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Local Information, News and Know-How

Upcoming Dates:



January 19-20
IL Association of Drainage Districts Conference

January 26
SWAT Meeting

February 28
Consolidated Primary Election

March 1-2
Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference

March 8-9
IL Rural Economic Development Conference

April 4
Consolidated Election

April 11
Annual Town Meeting

January/February 2017

Volume 8 Issue 1

Vote by Champaign County residents changes the structure of their county government

Only the second one in three decades

By Brenda Matherly

For the first time in 30 years, Illinois has a new county to be structured under the executive form of county government. In November, voters in Champaign County approved a referendum that will restructure the county's current form of a county government to an executive form of government.

The initiative to place the question on the ballot began with the Champaign County Farm Bureau®. It was through their efforts and a partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce that

the question of executive form of government made it to the ballot and was successfully passed by the voters.

Under this form of government, the elected county executive has significant authority over county operations.

In Champaign County, the executive authorities will likely include responsibilities such as: setting meeting agendas; proposing the county budget; making appointments; implementing the majority of county ordinances; and, the power to veto actions of the county board. However, votes could

(See **Executive** on page 2)

Did You Know...?

Because of a 5% debt limit for local governments imposed by the 1870 Illinois Constitution, it had been advantageous to create a new governmental unit to perform each local function. Thus we have everything from park districts to mosquito abatement districts to airport authorities.



Road district taxes

Considering a property tax adjustment for local roads

By Kevin Rund

For their role in providing such an important piece of local infrastructure, road district taxes most often make up a relatively small part of your overall property tax bill. What are some of the factors voters might consider in making decisions about adjusting road district tax rates?

April will bring two opportunities to bring questions of public policy before voters in road districts. In both

township and non-township counties, the first will be the Consolidated Election on April 4. The second—applying only to township road districts—will be the Annual Town Meeting on the second Tuesday, April 11.

Road districts in both township and commission forms of counties have very similar powers and taxing authorities. And, in each case, there are two primary sources of revenue

(See **Adjustment** on page 2.)

Executive

(Continued from page 1)

be overridden by a three-fifths majority.

The executive will also have the power to hire and fire department employees, enter intergovernmental agreements and vote, but only to break a tie.

A county which elects to have an executive officer was originally intended to then be considered a home-rule county. However, Champaign County voters elected to go to a county executive form without becoming a home-rule county. In 1987, Will County voters also supported a county restructuring to the executive form. And, like Champaign, Will County also elected to remain a non-home rule county.

To date, Illinois only has only two counties (Champaign and Will) in which voters supported this form of government. Cook County is our third executive form, made so by the constitution.

However, many more counties around the nation are structured under the executive form. In total, 840 counties located in 45 states operate under the county executive form of government.

In 2018, Champaign County voters will elect their new executive for a four-year term.

LINK

Adjustment

(Continued from page 1)

for local roads: motor fuel taxes (MFT) and real property taxes.

While the MFT is set by state statute, property taxes are generally subject to voter approval. The relative importance of each in the overall funding of road districts can vary widely.

Variables affecting the need for additional revenue within each road district include but are not limited to:

- *Number, pavement type and condition of road miles maintained;*
- *Number, size and condition of bridges;*
- *Ratio of MFT revenue to property tax revenue;*
- *EAV of the district and whether it is rising or falling;*
- *Current property tax rates;*
- *Account balances;*
- *Outstanding debt;*
- *Availability and condition of road maintenance equipment;*
- *New influx (or loss) of traffic generator(s);*
- *Need for new centerline road miles or lane miles; and,*
- *Whether maintenance and infrastructure investment has been a routine practice of the district.*

In recent years, MFT revenues have been flat or declining due primarily to the increasing average mile-per-gallon fuel efficiency of the nation's fleet of vehicles. You must then add to that the fact that, for nearly a decade, the total annual miles driven by Illinois drivers ranged from only a very modest year-to-year increase to stagnant.

At the same time, the cost of road construction and maintenance has risen with inflation. Formerly driven by the dramatic rise in petroleum costs, the more-recent leveling of crude oil prices has helped to stabilize the once-skyrocketing cost of petroleum-based road materials. Still, the purchasing power of today's MFT dollar for road district needs is estimated at only 60% or less of what it was two decades ago.

When it comes to State distributions of MFT funds to Illinois' local road units, each road district receives an equal dollar amount per road mile maintained. That dollar amount adjusts to reflect the MFT revenue received by the State during the preceding collection period.

The reliance of each road district on MFT revenues varies. For some, it can be a sizable share of the per-mile revenue they receive. For other road districts—those with higher equalized assessed values of property (EAVs) or fewer road miles—the MFT is less significant and the reliance on property tax revenue is more important. That being the case, each district must be looked at on a case-by-case basis to determine the advisability of any property tax rate (revenue) increase to offset lagging MFT revenues.

Property tax revenue has continued to be routinely adjusted over the 24+ years in which Illinois' MFT rate has remained unchanged. As local EAVs rise, property tax revenues rise even without increasing property tax

(See **Adjustment** on page 5)

The history of the Liberty Bell

A tradition for over 50 years

By Brenda Matherly

Congratulations to all the County Farm Bureaus[®] that won the Liberty Bell Award this year. You're in good company.

Replicas of the Liberty Bell, a symbol of the American heritage of independence, was first presented to county Farm Bureaus in 1962. That's 55 years of outstanding programs being awarded for county excellence.

In those early years, the award was presented to one county in each of the (then) six field districts. At that time, the award was given to the county in the district that received the highest score for their work in policy development. The award served an important role in stimulating the policy-formation phase of the organizations.

The attractive trophy, which stands 14 inches high and consists of a polished brass bell mounted on a walnut base, was awarded to the winning county Farm Bureau in their county office. Designed to be a traveling trophy, counties have been able to display the Bell for the year following their achievement. And, while the award moves around the state from year-to-year, each winning county will forever have their name engraved on a brass plate signifying their year's accomplishments.

Jump ahead to the current Liberty Bell award and a lot has changed. For starters, that polished brass bell is showing signs of well-earned tarnish. But more than that, years later, the award is no longer given for policy development efforts. Beginning in 1970, the award was in-

stead given in recognition for outstanding combined local affairs and legislative work throughout the program year. And, a few years later, the award was divided between counties based on membership size instead of districts.

Today, winning this award is a tribute to the priority our organization places on being actively involved in local affairs

and legislative activities. As was the case years ago, I would like to think the award has also served an important role in stimulating involvement in local government!

As we look to the future, we see more and more opportunity for county Farm Bureau staff and leadership to keep up the good work and take an active role in

(See **Bell** on page 5)

The photo below was originally published in the Dec. 1964 edition of IAA Records.



Six county Farm Bureaus were honored for the best overall policy development programs in 1964. Receiving the awards, on behalf of the Farm Bureau, are from left, seated: Raymond Otto, Farmer City, DeWitt County; Edgar Ibendahl, Oakdale, Washington County; Paul Atwater, Havana, Fulton County, Standing: Ray Clancy, Charleston, Coles County; Howard Harshbarger, Plainfield, Will County; and Rudy Kuttin, New Douglas, Madison County.

Township elections

What happens leading up to the April 4 election

By Kirby Wagner

The presidential election has wrapped up but election season is not over. 2017 is an election year for townships. These elections are set to take place in April. The caucuses have already taken place but the order of remaining events may not be clear to all.

The process of township elections is laid out by statute and enforced by the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE). The sequence of events is listed on the SBE website and in the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

The caucus is the most popular way to nominate a township candidate in Illinois. Although, in townships with a population of over five thousand whose boundaries extend over the same space or lie inside an incorporated town, a primary election is required.

Township caucuses are held on the first Tuesday in December. That made last year's caucuses fall on December 6th. Multi-township caucuses are held on the first Wednesday in December, making last year's caucus fall on 7th.

A minimum of ten days before caucus, the township board must publish a notice of the location and timing for each party's caucus. The last date to publish that information was November 26th. For multi-township caucuses, that deadline was November 27th.

In both cases, the committee or board must publish the notices in a newspaper that is in general circulation in the district.

Since the time caucuses were

concluded and the candidates nominated, there has been a filing period for independent candidates seeking election in the April consolidated election. That period ran December 12th-19th.

The final day of that period was the last day an established political party could file a certificate of nomination by caucus with the township clerk/election authority which had to include a statement of candidacy and a receipt for filing a statement of economic interests for each candidate.

The caucus and filing deadline have already taken place and a report on what has been filed can be found by contacting the township clerk/election authority.

On the schedule preceding the election are two dates worthy of note. The first is the party placement lottery to determine the order in which the parties will show up on the ballot. The last

day this can take place is January 26th.

Second, is the last day the township clerk can file a certification of ballot. That ballot shows the offices and the names of the nominees in the order in which they will appear. The last day for the certification of ballot also lies on January 26th.

Finally, the consolidated primary election will be held starting Tuesday, February 28th. Then on Tuesday, April 4th, the consolidated election will be held to determine who will fill the offices of the township and road district.

Make sure to note those dates on your calendar and get out and vote!

For further information on these elections visit www.elections.il.gov or il-ga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp

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Our Changing Landscape

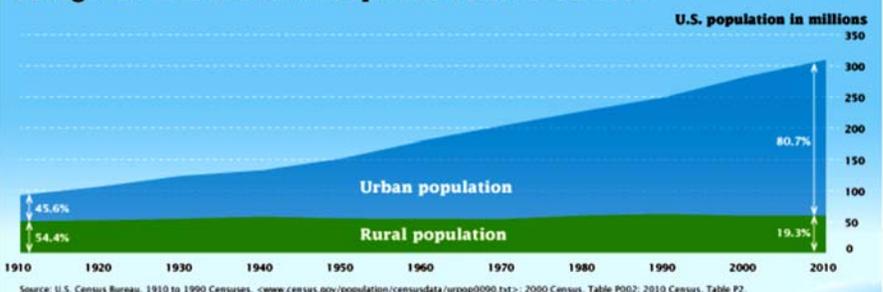
Source: US Census Bureau

People who live in rural areas are more likely to own their own homes, live in their state of birth and have served in the military than their urban counterparts, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community

Survey. "Rural areas cover 97% of the nation's land area but contain only 19.3% of the population (about 60 million people)," Census Bureau Director John H. Thompson said. "By combining five years of survey responses, the American Community Survey provides unequalled insight into the state of every

community, whether large or small, urban or rural." Data was collected between 2011 and 2015 on more than 40 demographic, housing, social and economic topics, including commuting, educational attainment and home value. These statistics are available to explore on the Census Bureau website.

Change in Rural and Urban Population Size: 1910-2010



Adjustment

rates. This helps to offset the stagnancy of the MFT revenue.

Many road districts may find themselves already bumping up against their maximum allowable tax rates (see blue sidebar.) Others have additional room for

adjustment—with voter approval.

Where does your road district stand? Whether an adjustment is needed is up to you, the voter.

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FUND	Township	Consolidated Township	County Road District	County Unit District
Road & Bridge	.66 [.94*]	.66	.66	.33
Road Damage	.033	.033	.033	---
Joint Bridge	.25	.25	.25	.05
Equipment & Building	.035	.035	.035	---
Gravel	.167	.167	.167	---

**All rates shown above are the maximum allowable via referendum.
* Applies only in townships with an EAV less than \$10 million.**

Bell

(Continued from page 3)

all things local. Whether it's developing a relationship with your local officials, providing input on legislation impacting local government, serving as an elected official, or being that "go-to" organization on local issues.

Award winning or not, the efforts to get involved at the local level offer rewards larger than any shelf can hold. As your county Farm Bureau looks at the year ahead, think back on the success of those local programs that have made Farm Bureau the "go-to" organization in your community.

Here are just a few of those awarding winning programs:

- Getting to know your local officials through one-on-one interaction and visits out in the county
- Elected and appointed officials' dinner, appreciation events and/or mealtime meet and greets.
- Adopt a county board member
- CFB staff/leadership and local official exchange program
- CFB and county governing board joint meeting
- Inviting local official to participate in landowner meetings on topics related to local government
- Encourage CFB leadership to

attend monthly government board meetings

- Distribute the LINK publication to local officials

I'm Looking forward to this year. Let's continue to make local a priority!

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Tax Rates

Maximum tax rates available to road districts are generally set by voters. Those maximums can vary by type of road district, and for some, by their EAV.

The basic tax rate established by statute allows the district to levee at a rate of only 0.165. The rate remains at that level unless and until voters approve a higher ceiling for the rate. Today, there are a handful of districts in Illinois that remain at that minimal level, severely limiting the availability of local funding.

In many districts, voters have approved rates up to 0.66, the maximum rate allowed by law.

In the very poorest of road districts—those with an EAV of less than \$10 million—the law allows voters to approve a tax rate of up to 0.94 for the Road and Bridge fund.

Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference

“Together Toward Tomorrow”

On March 1-2, 2017, Illinois Farm Bureau® will hold its annual Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference (GALC) at the President Abraham Lincoln hotel in Springfield, Illinois.

The conference is expected to bring in over 400 Farm Bureau leaders from across the state to receive information and training on key issues impacting agriculture, public policy and organizational priorities.

These two days will feature dynamic speakers, information, and training sessions. Farm Bureau leaders will have an opportunity to keep up with current issues and network with agency repre-

sentatives and elected officials.

This year's conference will include four general sessions, four breakout sessions—each offering



five separate workshops—and a statewide legislative reception.

If you are interested in local government issues, you won't want to miss the workshops we are planning to talk about drainage

districts, drainage law, township government and local level census information.

Reserve your place at this conference! To register, you may contact your county Farm Bureau manager, or visit our event website at www.ilfb.org/GALC17

Hotel reservations must be made on-line. A block of rooms has been reserved. The special room rate will be available until February 7th or until the group block is sold-out, whichever comes first.

See hotel info now at:

http://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/S/SPIASDT-IFB-20170228/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG

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Conference focusing on building strong rural communities:

Plan to attend the 28th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference on March 8 and 9 at the President Abraham Lincoln hotel in Springfield, Illinois.

This year's conference will focus on the changing environment for rural Illinois. Speakers will discuss broad trends affecting rural places. They will present new approaches designed to revitalize rural communities, teaching attendees to identify and accentuate the attributes that enhance the quality of rural living. Sessions will include presentations on entrepreneurship, sources of rural funding, digital manufacturing and health care access.

The conference, hosted by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs and Rural Partners, is expected to bring in more than 300 attendees from across Illinois, including community volunteers, local elected officials, economic and community developers, and representatives of state and federal agencies. It's a unique opportunity for participants to meet and network with others engaged in rural development.

The event will also feature an exhibit hall where attendees can network with agencies, businesses, and organizations. This networking venue is one of the most popular aspects of the confer-

ence. For many, it is a great opportunity to seek out and develop lasting contacts.

More information on the conference and opportunities to exhibit in the exhibit hall will be provided on the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs website at www.iira.org/.

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