

Macoupin County Interagency Meeting
Wednesday, July 9, 2008

The Macoupin County Interagency Group met on Wednesday, July 9, 2008, at the West Central Development Council/Job Center Meeting Room located at 116 South Plum, Carlinville. The meeting was called to order by President Reggie Byots at 9:15 a.m. Since there were several new members in attendance, Ms. Byots explained that the main purpose for our quarterly meetings basis was to share information, coordinate activities, and provide updates on programs and services available in Macoupin County.

Tom Spears, AFL-CIO - Thomass@ilafl-cio.org Mr. Spears is the Member Assistance Representative for the Illinois AFL-CIO in central Illinois. He assists individuals who are displaced from their jobs due to a closing or lay-off, providing information and referral to education, training and re-employment. In Macoupin County, he has been working with workers from Monterey Coal, Freeman Crown II, Accu-Data, and Dana/Affinia. He introduced three other individuals who are working as Peer Counselors assisting those affected by the coal mine closings, Paul Perrine, Scott Thomas, and Jim Daugherty.

Paul Perrine, Retired Crown II Coal Mine, Peer Counselor Mr. Perrine is a temporary employee of the IL AFL-CIO who works with displaced miners from the Freeman Crown II Coal Mine. He reported that several of the miners have been called back to work at the Farmersville Mine, while others are having a difficult time finding jobs in this tough economy. He is located in Springfield at the UMW Office.

Scott Thomas, Peer Counselor, Monterey Coal lindathomas15@hotmail.com Mr. Thomas is one of the IL AFL-CIO Peer Counselors who provides assistance to displaced miners from the Monterey Coal Mine. He is located at the Job Center in Litchfield. He has been helping miners enroll in training programs and assisting with their job search.

Jim Daugherty, Peer Counselor, Monterey Coal Mr. Daugherty is an AFL-CIO Peer Counselor who provides employment and training assistance to displaced miners. He is currently working at the Job Center in Carlinville. He reported that many of the miners have completed their training and are fortunate to be finding jobs. Many are now working as HVAC, have their CDL and driving trucks, and some are completing their training in other vocations, i.e., health care, plumbing, electrical.

Marilyn Lowe, Macoupin County Public Health Safe Families mlowe@mcphd.net Ms. Lowe reported on an upcoming Golf Tournament to be held at Timbered Lakes in Staunton on September 19, 2008. The funds from this event will be used to assist with costs associated helping individuals in crisis due to domestic violence. She also is a member of the Carlinville Ladies Association and outlined some of the civic and charitable activities that this group can assist with, including help with GED testing payment.

Dan Hauter, Dept. of Children and Family Services Daniel.hauter@illinois.gov Mr. Hauter reported that DCFS was preparing for the re-accreditation process which is conducted by the New York City Council on Accreditation (COA). The COA will be visiting various sites in the Central Region (Christian, Macoupin, Montgomery, Greene,

Jersey, Calhoun) as well as the Springfield office to ensure they are operating appropriately. He also reported that the Carlinville Office is supposed to be getting a new Case Worker which would fill their vacancy. He also discussed some of the challenges that his staff face when providing services while being understaffed, along with "summer issues" i.e., reports of small children left alone and unattended for long periods of time, children from divorced parents who are away visiting and the problems that develop as they transition back to the area, issues with children babysitting other children, etc., etc.

Joe Broers, Illinois Valley Economic Development Corporation
ivedcbroers@frontiernet.net

Mr. Broers updated the group on two new "Summer Cooling Programs" being operated by IVEDC. The first program is similar to the LIHEAP program in that it provides financial assistance in the amount of \$150 to those in need, targeting low-income senior citizens, families with infants, and households who have a disabled/handicapped member in the residence. This program will serve approximately 1,000 families in the service area covered by IVEDC. The second program is sponsored by Ameren and is for "all electric" households. Eligible customers are those who are spending 10% of their income on utilities. These customers are eligible to receive up to \$1,800 per year. More details of this program (PIP – Percentage of Income Payment) will be forth coming as brochures are currently being prepared. He also informed the group that IVEDC is recruiting children for the Head Start Program for the Carlinville area and the area north of Carlinville. Head Start provides educational programs for children ages 3-5 years old.

Jeff Johnson, Federated Church of Carlinville federatedchurch@frontiernet.net Mr. Johnson reported on several community service activities that his church has been involved in, including the "Take it to the Town" program. This one-day volunteer activity provided clean-up, fix-up, paint-up services in Carlinville. He commented on the need for positive actions within the community and the good feeling that volunteers get from helping others. He announced that his congregation is ready and willing to help the various human service agencies across Macoupin County.

Larry Pfeiffer, Regional Office of Education lpfeiffer@roe40.k12.il.us Mr. Pfeiffer briefly discussed the Regional Office of Education area of service, Calhoun, Greene, Jersey and Macoupin and some of the responsibilities of the ROE. He then discussed the Anti-Meth Coalition and expressed his thanks to Ms. Paula Campbell who has been working hard on securing a grant for the group. The grant funds will be used to continue to spread the word on the dangers of Meth. The application that was submitted was similar to the Montana "Paint the State" project. Once the funds are received, the Anti-Meth Coalition hopes to get students from across Macoupin County to take part in the anti-Meth theme... Not Even Once. This theme was adopted because of the highly addictive drug, one time use and the individual may be addicted for life. Students will be putting this slogan on posters, billboards, buildings, barns, etc., etc., etc.... getting the word out to all that may be thinking about trying the drug. He also informed the attendees that 176 students in the region earned their GED this year and a grant for Teacher Mentoring had been secured.

Lonie Mizeur, Illinois Health Connect lmizeur@automated.health.com Ms. Mizeur provided information on the Illinois Health Connect Program and the need to select a

Primary Care Provider. This new program is for individuals and families who are have HFS or All Kids Medical Cards. She informed the attendees that she had brochures to explain the Illinois Health Connect Program.

Linda Montgomery, Farm Resource Center frc1@mchsi.com Ms. Montgomery is the Farm Resource Center representative serving all areas of Illinois except for Chicago. The FRC provides rural individuals and families with counseling and crisis intervention services, stress management, suicide prevention, and disaster response assistance. She reported that the FRC is an outreach program that responds to individuals in their home or a public place at their convenience. Ms. Carol Childers is the Macoupin County Outreach Worker.

Ginny Ziglar, Macoupin County Sheriff's Office gziglar@frontiernet.net Ms. Ziglar is the Administrative Assistant at the Macoupin County Sheriff's Office. She has been preparing an application to get the Macoupin County Courthouse on the National Register and another application to get funding to do much needed repairs in and around the Courthouse.

Don Albrecht, Macoupin County Sheriff daalbrecht@frontiernet.net Sheriff Albrecht updated the attendees on several issues including staffing the Department to provide 50,000 citizens with crime protection, cutting down on overtime, and maintaining a budget. He updated the group on the Anti-Meth Coalition and the strides that have been made in curtailing the use of Meth. This is due to both educating the public and from the enforcement of new laws to limit the sale of medicines that are used to make Meth. He briefly discussed some of the problems that the recent weather/flooding has caused with regard to traffic, road problems and some power outages.

Vicki Lubrant, WDCD/The Job Center Vicki.lubrant@west-central.org Ms. Lubrant informed the group that the Job Center would be submitting an application for a Flood Recovery Grant to assist with clean-up activities in Calhoun and Jersey Counties. The program is slated to begin in late-July and possibility run from 4-12 weeks. Individuals who are displaced due to flooding or other displaced workers are encouraged to apply for the temporary jobs. The tentative rate of pay is \$12/hour and it is planned that the Jersey County Highway Dept. and Calhoun County Highway Dept. will be in charge of the workers. Workforce Development Week will be celebrated from August 25, 2008 through Friday, August 29, 2008. The Job Centers in LWA #21 are planning customer events along with promoting the new Illinois Work Net website. She asked if any attendees would be interested in becoming an Illinois Work Net Advisor. The training is done on-line and takes 3-5 hours to complete. If interested, please contact Dana Niehaus at the Job Center to enroll. Lastly, she briefly discussed the meetings that are being held in Macoupin to implement a Rural Public Transportation System. Mr. Kent Tarro and the Macoupin County Health Department are the leaders in this undertaking and committees are currently being formed to implement the program.

Reggie Byots, Macoupin County Housing Authority

regina@teamhousingcenter.com

Ms. Byots informed the group that the Housing Authority currently is responsible for housing in nine towns in Macoupin County. All units are full and individuals/families needing housing are put on a waiting list. The Village at Morse Farms (Supportive Living Center) is also full. This center provides three full meals a day, laundry service, cleaning, and limited care to its residents. The MCHA is working on a home ownership project that will bring 12 new homes to the area. They are hopeful that the agency will receive a \$2.5 million grant from Rural Development to help with the start-up and down payment for qualified families.

HAVE A GREAT REST OF THE SUMMER.... SEE YOU IN OCTOBER.....

The next meeting of the Macoupin County Interagency Team is scheduled for Wednesday, October 8, 2008, at 9:00 a.m. , at the WCDC/Job Center, 116 South Plum, Carlinville, IL.

Vicki Lubrant
Secretary

Carlinville Community Unit School District # 1

Board of Education

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Administrative Office

18456 Shipman Rd.
Carlinville, IL 62626
<http://www.carlinvilleschools.net>

Superintendent

Michael J. Kelly
Phone 217.854-9823
Fax 217.854-2777

July 2, 2008

Andrew Manar, Chairman
Macoupin County Board
215 South East Street
Carlinville, IL 62626

Dear Chairman Manar:

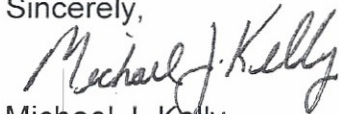
At the June 30th, 2008 Special Meeting of the Carlinville C.U.S.D. #1 Board of Education, the Board of Education voted 6-0 to pass the attached resolution concerning the County School Facility Occupation Tax. It is the hope of the Board of Education that other school districts in the County will also pass similar resolutions. If the Board and I understand the law governing the tax correctly, the County needs school districts representing fifty-one percent of the school children in Macoupin County to pass similar resolutions. When and if the other school districts pass resolutions in support of the tax, this issue will be presented to the public at the November election.

The Board of Education decided to move on this resolution after three separate debates. Like the County Board, the Carlinville C.U.S.D. #1 Board of Education is concerned with any negative impact new taxes might have on the people of this County. At the same time, this tax could possibly ease some property tax issues. However, the Board's strongest reason to move forward with this tax was to secure much needed revenue for the school districts in our area.

Most importantly, the Board is aware that the only action that they have taken is to possibly allow the public to make its own decision over the issue of an additional sales tax for schools. If other local districts do not pass similar resolutions, the Board of Education realizes that the possibility of this sales tax is a dead issue.

If there is any additional information required from Carlinville C.U.S.D. #1, please give me a call or drop me an e-mail. I will try to gather any additional documentation that you need.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Kelly
Superintendent

"Believing that a quality public education system benefits the entire community, the mission of Carlinville CUSD#1 is to provide students safe educational opportunities to reach their fullest potential as a contributing member of an ever-changing society."



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 17, 2008

CONTACTS:

Brian Williamsen 217/782.7355

Jeff Squibb (Ag) 217/558.1546

Governor Blagojevich's Request for Agricultural Disaster Declaration Approved

Declaration will assist farmers in 91 Illinois counties

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced federal disaster assistance is available to help Illinois farmers who suffered crop losses, because of excessive rain and flooding this spring.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has granted the Governor's request to designate 74 Illinois counties as natural disaster areas. The designation qualifies farmers in those counties and 17 contiguous counties for USDA assistance, including low-interest emergency loans.

"High grain prices will help offset production losses for those farmers who were fortunate enough to get their crops in the ground after their fields dried out, but thousands of acres across Illinois were unsalvageable," said Governor Blagojevich. "The loans that this declaration triggers will help those farmers who weren't able to plant a crop. They can be used not only to pay production costs, but also to refinance existing debt and cover essential family living expenses."

The January through June period this year is the wettest on record in Illinois. Precipitation, which has been above average every month, totaled 27.7 inches the first half of the year, or 8.3 inches above average. Only 1998 started out with comparable precipitation, with 27.2 inches.

According to USDA's June Acreage Report, 1.3 million acres of Illinois corn and soybeans were flooded. That figure represents about 6 percent of the total planted acreage in the state. Some flooded fields likely were re-planted. USDA currently is surveying farmers and will publish updated statistics in its August Crop Report.

- more -

The 74 counties declared as primary disaster areas are:

Adams	Effingham	Lee	Randolph
Alexander	Fayette	Logan	Richland
Bond	Ford	Macon	Rock Island
Brown	Franklin	Madison	Saline
Calhoun	Fulton	Marion	Sangamon
Carroll	Gallatin	Mason	Schuyler
Cass	Greene	Massac	Scott
Champaign	Hamilton	McDonough	St. Clair
Christian	Hancock	McLean	Stephenson
Clark	Hardin	Menard	Union
Clay	Henderson	Monroe	Vermilion
Clinton	Henry	Montgomery	Wabash
Coles	Iroquois	Morgan	Washington
Crawford	Jasper	Moultrie	Wayne
Cumberland	Jefferson	Perry	White
DeWitt	Jersey	Piatt	Whiteside
Douglas	Jo Daviess	Pike	Williamson
Edgar	Johnson	Pope	
Edwards	Lawrence	Pulaski	

The 17 contiguous counties approved for disaster assistance include:

Bureau	LaSalle	Peoria	Winnebago
DeKalb	Livingston	Shelby	Woodford
Jackson	Macoupin	Stark	
Kankakee	Mercer	Tazewell	
Knox	Ogle	Warren	

USDA was unable to immediately determine production losses in Boone, Cook, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties. A decision on their eligibility for assistance will be made after the fall harvest.

Farmers who believe they may qualify for disaster assistance should contact their county Farm Service Agency office. Staff in county Farm Service Agency offices can verify whether producers have crops that are eligible for emergency funds. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and applicant's repayment ability.

UNITED COUNTIES COUNCIL OF ILLINOIS

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WHITESIDE
TONY ARDUINI

July 24, 2008

Dear County Board Chairman and Board Members:

On Monday, August 18, 2008 we are proud to help sponsor an educational seminar for your benefit. We will begin at 5:30 P.M., at the Brass Door Restaurant, 527 South Main Street in Carrollton. (Directions included below)

The two topics to be covered are of interest to every county, regardless of size –

- Legal Liability Your County Faces Today – and Its Costs to Your County.
- You're Having a Committee/Board Meeting – What Restrictions Apply?

As an elected county official you are called upon to protect the interests of your citizens and to minimize the expense of running what is, in fact, a multi-million dollar business. Our programs are aimed at helping you do a better job.

Please join us on August 18, 2008 in Carrollton. The schedule is as follows:

5:30 P.M. Social hour begins
6:15 P.M. Dinner
7:00 P.M. Program begins
8:30 P.M. Program concludes

There is no registration fee or meal charge for this program. It is part of our UCCI service to member program. However, we would appreciate your calling the UCCI office (217-544-5585) to advise of the number of attendees from your county, as we need a head-count for dinner.

Both of these presentations are condensed versions of our day and a half education seminar on – “How to Conduct County Business According to the Open Meetings Act” and “Maintaining Coverage/Protection for Your Staff and Taxpayers.” Practicing attorneys retained by UCCI are the presenters on both topics.

DIRECTIONS TO BRASS DOOR RESTAURANT

From Jacksonville, Illinois

Take Highway 36 to Highway 67. Go south on Highway 67. You will pass through the towns of Roodhouse and White Hall. The next town is Carrollton. When you come into town, your first stop will be at the north end of the square. This is the intersection of Highway 67 and Highway 108 (North Main within city limits). Continue through the stop, go one block to the south end of the square. This is South Main. Go right onto South Main.

The Brass Door is on the south side of the square.

Talking Points

*Illinois
county news
& views*



A member service of the Illinois Association of County Board Members

July 2008

Logan County Board approves wind farm

The Logan County Board approved a conditional-use permit for the Rail Splitter Wind Farm, which will involve 29 wind turbine towers near the village of Emden. Another 38 towers will be across the county line in Tazewell County, which also has approved the wind farm. The project is expected to add about 200 construction jobs to the area's economy and another 10-15 permanent jobs once the wind farm is operating. Property owners will receive about \$5,500 annually for each turbine placed on their land. Decommissioning plans need to be ironed out in both counties before building permits are issued.

Shelby seeks grant to build new Emergency Operations Center

The Shelby County Board has committed \$125,000 as the county's match for a Homeland Security grant to build an Emergency Operations Center. If the county is successful in securing the FEMA grant, the new building would house the dive team and the Rescue Squad's equipment and vehicles. The facility would have a command center, conference room, communications room and would serve as command headquarters in an emergency.

Bureau County lawsuit dismissed

The case of the clerk versus the county board is closed. Circuit Judge Joseph Hettel dismissed the complaint filed by the Bureau County Clerk against the county board with no further arguments to be heard in the case. In the lawsuit filed last October the county clerk alleged she was unable to perform the duties of her office due to the county board cutting her department's hire line by \$17,000. The complaint was dismissed in March, but the clerk was allowed to re-plead her case in three amended versions of the complaint. She has 30 days to appeal the judge's decision.

Macoupin looks to reduce board

The Macoupin County Board approved placing an advisory referendum on the November ballot asking voters whether the county board should be reduced from 27 to 18 members. Reducing the board members by a third would save the county more than \$21,600 a year. Macoupin County has experienced a loss of sales tax revenue, about \$880,000, over the last several months due to closure of the Monterey and Crown II coal mines.

Mercer County wind energy partnership moves forward

A wind energy public partnership involving the Mercer County Nursing Home, the Mercer County Jail, Mercer County Hospital and Aledo School District is moving forward. The county is seeking a \$750,000 grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation to install a wind turbine to generate power to operate these buildings. The different groups now pay \$350,000 annually for electricity. With the normal life span of a turbine being 25 years, the county estimates the turbine will pay for itself in 10 years, meaning energy savings will be realized for 10 to 15 years. Estimated cost of the project is \$3 million.

Winnebago approves gun referendum

The Winnebago County Board approved putting an advisory referendum on the November ballot that asks: Shall the General Assembly enact legislation to permit the carrying of concealed firearms? Currently, 48 states have some form of concealed carry. Wisconsin is close to enacting such legislation, leaving only Illinois, Kansas and Nebraska to have no form of conceal and carry law.

Peoria County named top 10 digital county

Peoria County is one of the top digital counties in the nation according to an annual survey released by the Center for Digital Government and the NACo. The county's award-winning e-County program has been successful in creating a dynamic, useful website that offers access to government information and operations 24 hours a day. Residents, businesses and government agencies can take advantage of an expanding variety of online resources to make inquiries, pay taxes, court fees and traffic fines, locate facilities, subscribe to board meeting podcasts and research property information. To access the county's e-government services, visit www.peoriacounty.org/county/ecounty.

Boone County sets pet limit

The Boone County Board voted in favor of a 10-dog limit for household pets. The action comes following a high-profile animal cruelty case involving two Capron residents who had around 100 dogs roaming their property. The new law applies only to unincorporated Boone County and won't effect people who already have ten or more dogs at home. The county committee recommended a fine of \$75 for each dog over the limit.

Livingston County approves wind farm

The Livingston County Board approved the southern half of the Streator-Cayuga Ridge wind farm project. 155 wind turbines will be constructed on 15,000 acres between Odell and Emington. The foundation work for the turbines and access roads will begin this fall with the turbines erected next year. The county is expected to consider the northern half of the project in the coming months. It calls for another 300 turbines to be built reaching north to the southern part of LaSalle County.

DeWitt County looks to form search and rescue team

The DeWitt County Board has thrown its support behind an effort to organize a ground search and rescue team. The county currently works with the McLean County Search and Rescue Team. Having a team in DeWitt County would save assembly time and could mean the difference between a rescue and search effort. In addition to searching for lost people, the team would also help law enforcement find evidence.

Cass County Board adds second sales tax to ballot

The Cass County Board added a second 1% sales tax to the November ballot. If approved by voters, the sales tax will be used to fund necessary maintenance and construction in the county's respective school districts. The county board already approved a 1% sales tax to fund public safety, with the money going to bring the 136-year-old courthouse up to federal code. The courthouse does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act as it has no elevator and noncompliance ADA rest rooms. The county could lose more than \$1.2 million in federal funding a year if it does not address the safety issues. A state grant of \$100,000 has been secured to assist with the installation of an elevator.

Jefferson County receives water grant

Jefferson County has received a CDAP grant from the state for design engineering to bring water service to households outside the Rend Lake Conservancy District. The \$73,400 grant will be administered by the Greater Egypt Planning Commission. In addition to design engineering, the funds will be used to obtain easements and for general administration costs. There are 47 homes, with about 127 individuals affected by the project. In other news, the Jefferson County Board is gathering information on refinancing its jail bonds and turning them into debt certificates. The board will also hold a public hearing next month to hear from voters about putting a 1/4 percent public safety tax back on the ballot.

Courthouse clocks in need of repair

The clocks on the Coles County Courthouse tower may get a facelift. The numerals on the clock which are made of wood are decaying and the bell chimes were turned off several years ago. County officials are trying to identify outside funding to help offset the cost to repair the clocks which has been estimated at over \$36,000. The county's regional planning commission plans to look into possible grants for the project.

Richland considers flood insurance

Richland County has formed a special committee to research joining a flood-insurance program. Before flood insurance would be made available the county would have to pass an ordinance to discourage businesses, companies and residents from building on the flood plain. The county would also designate an administrator to check floodplain areas for any construction.

Cook County revises domestic partnership ordinance

The Cook County Board of Commissioners voted to revise the County's Domestic Partnership Registry Ordinance to preserve rights and benefits for LGBT couples in Cook County who may choose to marry out of state where same-sex marriage is now legal. Under the old language of the ordinance, benefits were extended only to 'unmarried' same-sex partners who sought to be recognized as 'registered domestic partners' as a way to accrue benefits that include health insurance for the partners of Cook County workers. The revisions ensure that LGBT couples that now choose to legally marry in California – a state that recently legalized gay marriage – would not lose benefits provided through Cook County's Domestic Partnership Registry Ordinance. The administration structured the revisions to protect the rights of LGBT couples in any state or area that may legalize same-sex marriage in the future.

County questions audit bill

The Knox County Board's finance committee voted to recommend the county board terminate its contract with a Moline company hired to conduct a forensic audit of the State's Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Department and to not pay any bills without documentation. The special audits were ordered in March 2007 when financial mismanagement and possible corruption was said to exist in the two departments. The county auditor estimated it would cost \$7,000 for each department, but the total bill is now at \$62,000.

Marshall County finances stable

Hats off to the Marshall County Board! The county's annual audit report showed a nearly 50 percent increase in the general fund's "unrestricted" balance at the end of the fiscal year. A combination of unexpectedly high revenues in several categories and below-budget spending added to the county's stable position.

Stephenson County Board rejects recall issue

The Stephenson County Board voted not to consider a proposal to place a referendum on the ballot asking voters if they would support establishing a recall procedure for Illinois public officials. The proposal was considered twice by the County Administration Committee, but failed each time. Earlier this year, a bill was introduced in the Illinois Senate to amend the State Constitution to establish a procedure for recalling "incompetent public officials." That bill failed in the Senate in May.

Williamson County fights landfill

The Williamson County Board has appealed an Illinois EPA permit allowing a Chicago company to build a landfill near Marion. The county has strong public support in its efforts to prevent the development of the Marion Ridge Landfill. There has been no discussion with the public or the county about what waste is intended for the site. The county board intends to continue to solicit support for the fight against the landfill and expects local organizations and communities to help pay litigation expenses.

Grundy County's purchase of vacant store on hold

The acquisition of the Save-A-Lot store by the Grundy County Board is on hold. The county board approved spending up to \$1 million to purchase the abandoned grocery store building in Morris, but are waiting on the current owner to produce a clear title to the property. All liens, judgments, unpaid taxes and mortgages on the site must also be satisfied before the county purchases the building. The former Save-A-Lot grocery store is located just east of the present courthouse. The site holds potential for a new courthouse, expansion of storage space needs and additional parking.

McHenry considers streaming meetings

County leaders in McHenry County are considering plans to video stream board meetings online. Under consideration is a proposal that would allow viewers to tune in live online or visit the county Web site to access archived video of meetings. The startup costs have yet to be determined, but the county estimates once the system is in place the maintenance fee should not exceed \$900 a month. The system could be up and running by January if approved by the full board.

Cats prove costly for one county

Cats are proving costly for St. Clair County. The county's animal services took in 28 cats seized from a pet hoarder in May. As a result, the animal services adoption center had to turn away hundreds of adoptable kittens because the seized cats, mostly adults, are taking up most of the space at the facility. The animal control center normally takes in about 65 cats a day during the summer. Care for the seized cats is costing about \$5,400 a month.

Madison County votes to close Shelter Care Home

The Madison County Board voted in May to close its Shelter Care Home. A transition committee has been appointed to oversee the transition of residents. The county is also working to identify a public guardian to protect the rights of those residents without other legal guardians or family members. The county board rejected plans to rebuild the century-old Shelter Care Home twice. The facility operated on a \$1.6 million budget generated through a respective property tax which will now be dissolved.

County launches new program to recycle unwanted electronics

DuPage County has entered into an agreement with SIMS Recycling Solutions to collect used and unwanted electronics from county households. This first-of-its-kind program in DuPage County will provide residents with an opportunity to dispose of old computers, printer, fax machines, cell phones, televisions and radios in a safe, and environmentally friendly, manner without any cost to the taxpayers. Under the agreement, the county will work with local governmental entities, schools and charitable organizations to schedule electronic waste pick-ups throughout the county. SIMS Recycling Solutions will provide all the needed supplies, transport the collected materials from the site, remove the recyclable parts from the machinery and properly dispose of all the materials.

Vermilion county buildings go 'green'

Vermilion County is becoming more eco-friendly. The Vermilion County Board approved a plan for the county to use an in-house cleaning staff rather than a contractor. The county-run cleaning staff will be using "green" products purchased locally in Danville. The intent is to expand the green cleaning to the county health department and Vermilion Manor Nursing Home.

County courts provide help to unrepresented litigants

Peoria County has established a new internet-based Legal Self-Help Center for individuals who represent themselves in court without an attorney. The self-help center provides legal information and court documents on a broad array of simpler civil legal problems. The web-site also has video explaining the court system and how to go to court. Anyone with a computer or internet access can use the materials at www.peoria.illinoislegalaid.org. The first two years of operation of the self-help center is being funded by a grant from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation which receives its funding from the Illinois General Assembly.

Pipeline hits roadblock in Macon County

The Macon County Board tabled a proposal to allow the Rockies Express Pipeline to bore under county roads. The \$5 billion, 1,679-mile natural gas pipeline will run through parts of Christian, Douglas, Edgar, Macon, Morgan, Moultrie, Pike, Sangamon and Scott counties from the Rocky Mountains to Ohio when completed in 2009. Members of the county board were concerned local workers were not getting a chance to bid on work for the project. More than 1,000 workers are expected to be deployed over the next several weeks to areas where the pipeline will be built.

Will County Board considers annexation agreement

An annexation agreement between Will County and the Village of Crete for county-owned property has been sent to the county board for consideration. The property offers a place to house a new courthouse satellite location next to the recently constructed Sheriff's Substation. If approved by the county board, it is estimated that two-to-three courtrooms will be built to handle traffic calls, small claims and other non-jury civil matters. Caseloads at the Will County Courthouse continue to increase. According to statistics from 2006, the judicial circuit had the third-highest per-judge caseload in the state with 7,814 cases.

County places safety tax back on ballot

The Douglas County Board approved placing a public safety tax referendum back on the ballot in November. The measure failed earlier this year in the primary election by a slight margin of only 83 votes. The referendum calls for a one-half of one cent increase on the sales tax and would generate about \$790,000 for the county. Lack of detention space in the county jail and increased ambulance service are critical needs facing the county at this time. The Douglas County Board plans to organize a steering committee to better educate citizens on the need for the tax.

Brick repair slated for courthouse

Brick repair work on the Whiteside County Law Enforcement Center has begun. Water damage and trapped moisture forced bricks to pop out of place on the facility, causing leaks. Board members agreed to pay a Springfield company \$244,000 to perform the work, which will also include repair to expansion joints.

Stark County revises 911 efforts

The newly established Stark County Emergency Telephone System Board is starting over to help develop Enhanced 911 service for the county. County voters have twice rejected E-911 plans that would have required a monthly surcharge of at least \$2.80 on each land-based telephone line. County officials were informed by the Illinois Commerce Commission that an order by the Federal Communications Commission would be implemented for the formation of a basic 9-1-1 system for counties that did not offer the service. A recent plan to provide the E-911 service through an agreement with a Lockport company fell through.

Ford County ranks high in agricultural output

The total value of agricultural output in Ford County is expected to be \$220 million in 2008, practically double what it was three years ago. The average net income per farm in Ford County is \$55,955 a year, the sixth-highest net income per farm in Illinois. One factor behind the resurgence is the development of the One Earth Energy ethanol plant which began construction last October. Employment in Ford County is also on the rise. In the last two years, 200 more people were employed. That number is expected to rise again in 2010 with the construction of 180 windmills in the Paxton area.

Mega dairy approved despite opposition

Jo Daviess County could soon be the site of Illinois' largest dairy farm. A California businessman won permission from the Illinois Department of Agriculture to build a 100-acre megafarm near Nora, a town of about 200 people. Local activists have filed a lawsuit in opposition to the proposed 5,000 head cattle farm over fear it will contaminate groundwater and air quality. The Jo Daviess County Board voted 11-5 against the farm, but state ruling supersedes that decision.

Kane County leaders unite to provide help for homeowners

Kane County has launched "Help for Homeowners," a comprehensive public information campaign aimed at highlighting the many resources available to assist homeowners during difficult economic times. Approved unanimously by the county board, the initiative highlights everything from emergency repair assistance and property tax exemptions, to property tax freeze options and foreclosure prevention counseling. Paid for with Riverboat Grant funds, the campaign will proceed at no cost to county taxpayers. Online "Help for Homeowners" information is available at www.countyofkane.org.

County faces legal action over sales tax vote

A new county sales tax for school districts in Williamson County took effect July 1st. Voters approved the 1 percent tax during February's primary election. Legal action has been taken against the county based on the argument that the ballot referendum should not have been placed on a primary election ballot. The regional office of education will begin receiving the tax proceeds in October.

DuPage considers strengthening strip club law

DuPage County is considering banning patrons from bringing their own liquor into strip clubs. The county's current ordinances prohibit female nudity at establishments that sell alcohol, but operators of some gentlemen's clubs have skirted the ordinance by only selling mixers like soda and water and allowing patrons to bring in their own liquor. New ordinances may mean only non-alcoholic drinks be allowed or the dancers must be clothed if alcohol is permitted on the premises.

Lee looks to enhance courthouse security

Lee County is considering tightening security at the courthouse. The finance committee has considered installing digital locks on doors in the Lee County Courts Building. The price tag is estimated at \$27,000, which could be paid out of the solid waste fund.

Metro East Counties to form flood prevention districts

In a push to provide assistance to three Metro-East counties affected by recent flooding, Gov. Blagojevich signed legislation that provides additional tools to Madison, Monroe and St. Clair Counties. The law allows these three counties to pay for projects to be reimbursed when newly authorized Flood Prevention Districts have been established. The individual county boards must vote to create the Flood Prevention Districts and authorize a retailers' occupation tax and a service occupation tax of 0.25%.

Fulton considers new courthouse annex

The Fulton County Board has formed an ad hoc committee to look into a proposed new annex for the courthouse. Estimates to construct a new 4,500-square-foot structure range between \$1.7 million and \$2.2 million. The committee will also examine other infrastructure needs for the county.

CMAQ leads study to head off potential water shortfalls

Depending on whether the region plans effectively, demand for water in 11 counties of northeastern Illinois (Boone, Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Will) could increase as much as 64 percent by mid-century, creating potentially serious shortages. So says a new report commissioned by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAQ) and its Regional Water Supply Planning Group. To download the document visit www.cmap.illinois.gov.



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