



Upcoming Dates:



December 3-6
IAA Annual Meeting

January 11-13
IL Specialty Crops,
Agritourism & Organic
Conference

January 19-20
IL Assn. of Drainage
District Conference

January 26
SWAT Meeting

February 28
Consolidated Primary
Election

March 1-2
Governmental Affairs
Leadership Conference
(GALC)

April 4
Consolidated Election

Did You Know...?

Illinois has the highest number of registered voters since 1970. (8,748,000)



November/December 2016

Volume 7 Issue 6

Township Consolidation

By Guest Author Bona Heinsohn,
Cook County Farm Bureau®

In 2015, Illinois' Task Force on Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates in collaboration with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and Northern Illinois University's Center for Government Studies released a report in response to Executive Order 15-15. The Executive Order created a task force charged with studying issues of local government, school district consolidation, and redundancy. The task force was also charged with making recommendations to ensure accountable and efficient government and education.

Farm Bureau attended and participated in the meetings leading up to the approval of task force recommendations.

History

In 2012, residents supported a non-binding resolution to gauge public opinion about dissolving Evanston Township in Cook County. Based on public opinion, state legislators introduced legislation to allow Evanston Township to dissolve through public referendum.

(See **Township** on page 4)

Consolidation on the Ballot

Considered by voters in three Illinois counties

By Brenda Matherly

There are 1431 civil townships in the state of Illinois. Some of the more rural ones have very few residents and relatively low Equalized Assessed Values (EAVs), making it difficult, if not impossible, to find qualified officials to run the government and property tax dollars to fund it. That forces voters in some townships to consider the concept of consolidation. It's been seven years since the last time two townships in Illinois were consolidated. That happened in 2009 in Macon County when voters in Mount Zion & Milam Townships chose to merge the two into a single unit.

Now known as Mount Zion Township, the unit covers just over 66 square miles with a population of over 7,100.

This year's Springfield debates on local government consolidation (see article above) have spurred renewed awareness and interest in consolidation in all forms of local government. A number of townships around the state have taken a frank look at the realities they face, and decided to ask voters whether they should consolidate.

(See **Consolidation** on page 3.)

Again?

Illinois Consolidated Election — April 4, 2017

By Kevin Rund

Just when you thought you were done with election rhetoric, it's time to start getting ready for the next one. Come April of next year, we'll be electing our township, municipal, school board, and special purpose district officers. And, November is none too soon to get started.

In fact, local officials who run in the Consolidated Primary Election on February 28, must file their petitions seeking nomination during the week of November 21-28. The week of December 12-19 is the filing target for candidates seeking election at the April 4 Consolidated Election.

Political party offices to be elected:

MUNICIPAL:

- Mayor or President
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Aldermen or Trustees

TOWNSHIP

- Supervisor
- Clerk
- Assessor
- Multi-township Assessor
- Highway Commissioner
- Collector (if elected)
- Trustees

Nonpartisan offices to be elected:

- Mayor or President
- Clerk
- Treasurer (Council-Manager only)

- Council Members or Commissioners or Trustees
- MUNICIPAL - Aldermanic run-off elections, if required due to a vacancy.
- MUNICIPAL - City of Chicago (run-off elections only)
- PARK DISTRICT - Commissioners, Trustees
- PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT - Trustees
- TOWNSHIP AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARY - Trustees
- REGIONAL BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES - Trustees
- SCHOOL DISTRICT - Board Members, (including districts under article 33), School Directors
- SCHOOL DISTRICT - Special Charter - Inspectors, Board Members
- TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES OF SCHOOLS - (Cook County only)
- COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT - Trustees
- TOWNSHIP LAND COMMISSIONERS - (in counties under 220,000 population)
- FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT - Trustees
- FOX WATERWAY MANAGEMENT AGENCY - Chairman, Directors: 2 Directors to be elected from Lake County; 1 Director to be elected from McHenry County
- FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT - Commissioners
- ROAD DISTRICT - Clerk, Commissioner
- SPRINGFIELD METROPOLITAN EXPOSITION AND AUDITORIUM AUTHORITY - Commissioners
- OTHER SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICTS (see applicable statutes)

For more information on the 2017 Consolidated Election, refer to the *Local Election Official's Handbook for the 2017 Consolidated Elections* on the Illinois State Board of Elections website (www.elections.il.gov).

LINK

Local Government Efficiency Concept Spreading

By Kevin Rund

What started as a pilot program in a single county to improve local government efficiency is now spreading into two more counties. It's a phenomenon to keep an eye on, with the potential to either help or harm, depending on one's perspective. It's limited

to the more highly-populated counties where one will typically find lots and lots of governmental units.

House Bill 229 (now Public Act 99-0709) gives McHenry and Lake county boards new powers that had been granted, up to this

point, only to DuPage County. That original authorization happened a few years ago when the General Assembly created a pilot program giving the DuPage County board the ability to dissolve certain appointed taxing bodies.

The new legislation regarding

(See *Efficiency* on page 3.)

(Efficiency continued from page 2)

McHenry and Lake had been in the works since 2015, but was signed into law by Governor Rauner only as recently as August 5, 2016. The bill has an immediate effective date.

The law allows the county to reduce the number of governing (read that "taxing") units through dissolution if it can be shown that the unit's services are either unnecessary or duplicative.

The primary limitations on the county board's action are that the law applies only to those local units for which the county board appoints a majority of the members for its governing board, and that the district's boundaries are entirely within the county. The bill exempts fire districts with full

-time employees and conservation districts.

Finally, any dissolution of a unit of local government proposed by the county board is subject to a backdoor referendum. So, voters within the district proposed for dissolution will have a chance to vote on the question if they successfully pass a petition to place the question on the ballot. They'll have 30 days from the date of notice to collect valid signatures from 7.5% or 200 of the district's voters, whichever is less.

Since it has held this authority, the DuPage County board has dissolved a handful of the 13 local units within its borders to which the law applies. To help keep things in perspective, you should know that DuPage County is home

to 172 units of local government, according to the 2012 Census of Government. That same source shows McHenry County with 104 and Lake County with 192.

Of particular interest to farmers is this; among the units of government that are potentially subject to the law are drainage districts that have their board members appointed by the county board. In other cases, drainage district board members are appointed by the Court, so would not be affected.

This will be a topic to watch in the coming years. We'll want to see how effective the new power is at improving local government efficiency while maintaining services for those who need them.

[LINK](#)

Consolidation

(Continued from page 1)

The question of township consolidation appeared on the ballot in three counties this November:

- Ogle County
Taylor & Lafayette Townships
- Montgomery County
Fillmore & South Fillmore Townships
- Hancock County
Wilcox & Rocky Run Townships

In both Hancock and Montgomery Counties, voters in all four of the townships passed the referendum to consolidate. In Ogle County, the question on the ballot was passed in Lafayette Township but failed in Taylor Township. In that case, the consolidation effort fails because the referendum did not pass in both townships.

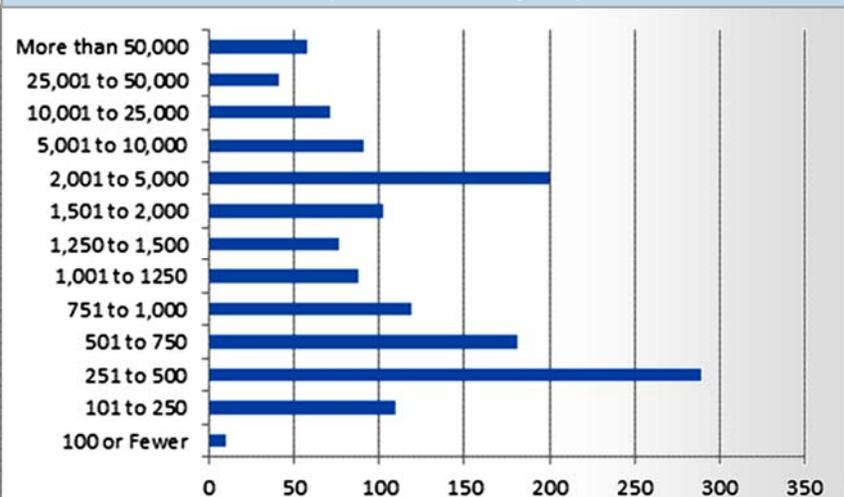
These six townships are typical of

the smallest in terms of population. Among them, only Taylor and Fillmore Townships each has more than 250 residents. That small size results in issues such as not being able to find qualified candidates to fill local govern-

ment offices. But that's not so unique in Illinois. We have lots of small townships with the same problems.

[LINK](#)

Number of Townships in Illinois by Population (2015)



As the chart indicates, there are more than 400 townships in Illinois with fewer than 500 residents. Nearly half of the state's townships have fewer than 1,000 residents. On the other end of the spectrum, there are 57 townships that each has a population of more than 50,000. The median population among the 1,434 townships is 1,041.

Township

(Continued from page 1)

Evanston Township was somewhat of a unique situation because the entire township fell within the City of Evans

ton's boundaries; therefore, the township was not required to maintain any roads in any unincorporated areas.

Upon the township's dissolution, the City of Evanston's Health Department assumed the general assistance and emergency programs and the City Administrative Service Department assumed responsibility for the assessment and administrative duties.

The Evanston Township legislation has prompted other communities to explore merging townships with municipalities. Of the 1,433 townships in Illinois, only 19 of them do not contain any unincorporated territory.

The Lt. Governor's Task Force supported the consolidation of townships and municipalities. Efforts to consolidate have centered around the more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Critics of township government often point to Peru Township. Peru Township elected officials and employees rank among the highest paid and compensated in Illinois; a single employee there made more in retirement benefits than the township paid out in state-mandated "general assistance" (*News Tribune*, June 18, 2012).

Township Code

The Township Code mandates that township government can only be dissolved if all the town-

ships within the county are also eliminated. Current law allows citizens to initiate a referendum to consolidate townships into the county structure, but the requirements are so burdensome that it is virtually impossible to do.

Current law requires citizens to collect signatures from 10 percent of registered voters in every township to be merged. Signatures must be collected within 90 days in order to place the referendum on the ballot. If the requirement isn't met in every township in the county, then it can be thrown off the ballot.

In comparison, to place a state constitutional referendum on the ballot, citizens are only required to collect eight percent of the total votes cast statewide in the previous gubernatorial election and have a substantial amount of time to collect the signatures.

As Illinois' oldest form of government, townships are tasked with maintaining roads and bridges in unincorporated areas. Townships also provide services for seniors, youth, and people in need. To serve these functions, each township's corporate body is made up of eight positions: supervisor, clerk, assessor, highway commissioner and four trustees. All of the positions are elected positions and they are charged with setting the tax levy and carrying out township duties.

[For news on township consolidation ballot questions considered by voters this autumn, see articles elsewhere in LINK.]

LINK

Population Construction



By Kirby Wagner

One thing to count on is change. The state of Illinois is no different. Populations in rural and urban areas are decreasing. You may have experienced a population decrease in your county, while seeing an increase in new construction projects.

Per the United States Census Bureau, Illinois is ranked 14th in issuing a total of 19,571 building permits in 2015 with 6,000 of those permits coming from Chicago and the collar counties. The downstate counties of Edgar and Lawrence issued 45 and 47 permits respectively, in 2015.

In 2010, Edgar County issued only six permits and Lawrence County issued none. Both counties experienced a population decrease in that same time span. Edgar lost population by 4.79% while Lawrence County's population decrease by 2.64%.

In recent years, building has increased, whether for additions to existing structures or new. To no surprise, the price of construction projects has gone up. Cost of construction in Lawrence County was nearly \$8 million in 2015 while Edgar's construction costs were approximately \$7.4 million.

What is causing this upward trend in permits? One answer could be household income. Median household income in Illinois rose by 11% from 2010 to 2015. Compare that to the counties: Lawrence grew by 2.06% while Edgar saw an increase in median household income of 7.36% in that time span. Per capita income in Illinois rose from 2010 to 2015 by 4.3%.

LINK

Agritourism is on the Rise:

Benefits Farms, Families and the Rural Economy

By Brenda Matherly

I suspect many of us recently enjoyed a visit to a pumpkin patch where we no doubt wound our way through a corn maze, sampled some of the fall treats (who doesn't love a pumpkin spice donut) and lugged home the "pick-of-the-litter" pumpkin. If you missed out on that, no worries. You still have plenty of time to visit a Christmas tree farm.

These are just a few of the agritourism opportunities offered on farms and in rural areas across the nation. The most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture showed 13,334 farms nationwide grossed \$674 million from agritourism. This was an increase of more than 3,000 farms and \$128 million just four years earlier. A quarter of those farms were in the Midwest.

In Illinois, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistic Service, eight percent of farms offer some type of agritourism or agrientertainment side business that brings in supplemental income.

But, income isn't the only thing these agritourism events bring in. Statistics show that the largest growth in this area is on farms located just outside the metropolitan area. Connecting the urban population to agriculture brings in a new level awareness and appreciation for diverse agriculture production and life in the rural areas. Whether its watching sheep shearing and taking home products from the wool or visiting a you-pick operation and taking home food for the table, it's a taste of the farm that balances urban perceptions with the rural lifestyle.

LINK

2016 Specialty Growers Annual Conference:

Specialty Crops, Agritourism and Organic Conference

The annual Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference will be held in Springfield, Illinois on January 11-13, 2017.

The conference is geared toward farmers and agribusiness professionals of fruits, vegetables, herbs, those who have agritourism businesses, as well as those who grow conventionally as well as organically. On Wednesday, January 11, the conference will open with five pre-conference, all-day workshops on (1) Cover Crops, Nutrient Management and Soil Health; (2) Digital Marketing Strategies for Your Farm; (3) Growing and Marketing Tomatoes and Peppers; and (4) Designing and Operating Irrigation Systems for Illinois vegetable

and Fruit Crops; and (5) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Farmers Forum.

The Thursday and Friday programming will showcase six concurrent breakout sessions including fruits, vegetables, herbs, agritourism/marketing, organics, and emerging issues.

There will be 60+ vendors showcasing products from vegetable seed, containers and packaging, jams and jellies, bakery items, crop protection products, and much more. This annual event attracts an average of 650 attendees and is the premier conference in the state for the specialty crop industry.



An agenda and online registration can be found on the ISGA web site: <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/iscaoc-conference.html>.

Any questions can be directed to Jim Fraley, jfraley@ilfb.org.

LINK

Protect and Serve

The Job of a Government

By Kirby Wagner

"A government's first duty is to protect the people," said Ronald Reagan. He also added, "Government is not to run their lives." If you ponder the first part of that, he may have been on to something. Governmental bodies, from the national level to local townships, come in all shapes and sizes. They are all in place to protect and serve their people, yet because of that, navigating through it may be challenging.

Illinois is ranked number one in units of local government in the U.S. According to the 2012 Census of Government, Illinois has 6,963 active governments. Their duties and abilities may serve all sorts of purposes.

The protection part of Reagan's quote is a big one. Policing and fire districts are just two types of local government services that are in place for your protection. Others include such things as drainage and water supply districts. Those units of local government may not perform all the same tasks in each community, but they are there for your protection.

Part of a government's job is also to serve. Governments are in place to help meet the needs of its people. School districts are there to serve as a place of learning for the community. Inside some districts lie economic development committees that seek to improve communities. They are in place to better life in the community and to make life easier for its residents.

Regan may have a point with the second part of that quote, too. Some governments can be over extending their reach. Others can be self-serving and destructive to the community. Some communities may have so many forms of government that it can be a disservice to voters trying to sort out concerns. If there are too many units of government jurisdiction can overlap and get in each other's way.

Governing bodies are in place to help. Take Reagan's advice and encourage leaders to protect and serve their people. In some cases, all that is needed is a direction for change. Take action and make change.

[LINK](#)

Spotlight on: Kirby Wagner

Kirby will fill the newly-created position of Assistant Director of Transportation and Local Government for Governmental Affairs & Commodities Division.

In this new role, he will be responsible for analyzing and disseminating information and coordinating organizational involvement in transportation-related issues. He'll also assume the role of providing transportation regulation outreach and educational programming for farmers. His duties extend to include levee, floodplain and drainage issues and



assistance in local government programming.

Previously, Wagner was a Claims Associate with COUNTRY Financial, responsible for the set-up, processing and settlement of claims.

Until recently, Kirby was manager and operator of Kev's Kans, a family-owned trucking business in Roanoke, Illinois where he was responsible for regulatory compliance, equipment maintenance, sales and service, and served as a driver. He has actively participated in his family's farming operation and has work experience in his county's Highway Department.