

Minutes
Governor's Rural Affairs Council Meeting
December 13, 2006
(Old State Capitol)

1. Carolyn Brown Hodge opened the meeting at 10:30 a.m.
2. Minutes of the June 1, 2006 meeting were approved (Pluta/Bradford)
3. *Illinois Coalition of Rural Health Centers*. Kari Bruce reported that a supplemental cost of doing business bill passed which will help school based health centers and other social service agencies deliver services. The direct impact of this bill on rural health centers will be \$150,000 divided by 41 centers around the state. Currently, 25 communities still need to develop school based health centers so the Coalition will continue to seek additional funding to provide services to these underserved communities. There are currently two projects in the developmental stage: Murphysboro Middle School and TriCo School District. Cass County will open a school-based health clinic on Friday. Shawnee Health Service received funding from the Illinois Department of Public Health to expand mental health services.
4. All American Energy

a. Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Dick Breckenridge, Agriculture Rural Affairs Advisor, IEPA, reported on the existence of brownfield sites and landfills throughout Illinois as potential sites for business expansion. He presented a map of the 127 active brownfield sites and 87 landfill sites. An example of a landfill site being developed is in Christian County at Taylorville. Waste Management is coordinating a project that uses methane to heat and power a commercial greenhouse. Brownfield sites in Alton and Rock Island are being considered for site for ethanol plants.

There are 43 ethanol plant applications for construction currently in-house at IEPA. That represents about 4.1 billion gallons of ethanol; existing production is 670 million gallons. Of the 43 pending applications, 10 have been issued permits.

There is only one Biodiesel plant in Illinois at Stephan in Joliet and one coming on line at Gilman. IEPA has issued permits for five more plants in the state.

Darwin Burchhart, IEPA, reported on the E85 rebate program. The new funding cycle begins January 1. Information on the Rebate Program can be found on the Illinois Green Fleets web site: www.illinoisgreenfleets.org. Consumers are eligible for a rebate of up to \$450 per vehicle.

- b. *Biofuels Working Group.* Governor Blagojevich created the Biofuels Working Group with Lt. Gov. Quinn as chair. He reported on the October 17, 2006, meeting (minutes distributed). The Biofuels Working Group is interested in working on E85, Biodiesel, and Biomass Cellulosic initiatives. The group works with both production and distribution issues and is working with EPA and DCEO to promote the use of green fuels. The next meeting is December 13, 2006 at 2:00.

On December 14, 2007, a Sustainable Cities symposium will be held in Chicago. This symposium is planned to be held on an annual basis and will give ideas to municipal and county officials on green solutions that will lead to sustainable cities and counties across Illinois. For more information is available on the Web site. www.greensolutions.il.gov.

5. Telecommunications

- a. *ICC Grants.* ICC Grants were awarded to nine communities/agencies to enhance broadband deployment. Projects include the City of Sullivan which is using its municipal electric utility to help build out the local infrastructure for broadband. The USA Broadband project was led by the rural electrical coop. The Northern Illinois Technology Triangle (Rockford) currently runs from Rochelle to Rockford to Rockfalls and plans to expand. This is an important area to expand so that all Illinois residents have access to broadband Internet.
- b. *Broadband Deployment Council.* The Broadband Deployment Council will meet on Tuesday, December 19 (correction of date on agenda) in Springfield. The meeting is open to the public. The Council awarded funds through the Vince Demuzio Rural Broadband Initiative to Macoupin and Montgomery Counties to use the 14 state-owned towers in those counties to install nodes for wireless service. The Council is also partnering with the State Board of Education on the Technology Immersion Project to provide laptop computers to 6th graders including several schools in rural counties.
- c. *Wireless Mainstreet.* Mainstreet has awarded grants in Quincy, Mt. Vernon, Carbondale, and Belleville to create wireless zones in their main streets. Quincy's wireless main street extends into the Mississippi so that boaters have broadband access.
- d. *State Surplus Computers.* The Department of Central Management Services has collected 104 surplus computers, refurbished them, and distributed them to Boys and Girls clubs across the state. Microsoft has donated time to reprogram the computers so they are ready for use.

6. Healthcare

- a. *Heartsaver AED Trust Fund.* This program, established by the Lt. Governor's office has \$100,000 budgeted and received \$10,000 from Walgreens, \$150,000 from the Governor, and \$1,000 for individual donations. State income checkoff start this year so that taxpayers can

donate to the Heart Saver Fund. The checkoff must generate \$100,000 to stay active next year. Carolyn Brown Hodge distributed a list of schools that applied to the fund. The Governor's appropriation makes it possible for more schools than originally thought. The State has negotiated a contract that will allow purchase of AEDs for half the original price and provide AEDs to all the schools that have applied.

- b. *Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network*. Pat Schou reported that on progress made in using telecommunications in rural hospitals. These hospitals use video conferences for training and consultations and telemedicine to expand access to medical specialists. The next step planned is the expanded use of electronic record keeping.

7. Poverty

- a. *Earned Income Tax Credit*. Ray Olszewski, Tax Counseling Project, Center for Economic Progress, reported on the outcomes of the project for 2006. A total of 366 returns were completed for a total of \$186,020 in federal refunds and \$9,268 in state refunds in rural Illinois.
- b. *Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday*. Lt. Governor's office partnered with sites that do Super Bowl projects across the state. The Lt. Governor awarded a \$24,000 capacity building grant to the Illinois Food Bank Association.
- c. *Fan Club*. GRAC awarded \$10,000 to the Illinois Community Action Agencies to provide fans during the hot summer months to low income residents of Illinois. The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services matched the award.
- d. *Extreme Poverty Campaign*. Joe Dunn, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition for Community Services, reported on the Extreme Poverty Campaign. A campaign to have Freedom from Poverty designated as a human right was kicked off on Monday in Chicago. The Coalition will host 16 action forums to move from poverty to opportunity throughout the state. The first one is scheduled for January 27 at the United Methodist Church in Vienna and will focus on the seven southern counties. The forum is open to anyone interested in attending.

8. Housing

- a. *Update from the Illinois Housing Development Authority*. Jennifer Novak and Bill Pluta, Housing Coordination Services, IHDA, reported that Executive Order 2318 became law in June and continues the Illinois Housing Taskforce to the year 2016. The Lt. Governor serves on that Taskforce which will continue to publish comprehensive housing plans. The next report of the Taskforce is due January 2. This year IHDA worked with the Department of Human Services and the Department on Aging to provide funding for a home modification pilot project. Some of the counties receiving funds were Adams, Brown, Henderson, Jackson, Jefferson, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Perry, Pike, Randolph, Schuyler, and Warren counties. IDHA is supporting a Supportive Housing Institute

through the Corporation for Supportive Housing to obtain housing with appropriate services in underserved areas of the state. The Rental Housing Support Program is due to begin soon. This program will fill the gap in housing for those who cannot afford housing under the existing programs.

9. Transportation

- a. *Human Services Transportation Plan.* Dave Spacek and Erica Interrante, Illinois Department of Transportation, reported on the new federal mandate for human services transportation coordination. This requires rural areas and small urban areas to have a coordinated human services coordination plan to be eligible for some federal transportation funding. This is an opportunity for the state to examine rural transportation infrastructure in a much broader sense than in the past. There are significant gaps in transportation especially in central and western Illinois. An IDOT goal in the next several years is to fill those gaps in rural transportation. The plan focuses on low income, elderly, and disabled transportation dependent individuals in rural areas. The key to the requirements is that initiatives must come from locally developed plans.

IDOT is working to set up a rural planning infrastructure for rural transportation. The strategy includes three parts. Part 1 involves a series of public meetings to gather input. Part 2 involves the hiring of regional coordinators funded with federal funds and the creation of local review and coordination committees. Part 3 involves preparing a template for local regions to use in developing their plans, oversight of the plans, and coordination of the projects. IDOT plans to begin hiring the regional coordinators in January and begin reviewing projects this summer.

10. Rivers

- a. *Savanna Riverfront Improvement.* Hero Tamerling, Illinois Department of Human Services, and Bill Lease, mayor of Savanna, reported on efforts in Savanna to improve its riverfront and take advantage of its potential for recreation and tourism. This effort was an outgrowth of work done as a part of a TEAM Illinois initiative working with the MAPPING program at the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. One of the most exciting outcomes of this effort is the beginning of the development of a bioenergy resource site which will include a 105 million gallon corn to ethanol plant. Also in planning is a Cellulosic plant. Plans for the riverfront include construction of a boat launch facility, expansion of day trip docking, completion of the Great River Trail Bike Path, relocation of barge loading and sewage treatment facilities, extensive beach areas, redevelopment of the marina and entertainment and recreation areas.
- b. *Mississippi Coordination Council.* The Lt. Governor reported that he chairs the new coordinating council has been formed for the Mississippi.

11. Other business

- a. *Services for rural elderly.* AARP held 17 listening sessions around the state to allow legislative staff to hear directly from older residents about their needs for an acceptable quality of life. While many issues are common to both rural and urban seniors, rural seniors reported significant challenges not reported in urban areas. The Lt. Governor commented that it is important that the GRAC reach out to AARP to insure that the needs of rural seniors are met.
- b. *Agricultural and Rural Community Bond Program.* Glen Semple, Farm Credit Services, reported on a new pilot project that allows Farm Credit Services to extend financing to non-farm profit and nonprofit businesses, municipalities, and other entities involved in rural communities.
- c. *Update on Rural Partners.* Kay Gregg, Rural Partners, reported on the Rural Partners' Home Ownership Program that allows for the construction of affordable housing by bringing together the resources of several GRAC member agencies. The Human Patient Simulator is a product that comes out of the University of Illinois – School of Medicine in Peoria. The Simulator is used to train rural first responders. Twenty-nine providers have been trained to date.
- d. *Growing Latino Population in rural Illinois.* Claudia Fabian, Outreach Specialist, Latino Coalition for Prevention, reported that the Latino children are the fastest growing group in Illinois. In 2005, 20 percent of children in Illinois are Latino. Some small towns have much higher Latino populations than average; in Beardstown, 35 percent of school children were Latino and in Arcola, 52 percent of kindergarten children were Latino last year. The Latino Coalition for Prevention works to build capacity of Latino residents in Illinois.
- e. *Annual Report/Conference.* Karen Poncin, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, reported that work is progress on the Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly. The report includes information on the current conditions and issues in Illinois and documents efforts of GRAC member agencies to address these issues. The Annual Community Economic Development Conference will be on March 7 and 8 in Peoria, Illinois. The conference will focus on entrepreneurial and innovations approaches to rural community and economic development.
- f. *Looking for Lincoln.* Nicky Stratton, Looking for Lincoln Coalition, reported that the Coalition has planned a series of legacy projects at each of the debates sites. This initiative will allow these debate sites to have permanent interpretive programs.

12. Handouts.

- a. Draft of the joint resolution of the Lincoln/Douglas debates reenactment for 2007-08 first introduced in the House and then in the Senate.
- b. Rural Water Task Force report

13. The next meeting of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council will be in June.