

COUNTY LEADER



County Commissioners Association of Ohio quarterly magazine

Summer 2021



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1) Franklin County Commissioners Erica Crawley and Kevin Boyce attend the NACo Annual Conference.
 2) Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis gives Shelby County Commissioner a tour of the courthouse.
 3) County commissioners from around Ohio recently participated in the Public Leadership Academy sponsored by the Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University.
 4) CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler and CEBCO Managing Director Mike Kindell traveled to Carroll County, a CEBCO member, to visit with new County Commissioner Christopher Modranski.

A MESSAGE FROM 2021 CCAO PRESIDENT TIM BUBB, LICKING COUNTY COMMISSIONER

As we enter the second half of the year, I am impressed at the progress of our association in 2021. In what is turning out to be the return to the 'new normal' after the pandemic, it has been great to be part of a long list of achievements, both projects delayed in 2020 by the shutdown and moving forward to new and exciting initiatives.



CCAO is able to again 'hang its hat' on an extensive and persistent lobbying effort to encourage acceptance of our 'priority platform' items in the Governor's Executive Budget in February. Then through the tedious effort to reinforce our priorities as the House, Senate and Conference Committee pushed the massive budget bill across the finish line by July 1. One hundred percent reimbursement for indigent defensive was a big win, along with a variety of other areas of interest and concern. They are highlighted in detail in this publication. However, as your president I want to thank our policy staff and the many commissioners and county officials who testified and made hundreds of phone calls to reinforce our needs and relationship as the 'most important' government partner with the State of Ohio. Congratulations to all for a powerful and successful budget bill effort in 2021!

The first half of 2021 our Executive Committee, Board and most committees have met virtually; however in the second half of the year we are moving the Board back to 'in person' meetings. It would appear the new normal will encourage in-person and hybrid meetings, however (as permitted in our bylaws update) virtual committee meetings likely will be scheduled as well. Also, in mid-July, our staff, for both the association and affiliates, moved back into our headquarters building on State Street in downtown Columbus. They transitioned back with a plan that includes downtown Columbus and still some limited 'work at home' options.

CCAO's Strategic Vision planning group recently completed their work. Still being compiled, they are producing both short and long term plans for making our association even better! I would like to personally thank the members who participated in four day-long sessions to discuss and debate priorities for the future. They included Chairman Jeff Fix (Fairfield), John O'Grady (Franklin), Lenny Eliason (Athens), Armond Budish (Cuyahoga), Cory Noonan (Allen), Debbie Lieberman (Montgomery), Tony Vero (Richland), Tony Anderson (Fayette) and Kathryn Whittington (Ashtabula). Their efforts will pay dividends for the association for years to come!

The big hurdle in returning to the office has been the major HVAC (heating, ventilating and air conditioning) modernization of our three-story building. As I have mentioned we as a group (CCAO, CEBCO and CORSA) as building co-owners moved up this much needed project to this year to take advantage of the pandemic 'work from home' situation. With the building empty, it allowed the construction both inside and on the roof to be accomplished in half the time, and well within budget. The good news is the HVAC project is nearly complete, with just final adjustments and air balancing internally to be accomplished. This third of a million dollar upgrade is a huge improvement environmentally, and will make our building fully functional for years to come.

Along with in-person meetings, it is my hope that our five CCAO/CEAO Regions will resume meetings in the second half of 2021. The new 14-County Central Region met in Delaware County for an inaugural meeting on June 30 and a September meeting in Franklin County is being planned. Our five regions are all about relationship building and collaboration, and are an important part of the program.

It was an honor leading an Ohio delegation of some 50 commissioners and staffers to the annual NACo Convention the second week in July in Prince George's County Maryland. The conference was well attended and featured a wide variety of business and educational sessions. Both Vice President Harris and House Speaker Pelosi were featured speakers. Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire of Minnesota was elected NACo 2nd Vice President and will serve as NACo President in 2023-24.

I am pleased the next CCAO Executive Committee and Board meetings will be 'in-person' here in Licking County at the Cherry Valley Hotel. In addition, we have invited the some 60 newly elected and appointed commissioners to attend the two-day event August 19 and 20. We have planned several new member training sessions and informational programs for their benefit. A bonus aspect of the meeting will be the debut of the newly designed CCAO logo and marketing design. It is a much needed update that will be featured in many ways to reinforce the progressive and contemporary nature of our association.

Development work continues on a kiosk style educational/informational display to be placed in the Map Room of the Ohio Statehouse. CCAO is the primary sponsor working with the Cap Square Advisory and Review Commission. Our association is using the firm Roto in Dublin to design this interactive display with a goal of dedication before yearend. All 88 counties will be represented with information. Your county will be contacted in the weeks ahead to verify information. The purpose of the display is to show in graphic form the strong partnership between the counties and the state.

Finally, CCAO 2nd V.P. Tom Whiston has agreed to lead the planning committee for the CCAO/CEAO Annual Meeting at the Hyatt and Convention Center in Columbus in December. If you would like to assist or offer program suggestions please forward them to Commissioner Whiston or the CCAO staff. The committee will begin its work by the first week in August. The conference will be December 8, 9 and 10, and your attendance is encouraged! So mark your calendar.

Very Best – CCAO President Tim Bubb

SAVE THE DATE

**2021 CCAO/CEAO
ANNUAL WINTER
CONFERENCE**

Dec. 8-10, 2021

LETTER FROM CCAO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHERYL SUBLER

With the state budget process in the rearview mirror, the summer months provide an opportunity to escape the Columbus beltway and visit CCAO members in their own communities. In other words, it's road trip season at CCAO.



Paired alongside CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz, CCAO's "road warrior," we've spent a fair amount of windshield time traveling to counties in recent weeks learning more about the exciting developments taking place in communities across the state.

After a challenging 2020 and a lengthy (but fruitful!) state budget process, it's rejuvenating to see members in person once again and witness progress being made on a host of key county priorities.

A popular discussion topic during most county visits is the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). ARPA provides counties, along with the state and other local governments, significant federal resources to continue the fight against COVID-19 and make transformative investments in local government operations. These funds represent once-in-a-generation investments that can assist counties in a host of different ways.

Throughout our summer travels, many counties expressed interest in investing ARPA funds to improve and expand critical water and sewer infrastructure. Other counties are looking to extend affordable broadband service to unserved communities cut off from the many benefits of a high-speed internet connection.

Counties have shared their ARPA plans for strengthening public health infrastructure, including mental health and substance abuse programs, affordable housing and mortgage assistance. Investments in workforce development and assistance for non-profits, small businesses and

IT'S AN EXCITING TIME TO BE INVOLVED IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT AND TO SEE ALL THAT'S BEING DONE TO BUILD STRONGER COUNTIES FOR A STRONGER OHIO.

hospitality industries are also ideas commonly heard while out on the road.

These are all exciting developments for counties, and we are eager to see the benefits that they will bring to countless communities. It's our goal at CCAO to assist our members with guidance and resources so that ARPA dollars provide the maximum benefit to each county.

Alongside ARPA it's been a pleasure to share with members the successes of the recent state budget bill. Through the work of many CCAO members and the CCAO policy team, the enacted budget bill is projected to fully fund indigent defense reimbursement – a historic win for county government. The state-county partnership has made great strides in recent years, leading to better outcomes for counties and Ohioans alike.

While discussing ARPA and state legislative victories has been invigorating, the most enjoyable aspect of "CCA0 Road Trip 2021" has been experiencing these successes with our members. Counties today are poised to do great work to improve the lives of the constituents they serve. John and I along with the whole policy team – Jon, Adam, Rachel and Nick, are energized by the optimism, leadership and ingenuity we are witnessing at the county level all across the state.

The CCAO team will continue our road tripping adventures in the weeks to come, and we look forward to seeing many of you along the way. It's an exciting time to be involved in county government and to see all that's being done to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

GUEST COLUMN

GOV. DEWINE HIGHLIGHTS HOW STATE OPERATING BUDGET AFFECTS COUNTIES

Mike DeWine, Ohio Governor

A budget is a statement of priorities. As we worked on the Ohio operating budget for FY22-23, and reaffirmed our priorities, we kept in mind our local government partners and their needs. I appreciate the work of the General Assembly, and I am



proud to say that Amended Substitute House Bill 110, which I signed on July 1, has bipartisan support, is balanced, and sets a bold path for our state.

It continues and expands on areas of importance from the previous budget, including investments in our children, communities, health, and environment. And, because Ohio is rebounding so well, the budget cuts income taxes by \$2 billion for all Ohio taxpayers and eliminates the tax liability for Ohioans earning less than \$25,000.

During the budget process, Ohio's county officials expressed particular concern about indigent defense reimbursement, broadband expansion, the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) fee offset, an increase in the State Child Protection Allocation, and criminal justice reform. We listened, and this budget includes:

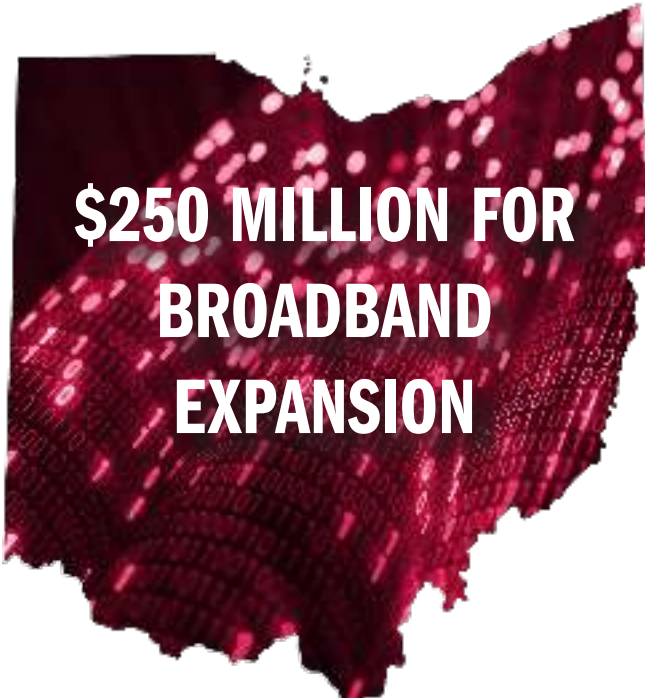
- \$268 million to fully reimburse indigent defense costs in all 88 counties and free up county funds for other uses.
- \$250 million for broadband expansion to provide the flexibility to bring internet service to rural and urban Ohio neighborhoods that are missing out on opportunities to grow and thrive.
- \$3 million for the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) fee offset to support law enforcement and first responders.



- \$240 million to increase funding for the State Child Protection Allocation for Ohio's 88 county public children's services agencies.
- An expansion of the population eligible for the Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison (T-CAP) program. Building up T-CAP is a step toward getting more low-level, nonviolent offenders the treatment and rehabilitation they need.

Other highlights from the budget include, investing in children:

- \$20 billion over the biennium in state funding for K-12 schools, a record investment.
- \$20 million for evidence-based services to prevent children from having to enter the foster care system.
- \$2 million to help counties inspect and approve placements for foster and adoptive children.



\$250 MILLION FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION

Investing in communities:


- \$889 million in the Local Government Fund over the biennium.
- \$350 million to clean up “brownfield” sites — abandoned industrial or commercial sites that are too contaminated to redevelop.
- \$10 million to pay for grants for law enforcement agencies to implement or enhance body-worn camera programs.

Investing in health and wellness:

- \$41 million to pay for mental health and substance use crisis service support.
- \$5.5 million for local programs to improve maternal and infant health.
- \$41.2 million for Help Me Grow, Ohio’s evidence-based home visiting program for at-risk, expectant mothers, and families of young children.

Investing in the environment:

- \$100 million for the Ohio Department of Agriculture to continue to enroll agriculture



\$20 MILLION FOR SERVICES TO PREVENT CHILDREN FROM HAVING TO ENTER THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

producers in nutrient management, water management, and erosion management.

- \$50 million for the continuation of wetland creation and restoration.
- \$20 million for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to improve water and wastewater infrastructure.

Today, Ohio is gaining strength. With this budget, every county stands to benefit as Ohio emerges as the best state in the Midwest for people to live, work, invest, and play.

Gov. Mike DeWine previously served as Ohio’s Attorney General, a U.S. senator, Ohio’s lieutenant governor, a U.S. representative, an Ohio senator, and Greene County’s prosecuting attorney.

CCAO POLICY TEAM

ARPA FUNDS CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR INVESTMENT IN WATER, SEWER AND BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

by Jon Honeck, CCAO Senior Policy Analyst

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is making \$2.3 billion available to Ohio counties in order to help with the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



These Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

(CLFRF) are being disbursed in two equal tranches by the US Department of the Treasury, with the first round available in 2021 and the second round in Spring 2022. CLFRF resources must be used for four eligible use categories specified in the American Rescue Plan Act and implemented in the Treasury Department's Interim Final Rule and Frequently Asked Questions:

1. To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
2. To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
3. For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
4. To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The ability to make investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure is a major difference with the Coronavirus Relief Fund created in the federal CARES Act last year. These kinds of investments will boost economic development and improve the

quality of life in many Ohio communities. Funds must be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024, and spent by Dec. 31, 2026. The funds can be used to cover costs incurred for eligible projects planned or started prior to March 3, 2021, provided that the project costs are incurred after March 3, 2021. Cost sharing or matching is not required, and recipients are not required to receive prior authorization from Treasury.

CLFRF resources are more flexible than most other sources of federal financing. Projects using CLFRF are not subject to review under the National Environmental Policy Act or to Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements, although these and other laws may still apply if funds are combined with other federal programs. State prevailing wage law will apply if applicable cost thresholds are met.

Treasury will require documentation of wages and labor standards for infrastructure projects that cost over \$10 million.

Funds may be transferred to other subrecipient governments or organizations as the need arises, as long as the intended use is allowed by the statute. Counties may pool funds with other political subdivisions for regional projects and partnering governments may agree that one government can undertake the project on behalf of the group.

Funds may even be transferred to another county, as long as it can be documented that all counties receive a proportionate share of the benefit based on their financial contributions.

For water and sewer projects, the Interim Final Rule aligns eligible uses with allowable project categories in the US Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Fund or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. Both of these programs allow for pre-project development costs, such as planning and engineering, and for directly-related road repairs necessary for the project.

Stormwater projects must have direct water quality benefits.

Generally, broadband projects must meet standards of delivering minimum speeds of 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload, and must be targeted to underserved consumers, including households, schools, healthcare facilities, businesses, and public safety organizations. An underserved consumer lacks a physical connection that delivers at least 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed.

The first interim report to the Treasury Department is due Aug. 31. The first quarterly project and expenditure report is due Oct. 31, covering the

period from the initial award date to Sept. 30.

Counties with populations over 250,000 are also responsible for a Recovery Plan Performance Report, delivered to Treasury by Aug. 31 and posted on the county website, that provides project information and explains how program outcomes will be achieved in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.

Members are encouraged to check the US Treasury website, NACo informational page, and the CCAO Local Fiscal Recovery Fund Resources page for more information.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY USES ARP FUNDS TO BENEFIT COUNTY FAIR AND HELP ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Fairfield County Board of Commissioners announced an American Rescue Plan (ARP) \$500,000 subgrant award to the Fairfield County Agricultural Society.

The subgrant supports projects that address the negative impact to the tourism and travel industry from not being able to hold a county fair during the COVID-19 pandemic and to support the county fair as part of the tourism and travel industry, ultimately benefiting the Fairfield County economy as the community comes out of the pandemic and recovers from the public health emergency.

The collaboration between the County Commissioners and the County Agricultural Society is a partnership to move forward, following the pandemic, encouraging citizens to enjoy the county fair and support tourism in Fairfield County. The theme for the collaboration is Fairfield Forward.

The county fair board last year put on a junior fair only; according to an article in the Lancaster Eagle Gazette, the fair board lost about \$170,000 from not having the full fair.

The ARP subgrant will be used for fair operations in 2021 and 2022 as well as to paint historical buildings at the fairgrounds, improve technology and

repave a small portion of road that was used when the Ed Sands building served as a vaccination site.

“The county fair’s importance dates back to a history when people loved to get together and celebrate. They celebrated successful learning and showed their best harvest, livestock, and crafts,” said Commissioner Dave Levacy. “The county fair is a celebration everyone looks forward to – and that is something we need as we collectively come out of the pandemic. This is a time of hope.”

100,000 people are expected to attend the fair this fall. The money will also help the fair board host four additional events at the fairgrounds throughout the year.

The commission is excited to have the fair back for 2021 after being canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

The 2021 Fairfield County Fair will be held Oct. 10 to Oct 16.

Speaking of county fairs, you can see pictures from county fairs from around on Ohio on pages 26-27.

FEATURE

CROSSING THE FINISH LINE ON THE STATE BUDGET

Adam Schwiebert, Policy Analyst

The state budget process is often described as a marathon. Appropriating tens of billions of dollars and making countless policy changes does not happen overnight and the advocacy efforts oftentimes feel endless.



The long road of the state budget begins as the executive branch spends months developing its budget proposal. Once introduced by the governor, the budget process hits overdrive and kicks off months of legislative hearings with lengthy amendment processes and final votes. All throughout this long journey, the CCAO policy team as well as CCAO membership advocate for key county priorities. It's a monumental effort, but the stakes are high and the outcomes have considerable impact on the strength and health of counties across the state.

This year's budget process was no different. When Gov. Mike DeWine signed House Bill 110 on June 30, the lengthy budget process once again concluded and the outcome of numerous county priorities became clear. Due to the many advocacy efforts from CCAO members, several crucial county priorities were included in HB 110 which will directly benefit counties and the citizens they serve.

CCAO's number one budget priority this cycle was full funding for indigent defense reimbursement. For many years, the state reimbursed counties less than 50 percent of the costs of this state-mandated service, leaving counties to shoulder tens of millions in annual costs to fulfill the state's constitutional obligation. Building off the successes of the previous budget bill, HB 110 is projected to provide 100 percent reimbursement for indigent defense – a historic moment for the state county partnership. DeWine along with the General Assembly demonstrated incredible support for counties by fully funding this mandate.

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Another key priority for counties has been expanding broadband service to those who are unserved and underserved. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the desperate need for broadband service as workplaces and classrooms across the state moved to online platforms. For those lacking broadband, participating in this new digital landscape became practically impossible. Looking forward, the need for broadband service will only become more critical. CCAO was pleased to see \$250 million included in HB 110 for the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program to help connect more Ohioans with this critical service.

The budget builds on previous investments in children services by increasing the state child protection allocation by \$10 million each year. These

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These increased funds will help counties fund some major transformations happening in the child welfare space, including the implementation of the state Kinship Support Program and the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

increased funds will help counties fund some major transformations happening in the child welfare space, including the implementation of the state Kinship Support Program and the federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

County agencies will also receive additional administrative dollars for JFS program administration, child support administration, and adult protection services. Key investments from the last biennium to prevent custody relinquishment of multi-system youth were increased.

Jail construction and operations continues to be a top priority for counties. Existing statute allows for counties to utilize up to an additional 0.5 percent of unused transit sales tax authority for county jail construction, subject to a vote of the people. HB 110 includes a provision that allows this additional 0.5 percent sales tax authority to be used not only for construction purposes, but also for county jail operations. Many counties have constructed new jails only to experience challenges in funding the operating costs of the new facilities. This provision provides counties with another tool in the toolbox to address their public safety needs.

The budget contains numerous other programs and appropriations that stand to benefit county government. HB 110 contains \$350 million for brownfield remediation, \$15 million for the Rural

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Now is the time to thank DeWine and state lawmakers for their support. If you have not done so already, please reach out to your state officials and thank them for their support.

Industrial Park Loan Program, increased funding for MARCS radio subsidies, OSU Extension and more. While no budget bill is perfect, on balance, HB 110 advances many key county priorities. CCAO is very grateful to the many supporters within the DeWine Administration and General Assembly who made many of these victories possible. DeWine and Lt. Gov. Jon Husted started counties off strong with an executive budget which provided considerable increases in indigent defense reimbursement.

The Ohio House, led by Speaker Bob Cupp, added additional funds to raise the reimbursement rate to a projected 100 percent. The Ohio Senate and Senate President Matt Huffman continued that strong county support in the Senate version of the budget. Counties found supporters at every step throughout the budget process. Now is the time to thank DeWine and state lawmakers for their support. If you have not done so already, please reach out to your state officials and thank them for their support. Better yet, consider passing a resolution thanking these officials for their support and share with your local media. Publicly sharing thanks for helping advance county priorities is critical to building a strong state-county partnership.

Finally, the entire CCAO policy team is grateful for all the work that county commissioners, executives, and council members put in to make this budget a success for counties across the state. The countless phone calls, conversations, letters, committee testimony and more made a real difference with lawmakers. These successes would simply not be possible without your efforts.

We finished the budget marathon together, and as a result, we continue to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

FEATURE

NEW HVAC UNIT BRINGS COMFORT, SAVES DOLLARS

by Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

It's often said you know you're an Ohioan when you've experienced all four seasons in a single day. You might start the day defrosting your car and end the day by cranking the AC. The same was also true at the CCAO offices. At any given time, you'd find yourself in need of a jacket, a fan or, sometimes, weirdly, a combination of both, depending on whose office you happened to visit. Even worse, the HVAC unit would sometimes completely fail, causing disruptions in the building.

Those days are gone thanks to the recently completed HVAC project that has not only made the office a temperate place to work but will save the association significant costs for years to come.

The massive \$300,000 project was originally scheduled for 2022, but during the pandemic CCAO took advantage of the empty office building and allowed contractor Roger Edwards and his team at Integrated & Open Systems to get to work.

His company has done work on the building for the last five years, and he also worked for his brother's company on the building's original design in 1978. That original HVAC equipment was what was attempting to regulate the building over 40 years later, which led to numerous issues when trying to control the building's climate. As Edwards succinctly put it, "The system was old."

"We got tired of pouring money into band aids for the old unit and figured our money was better spent doing the replacement early," said CCAO Network Administrator Tim Hoverman, who oversaw the project.

CCAO President Tim Bubb said that move could very well have resulted in savings of up \$100,000, as inflationary pressure on construction materials and systems and increasing labor costs would have impacted the project in the future.

According to Bubb, CCAO, CEBCO and CORSA will immediately see savings in monthly costs of natural gas and electricity, and major savings in what has



Roger Edwards gives Network Administrator Tim Hoverman and CCAO President Tim Bubb a tour of the HVAC unit.

been annual considerable maintenance costs trying to keep the four-decade old HVAC systems functioning.

So, what is involved in a \$300,000 overhaul? The renovated HVAC features new smaller and high efficiency boiler for heating; a new steam humidification unit; a new stainless steel water heater; a pair of large ultraviolet vertical light systems in the air transfer chamber on the roof that will sanitize the air headed for the interior (ie: COVID and virus killers), new air condition and air handler units; a special environmental unit for the server room; both new and refurbished motors and fans for the system on the roof; new hot water circulation motor/pumps combinations; and refurbished VAV air distribution boxes in the ceilings inside and all connected to a computerized HVAC management system.

That system will easily allow Hoverman to manage the system and ensure it is working properly, an update for which he's grateful.

"I'd like to thank the Facilities Governance Board for agreeing to push the project up in the timeline. This

was way overdue and will be much appreciated by everyone who uses our building,” Hoverman said.

Bubb concurs, saying “This project assures the association and its affiliates a comfortable and well-managed building and environmental system for decades to come.”

Additionally, the tinting of the windows in the building’s atrium will improve energy efficiency. The staff also worked outside to refresh and update landscaping around the building, as it was important to beautify and improve the space, as they take great pride in the building that sees members and staff

spend countless hours working to build stronger counties for a stronger Ohio.

With the HVAC project completed, the staff headed back to the office and were treated with a welcome back breakfast. They’re eager and excited to see our members in person!



The tinting of the atrium window.



Policy Analyst Adam Schwiebert and CORSA Risk Manager Frank Hatfield refresh the landscaping outside the CCAO building.



CCAO staff attends the welcome back breakfast.

FEATURE

INAUGURAL CENTRAL REGION MEETING A SUCCESS

Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

What do The Great Lakes, The Marx Brothers and CCAO's regions have in common? They're proof that sometimes things work better with a fifth member. For CCAO, it was the addition of the new Central Region, which includes Champaign, Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Richland and Union counties.

Delaware County commissioners and engineers along with CCAO and CEO hosted the Central Region's inaugural meeting in June in Delaware County, which President Tim Bubb hopes is only the beginning of a productive working group that will serve as a major economic development engine driving Ohio into the future.

"The goal of this new fifth CCAO/CEO Region is to build an active and engaged group of commissioners and engineers who share considerable connection to central Ohio and shared challenges and opportunities as this region grows," he said. "[We want] to bring together leaders with common interests and encourage collaboration on regional projects. Relationships are very important, and this new region will foster relationship building between these 14 counties."

The meeting turned out to be a productive blend of familiar faces as well as new commissioners and engineers, and guests were treated to a full agenda with timely and beneficial information.

Delaware County Commissioner Gary Merrell led a presentation on his county's economic development, followed by CCAO and CEO policy updates and a roundtable discussion on the American Rescue Plan,

moderated by CCAO Policy Analyst Jon Honeck.

"We set out to announce the new region to those members and to challenge us to work together. Mission accomplished," Merrell said of the meeting.

Merrell's spirit of partnership is also central to what Delaware County Commissioner Jeff Benton hopes to gain from the Central Region.

"I have learned so much from my fellow commissioners over the years, and the personal interaction and informal discussion that we have missed in the past year are extremely valuable to me," he said. "Plus, having this group that focuses on issues in our region is a big plus for collaboration and information sharing."



Back: CEO Executive Director Dean Ringle, CCAO President Tim Bubb, CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, and CEO President and Coshocton County Engineer Fred Wachtel
Front: Delaware County Commissioners Barb Lewis, Gary Merrell and Jeff Benton and Delaware County Engineer Chris Bauserman.

Following the meeting, the Delaware County Commissioners and staff treated guests to a tour of the renovated historic courthouse.

"I was very proud to showcase the beautiful renovation of our historic courthouse, and I really appreciated the commissioners who took the time to go on a tour," Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis said.

Bubb, one of the many attendees who took the time to tour, was nothing but impressed.

"The main attraction of this first Central District meeting was to give the leaders in Delaware County an opportunity to share the renovation and restoration of their historic courthouse, as a new administrative center including offices and meetings rooms for the commissioners," he said.

FEATURE

LADY JUSTICE FLIES HIGH ALONG A NEW CUPOLA AT HOLMES COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

Lady Justice is back in her rightful place atop the Holmes County Courthouse, as is a new cupola, and more than 100 residents gathered at the courthouse to help celebrate.

The July 3 event marked the end of the roughly 5-year project that returned the restored Lady Justice to her spot and created a new, copper cupola to replace what had been removed in the 1950s from the courthouse, which itself had been built in the 1880s.

Commissioner Joe Miller said it was important to replace the structure to preserve the building’s legacy.

“The courthouse is very important to us. It’s the people’s house. It belongs to everyone,” he said.

“We want it to look historical, the way it did many years ago. The work they did without having equipment in the 1860s, people need to see that forever.”

The people of Holmes had the opportunity to see the completed work when they gathered for the July 3 event. Mark Boley of the historical society spoke about the history of the courthouse, and Miller and Doug Hooper of Midstate Contractors discussed the scope of the project.

“It was important to us to get the courthouse back to how looked,” Miller said. “The support of the community is overwhelming.”



Photo 1) The Holmes County Courthouse cupola with Lady Justice.

Photo 2) Lady Justice (before).

Photo 3) Lady Justice (after).

Photo 4) A Midstate employee working on the cupola.



FEATURE

OTTAWA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CELEBRATE LOCAL ARCHER'S SHOT AT OLYMPIC GOLD

by Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

When Ottawa County resident and archer Jacob Wukie took aim for a gold medal at the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo, he had his county behind him, so much so that Ottawa County Commissioners Don Douglas, Mark Coppeler and Mark Stahl proclaimed July 9, 2021, as "Jacob Wukie Olympic Day."

Wukie made his second appearance at the games; he competed in 2012 in London and took home a silver medal with Team USA. Throughout his pursuit of gold, which involves an elite training schedule to perfect his archery skills, he has worked a full-time job as a licensed water operator at the Ottawa County Regional Water Treatment Plant and he and his wife, Brianne are raising three children, Aria, Gemma and Caroline.

That dedication to his craft, family and career led the commissioners to recognize him for his accomplishments.

The proclamation reads "WHEREAS, the 2021 Olympic Summer Games will be held in Tokyo, Japan and will officially commence on July 23, 2021 and run through August 8, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a rich history of sending athletes to both the summer and winter Olympic Games, all of which have competed amongst the best in the world while seeking to medal in their representative events; and

WHEREAS, almost 600 athletes will be representing the United States in the 2021 Tokyo Summer Olympics including our own Jacob Wukie of Fremont,

Ohio who has worked hard to train and perfect his archery skills and craft to the level of earning a spot on the 2021 US Olympic Team, and

WHEREAS; Jacob throughout his pursuit for Gold, also works a full time job as a licensed Water

Operator at the Ottawa County Regional Water Treatment Plant, and WHEREAS, Jacob and his wife, Brianne, share in the parental responsibilities of raising their three children, Aria, Gemma and Caroline, and

WHEREAS, Jacob will be competing on the Olympic stage for the second time in his life after winning a silver medal in Archery for the United States along with his teammates during the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in London, England, now

Therefore, we, the Board of Ottawa County Commissioners, have the honor and privilege to commend Jacob for his dedication to the sport of Archery, serving as a role model to others, demonstrating that with hard work, a focused mindset, and his devout Christian faith, tremendous accomplishments are possible."

Before he left for the Games, the commissioners joined Wukie, his wife, their children, his parents and his coworkers at the Ottawa County Regional Water Plant in Bay Township for a special sendoff.

Each of his coworkers signed an Olympic flag, which Wukie promptly hoisted to fly beneath the American Flag outside of the water plant. The flag will be displayed inside near the entrance to the facility.



Wukie holds his commendation from Ottawa County Commissioners Don Douglas, Mark Stahl and Mark Coppeler.

FEATURE

CCAO MEMBERS REPRESENT OHIO AT NACO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

by Adam Schwiebert, Policy Analyst

The National Association of Counties (NACo) recently held its 86th Annual Conference at the Gaylord National Harbor in Prince George’s County, Maryland, July 9-12. The hybrid event hosted county officials from across the country, both in person and online. Ohio was well represented at the conference, with a total of 55 Ohio county officials, county staff and CCAO staff registered.

In attendance were members of the CCAO Executive Committee: President Tim Bubb (Licking County), 1st Vice President Debbie Lieberman (Montgomery County), 2nd Vice President Tom Whiston (Morrow County), Treasurer Glenn Miller (Henry County), and Past Presidents Julie Ehemann (Shelby County) and Mike Halleck (Columbiana County).

Many of Ohio’s NACo member counties, including commissioners and county executives from Clermont, Defiance, Franklin, Hamilton, Holmes, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Summit, Trumbull and Warren counties also participated. CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, CCAO Policy Analyst Adam Schwiebert and CCAO Administrative Professional Robin Garrett also attended the conference.

Featured speakers at the conference included Vice President Kamala Harris, who referenced her experience in county government as a former district attorney for Alameda County, California. She discussed the importance of infrastructure, election administration and the role of county government in implementing numerous government programs.

“You are the leaders the American people look to. You are the leaders the American people trust,” she said. “You are the leaders who deliver for the American people. Thank you for everything you have done and everything you will do.”

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi discussed the importance of county leadership and advocacy in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding broadband, and investing in infrastructure.



The Ohio delegation gathers in advance of the NACo Annual Business Meeting to elect NACo leadership and set federal policies.

US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge, American Rescue Plan White House Coordinator Gene Sperling, and many other federal, state and local officials made appearances.

Following the election of NACo officers, DeKalb County (Georgia) Commissioner Larry Johnson was sworn-in as NACo’s new president; Boone County (Kentucky) Judge Executive Gary Moore as immediate past president; Will County (Illinois) board member Denise Winfrey as first vice president, and Ramsey County (Minnesota) Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire as second vice president. The conference also approved updates to NACo’s policy platform.

CCAO sends its congratulations to Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady, who was appointed Chair of the NACo Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC) and Clermont County Commissioner David Painter, who was appointed to join Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman, Shelby County Commissioner Julie Ehemann and NACo Past President and Athens County Commissioner Lenny Eliason on the NACo board of directors.

VOICE OF COUNTY LEADERSHIP

DAVE WILSON, GUERNSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER



How long have you been a county commissioner?

I'm in the middle of my seventh year as a Guernsey County commissioner.

Can you tell us about yourself? What is your professional background? What other elected positions have you held? Why did you first run?

The 2014 election was my first experience with running for public office. In December, 2013, I was approached by a friend who told me that the incumbent "off-year" commissioner was retiring and they wanted me to consider running for the open seat. At that time, I was in my 32nd year as operations manager at AVC Communications, Inc., a six-station radio group based in Cambridge. I was also the owner/licensee of one of the radio stations, WBIK-FM.

I had thought of running for office before but, when a candidate's voice is used on-air, whether in live programming or pre-recorded programs, commercials, etc., the station(s) become subject to providing "equal opportunity" for any opposing candidate(s). I thought that making a run at an open commissioner seat was worth taking myself off the air, thinking it would only be for the stretch after the May primary. However, another candidate filed petitions for the same spot on the fall ballot and, as a result, I was off the air starting in February. It was a challenge, but we worked through it!

Why did you want to be a commissioner?

I'm a "hometown boy" and have been deeply involved in community endeavors for all of my adult life. Through that community involvement as well

as opportunities and experiences provided by my broadcasting career, I felt that I had developed a substantial awareness of our county's strengths and weaknesses and had the experience and skill set to serve as a county commissioner.

What are you most proud of for having achieved in your time as commissioner?

In terms of something tangible, I'm proud of our acquisition of a nearly-turnkey office center in Downtown Cambridge, in convenient proximity to our courthouse, to house our Prosecuting Attorney office as well as our Auto Title Department. Through the owner's generosity, saving a substantial amount of money otherwise spent on rent.

Something intangible that I'm equally proud of is the communication and cooperation that we have cultivated among our General Fund offices. That has proved to be invaluable.

What has been the biggest challenge you've dealt with as a county commissioner?

Improving county infrastructure is an ongoing challenge. Expanding our county water system is a critical need as well as expanding broadband coverage, the need for which was greatly magnified by the pandemic. Having both Interstates 70 and 77 bisecting Guernsey County helps somewhat, since the major cellular carriers provide coverage along the corridors, and that coverage spills over both sides of the two highways. But, at the same time, we have two communities, one in our county's extreme southeast corner and the other in the extreme southwest, that are cellular black holes. That should be unimaginable in 2021!

Another aspect of our infrastructure challenge is the availability of developable land that is above flood plain and not subject to mine subsidence. There was a prolific amount of underground coal mining in Guernsey County during the early 20th century, so any construction above these mines requires a tremendous amount of fill material (at an equally tremendous cost) to be pumped into the subterranean voids.

What was the biggest surprise or adjustment after taking office?

I'm surprised by the number of times we encounter people that think we have some kind of authority over other elected officials. That happens more frequently than I could have imagined!

One of the primary responsibilities of a commissioner is to develop a balanced budget and provide adequate resources to deliver county services. What has been one of the biggest challenges in that area?

Being the only rural county in Ohio with two major interstate highways is a two-edged sword. On one hand, our accessibility is a tremendous resource. On the other hand, they provide major arteries for drug traffic from Columbus, Cleveland, Akron, Pittsburgh and a host of other larger cities. As a result, the cost of operating our courts, our sheriff's office and our overcrowded jail grows substantially every year. I tell people that we have "big city drug problems on a small county budget," and we do. We have only one Judge presiding in our Court of Common Pleas General Division and his docket is routinely heavier than nearby, larger counties with two judges. And our jail, built in the '80s to house 66 inmates, regularly exceeds 100 in custody.

We recently spoke about the Guernsey Power Station and economic development in your region. Can you tell us about the project? How did it come about? What benefits will it bring to the area?

An Indiana husband and wife duo, Mike and Mary King, form an entity called the Apex Power Group. They discovered a developable spot, along Interstate 77 in Guernsey County, where 765kv transmission lines are quite literally on top of the Rockies Express (REX) natural gas pipeline. They partnered with New York-based Caithness Energy and the result is the construction of the Guernsey Power Station at a cost of \$1.6-billion. The plant, scheduled to be online sometime during the Third Quarter of next year, will generate 1,875 megawatts of power, making it the most powerful facility of its kind east of the Mississippi.

The plant's ownership has already formed a relationship with Rolling Hills Local Schools, to provide the local match required to accept funding from the Ohio School Facilities Commission to construct a new K-12 campus for the district.

The plant will also make substantial annual payments to Valley Township. Our county benefits from the commerce resulting from the 900+ construction workers currently employed at the site as well as the future tax revenue the plant will, literally, generate.

How have you or what has your county been doing to participate in the state-county partnership?

We feel that we've built and continue to maintain an excellent relationship and an open line of communication with our state legislators. When our CCAO team asks us to reach out to them regarding pending legislation, it's obviously important to have those relationships in place beforehand. Fortunately, our legislators have been exceptionally responsive to our questions and concerns. Most importantly, their votes have reflected their advocacy for county government. In addition, I've had the opportunity to offer testimony during House committee hearings on three occasions, once at the request of our then state representative and twice at the request of CCAO.

We have more than 50 new CCAO members this year. What advice do you have for them as they take office?

Never lose track of why you have been elected as a county commissioner and who you are there to serve. In our office, when a Guernsey County resident calls with a complaint or concern, we make it a priority to take or return those phone calls and, whenever possible, we do it as a group of at least two if not all three of us. More often than you'd think, people are surprised to hear from not one but rather two or three commissioners. That in itself is most-often disarming in cases where the resident is angry or upset. People want to feel relevant and, sometimes, just having their elected officials listen to their concerns is enough to provide a sense of satisfaction.

And, if it's an issue that is not a direct responsibility of the county commissioners' office, like a complaint about a county road, you can still act on the citizen's behalf to find and/or provide an answer or solution. For example, in the case of a road issue, we'll typically drive that road, document what we see and share that directly with our county engineer.

One more thing: remember that a single commissioner is powerless, which underscores the

importance of having a healthy relationship with your two fellow commissioners. I am incredibly thankful for the chemistry and trust we have in our office. I feel that, especially in a small county like Guernsey, when citizens sense that we trust each other they, in turn, will trust our leadership.

Could you discuss your involvement with CCAO as well as the benefits of being an active member?

In my opinion, the CCAO team and the services they provide are perhaps the greatest resource we have as commissioners. In addition, events like the CCAO Winter Conference provide the opportunity to network with other commissioners, and that alone might be the greatest benefit of all. I've lost track of the number of times I've shared a particular issue with another commissioner to see how they've dealt with it.

For me, personally, the most rewarding experience I enjoy through affiliation with the CCAO has been serving on the CORSA board of directors for the past four years. Guernsey is one of the "Nine Brave Counties" that formed CORSA in 1987. So, as a Guernsey County commissioner, being one of the nine members of the CORSA board is particularly gratifying. Ours is an active, working board and I have learned much from the exceptionally talented group of professionals who do a marvelous job of protecting the assets of our 66 member counties. And I really can't fully express how much I value the friendship I enjoy with the CORSA staff and my fellow directors, both present and past.

Do you have any personal causes or priorities?

For me personally, nothing is more important than my faith and my family. At the same time, I embrace my responsibilities as a county commissioner 24/7. My top priorities all deal with the challenges of a rural county in the hilly topography of East-Central Ohio. The Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) is essential for communication among law enforcement, fire and EMS. However, because of our countless hills and valleys, we have dead spots in the MARCS network. When we, as Joe Citizen, encounter a dead spot and drop a cell call, it's not what you would call Earth-shaking. However, when emergency responders lose communication, we're now talking about potential life or death situations. Correcting that problem is a top priority.

There's a related issue that I can easily lose sleep over, and that's Emergency Medical Services. We have an exceptionally good, "paid" ambulance service that is affiliated with our local hospital. They do a great job but they can't cover an entire county. That makes the EMS/first responders of our volunteer fire departments critically essential, but volunteers are in short supply. Some of those departments cannot summon enough volunteers during the day to dispatch a squad. I feel like it's kind of a house of cards; the dedicated volunteers that we do have are doing the best that they can, but our lack of depth could too easily be stretched to the breaking point. We have to find a long-term solution.

What do you find are the most successful methods for reaching out to the residents of your county to communicate what your office is doing and why it's doing it?

We are fortunate to have a good relationship with our local media. The fact that I was employed by our local radio station group prior to taking office helps. We also have a solid relationship with our local, daily newspaper, as well. In addition to covering our meetings, they are also cooperative when we have information that we need to get to the general public. That was particularly important during the height of COVID-related restrictions and we were provided the means to stream informational "town halls." I see those relationships as being a benefit of living in a smaller county. We also have a social media presence but, with a small staff, our maintenance is inconsistent. We need to do better.



Wilson with CORSA board members Craig LaHote (Wood County) and Dan Dean (Fayette County)

LEGISLATOR Q & A

REP. KYLE KOEHLER, CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

What have you learned about Ohio agriculture during your time as the Chairman of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee?

I have learned that farmers are always willing to step up and do the hard work to make Ohio and Ohio Agriculture better. When the General Assembly began to talk about water quality in 2015, it was farmers who stepped up first and took action regarding their operations and practices. They were willing to take responsibility for some (keyword: some) of the issues we were facing. Every farmer knows how important water is to our state. Farmers across the state have done a phenomenal job instituting Best Management Practices in order to improve water quality in Ohio. Bottom Line: farmers step up!



Looking forward, what do you see as Ohio's greatest agricultural challenges and opportunities?

Currently, we have an enormous issue with meat processing capacity in the state of Ohio. Over-regulation and an aging population have driven many small and medium size processors out of business. In the recently passed budget we have put aside \$10M in new funds to help increase processing capacities. Of course, this means that we will also need to increase the number of inspectors as well. Besides continuing to fight water quality issues in Ohio, we also need to help young farmers begin to replace the number of senior farmers who are looking to retire. Providing tax credits to older farmers who are willing to sell their land to new farmers must be a priority. I am thankful to Rep. Susan Manchester for sponsoring House Bill 95 that is currently in the Ohio Senate.

Counties partner closely with the state in supporting key programs like Soil and Water Conservation, OSU Extension and other agricultural endeavors. What advice do you have for counties in working with the state to promote a robust and sustainable agriculture industry?

I am blessed in my district to have county commissioners like Melanie Flax-Wilt who has a lifelong and multi-generational background in agriculture. We need to encourage farmers to step up and be actively involved in Township, County and State politics. No one understands the hard-work associated with agriculture like the farmer who is out in their fields or barns every day. If nothing else, make sure you are at least communicating with your elected officials every day. In my district, I rely on folks like cattle rancher Sasha Rittenhouse (former President of the Ohio Cattlemen's Association), farmers like Alan Armstrong (a Township Trustee), and others who have become trusted voices that can tell me exactly what is happening in the fields. State Legislators have many issues they have to consider every day, help them by being an active and honest voice when it comes to the issues related to agriculture.

LEGISLATOR Q & A

SEN. TIM SCHAFFER, CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

What have you learned about Ohio agriculture during your time as the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee?

Becoming the chairman of the Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee has been an honor and

extremely rewarding. It has allowed me to continue working on important policies that greatly impact our state's natural resources, energy producers, parks, farm families and the entire agricultural community — one of Ohio's leading industries!

As the committee's vice-chairman last General Assembly, I was able to see what issues stood out and to work with the agricultural associations to best address these issues.

One such policy that I was able to pass was Senate Bill 195, which allowed small wineries to be exempt from retail food establishment licensure if they are not preparing or serving prepared food. This language was eventually amended into House Bill 160 and subsequently enacted. What a relief it has been for small wineries that were paying for multiple, duplicative food inspections prior to the bill!

It is my hope that we will continue to work with the agricultural associations and pass meaningful change so that we can continue to support and grow our state's robust agricultural community and manage our natural resources.

Looking forward, what do you see as Ohio's greatest agricultural challenges and opportunities?

As a legislative body, we must continue to overcome the pandemic and issues it brought to supplying food to the state and world.

I was proud that the recently passed state operating budget, among other things, works to expand broadband to our state's rural communities, provides funds to improve our state's water quality issues, and created a grant for our local meat processors.

Legislatively, we must continue to focus on how we keep Ohioans in the agricultural industry, including bills such as House Bill 95 which creates a tax credit for first time farmers.

Counties partner closely with the state in supporting key programs like Soil and Water Conservation, OSU Extension and other agricultural endeavors. What advice do you have for counties in working with the state to promote a robust and sustainable agriculture industry?

Ohio has the most robust and sustainable agriculture industry in our nation. On top of that, we have continued to add millions of dollars in funding soil and water conservation districts to help prevent phosphorus runoffs, as well as provide nutrient management plans soil testing. Counties have been a key component in this success.

Our state has faced some challenging times in the agricultural world in the past few years, and the state and counties have worked together to find solutions. Moving forward, the state needs to continue to have a constant dialogue with counties and local governments to ensure that we keep working together on fixing these problems and hopefully prevent them from occurring in the future.



LEGISLATOR Q & A

SEN. TERESA FEDOR, RANKING MEMBER OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

What have you learned about Ohio agriculture during your time as the Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee?

I have always known that agriculture is at the heart of Ohio’s economy, and addressing issues that impact Ohio’s famers and the agriculture industry would present a variety of challenges. However, one thing I have learned is that the Department of Agriculture has taken on ensuring environmental control and protection that was once the Ohio EPA’s responsibility.



Looking forward, what do you see as Ohio’s greatest agricultural challenges and opportunities?

We are at an impasse where we cannot continue to disregard agriculture’s environmental impact, but I believe technology can help us find the right balance between feeding Ohioans while using sustainable practices. Take the concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) issue for example: We want to encourage industry in our region, but we must also protect our Great Lake. Cleaning up the animal waste must be included as part of the cost of doing business, but we should also invest in the existing technology that can be used to convert the waste into usable energy.

Counties partner closely with the state in supporting key programs like Soil and Water Conservation, OSU Extension and other agricultural endeavors. What advice do you have for counties in working with the state to promote a robust and sustainable agriculture industry?

I would advise county officials to bring important issues to legislators’ attention so we know what matters most to your area. I also encourage people to get involved in the legislative process by coming to the Statehouse to testify in committees, writing letters, and holding rallies. We work for the people, but we need to know what the people want in order to make it happen in Columbus. I am just the bullhorn to amplify the voices of my community, but I am lucky to have very engaged local governments in my district.

FEATURE

DRIVING AND DINING WITH PERRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER BEN CARPENTER

by Rachel Massoud Reedy, CCAO Policy Analyst

In addition to serving as Perry County commissioner, Ben Carpenter and his wife operate a food truck, Mt. Airy Beef. We wanted to know more about that.

Tell us a little about your background and why you decided to open the food truck?

We have the good fortune to live on the farm I grew up on. My parents bought the home farm in 1965 and with the land here and the other farm we have around 350 acres of rolling Perry County land. About five to six years ago we transitioned to all grass. So now we do not raise any row crops. Just grass and cattle. All of our cattle are grass fed. I was hoping to reduce the seasonal demands of the farm to help reduce the farm demands as I transitioned to beginning my role as county commissioner in 2017.

Around 2012 the village of Somerset started a farm market and we were selling some of our beef. A few of the other vendors thought it would be nice if we brought a grill and cooked some burgers for the vendors while at the market. Well, the customers wanted some burgers as well. Of course, we were not set up to sell so we just gave them away and the tip jar reflected a market that was not being tapped. So, we got a temporary license from the health department and mounted our home grill on a little 5x8 trailer and started selling. That went so well that in the winter after the market season was over, we found a trailer and built it as we thought we wanted it.

There seems to be quite a bit of work to be done (buying the truck, making it operational, ordering food, finding workers, etc.) when opening the food truck. How did you go about opening it? How long have you operated it?

There is definitely a lot of work to operating a food truck. What we saw was a lot of people starting food trucks/trailers and after a few years they folded and put the truck or trailer on the market. We didn't want to have that happen to us. We operated a cash business for the first four years and made money without debt as we established our brand and got into some nice festivals. My wife Katrina and I both



work so the lunch setup idea through the week was not an option, we had to get into festivals.

In 2017, my first year as a county commissioner we sold the trailer and bought a truck and had a company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania build a brand-new kitchen. That was pricey but after four years of working in the trailer we knew what we wanted to cook and how we had to do it.

We have kind of turned into foodies and I often talk to and look at other trucks in operation and small restaurants. We have a lot of cooking power and capacity, in our truck. We are very happy with our design and how it works with our menu.

My advice for anyone thinking about a food truck would be to start small and learn the trade and the challenges before getting too far in debt.

What kinds of food do you serve? Where do you source it?

When it comes to food, I think we are very unique, maybe one of a kind. We only serve the beef we raise on our farm. We never purchase meat to cook in our truck. On our farm "Mt. Airy Beef" (which is also the name of our food truck) we raise Texas Longhorn cattle that are 100% grass fed and grass finished. "Know your farmer, know your food" is our slogan.



I have not yet seen a food truck that can say they also raise all the beef they cook. While we take a lot of pride in that fact it also presents some increased challenges. We cannot just go to the whole sale food outlet and purchase meat for a festival we just booked. The beef we cook today comes from a calf that was born two and a half years earlier. That presents a higher level of planning when you are preparing your source 2.5 years in advance of festivals you don't really know if you are going to be in.

That sounds a lot worse than it is. We also sell freezer beef, whole steers, halves as well as packaged cuts. With our license and because we have our cattle processed in a state inspected plant we have our own label that meets all the ODA guidelines. We sell a lot of beef directly to customers that way as well.

We generally butcher two per month, 24 throughout the year, either sold to customers or as supply for the food truck. During the growing season we source tomatoes, lettuce and other produce from local growers as long as they are available.

Naturally our menu centers around "beef." We sell burgers, our Original, a Swiss Mushroom and a Western, we do a ribeye Philly Cheese Steak - that is shaved from ribeye steaks from our cattle. We make our own hot dogs and old fashion bologna, for our fried bologna sandwich. And French fries and nacho chips. At one festival early this year we were a Mexican truck and did burritos and Quesadilla's; that was interesting, but it worked out great.

What do you like most about running the truck?

Running a food truck is a challenge, it can be slow

and you wonder why in the world you set up and other times it is insanely busy. We hate to have long lines and make people wait. We have evolved and learn to cook and serve our menu items really fast when we need to. We enjoy the festival environment, the people at festivals are great and 99% of the time have a great attitude.

At what kinds of events do you serve? Does any event stand out as particularly memorable? I imagine part of the fun of the truck is that you're able to be mobile. Have you taken it to any other locations or participated in any festivals? If so, can you tell me about that?

The biggest event for us so far has been the Nelsonville Music Festival (NMF) in Nelsonville. Unfortunately, COVID-19 compelled them to cancel in 2020 and 2021. We have six people working in the truck for NMF: Katrina and me and four employees.

In 2019 we opened around 9 a.m. with some breakfast items because there are a lot of campers and typically would serve till about 2 a.m. At the 2019 NMF we averaged a sale every 72 seconds throughout the time we were open. That takes 6 people that know how to work in close quarters, and creates lasting friendships with the folks that work with us in the truck. Not every event is that busy, but we have several annual festivals we have gotten in on that are very, very good.

Has running the truck had an impact on how you work as a commissioner or vice versa, or have you learned anything from one you can apply to the other?

A county commissioner has management responsibilities to run a county, it's not just policy work. As owner operators of a food truck there is a great deal of management that goes into that, from the supply side to the employees and the fact that it is like running a small restaurant with all the same challenges. The food truck schedule allows us a great deal of flexibility regarding time, so it does not interfere with my role as a county commissioner

Anything you'd like to add?

Working a food truck with your spouse presents all sorts of challenges. But Katrina and I have determined that if we can run a food truck together through all the problems and bumps in the road, we can successfully do anything together.

FEATURE

COUNTY FAIR SEASON BRINGS FUN, FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY



Montgomery County Commissioner Judy Dodge with this year's Junior Fair King and Queen, Wyatt Mobley and Katie Cox

County fairs remind us about the key role that agriculture continues to play in our economy and daily lives. They also supply jobs and provide important opportunities for youth and adult education -

Montgomery County Commissioner Judy Dodge



Ottawa County Administrator/Clerk Rhonda Slauterbeck's granddaughter makes a new friend.



Ottawa County Commissioners Don Douglas, Mark Stahl and Mark Coppeler



Lawrence County Fairgrounds



Children showing animals at livestock Madison County fair.

The Madison County fair allows us to provide and deliver a positive outlet for our youth that teaches work ethic, responsibility, the value of competition, and personal accountability. This year we introduced 140 kids to the livestock program that had never shown an animal before as a result of our Livestock 101 initiative, kids from 10 different counties attended.

- Ron Slane, Madison County Administrator

The county fair is a great opportunity to bring our community together. This year it is especially important as we are seeing some people for the first time in almost two years.

The 4-H participants have the opportunity to showcase what they have learned over the past year in some friendly competition with their peers. And while not everyone can win, hopefully they will take home great memories that last a lifetime.

Shelby County Commissioner Julie Ehemann



Lawrence County Fair



Shelby County Commissioners Julie Ehemann and Tony Bornhorst with Secretary of State Frank LaRose and the Shelby County Pork Producers.

FEATURE

COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS COMPENSATION: LOOKING BACKWARD

by Larry Long, former CCAO Executive Director

Most non-judicial county elected officials are compensated according to county population. H.B. 64 of the 131st General Assembly reduced the number of compensation classes from eight to six, starting in 2017. Before this 8-class system was established Ohio law provided for 14 compensation classes; prior to 1977 there were 35 separate classes. Some “old timers” remember when there were 48 compensation classes.



But the history of how we pay county elected officials is even more complex and interesting. ORC 325.02 provides that the compensation of county officials is “. . . in lieu of all fees, costs, penalties, percentages, allowances, and all other perquisites . . .” which any of the officials collects or receives. Have you ever wondered why this is in Ohio law?

This statute and others direct what today seems obvious: that all fees, poundage, and other allowances collected by county officials are deposited into the county treasury. But historically this was not always the case.

Prior to 1906 most county elected officials were paid under a fee system which was common since colonial days. Back then most county commissioners were compensated based on a fixed daily amount when services were rendered. In the case of the many other county elected officials, their compensation was exclusively from statutory fees they collected and retained.

At the turn of the last century, this system became controversial. The 74th General Assembly in 1900 established a Commission on Fees of County Officials composed of the state auditor, attorney general and secretary of state to examine and report on the fees. The commission submitted its report to the 75th General Assembly.

While not specifically recommending the abolishment of the fee system, the commission found that “the present arrangement of the statutes and the indexes thereto, is such that no one can be certain that he has found all the statutes relating to fees of county officials.”

But while the commission did not explicitly recommend the abolishment of the fee system, Governor Myron Herrick, in 1906, just before handing the office over to John Pattison, who defeated him in the 1905 election, in a message to the 77th General Assembly, made his position clear:

“The present fee system of compensating county officers ought to be abolished at once. A general county salary law should be enacted before the adjournment of the session of the legislature to which this message is addressed. The platforms of all political parties in the state have declared for this reform. . . . The method of paying public officers an unknown and uncertain sum in fees for public services is not only antiquated but pernicious. . . . It is intolerable that any county officer in Ohio should receive as much or more per annum than the President of the United States and it is unjust to the people who pay the bills that many county officers in this State should receive five to ten times what their services are fairly worth.”

When Governor Pattison delivered his inaugural address in 1906, he made it clear that he agreed with his defeated predecessor. Reflecting what was apparently significant opposition by county elected officials to a proposed change from the fee system, Pattison admonished elected officials and their associations to stay out of the legislative fray: “The members of such organizations should certainly consider it unpatriotic and in somewhat poor taste to make any efforts in their own behalf of such officers. All organizations of county officers formed for the purpose of increasing their salaries or compensations, either directly or indirectly, should be prohibited by law.”

the General Assembly responded with the enactment of compensation legislation in 1906 which established fixed salaries based on population for many county officials. And while the legislation did not include commissioners, prosecutors, surveyors, or coroners, fixed salaries for these officials, some based on the real and personal property tax duplicate of the county, would be established later.

Likewise, the new law contained a requirement that the officials continue to collect statutory fees but required most fees to be paid into the county

treasury. Indeed, the statutory citations previously referenced have their roots in this early salary bill.

H.B. 283, the Wilson Salary Law, sponsored by Belmont County farmer, Benjamin Wilson, took effect on Jan. 1, 1907. Governor Pattison, however, did not sign the legislation which he so passionately promoted—it became law without his signature after sitting on the Governor’s desk for 10 days. You see, Governor Pattison had returned home to Clermont County with Bright’s disease and died in June of 1906.

GUEST COLUMN

ARE YOU READY TO FOCUS ON YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE?

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist, Empower Retirement

Throughout your career you’ve likely received a regular paycheck. As you start thinking about life in retirement, there’s a lot to consider, like how much money you’ll need and where the money will come from. Your pension, other benefits and outside assets are designed to be sources of income for you in retirement, but you may also need to save more on your own.

One of the easiest ways to save is through a plan like your CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan. Even a small contribution like \$25 per paycheck can translate to a potential monthly income of \$361 per month in retirement.¹

Some of the benefits of participating include:

- Can help you save and invest extra retirement money.
- Offers easy, convenient payroll deduction.
- Allows your money and any earnings to grow tax deferred until withdrawn, usually during retirement.²
- Provides access to professional, individual retirement planning services at no charge.
- Includes a wide range of investment options, including a service where you can pay a quarterly fee to have your investments managed for you.

- Has a website and mobile app, where you can monitor and make changes to your account, access retirement tools and much more.

Your Empower CCAO Retirement Plan Advisors are here to help you understand this option and the resources available to you on your journey toward retirement.

If you are interested in learning more about the Plan, you can schedule a meeting with an Empower Retirement Plan Advisor at your convenience. There is no cost to meet with a representative.

1 FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. This hypothetical illustration assumes a 6% average annual rate of return, 24 pay periods per year for 30 years, and reinvestment of earnings with no withdrawals. Rates of return may vary. Monthly income assumes equal monthly payments for 20 years in retirement and does not take into account any taxes. This illustration does not include any charges, expenses or fees that may be associated with your Program. Your account balance would be reduced if these fees had been deducted.

2 Withdrawals may be subject to income tax.

Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

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GUEST COLUMN

MEIGS COUNTY HOLDS FUNERAL SERVICES FOR FALLEN WWII SOLDIER

by Sarah Hawley, Managing Editor of The Daily Sentinel

It was a homecoming nearly 77 years in the making.

Military services, proclamations, presentation of medals, and a procession through flag-lined streets welcomed home Army Pfc. James Wilmer White last Saturday nearly 77 years after he was killed in Burma during World War II.

The city of Chillicothe, as well as village of Pomeroy and Meigs County all declared Saturday, June 12, 2021, as Army Private First Class James Wilmer White Day in honor of the late soldier.

Presentations from both Pomeroy and Chillicothe, as well as the Ohio VFW were made before the services at the Ewing-Schwarzel celebration center (former Maple Lawn Brewery) with veterans from across the state in attendance. Major Patrick Hernandez, who is part of the Casualty Operations division of the Ohio National Guard, had been working with the White family leading up to the services and spoke briefly during the presentations.

During the public visitation, veterans and active duty military members were given the opportunity to pass by the casket to pay their respects to White and his family.

Following the funeral service, military pallbearers



The procession through flag-lined streets

carried the flag draped casket to the horse drawn hearse as a bagpiper played “Going Home.” Doves were also released from the hillside above.

As the procession moved from the Ewing-Schwarzel Funeral Home toward Main Street, local band members under the direction of Toney Dingess played patriotic music. Hundreds of people lined the streets, waving flags in tribute to White.

Local fire departments also took part in the tribute with an American Flag draped from the Middleport and Pomeroy ladder trucks. It was at that location that local veterans served as pallbearers, moving the flag draped casket from the horse drawn hearse to the motorized hearse. The procession then moved to the White family cemetery off Bashan Road for burial of White with his family.

At the cemetery, military members and veterans lined the walkway where the casket was carried. Military honors were conducted, with the flag from the casket folded and given to the family at the conclusion of the service.

White, who grew up in Meigs County, later moved to Chillicothe, married his wife, Mary Frances Hunt, and joined the United States military.



The flag draped casket of Army Pfc. James Wilmer White



Military pallbearers place the flag draped casket in the horse drawn hearse.

On July 2, 1944, Pfc. James Wilmer White was killed in action and unidentifiable outside Myitkyina, Burma (now known as Myanmar). He was fighting with the famed 5307th Composite Unit Provisional – The Merrills Marauders. His Army Infantry Unit was conferred the Congressional Gold Medal by both Houses of Congress this past fall.

He was temporarily buried in U.S. Military Cemeteries in Burma and India. In 1949, one set of remains, designated Unknown X-52 Kalaikunda, was still unable to be identified and was buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In July 2018, the remains of service members from that battle were transferred to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) laboratory at Joint Base



The casket is led through the town in a horse-drawn hearse.



Veterans and active duty military salute as the casket is transferred from the horse drawn hearse to the motorized hearse.

Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

White was accounted for by the DPAA on Jan. 29, 2020 after his remains were identified using dental, anthropological and mitochondrial DNA analysis and circumstantial evidence.

His name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Taguig City, Philippines, along with others still missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

A portion of the information provided by the United States military and Ewing-Schwarzel Funeral Home.

This article originally appeared in The Daily Sentinel.



Both the horse drawn hearse and the motorized hearse stop under the American Flag where the casket.

GUEST COLUMN

HOW PAPERLESS PROCESSING CAN HELP INCREASE INFORMATION SECURITY

by Lori Paulenich, Senior Communication Strategist, Empower Retirement

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that we can all change and pivot to meet the circumstances. Think:

- Work from home for many
- Virtual meetings
- Closed or restricted access to offices, libraries, medical facilities, etc.
- Increased online shopping

One area that benefited from these restrictions was the move to electronic, automated paperless processing across our counties. And, for good reason, number one being data security.

The Plan recordkeeper, Empower Retirement, takes security very seriously for our CCAO 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan and county employees who are participating.

It's up to you to do your part, too.

It is strongly recommended that you do not put your employee data at risk by continuing to send paper reports, spreadsheets and contribution checks through the mail.

Our goal is to have all counties utilizing the automated Plan Service Center for electronic submission of participant data and ACH

contributions by Jan. 1, 2022. It's more secure, timely and accurate.

Next steps:

1. [Watch this short video](#) to learn how easy it is to process your employee information and contributions online.
2. Contact Kerrin Bostwick-Strub to start paperless processing or for questions regarding funding options. She can be reached at kerrin.bostwick@empower-retirement.com or 303-737-0946.

For other security tips for you or to share with your participants, visit <https://ccao457.empower-retirement.com/participant/#/articles/securityTips>.

Empower Retirement is dedicated to making transactions as secure as possible. In addition to being able to make secure changes to your account on the website, you can use the Empower Retirement mobile app. If you suspect fraudulent activity on your account, please contact 844-773-6797 immediately.

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CEBCO NEWS

AN UPDATE FROM CEBCO

by Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

The CEBCO board of directors and staff held the Annual CEBCO Board Retreat at the end of April. The first order of business was the election of officers for 2021-22: President Tony Bornhorst, Shelby County; Vice-President Chris Schmenk, Union County; Secretary Cory Noonan, Allen County; and Treasurer Lew Hilkert, Williams County.



Also at the retreat, the CEBCO board agreed on the following changes to the CEBCO program.

1. For the 2022 renewal and prospective new counties, our actuary will use the most recent four quarters Rx rebates to calculate the percent of Rx claims that are offset by the rebates. This percentage will apply to each county during the renewal process and be used in the new business process.
2. Rx rebates will be applied in the renewal process prior to the board establishing the Minimum and Maximum renewal increases, as well as, deciding usage of Member Equity.
3. Effective 1/1/22, CEBCO will move to the Sydney App, which will give the program more flexibility and allow us to tailor messaging down to the county level.
4. Effective 1/1/22, CEBCO will allow counties the ability to add an additional medical option to their current plan offerings.
5. Effective 1/1/22, CEBCO counties will have access to Anthem’s High-Performance Network (HPN), which is an HMO type arrangement and will allow counties to offer a lower cost, higher quality network. Currently, it is available in the Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland markets but will expand to the balance of the state.

6. Also, effective 1/1/22, CEBCO will require members to receive a 90-day supply of maintenance medication through the RxMaintenance Retail Network or Mail order after two courtesy fills.
7. Finally, CEBCO will introduce a Cost Relief program for certain high-cost Specialty medications, where the Rx manufacturer will cover the cost of the medication.

The board of directors met in June and July to discuss the Pre-Renewal projections that are forecast by our Actuary. Based on the very positive investment gains in 2020 and overall stability of the program, the CEBCO board decided that another \$10 million of Member Equity will be used to lessen the impact of this year’s renewal increase. Though the final increase will not be determined until early September, the preliminary estimate is under 4 percent.

CEBCO’s Wellness Team hosted our first CEBCO Wellness Coordinators’ meeting in nearly two years on July 23. This was the first meeting hosted in the CCAO building since the installation of the new AC unit. Normally, this is a biannual event and we are working to get back on that schedule. The meeting topics covered deliverables for the completion of this year’s program and introduced some changes for the 2021–2022 Wellness Program. Presentations were made by Health Works (wellness vendor), SmartShopper, Lark (Diabetic Prevention Program), and staff.

The 2020 Wellness Awards were also be presented during this meeting. Winners were: **Top Engagement in Screenings:** Preble, Shelby and Union Counties; **Increased Engagement in Screenings:** Crawford, Morrow and Delaware counties; **Noticeable Improvement in Efforts:** Hardin, Darke and Logan counties; and **Outstanding Efforts:** Fayette, Crawford and Union counties

CEBCO will host the 2022 Renewal Meeting at the Airport Embassy Suites on Friday, Sept. 3. The invitations and agenda will be released by early August.

CORSA NEWS

HILTY & FLORY DELIVER CORSA LAW ENFORCEMENT RISK MANAGEMENT WITH PROFESSIONALISM & PASSION

by Frank Hatfield, CORSA Risk Manager

CORSA is committed to providing professional and innovative law enforcement trainings, services and reimbursements as part of its overall member risk management program. CORSA sheriff's offices, law enforcement agencies and facilities have access to numerous industry leading services and resources at no cost. A few general examples of CORSA law enforcement and corrections risk management offerings are best practice law enforcement policies; in-person, webinar, and online law enforcement and corrections training; onsite law enforcement loss control visits and jail reviews; and onsite one-on-one decision based de-escalation deputy and corrections officer training.

While sheriffs and their staffs know the gentlemen that travel the state to deliver industry leading law enforcement training and services, many outside the sheriff's office may be unaware of who they are.

Ken Hilty: A Black Shirt Through & Through

Ken is and always will be a sheriff's deputy (aka "Black Shirt") at heart. Ken has been a Hardin County resident most of his life and spent his law enforcement career with the Hardin County Sheriff's Office. CORSA members benefit from Ken's 29 years of law enforcement and corrections experience.



Hilty

After retiring as the Hardin County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Ken joined CORSA as a risk control law enforcement coordinator in 2010. Ken has traveled the state to serve 66 CORSA member sheriffs' offices, law enforcement agencies and correctional/detention facilities. Ken continually looks for ways to enhance CORSA's risk management program. Ken conducts research and attends seminars to stay abreast of law enforcement and corrections matters, attends Ohio Jail, Advisory Board meetings and collaborates with the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association on projects/trainings.



Steve Flory: Prepares Deputies & Corrections Officers for "Real Life Situations."

Five years ago, CORSA retained the services of Steve Flory to provide on-site one-on-one simulated de-escalation training. Steve is an OPOTA certified firearms instructor who brings over 20 years of law enforcement experience to the CORSA program. Steve spent eight years as a sheriff's office road deputy and 12 years as a patrol supervisor. Steve is currently a reserve deputy with the Paulding County Sheriff's Office and also operates Countyline Firearms in Defiance Ohio.

Steve conducts de-escalation training that requires participants to react and respond to various simulations (e.g. traffic stop; belligerent inmate) to determine if the use of force is necessary to reach a resolution and, if so, what level of force is appropriate given the circumstances. After completing each simulation, Steve conducts a debriefing session with the participant regarding the action taken. While deputies and corrections officers must be prepared to use force in dynamic fluid situations, Steve stresses that many times situations can be safely resolved with verbal commands and communication. Steve's de-escalation training and CORSA members have received favorable press coverage including stories in the Medina Gazette¹ and Marion Star.

Should you have any questions regarding CORSA Law Enforcement and Corrections Risk Management Services, contact Ken Hilty (614) 357-6966 or Frank Hatfield, CORSA loss control manager, (614) 560-1474.

1 Photo: Medina County Deputy Brady England with Flory, Judgment simulator benefits deputies, corrections, officers. Medina Gazette April 2, 2021. <https://medina-gazette.com/news/256874/judgment-simulator-benefits-deputies-corrections-officers/>

CCAO SERVICE CORP NEWS

CCAO MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO FIRSTCOMM'S SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGICAL SERVICES

by John Leutz, Assistant Director

Rarely is exceptional quality and low costs found in the same service provider. But as a CCAO member, you can experience both through our partnership with FirstComm, a leading technology solutions provider that takes a "customer-first" approach with its telecom services.



FirstComm's unparalleled offerings of cloud communications, data, voice, security, and managed services empower over 35,000 businesses across the United States.

Currently 58 of our counties are utilizing FirstComm for their long distance phone service and are saving between 15% to 25% on their long distance phone charges. However, FirstComm offers a variety of additional services I'd encourage you to explore. In addition to local or hosted phone equipment FirstComm also offers Hosted Cloud IP PBX, SIP Trunking, Unified Communications PRI, Ethernet Fiber Internet, Managed Security, and Managed Router Service.

Cost-Effective Solutions Without Sacrificing Quality

FirstComm's secret to being cost-effective is in its service offerings. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all model, FirstComm designs solutions to fit your company, having pricing only for the solutions to fill your business needs. This means you are not paying for any unnecessary service. FirstComm breaks down its offerings into unique plans. An example of this is their Unified Communication offering which have three different bundles.

High-quality Voiceover Internet Services (VoIP) are a necessity in the modern world of virtual communication. VoIP runs over the internet and serves as a departure from traditional voice services, which are outdated and expensive to support.

FirstComm's services are supported through a set monthly reoccurring charge. This means that, as a customer, you are not burdened by any large upfront capital outlays for equipment.

When partnering with FirstComm, your county can depend on assistance every step of the way, whether it is making the transition from outdated voice services or answering concerns about network security. You can rely on FirstComm to manage all communication and technological needs without having to deal with multiple vendors.

Powering a World-Class Customer Experience

FirstComm stands out from the rest because of its customer-first approach to how it operates. FirstComm views its customers as partners and, with over 20 years of industry experience, is committed to finding the solution that works best for you and your county.

Pushing the Envelope on Communication Capabilities

With a wide range of solutions, FirstComm can cover all your county's technological needs. Offerings range from cloud-based communication, Voice Solutions/ SIP Trunking, network security, Microsoft Teams integration, and customer call experience. I encourage you to take a close look and choose FirstComm as your county's technology solutions provider.

FIRSTCOMM'S UNPARALLELED OFFERINGS OF CLOUD COMMUNICATIONS, DATA, VOICE, SECURITY, AND MANAGED SERVICES EMPOWER OVER 35,000 BUSINESSES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.



COUNSELOR'S CORNER

OHIO LEGISLATURE ADOPTS NEW WIND AND SOLAR SITING LAW

by Christine M.T. Pirik, Matthew C. McDonnell and Terrence O'Donnell, Dickinson Wright

On June 29, 2021, the Ohio General Assembly passed Substitute Senate Bill 52 (S.B. 52), a significant revision to Ohio's power siting approval process for utility-scale solar and wind projects. Governor Mike DeWine signed the bill into law with an effective date of October 11, 2021.

Sponsored by Senators Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) and Bill Reineke (R-Tiffin), S.B. 52 aims to increase local awareness and input from property owners – and to provide a new element of local control to county officials. In short, the law requires a new upfront review from the County Commission prior to the developer moving forward with the state siting process for certification of utility-scale solar and wind projects.

Background

The Ohio Power Siting Board, housed within the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, is responsible for approving the siting of major utility facilities and issues certificates following a rigorous application process, including notice, hearings, testimony, fees, and an OPSB staff investigation. Projects subject to OPSB jurisdiction are generally not subject to the zoning regulations of the local municipal corporation, county, or township.

Wind and Solar Project Certificates and “Material Amendments”

S.B.52 revises this approval process for new applications or “material amendments” to existing certificates for an “economically significant wind farm,” a “large wind farm,” or a “large solar facility.” R.C. 303.57. An economically significant wind farm is a project with a single interconnection with the electrical grid capable of generating at least 5 MW but not more than 50 MW. R.C. 303.57 (A). A large solar facility or large wind farm is a facility with a single interconnection to the electrical grid capable of operation at 50 MW or more. R.C. 303.57 (B). A material amendment would: 1) increase the

facility's nameplate capacity; 2) change the facility's generation type from one type of utility facility to another, 3) change the facility's boundaries, unless the new boundaries are entirely within the previous boundaries or the facility components outside the previous boundaries are underground; and 4) for wind projects, increase the number or height of turbines. R.C. 303.57(C).

Application to Pending Projects – “Grandfathering”

The bill specifies that it does not apply to certain pending wind and solar projects, effectively “grandfathering” those projects meeting certain criteria. See Sections 3, 4, and 5 of S.B. 52. For solar, S.B. 52's required County Commission approval does not apply to applications for a certificate or material amendment to an existing certificate that, as of the bill's effective date have received a completed System Impact Study from PJM and paid the fee for the facilities study to PJM. Section 4 of S.B. 52. For wind, S.B. 52's required County Commission approval does not apply to applications for a certificate, or material amendment to an existing certificate, that as of 30 days after the bill's effective date, have received a letter of completeness from OPSB. Section 3 of S.B. 52. However, Section 5 of the bill makes all projects (solar and wind) that have not received their compliance letter from the OPSB by the effective date of S.B. 52 subject to the addition of two local voting ad-hoc members.

County Approval on Project Basis

The bill establishes a 90-day period of review of wind and solar projects by the applicable Board of County Commissioners. After a public meeting is held where the project is described, Commissioners can 1) deny the project, 2) modify the footprint, or 3) take no action in which case the applicant can proceed to OPSB on the 91st day. The process also now requires several steps intended to encourage additional local awareness and input regarding the project.

- **Local Pre-Application Meeting:** At least 90 days, but no more than 300 days before applying for a certificate, or an amendment to an existing certificate, the applicant must hold a public meeting and provide specific information about the project at the meeting. R.C. 303.61(B).
- **County Review after Meeting:** 90 days after the local pre-application public information meeting, Commissioners may take three actions: 1) adopt a resolution prohibiting construction of the project, 2) adopt a resolution limiting the project footprint, or 3) not adopt a resolution within 90 days of the meeting. R.C. 303.62
- Should the Commissioners not adopt a resolution prohibiting construction of the project, the applicant may proceed with the OPSB process.

Restricted Areas/Zones in Counties

In addition to the specific project approval requirement described above, the bill also grants County Commissioners a separate, independent manner to restrict wind and solar development. By resolution adopted at a public meeting, County Commissioners may designate all or part of the unincorporated area of the county as a restricted area where the construction of an economically significant wind farm, a large wind farm, or a large solar facility is prohibited. R.C. 303.58.

Commissioners must provide 30 days advance public notice of the meeting to ensure local awareness when considering a resolution designating restricted areas and such resolution is subject to referendum. R.C. 303.58 (C) and R.C. 303.59. Approval for any project must be obtained from the county, even if it is outside a designated restricted area. However, a resolution adopted under R.C. 303.58 does not apply to a project that was effectively approved (by not being prohibited) within the 90-day period established under R.C. 303.62. R.C. 303.58(E). In other words, the establishment of the restricted area is prospective.

Local Officials Added to Ohio Power Siting Board

S.B. 52 adds two voting “ad hoc” members to the

current 11 member OPSB for considering wind and solar applications and material amendments to represent the interests of the residents of the area in which the utility facility is to be located. R.C. 4906.02(A)(2); R.C. 4906.021. One ad hoc member is a chair of the board of township trustees or their “designee.” The other ad-hoc member is a county commission president or their “designee.”

A designee tapped to serve as a voting ad hoc OPSB member must be one of the following from the same political subdivision as the designator: another elected official or a resident. R.C. 4906.023. If a project is in multiple townships or counties, all of the township trustees in the area vote on the member; likewise for a county commissioner representative when a project spans multiple counties R.C. 4906.021 (C). In addition to other conflict-of-interest related prohibitions on service as an ad-hoc member, project leaseholders are barred from service. R.C. 4906.021(D).

Decommissioning

S.B. 52 requires an applicant to submit a comprehensive decommissioning plan for the facility for the OPSB to review and approval 60 days before construction. R.C. 4906.21(B). The plan must be prepared by a professional engineer, and designate the responsible parties for decommissioning, a schedule of decommissioning, and cost estimates R.C. 4906.211. The cost estimate must not take into account the salvage value of materials from the facility. Developers must post a performance bond before construction may begin, with the OPSB as the obligee of the bond. R.C. 4906.22.

County’s Option to Grant PILOT Extended in Ohio’s Budget Bill (HB 110)

On the same day the Ohio General Assembly passed S.B. 52, they also passed the state’s operating budget, Sub. House Bill 110. In that bill, the state extended by two years the option for counties to offer renewable energy projects a “payment in lieu of taxes” (“PILOT”). The law now sunsets at the end of 2024.

KEY CONTACTS

Christine M.T. Pirik is Of Counsel in Dickinson Wright's Columbus office. She can be reached at 614.591.5461 or cpirik@dickinsonwright.com.

Matthew C. McDonnell is an Associate in Dickinson Wright's Columbus office. He can be reached at 614.591.5486 or mmcdonnell@dickinsonwright.com.

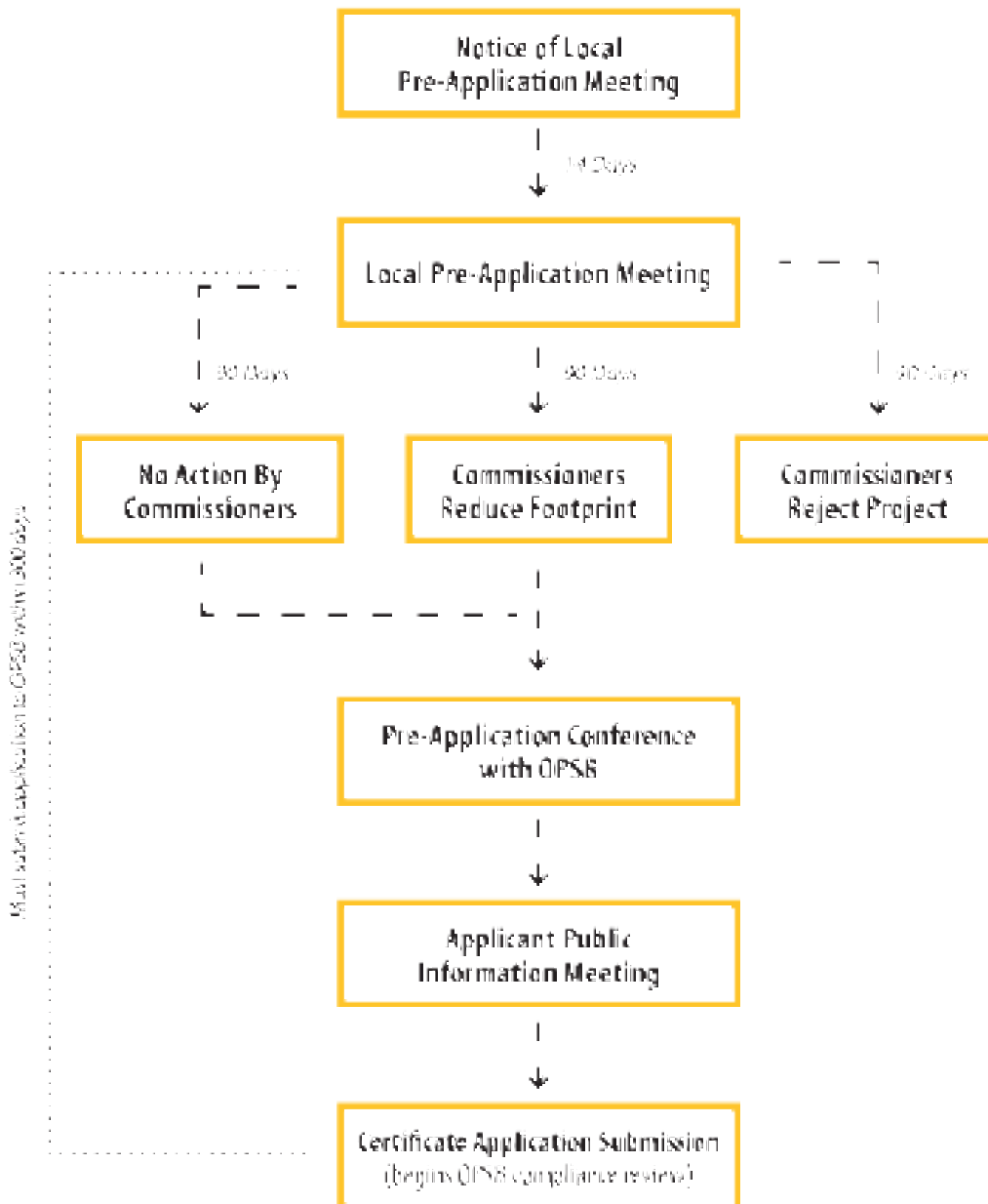
Terrence O'Donnell is a Member in Dickinson Wright's Columbus office. He can be reached at 614.744.2583 or todonnell@dickinsonwright.com.

William Vorys is Of Counsel in Dickinson Wright's Lexington office. He can be reached at 614.744.2936 or wvorys@dickinsonwright.com.

Madeline P. Fleisher is Of Counsel in Dickinson Wright's Columbus office. She can be reached at 614.591.5474 or mfleisher@dickinsonwright.com.

Lloyd Pierre Lewis is a member of Dickinson Wright's Columbus office. He can be reached at 614.591.5490 or lpierre-louis@dickinsonwright.com.

OHIO SB-52 LOCAL APPROVAL PROCESS



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CCAO STAFF

Brandy Allen, Accountant

(614) 220-0640 | ballen@ccao.org

Sherry Barbosky, CORSA Underwriting Manager

(614) 220-7995 | sbarbosky@ccao.org

Nedra Benson, CCAO Administrative Professional

(614) 221-5627 | nbenson@ccao.org

Melissa Bodey, CEBCO Senior Benefit Specialist

(614) 220-7997 | mbodey@ccao.org

John Brownlee, CORSA Managing Director

(614) 220-7988 | jbrownlee@ccao.org

Debi Burnette, CEBCO Enrollment and Billing Specialist

(614) 220-0644 | dburnette@ccao.org

Thisbe Butcher, Finance Manager

(614) 220-7990 | tbutcher@ccao.org

Nick Ciolli, Policy Analyst

(614) 220-7983 | nciolli@ccao.org

Tricia Callihan, CORSA Program Assistant

(614) 220-7993 | tcallihan@ccao.org

Wendy Dillingham, CEBCO Senior Benefit Specialist

(614) 220-7992 | wdillingham@ccao.org

Albert Francis, CORSA Senior Claims Representative

(614) 220-0638 | afrancis@ccao.org

Robin Garrett, CCAO Administrative Professional

(614) 220-0653 | rgarrett@ccao.org

Justin Grant, Benefit Specialist

(614) 220-7984 | jgrant@ccao.org

James Hale, CORSA Risk Control Consultant

(614) 246-1630 | jhale@ccao.org

Frank Hatfield, CORSA Risk Manager

(614) 220-0639 | fhatfield@ccao.org

Ken Hilty, CORSA Law Enforcement Consultant

(614) 357-6966 | khilty@ccao.org

Jon Honeck, Senior Policy Analyst

(614) 220-7982 | jhoneck@ccao.org

Tim Hoverman, Network Administrator

(614) 220-0655 | thoverman@ccao.org

Andrew Johnson, Communications Coordinator

(614) 220-7986 | ajohnson@ccao.org

Amanda Jones, CORSA Claims Representative

(614) 220-0636 | ajones@ccao.org

Mike Kindell, Managing Director of Health and Wellness

(614) 220-0645 | mkindell@ccao.org

Jeff Knapp, CORSA Claims Supervisor

(614) 220-0642 | jknapp@ccao.org

John Leutz, Assistant Director

(614) 220-7994 | jleutz@ccao.org

Katie Lininger, CORSA Senior Claims Representative

(614) 220-0637 | klininger@ccao.org

Hannah McKee, Wellness/Benefits Administrator

(614) 220-0654 | hmckee@ccao.org

Elizabeth Miller, CORSA Claim and Litigation Manager

(614) 220-7989 | emiller@ccao.org

Ryan Mills, Accountant

(614) 220-7985 | rmills@ccao.org

Curtis Pratt, CORSA Claims Technician

(614) 220-0636 | cpratt@ccao.org

Alison Redmond, CORSA Membership Services Manager

(614) 220-7991 | aredmond@ccao.org

Rachel Massoud Reedy, Policy Analyst

(614) 220-7996 | rreedy@ccao.org

Adam Schwiebert, Policy Analyst

(614) 220-7981 | aschwiebert@ccao.org

Tori Sinclair, CEBCO Wellness Coordinator

(614) 220-0650 | tsinclair@ccao.org

Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

(614) 220-7980 | csubler@ccao.org

County Leader, CCAO's quarterly e-magazine, provides an in-depth look at the news, programs and policies affecting Ohio's 88 counties. The e-magazine also showcases our members, offers best county practices as well as ways to enhance the state-county partnership practices and shares the offerings of the association. If you have questions or story submissions, contact Editor Andrew Johnson at ajohnson@ccao.org or 614-203-8920.