

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2014
Stratton Office Building, Room 413
Springfield, Illinois**

1. The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Sheila Simon at 2:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Member Agencies Present

Illinois Department on Aging, Matt Westcott
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Tyler Hanner
Illinois Department of Human Services, Randy Staton
Illinois Department of Public Health, Don Jones and Jack Fleearty
Southern Illinois University, Kim Sanders
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett *
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
Rural Partners, Christopher Merrett *

Not present: Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of
Employment Security, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois
Department of Transportation, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois
Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education, University of
Illinois Extension, Illinois Housing Development Authority, Illinois Agriculture
Association (Illinois Farm Bureau)

Citizen Members Present

Greg Scott
Heather Hampton-Knodle
Robin Rose

Not Present: Karen Stallman, Mark Rothert

Advisory Members Present: Norman Walzer, Colleen Callahan

Lt. Governor's Office: Maggie Carson

2. Approval of Minutes of the August 7, 2014, Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting. Motion to approve by Norman Walzer/Seconded by Tyler Hanner/Motion Carried

3. Transition Discussion

Lt. Governor Simon reported that her staff has met with Lt. Governor-elect Sanguinetti's staff and that the meeting went well. Lt. Governor Simon asked Chris Merrett to take the

* Representing both organizations

lead in meeting with Lt. Governor-elect Sanguinetti to assist her with the transition of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council.

4. Working Group 1 (Enhance Services for Rural Illinois) Update

Christopher Merrett thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her service to rural Illinois and the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. He reviewed the GRAC's accomplishments over the last four years including the convening of a series of Rural Listening Posts and the subsequent report, the contributions to the House EMS Task Force and the support of the EMS Summit, the support of the annual rural community economic development conference, the convening of the GRAC Working Groups, the revision of the Rural Development Resource Guide, and the development of a set of best practices for rural development and list of recommendations for future priorities.

Dr. Merrett reminded the Council members to update their agencies information in the Rural Development Resource Guide. Agencies can update their listings online on the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs website (www.iira.org).

Grocery Store Start-up Guide. Dr. Merrett reminded the Council that the loss of a grocery store can present significant challenges to rural communities, particularly to low-income residents, the elderly, and those without access to reliable transportation. In these situations, residents may be left without access to fresh, healthy food. To assist communities that have lost or that are in danger of losing their grocery store, the Lt. Governor's Office asked the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs to compile a Grocery Store Start-up Guide and supplemental materials. The lead author of the Guide owned a grocery store in Rushville, Illinois, for many years and has a unique understanding of the issues confronting small town grocery store owners. Dr. Merrett distributed a draft of the Start-Up Guide and reported that three additional supplements are being developed: The Cooperative Model of Grocery Store Ownership, The Indoor Farmer's Market, and Business Succession.

5. Working Group 2 (Empower Rural Illinois for the Future) Update

Norman Walzer thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her support of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. He reported that Working Group 2 compiled a set of best practices for rural economic development and made specific recommendations of projects and policies for Illinois to adopt. As part of Working Group 2's research, he looked at population projection for Illinois. The group in rural areas with the highest projected growth included residents that are 60 and older. At the same time, the rural labor force is shrinking. These trends will impact Illinois' rural economy and must be addressed.

6. Working Group 3 (Moving Rural EMS Forward) Update

Greg Scott thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her support for EMS. He announce that Working Group 3 is hosting the 2nd annual EMS Summit on October 19 at the Northfield Inn, Suites and Conference Center in Springfield. Mr. Scott stated that the goal of the

event is to attract 150 attendees and that this year's summit features an out-of-state speaker on Mobile Integrated Healthcare. He expressed his appreciation for the work of the working group and the members' willingness to share the workload of putting on the event.

Mr. Scott showed a promotional video on EMS careers that was created by the Illinois EMS Advisory Council. This video is available on YouTube and is being distributed to Illinois schools to encourage students to pursue careers in EMS. The Illinois EMS Advisory Council plans to expand to billboards and public service announcements on radio to promote EMS careers.

Lt. Governor Simon acknowledged the work of Laura Kessel, a former Lt. Governor's office employee for bringing the issue of rural EMS forward.

7. Featured Discussion – Virtual Legal Clinic Update

Noelle Dupuis, Director of Policy, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), updated the council on the Virtual Legal Clinic. Ms. Dupuis stated that there is a shortage of family law practitioners in rural areas and domestic violence victims can have difficulty getting legal advice. In May the ICADV received a grant from Verizon to implement a virtual legal clinic, connecting clients in rural communities to attorneys in the Chicago area. Special software is being developed to handle such tasks as registration of clients, recruiting and training attorneys, and scheduling virtual appointments. ICADV is recruiting attorneys and expect to have the program in place by January 1, 2015.

8. Member Updates

Colleen Callahan, USDA, Advisory Member. Director Callahan reminded the council members that the USDA is a lender and in this way, the agency supports communities. She thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her support for rural issues. The issues that she is currently focused on include local foods, transfer of wealth, and the bio-economy. She reported that the Farm Bill includes several provisions to will support local foods. She stated that Secretary Vilsac is promising that these provisions of the Farm Bill will be implemented in a timely manner.

Patrick Evans, Illinois Finance Authority. Mr. Evans reported that IFA is focused on agriculture and young farmers. There is more need for IFA's products with recent changes to the economy.

Matt Westcott, Illinois Department on Aging. Mr. Westcott thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her service on behalf of Director Holton. He reported that IDoA recently entered into an interagency agreement with the Department of Children and Family Service. This agreement creates policy and procedures for children with older care givers.

Greg Scott, Citizen Member. Mr. Scott reported that SJR62 passed through the Senate but is now stuck in the Rules Committee. This resolution will create a bipartisan taskforce to examine roadway safety for first responders and will identify best practices.

Kim Sanders, Southern Illinois University. Ms. Sanders thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her service to rural Illinois. She reported that SIU's president, Randy Dunn is serving as Chancellor after the death of Interim Chancellor Sarvela. SIU's medical school is opening several regional offices to provide outreach services in rural communities.

Jack Fleeharty, Illinois Department of Public Health. Mr. Fleeharty thanked Lt. Governor Simon and Laura Kessel for their leadership on rural EMS issues. He reported that the department is working on several initiatives including national accreditation, and youth violence prevention. The department is also working with the CDC on the state's response to Ebola. This response includes monitoring travelers and developing a multistate infrastructure to treat infected individuals.

Randy Staton, Illinois Department of Human Services. Mr. Staton reported that he is working in Region 4 and 5 on issues related to workforce opportunities, in-home care, and education and training.

Robin Rose, Citizen Member. Ms. Rose thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her service to rural Illinois.

Tyler Hanner, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Mr. Hanner announced that Cronus Fertilizer is locating a \$1.4 million plant in Tuscola and that Amazon has announced plans to open a facility in Illinois next year. He also reported that the department is making more funds available for retraining workers made redundant by technology.

Heather Hampton-Knodle, Citizen Member. Ms. Hampton-Knodle thanked Lt. Governor Simon for her services. She also announced that she is working with a group to launch the C.E.O. program in Montgomery County.

Norman Walzer, Advisory Member. Dr. Walzer reported that he is working on looking at changes in rural population. One interesting trend is the return of 30-40 year olds to rural areas. Overall, however, there is a net decline in the number of people in rural areas. He is looking at new models of regional governance.

Christopher Merrett, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs and Rural Partners. Dr. Merrett announced that the Illinois for Rural Affairs recently received a USDA Cooperative grant and will be working with several existing coops and assisting groups working to form new coops. Coops are an alternative business model that can work well in rural areas.

9. Adjournment

The Governor's Rural Affairs Council adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Poncin, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs