

Talking Points

Illinois
county news
& views



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Peoria County goes hybrid

Peoria County has recently added four Toyota Prius automobiles to its vehicle fleet, the first hybrid vehicles purchased by the county. The Prius is noted for its exceptional fuel efficiency and low emissions. Two of Peoria's County four recently acquired hybrids are assigned to the probation department, one to the county's general motor pool, and one to the highway department. Peoria County plans to continue adding hybrids to its fleet each year.

Will County to develop green energy plant

Will County and Waste Management of Illinois announced a plan to jointly develop a landfill gas-to-energy plant at the Prairie View Recycling and Disposal Facility near Wilmington. The gas-to-energy plant will generate electricity that is distributed over the area's electrical grid. Waste Management will build and operate the facility, which could be in operation by 2010. Will County said it intends to apply for federal economic stimulus funds earmarked for renewable energy projects to help finance the project. Once the process is complete, Will County anticipates putting at least \$1 million in stimulus funds toward the project.

Franklin County looks to save on electric service

The Franklin County Board vice chairman has proposed switching from AmerenCIPS to Direct Energy to provide the county's energy needs. The county would still be billed from AmerenCIPS for usage of the utility poles and lines but the electricity would be provided by Direct Energy. A one year contract would save the county around \$24,000. After one year, if the county decides to return to AmerenCIPS they have to remain with them for twelve months before they can switch providers again.

DeKalb wind farm receives approval

A 151-turbine wind energy plant proposed by Next-Era Energy Resources has received approval from Hearing Officer David Dockus of DeKalb. The proposal was originally denied citing it needed to establish a property value guarantee plan and complaint hotline, among others provisions. Next-Era made revisions to its original proposal and subsequently was approved by Duckus. The DeKalb County Board's Planning and Zoning Committee will discuss the application further at their next meeting.

Sangamon County Board proposes pay cut

A projected \$2.7 million drop in revenue has led the Sangamon County Board to propose cutting their salary by about 10%. Like many counties, Sangamon's projected shortfall in revenue is partially attributed to lower-than-expected returns from state taxes. County officials have already asked department heads to cut their budgets by 10% in any way they can. "We have to lead by example," stated Sangamon County Board member Andy Goleman. The proposal will be voted on during the June meeting and would save the county about \$28,609 annually.

LaSalle County looks to streamline

LaSalle County seeks to streamline their government documents by making them available on their website to both officials and the public. The County Board's Legislative and Rules committee has asked their information technology department to research how document distribution could be either emailed or placed on the county website. Reducing 22 current consolidated committee meetings down to 17 has also been proposed.

Sports complex proposed for Fayette County

A \$300 million sports complex that will include a 9,000 seat arena, restaurants, 400-seat IMAX theater, 300 room hotel and a bicycle manufacturing operation has been proposed for the city of Vandalia in Fayette County. Michigan-based Motown Technology and Sports Facility has been in negotiations with the Vandalia Economic Development Director since January. The complex is expected to draw 55% of its market from out of state and pull people in from cities as far as Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis and Louisville. Construction could start as early as Spring 2010 and take 3 years to complete.

DuPage cracking down on illegal water/sewer usage

DuPage County estimates that between 50 and 200 properties are illegally tapped into the county's water and sewage system. The county is undergoing an extensive audit of the water and sewage systems and is proposing a fine for anyone found not paying for service. The policy proposes charging up to seven years of service unless it can be proven that the service has been in place for either a longer or shorter period of time. DuPage County loses about \$10,000 annually because of illegal connections.

Recycling is easy in Madison County

Madison County is initiating several recycling and "green" programs to help reduce environmental decay. These programs include taking back compact fluorescent bulbs, replacing old 18 gallon recycling bins with large easy to move 60 gallon recepticals, a new recycling station, and two free collection events. The collection events focus on household wastes and electronics waste and is in partnership with St. Clair County. "Madison County is proud of the services we provide for our residents, especially our environmental programs and projects," said Chairman Alan Dunstan.

New debris site opens in Jackson County

Jackson County has opened a new debris consolidation site for vegetative materials. The site is located at the Southern Illinois Airport, northwest of Carbondale and is open to residents, private businesses, and governmental units. Only vegetative materials will be allowed. Residents in unincorporated areas of the county are still encouraged to manage vegetative materials on their own property.

"Inland Hurricane" in Williamson County

The "inland hurricane" as dubbed by the National Weather Service ripped through Williamson County causing 35 to 50 injuries and millions of dollars in damage. Winds reached around 106 miles per hour in Carbondale and 86 miles per hour at the Williamson County Airport. County Board Chairwoman Tracey Glenn is wanting the federal government to declare a disaster area so that cost of the cleanup can be recouped. She estimates that recovery costs could be as much as \$16 million in Williamson County alone.

Lake County gets creative in reducing personnel costs

In order to avoid layoffs, the Lake County Board has approved a measure that offers certain employees accelerated retirement options or a reduction in hours. The employees who choose to retire would either not be replaced, or replaced by an entry-level salaried employee. The reduction in hours is not to exceed one full work day and must be approved by a supervisor. Both options are completely voluntary. The early retirements could save the county up to \$500,000 a year.

Greene County considers hazard mitigation plan

The Greene County Highway Department Engineer has proposed developing a hazard mitigation plan in order to prevent loss of life and property damage in the event of a natural disaster. Like many other Illinois counties, Greene County does not have a hazard mitigation plan and therefore is not eligible for some state and federal grants. In April, the county board reviewed a proposed plan offered by a Springfield-based engineering consulting firm which included acquiring buildings and land located in flood plains, retrofitting existing infrastructure, and constructing retention basins to manage storm water. FEMA grants provide 75% of funding for projects with a 25% local match in funds or in-kind services.

Morgan County adopts wind turbine ordinance

Morgan County Commissioners passed an ordinance regulating the siting of wind energy turbines due, in part, to inquiries of local property owners by Global Winds Harvest, of New York, to locate wind turbines on their land. "The ordinance is really for the protection of the private property owners who may be approached by wind energy companies and for the protection of county roads," said Chairman Dick Rawlings. The ordinance also provides for a decommissioning bond for the removal of the facility.

Senior exemption now automatic in Edgar County

A resolution passed by the Edgar County Board puts a measure in place to automatically renew individuals who have previously applied for a senior citizen property tax exemption. "Once they are 65, they don't get any younger," stated Supervisor of Assessments Bev Markey. Under the new plan, once a senior citizen is granted the exemption it is automatically renewed unless they change addresses. The resolution does not impact the owner occupied homestead exemption and it will still need to be filed annually.

Champaign County rejects fewer panels

A plan to reorganize and consolidate committees from six to four was rejected by the Champaign County Board on a vote of 14-11. Earlier this month the policy committee put forth a proposal to combine the highway committee with the facilities committee and the justice-social services with the policy committee. The intent of the proposal was to save money through consolidation of meetings, however, according to County Board Chairman C. Pius Weibel, it became clear that the savings, if at all, would be minimal. The county board will continue to look at other reforms, including reducing the size of the board.

County plans for increased animal control needs

Even with the \$400,000 allocated for a new animal control facility being constructed this year, it is expected that the future needs for animal control services may require additional funding in Grundy County. The county has researched additional funding through grants and other sources to no avail. According to County Administrator Dan Duffy, "The county plans to build based on animal control's current needs. Because of the county's consistently growing use of animal control, the county would like to build for its future needs."

Crawford supports coal-fired power plant

The coal-fired Ameren Energy plant in Hutsonville has come under scrutiny for emissions and the Crawford County Board has sent a letter in support of the plant to Springfield stating what would happen to the community if the plant were forced to close. If emission standards were raised in Illinois it would put the plant at an even further disadvantage to Indiana plants with already lower emission standards. "We need to send a message. We object to new environmental standards on Hutsonville," according to board member David Fulling. Governor Quinn has stated that he is in favor of a nationalized emission standard.

Knox County debates courthouse fate

The Knox County Board Building Committee is debating whether or not to repair existing problems of the courthouse or move the government offices to a new facility. While the cost of the repairs would be significant, moving the offices out of the courthouse would sever a historical relationship and leave the future of an important Galesburg centerpiece in question. According to one architect, to fix the present courthouse and bring it in line with buildings codes could cost up to \$20 million.

County approves IMRF levy

The Jefferson County Board approved a levy which will account for about \$600,000 for county employees who are members of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF). The action is needed due to a lower return of funds invested by the program. The 2010 optional phase-in rates approved are 9.57% for IMRF, 15.28% for SLEP and 42.25% for ECO.

MACOUPIN COUNTY INTER-AGENCY
MEETING
April 8, 2009

The Macoupin County Inter-Agency Team met on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, at the West Central Development Council/Job Center Meeting Room, located at 116 South Plum Street, Carlinville, Illinois. The meeting was called to order by President/Chairperson Reggie Byots at 9:00 a.m.

Reggie Byots, Macoupin County Housing Authority regina@teamhousingcenter.com was first to report. She updated the group on the status of the public housing units across Macoupin County, noting that most all residences were full with numerous families on the waiting list. The Morris Farms Supportive Living Center is fully occupied also. Macoupin County will receive \$1.5 million in federal funds to assist first time home buyers with their mortgages; building new homes, and/or refurbish existing homes. These funds are intended for qualified individuals, who are either low income or veterans.

Vicki Lubrant, West Central Development Council/Job Center Vicki.lubrant@west-central.org updated the group on recent activities of the WCDC and the Job Center. The Job Center will be receiving American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to operate a special Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker Program. The Job Center is planning on operating a summer work experience program across the 8-county LWA for eligible youth ages 16-24. Staff are currently developing worksites and taking applications from interested participants.

Don Albrecht, Macoupin County Sheriff's Dept. daalbrecht@frontiernet.net announced that the County recently was awarded a grant in the amount of \$3500 for the purpose of developing a renovation plan as the Courthouse is in need of numerous updates and repairs that could cost as much as \$3 million. His department is currently working with the Department of Public Health for the purpose of submitting an application for funding that would establish a child advocacy center in Macoupin County. He reported that the County has seen a rise in crimes that are related to the sluggish economy, including telephone scams, online scams, and burglaries.

Pam Monetti, Congressman Hare's Office pam.monetti@mail.house.gov updated the group on a recent stopover that the Congressman made to the district. He visited the Benld Grade School which was considered a total loss due to mine subsidence. Over 700 students in grades kindergarten through 5th grade are displaced. The Congressman's Office is very busy these days working with housing issues, Social Security, Veterans, and the ARRA/Stimulus Package.

Paula Robinson, U of I Extension probinso@illinois.edu updated the attendees on the Elks Organization grant that they received to assist low income families with nutrition improvement. The grant allows U of I Extension to host a workshop which will include a free lunch, a class on food preparation, a class on nutrition, and information on economical grocery shopping. The U of I Extension will be taking part in the Walking Program again this year. It begins on April 20th and includes an education component and incentives.

Pam Leonard, Virden Schools/Parent Place, pleonard@virdenschools.com provided a brief overview of the services provided at the Parent Place. She discussed the various advocacy and parent services offered.

Zach Allen, Virden School System, zalle2@uis.edu reported on a demonstration grant that was received by the Virden School System which will provide parenting classes for young fathers of infants, birth through age 5. The program will consist of 12 classes, beginning in June, and attendees will be provided support services, incentives, and parenting tips.

Donna McLeese, Girard First Steps, dmcleese@girardschools.org presented a brief summary of the Girard First Steps Program which provides early childhood learning (ages birth to age 5) initiatives for families. She also provides pre-school screening for children age 2.5 through age 5. April is considered the Month of the Young Child and several activities and events are being planned for the Girard First Step students and families.

Kathy Stiles, IMPACT, styles@impactcil.org provided information on independent living for individuals with disabilities. IMPACT of Central Illinois has numerous programs including: Pharmacy Program, Programs for Visually Impaired, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Programs, Re-integration Program, Youth with Disabilities Program, Brain Surgery Support Group, and Personal Assistance Training. Phone: 618-474-5302 or 618-462-1411

Debra Mays, Farm Resource Center, jazz62546@hotmail.com introduced herself to the group. She is a new employee at the Farm Resource Center and is charged with the task of crisis intervention, home visits, and linking families/clients to resources across the region to help them deal with stress and stress management.

Luetta Weichert, Carlinville Southern Baptist Church, luetta@carlinvillesouthern.org reminded the group of the Angel Food Ministries Program that provides a supply of groceries for a minimal fee each month. Information on the program can be found on the church website. She also announced the Divorce Care Group that meets on Wednesday evenings and

the Grief Share Group that meets on Thursday evenings. Please visit the website or contact Luetta at 217-854-2837.

Kristian Wise, Locust Street Resource Center, kristinaw@macmhc.org discussed several programs available at the Locust Street Center including the Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse Program (group and individual counseling), the Elder Abuse Program, the Youth Transition Program, and the SASS program, which is a 90 day intensive care program that provides counseling, case management and psychiatry help/resources for the child. Contact 1-800-345-9049 or 217-854-3166 for assistance.

Jenny Baker, (for Carol Little carol.little@llcc.edu jeniferbaker@llcc.edu of Lincoln Land Community College TEAL Program was in attendance and reported for Ms. Carol Little. Carol provides adult literacy programs, GED, and other learning programs in Virden, Girard, Nilwood, and Palmyra for Lincoln Land Community College. GED class sign-ups for the summer session are beginning (call: 1-800-666-8325) and for those individuals that complete TEAL GED will be awarded a scholarship for 6 free credit hours of LLCC Classes. She also informed the group of a new program that is being offered free called TEEM. This program is a computer technology and office skills class for beginners who would like to learn basic keyboarding, bookkeeping, filing, etc., to be held in the fall.

Dan Hauter, Dept. of Children and Family Services, Daniel.hauter@illinois.gov updated the group on a number of changes with regard to the way the DCFS agency handles critical cases and families that have emergencies. The agency has seen more child endangerment, families at-risk, and mental health issues lately, as a result of the slowing economy and rising unemployment.

Linda Warlow, President of Virden Chamber of Commerce, linda.warlow.g3kh@statefarm.com announced that there would be a "Connect the Dots" event on April 18, 2009, at the Girard High School. The Virden, Girard and Carlinville Chambers of Commerce are hosting the event that is open to the public. They are inviting various agencies and representatives from health services, employment services, education, etc, to take part in the event and provide information to the attendees. She also announced that the Virden and Girard Schools will be consolidating in 2010.

Joe Broers, Illinois Valley Economic Development Council, ivedcbroers@frontiernet.net reported on several new and on-going programs. Some of these on going programs may be at a much higher level than in the past ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). IVEDC will be operating the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, the Community Service Block Grant Program, Weatherization Program, and the Summer Cooling Program. ARRA

funding is expected however no final determination on how much extra funding to expect and when it will be received.

Steve Meyer, Macoupin and Montgomery County Crime Stoppers, smeyer@konneker.com presented a brief overview of Crime Stoppers, a program that was started in 1991 where individuals could report tips to law enforcement, and receive a reward for being a good citizen. Crime Stoppers has a commercial out that was produced by WICS to let the public know how to report crimes and receive compensation for their actions. The Crime Stoppers program is being introduced at the area high schools to make it easier for students to report tips and receive cash. Tips can be called in by telephone to 1-800-352-0136 or reported on-line at **www.macmontcrimestoppers.com**

NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting of the Macoupin County Inter-Agency Team will be held on Wednesday, July 8, 2009, at the WCDC/Job Center, 116 South Plum, Carlinville, IL