois and RP will update its *Building a Brighter Future* plan. RP will send out calls for annual conference sponsorship.
18. *“Building for Success” the 2006 State Comprehensive Housing Plan*. Bill Pluta, Office of Housing Development Coordination, IHDA, discussed the Governor's Housing Task Force results. Last year IHDA provided 400 home repairs for low income homes, 180 homebuyer assistance, rural housing initiative 68 loans. 18 projects in rural areas created about 950 units for low income elderly and families were funded including projects in Morrison, Galena, and Bushnell. All programs on IHDA website. The IHDA plan focuses on realignment and coordination of resources from state agencies, long term homeownership and preservation of existing affordable housing. LtG Quinn wants to focus on housing in downstate communities.
19. *Earned Income Tax Credit*. Alan Kamhi. Center for Economic Progress, described free tax preparation services to low income families in Illinois with 250,000 families served last year. The efforts generated state tax refunds and

saved families from paying for services. Earned Income Tax Credit is important for low income families especially in rural areas. OLG provided funding for selected downstate communities and wants to increase the number served from last year and will return to Karnak, Macomb, Danville, Sparta, and other cities.

20. *Souper Bowl of Caring*. The GRAC granted \$27,000 to the Illinois Food Bank Association in June, 2005, for Hunger Awareness Day and \$25,000 to food banks making a total of \$129,000 given to food banks since 2004. It also promoted the Souper Bowl of Caring (held on Super Bowl Sunday) helping youth to see the magnitude of domestic and international hunger. There are currently about 2,000 food pantries in Illinois.
21. *"Fan club" Report*. Gus Otalvora, Paul Simon Fellow. A program created and funded by GRAC with the Community Action Association provides free fans to seniors in Illinois. In 2005, a \$10,000 grant started the program, but an early heat wave required another \$10,000 grant. More donations are needed.
22. *Broadband Deployment Council Update*. The Council will meet this afternoon and an agenda is attached. Broadband is important for rural economies and GRAC wants to make the Council deliberations part of a rural agenda.
23. *I-Connect*. LtG Quinn stated that Maine, California, Kentucky, Maryland, and Virginia provided laptops to all seventh graders in schools with dramatic increases in math, science, English and reading scores. I-connect initiative will provide all 169,000 public school 7<sup>th</sup> graders with a laptop. Funding will cover technical assistance for teachers as well as updating and maintaining computers. Funds will come from the current discount/commission that retailers receive for collecting sales tax from customers. 18 states don't have retailer collection fee. The plan is to reduce the commission to 1%, which is \$50 million annually to help school districts get laptops or computers in rural areas. So far there have been good responses in Champaign, Carbondale, East St. Louis and Chicago. This program helps build demand for internet connection plus helps students.
24. *Main Street-Wireless Grants*. Wendy Bell, Main Street Program. Two \$20,000 grants to implant Wi-Fi projects were provided. Quincy focused on public areas, offering free internet to visitors to draw more tourism. Mt. Vernon focused on downtown district working with Ameren.
25. *Grants for the Farmer's Market*. Wendy Bell. 26 Main Street communities received grants to attract more vendors to Farmer's markets. The grants have also influenced restaurants to buy locally grown food. These efforts allow local businesses to be open more often. Seven Main Street communities were added during the past year.
26. *Illinois River Coordinating Council*. Marc Miller, OLG, noted that the Illinois River Coordinating Council will meet on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Enrollment in the

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to promote conservation practices on farm land is now closed for this year. There was twice as much demand as funds would support. Silt from the Illinois River is being used productively elsewhere. A park in the Chicago area has benefited and some may be sent to the New Orleans area to help rebuild wetlands. Nature-based Tourism is a rapidly growing segment of the tourism industry and Illinois has much to offer visitors. .

27. *Rural Public Transportation Bill/HB2222*. CBH described plans to design a public transportation system building with a regional configuration such as RIDES to improve access to health care services in rural and underserved areas. The GRAC is spearheading this initiative. The hope is to help counties without access to rural transportation funding to obtain support.
28. *Illinois Farmer-Consumer Coalition*. Jim Braun, IFCC, described a collaborative effort with NIU that represents a network of organizations, both rural and urban, to serve social, economic, environmental, public health, union, organic food networks, and faith-based organizations. The IFCC works with social justice, clean environment, healthy communities, and an equitable economy.
29. *Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies*. Rick Chapman, INCCRRA, described a statewide organization in partnership with 17 child care resource and referral agencies to make early child care and educational options available especially in rural areas. INCCRRA is funded by Illinois Department of Human Services and other agencies. Its programs include: Great Start, Illinois Apprenticeship Program, Heads up Reading Illinois program, Illinois Director's Credential Program, Early Childhood Career Ladder and others. In the past, INCCRRA was not traditionally engaged in rural programs, but has seen the loss of child care centers especially in rural areas lately. More information will be provided at the next GRAC meeting.
30. *Green Government Council*. An effort is underway to make sure that all state government agencies practice energy efficiency, water sanitation and seek renewable opportunities for energy efficiency. The Green Government Council will meet next on December 20, 2005.
31. *Textbook Initiative*. Ben Winick, GRAC. Textbooks are expensive and an effort is underway to unbundled books for educational accessories that sometimes are not required in the classroom. An attempt will be made to cause the General Assembly to focus on this issue in January.
32. *Annual Conference*. Norman Walzer, IIRA, described the IIRA/GRAC/RP annual economic development conference on March 8 and 9, 2006. Several themes will include entrepreneurship, nonprofit and community foundation

management, information technology, and downtown development. GRAC members are encouraged to attend the meetings.

33. *Annual GRAC Report.* Norman Walzer, IIRA, discussed the annual GRAC report that goes to the Governor and General Assembly. The report will describe rural trends, programs used by state agencies to assist rural, and the GRAC agenda for the next legislative session.
34. *Promote Illinois Agriculture Products.* Lisa Groetsch, IDOA, described efforts to increase demand for agricultural products grown in Illinois. A cookbook is available as is information on the food pyramid and the availability of sources of produce within the state.
35. *Sewerage Discharge.* Marsha Wilhide, IEPA, noted that sewerage discharge is a serious issue in Illinois and discharge systems will be subject to an installation permit fee with a sample of the effluent submitted several times per year. No fees will be charged by IEPA. Marc Miller, OLG, will work on this issue.
36. The GRAC meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

(Minutes respectively submitted by Norman Walzer, IIRA)