



## Upcoming Dates:



January 31:  
SWAT Meeting

February 19:  
Governmental Affairs  
Leadership Conference  
(GALC)

February 26:  
Consolidated Primary  
Election

March 6-7:  
30th Annual Rural Com-  
munity and Economic  
Development Conference

April 2:  
Consolidated General  
Election

April 9:  
Annual Town Meeting



## Did You Know...?

**More than 22,000 local government units participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). That includes 82 counties and 770 communities in Illinois.**



January/February 2019

Volume 10 Issue 1

## Open Meetings Act

Training mandatory for newly-elected officials

*by Brenda Matherly*

The November elections are over, many of your newly-elected officials have taken an oath of office and may have even sat through their first board meeting - so now what?

According to a state law passed in 2012, any person who becomes an elected or appointed member of a public body must complete the Open Meetings Act (OMA) training. The required electronic training curriculum is offered by the Public Access Counselor with the Illinois Attorney General's office.

Now that the focus on getting elected, and the well-earned victory celebration has passed, your newly-seated officials will be turning their efforts toward the process and rules that need to be followed in those

first few months. As mentioned earlier, one of those responsibilities is to comply with the OMA training.

By law, that training is to be completed no later than the 90<sup>th</sup> day after taking the oath of office. Most newly elected local officials took their oath of office on December 3. Those that did will be required to complete the OMA electronic training no later than March 2.

For many of these officials, that training need only be completed once during their term. It is only those OMA designees who are required to take the training annually.

Every public body must designate someone to serve as their OMA designee. That person can be an employee, officer or member.

(See **Mandatory** on page 3)

## OMA training benefits officials and citizens

As a concerned citizen, you have much to gain by taking OMA training

*by Brenda Matherly*

The Open Meetings Act (OMA) is familiar to those already serving on elected governing boards. But some of us, from time-to-time, might be formally or casually appointed to serve on a public committee/board/commission. Therefore, we too will want to acquaint ourselves with the statutory provisions that public bodies must follow under the OMA.

In clinical terms, the purpose of the OMA is to ensure that the actions of public bodies are taken openly and that their deliberations are conducted openly.

In other words, the right to attend a meeting has very little meaning without first having a heads up on such an event; including, time, place and subject matter of the meeting. To

(See **Training** on page 3)

## USDA rural eConnectivity program bolstered by \$600M

New funding allows creation of federal loan and grant program for rural broadband

by Brenda Matherly

The USDA recently received a \$600 million appropriation from Congress in the Consolidated Budget Act of 2018. The money is now being used to establish a new broadband loan and grant pilot program, known as the Rural ReConnect Program.

If this sounds familiar, it's because we first brought you this story back in our September 2018 *LINK* publication. At that time, we reported that Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB®) had submitted comments to the USDA in a show of support for this newly-funded program and USDA's plans to elevate rural broadband needs as a funding priority.

As the pilot program begins to unfold, the focus and distribution of dollars will be aimed at projects that improve broadband services not only in rural American homes, but also rural businesses, farms, schools and healthcare facilities. As a major stakeholder in agricultural interests and rural development, IFB's comments to USDA drove home the importance of connectivity in these areas.

Achieving that connectivity starts with access to reliable, high-speed internet. Therefore, an essential goal of the ReConnect Program is to expand broadband service to rural areas that fall below sufficient broadband access of 10 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 1 Mbps upstream. Through the ReConnect Program, applicant requests must be capable of providing service to every premise in the proposed funded service area at minimum speed of 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps

upstream. These speeds meet the Federal Communications Commission's definition of broadband.

The distribution of these new dollars will be based on applicant funding needs and the current broadband access in proposed service areas.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA is providing for three separate funding categories and lists the following options for first round applicants to choose from:

- 100% loan,
- 50% loan / 50% grant, or
- 100% grant

Applicants will decide on one of these options based on service area need. USDA states, to be eligible for a 100% loan or 50% loan / 50% grant, the proposed funded service area must be in a rural area where 90% of the households do not have sufficient broadband access. To be eligible for a 100% grant, the proposed funded service area must be in a rural area where 100% of the households do not have sufficient broadband access.

Following is a list of project costs eligible to receive program dollars (details are provided on USDA's program website: <https://www.usda.gov/>

broadband under *Eligible Funding Purposes*):

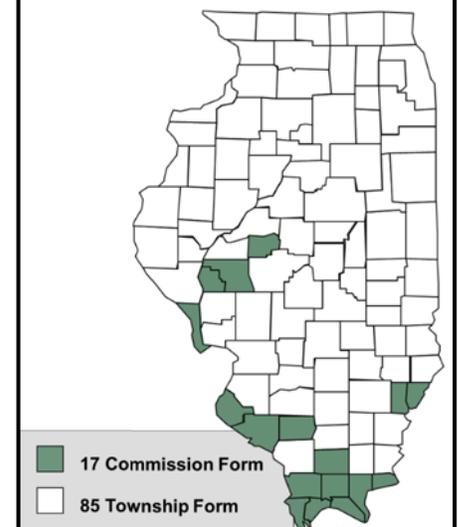
1. To fund the construction or improvement of buildings, land, and other facilities that are required to provide broadband service.
2. To fund reasonable pre-application expenses.
3. To fund the acquisition and improvement of an existing system that is currently providing insufficient broadband service (eligible for 100% loan requests only).

To fund terrestrial-based facilities that support the provision of satellite broadband service.

For more information on the Reconnect Program, visit USDA's website at: <https://www.usda.gov/broadband> and learn more about their commitment to invest in rural America.

LINK

### Illinois has two different forms of county government



## OMA designee

Someone must be designated as the go-to person when it comes to the Open Meetings Act

Every public body must designate someone to serve as their Open Meetings Act (OMA) designee. This applies to even the smallest of public bodies such as drainage district commissioners, SWCD boards, even advisory boards.

That's a good idea in that someone associated with the public body is aware they are tasked with the primary responsibility to

consider OMA limitations and requirements applicable to that body's actions.

It doesn't matter who it is that holds that title for the public body—whether employee, officer or member—but whomever it is, they'll need to have special training. Once appointed to that role, the individual will have 30 days in which to complete the

training, which will need to be repeated every year.

Each body may have more than one designee. The public body must submit a list of designees to the Public Access Counselor.

Check with your local governing boards—does each have an OMA designee?

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## Mandatory

*(Continued from page 1)*

The electronic training is available free of charge through the Public Access Counselor's website at <http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/Default.aspx>.

Those elected officials who took their oath of office on December 3 will be required to complete the OMA electronic training no later than March 2.

If this article has sparked your interest in learning more about the Open Meetings Act check out additional information provided in this edition of *LINK*.

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## Training

*(Continued from page 1)*

address this issue, Illinois law requires public bodies and their committees to give notice to the public of its meetings.

The OMA also prescribes:

- The type of government body and public meeting covered under the OMA.
- The number of members of a public body that have to be present before the OMA is required.
- How to provide accurate public notice.
- Key protocols that must be followed before and during a meeting.

Under these guidelines many of our own county Farm Bureau managers may find themselves participating in business events and social gatherings with public bodies that fall under the OMA.

The article on the front page talks about the OMA training requirements for newly-elected officials. Similar training is also available to the general public.



Completing this training will help you better understand the general principles of the Open Meetings Act and raise awareness on OMA compliance—whether the event is formal, casual, business or social.

To begin the training, visit the Attorney General's Office website at: <http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/>.

For general information training, click on "General Public Training". You will be redirected to the FOIA/OMA Training page. From there you will click on "OMA 2019 Training" to begin your session.

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# Rural infrastructure one aim of BUILD

Revised federal program ensures at least a portion of major funding goes to rural areas

by Kirby Wagner

The federal government is attempting to do more to recognize infrastructure needs in rural areas.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao announced \$1.5 billion in grant funding for 91 projects in 49 states and Washington D.C. The grants are made through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.

BUILD, introduced in April 2018, is a rebranded version of the old Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program. It focuses on major investments in road, rail, transit, and port infrastructure projects.

One goal of the BUILD program is to invest in rural communities in which government has long underinvested.

BUILD guidelines require 30% of the \$1.5 billion to be awarded for rural projects—infrastructure outside of an Urbanized Area (UA). [The UA is defined as a *densely settled territory with a population of 50,000 or more.*]

The program is intended to encourage local governments to raise new sources of revenue to evaluate local activities and generate additional non-federal investment to match these federal grants.

In the first round of BUILD funding, the number of rural applications more than doubled compared to the previ-

ous year's TIGER applications according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. This year, 59% of the applications were for rural projects, and 62 projects were awarded to rural

The lone awarded project in Illinois went to an urban project in Springfield. The funding is for railway improvements and addition of track through the city.

grant applications.

Of the 62 awarded projects 13 were sponsored by municipalities, 11 sponsored by counties, 16 were sponsored by a transportation authority, and 22 were sponsored by State departments of transportation.

Awards were given to rural projects representing several modes of transportation includ-

ing rail, roadway, bridge, and port projects. Many of the awarded projects were for road system upgrades and enhancements to better connect citizens with their communities and with larger urban areas.

USDOT believes they prioritized rural projects that aligned with criteria that addressed the needs of rural infrastructure.

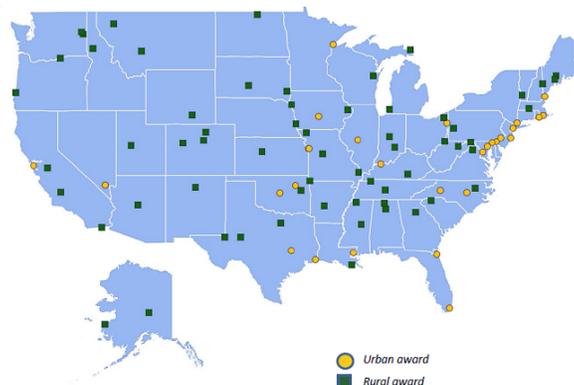
The guidelines of the program were made to address projects of all shapes and sizes to allow local governments to compete for projects that address the needs of their citizens. Now that the first round has been awarded, local units can better align future projects with the criteria of the program to increase chances of winning an award.

Illinois had often been a big winner in the TIGER Grant Program. That may have been largely due to the fact that both the sitting President and the Secretary of Transportation were from Illinois at the time.

It is with some irony, now, that the lone BUILD project awarded in Illinois went to an urban project in Springfield—for railway improvements and the addition of track through the city.

This first round of BUILD awards can be considered a win for rural local government that sets the stage for future investment in funding the needs of rural infrastructure.

## 2018 AWARDS



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## Consolidated Election—April 2, 2019

Besides electing officials, watch for public policy questions

We're still settling in following the changing of the guard brought about by the November election, and we're about to go through yet another one—for some, two more.

In this odd-numbered year, Illinois voters will go to the polls once again for the Consolidated Election where local contests are featured on the ballot. As always, questions of public policy can appear there, too.

In municipalities over 5,000 in population and those smaller than that who have chosen to use the partisan approach, candidates for those offices will first vie for their political par-

ty's nomination in a Primary Consolidated Election held on February 26.

The vast majority of local officials to be elected this spring run in non-partisan races. The election for them—and for winners of the February 26 primary races—will be held on April 2.

County Farm Bureaus® are encouraged to identify candidates running in important races within their county and provide background information to their members, along with information on questions of public policy appearing on the ballot.

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## Election Calendar Amendment

Recent change worthy of note for upcoming April election

If you've been following the State's calendar (<https://www.elections.il.gov/>) for the General Consolidated Election coming in April, you need to be aware of one amendment that was made just this past August.

The election calendar has been amended to show that a notice for a public question may be published up to 60 days before an election, instead of "not more than" 30 days before.

The change was brought about by legislation passed in 2017 (HB0512) and is now embodied in Public Act 100-298. But this year's election calendar was originally published using the old 30-day standard.

The 2017 law change provides a significant adjustment that would allow both proponents and opponents twice the time to explain their viewpoints to voters ahead of them casting ballots.

For the General Consolidated Election in April of this year, that public notice timeframe is adjusted from its original date of 3/5/19 to a much earlier 2/1/19—just around the corner.

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## Who's up for election?

April 2, 2019

### MUNICIPAL --

- Mayor or President
- Clerk
- Treasurer (Council-Manager only)
- Council Members or Commissioners or Trustees or Aldermen

MUNICIPAL -- City of Chicago (run-off elections if required) [65 ILCS 20/21-26]

PARK DISTRICT - Commissioners, Trustees

PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT – Trustees

TOWNSHIP AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARY – Trustees

REGIONAL BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES – Trustees

SCHOOL DISTRICT - Board Members, 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

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT – Commissioners

SPRINGFIELD METROPOLITAN EXP. & AUDITORIUM AUTH.—Commissioners

OTHER SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICTS (see applicable statutes)

# The 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference

March 6-7, President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield

Source: *Rural Partners*

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs will host the 30th Annual Economic Development Conference "Designing Our Future to Reach New Heights," March 6-7, 2019, at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, 701 E Adams Springfield, IL, in conjunction with the Governor's Rural Affairs Council and Rural Partners.

This annual statewide conference is uniquely focused on improving the quality of life for small rural communities throughout the state, featuring approximately 20 speakers from Illinois and beyond, who will share their experience and expertise. The event



will feature plenary and session speakers, as well as breakout sessions addressing strategies designed to teach your community not only to survive economic downturns, but also to thrive and prosper.

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs will soon be providing details and additional information on their website at: <https://www.iira.org/>

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# Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference

Taking Charge of Change

On February 19, 2019, Illinois Farm Bureau will hold its annual Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference (GALC) at the President Abraham Lincoln hotel in Springfield, Illinois.

This one day conference will feature dynamic speakers, information, and training sessions on key issues impacting agriculture, public policy and organizational priorities. Farm Bureau leaders will have an opportunity to keep up with current issues and network with agency representatives and elected officials.

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/GALC19](http://www.ilfb.org/GALC19)

Hotel reservations must be made online. A block of rooms has been reserved.



Much more information to come. Visit the website for the latest.

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