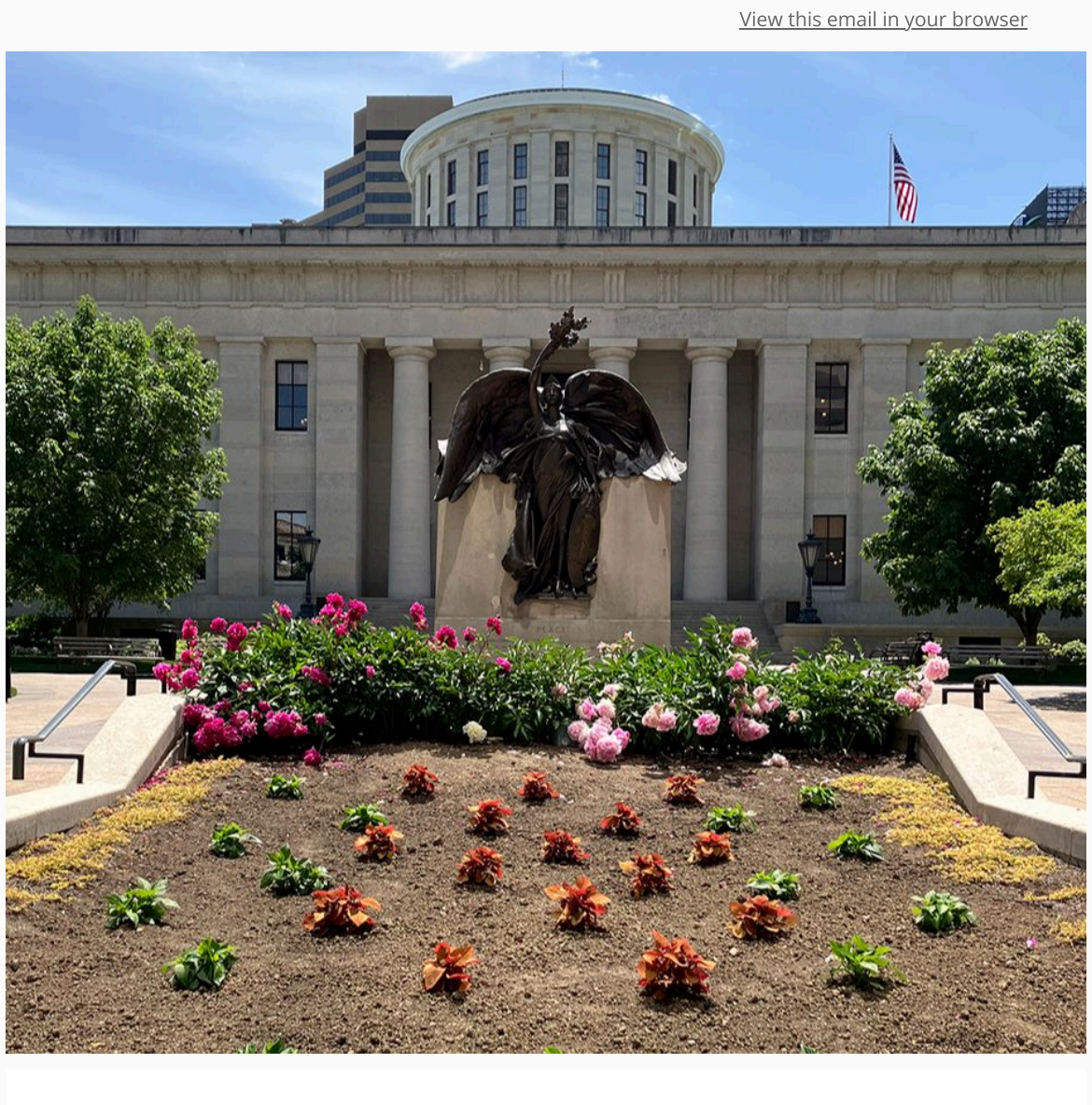

May 30, 2023

The "Peace" Monument on Capitol Square. The statue was dedicated in 1923 in honor of Ohioans who fought in the Civil War.

Photo courtesy of the Ohio Statehouse

If you are having issues viewing Counties Current in your email, click [View this email in your browser] at the top of the email.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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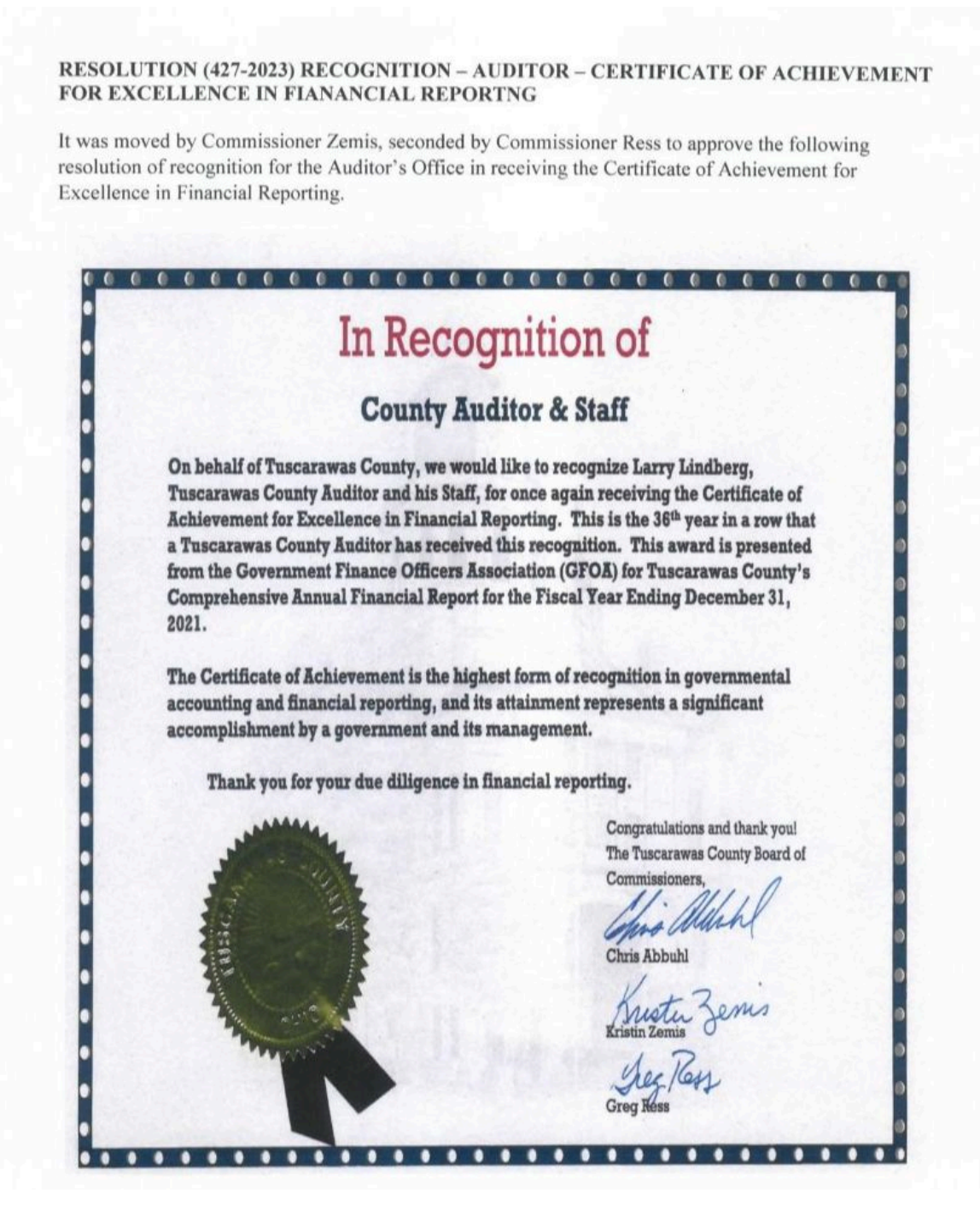
Tuscarawas County Auditor receives excellence recognition

Last week, the Tuscarawas County Auditor's office received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, presented by the Government Finance Officers Association. This is the 36th consecutive year that the Tuscarawas County Auditor has received this recognition!

Congratulations Tuscarawas County!



RESOLUTION (427-2023) RECOGNITION – AUDITOR – CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE IN FIANANCIAL REPORTNG

It was moved by Commissioner Zemis, seconded by Commissioner Ress to approve the following resolution of recognition for the Auditor's Office in receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

In Recognition of

County Auditor & Staff

On behalf of Tuscarawas County, we would like to recognize Larry Lindberg, Tuscarawas County Auditor and his Staff, for once again receiving the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This is the 36th year in a row that a Tuscarawas County Auditor has received this recognition. This award is presented from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for Tuscarawas County's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2021.

The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Thank you for your due diligence in financial reporting.

Congratulations and thank you!
The Tuscarawas County Board of Commissioners,

Chris Abbuhl

Kristin Zemis

Greg Ress

Ohio counties, CCAO receive NACo Achievement Awards

On Friday, NACo released the winners of 2023 NACo Achievement Awards. Ohio counties brought home 15 awards, with Cuyahoga County, Fairfield County, Franklin County, Hamilton County, Montgomery County, and Summit County all receiving recognition. The number of awards and the award categories each was honored under are listed below.

- Cuyahoga County (1): Children & Youth
- Fairfield County (1): Children & Youth
- Franklin County (3): Criminal Justice & Public Safety; Human Services; and Personnel Management, Employment, and Training
- Hamilton County (4): Community & Economic Development; County Resiliency; Health; and Information Technology
- Montgomery County (4): Civil Education & Public Information; Health (2); and Human Services
- Summit County (2): Civic Education & Public Information; Human Services

Ohio counties have received 159 NACo Achievement Awards since 2009, with Human Services being the most-received category.

CCAO received an award for the Ohio Counties: Statehouse Display that is installed in the Statehouse Map Room. Since 2013, only 16 awards have been given to statewide associations. The other statewide associations that have received awards are North Carolina (4), New Mexico (3), Iowa (3), Alabama (1), Arkansas (1), South Carolina (1), Utah (1), and Washington (1).

Congratulations to all the award recipients!

County Advisory Bulletin released for the State Transportation Budget

At the end of March, the General Assembly enacted HB 23, the state transportation budget bill. Among other provisions, the bill distributes motor fuel tax revenue to counties, cities, and townships, and provides funding for the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Public Works Commission, and the Ohio Department of Development.

It also contains a historic change in the county engineer force account limits by creating a new threshold of $70,000 per mile for road construction and repair and a limit of $233,000 for work on bridges and culverts. These thresholds will be adjusted annually based on ODOT's construction cost index, with a 5% cap.

The County Advisory Bulletin reviews these and other provisions that are of interest to counties, such as Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs) and public transportation.

The bulletin is available directly here and is also available on the CCAO website.

Save the date for CCAO's 2023 Summer Symposium!

From August 16 to 18, CCAO will host Economic Development Strategies: Ohio Counties Reaching Forward, the 2023 Summer Symposium. It is open to county commissioners, county executives, and county council members, as well as their key staff.

Among the areas of interest that the symposium will focus on are successful landbank practices, economic development practices, workforce development case studies, and expanding broadband services.

Early bird registration will open in early June.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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State unveils new portal to streamline adoption, foster care system

Last week, the DeWine-Husted Administration launched a new online portal through which Ohioans can inquire and apply to become foster or adoptive parents. Ohio currently has about 15,000 youths in the foster care system, with administrative barriers to become a foster or adoptive parent keeping some would-be caregivers on the outside.

The new system streamlines the process by allowing interested individuals to complete and submit applications and accompanying documents electronically. These forms and documents used to have to be completed and submitted physically.

Agencies and state administrators will have access to data dashboards and reports that highlight, in real-time, inquiry and application data across the state and by the agency. This will enable easier and more direct communications with interested individuals and families.

Later this year, Ohio agencies, group homes, and residential facilities will be able to use the system to complete inquiries, applications, and certifications. Eventually, it will be a one-stop-shop for prospective and certified caregivers to track their progress in pre-service training as well as the home study and certification processes.

NACo partners with Homeland Security on cyber protections

With an increase in cyber threats, ranging from phishing attempts to ransomware attacks, NACo has partnered with the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a body within the US Department of Homeland Security, to promote county cybersecurity practices.

NACo members can learn more about the partnership here.

CCAO, the CCAO Service Corporation, and CORSA will highlight more cybersecurity opportunities in the coming weeks.

Auditor of State issues fraud risk reporting advisory

Auditor of State Keith Faber recently released an advisory to local governments, public offices, and independent public accountants.

The advisory, which can be accessed here, primarily focuses on the need for local governments to monitor their fraud risk environment, particularly specific risks related to government operations and to give prompt and accurate responses to Fraud Risk Assessment Questionnaires that Auditor of State auditors send.

We recommend that commissioners, as well as other key county officials and employees, review the advisory. Keeping up to date on Auditor of State advisories is an important part of being good stewards of public funds.

Four weeks remain to utilize the children services workforce recruitment and retention grant

The window for spending a one-time $15 million grant awarded by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to county public children services agencies (PCSAs) last year will **close June 30**.

The workforce recruitment and retention grant, which is managed by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, was allocated to counties by formula in June 2022 to improve recruitment and retention of frontline workers. ODJFS offered counties a number of options for spending the grant, including various types of incentives and bonuses, tuition payment and loan reimbursement, culture and climate initiatives, flexible/hybrid work options, and more. Many of these options were identified in an OSU report on the children services workforce released by PCSAO in February 2022. The grant provided a rare opportunity to offer bonuses and make purchases outside the normal course of business.

Some county agencies have spent their entire allotment, while others have scheduled retention bonuses to be paid by the end of June. According to PCSAO, grant funds **must be entirely expended by June 30**, with final reports and grant closeout due September 10.

PCSAO added that one-time funding presents unique challenges, particularly when in the form of a grant. JFS and Children Services Board directors worked closely with commissioners last year to identify the most feasible, flexible and sometimes creative spending options for the county, but given the ongoing workforce crisis, plans evolved.

With a hard deadline of June 30, commissioners can help ensure that the entire local allocation is expended by working with PCSA directors to shift unspent funds to other allowable grant expenses or to relinquish unspent funds to other counties that can use them.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

SPBR to host virtual seminar on civil service this Thursday

This Thursday, June 1, the Ohio State Personnel Board of Review (SPBR) will hold a Virtual Civil Service Commission Seminar, primarily for municipal civil service commission board members and supporting staff.

The Seminar is a prime opportunity to enhance one's knowledge and skills as they pertain to civil service.

Registration is free and can be completed here.

Highlighting of available grant opportunities

CCAO is highlighting a handful of grants currently accepting applications. One is offered by the state of Ohio and the others by the federal government.

Violence Against Women Act Grant **(State)**

- Aims at enhancing the capacity of local communities to combat violent crimes against women and to strengthen victim services in such cases.
- Grants require a 25% match, applications close on June 5.

Rural Housing Preservation Grant **(Federal)**

- Intended to fund programs that assist very low- and low-income homeowners in repairing and rehabilitating their homes in rural areas.
- Applications close on June 5.

Integrated Services for Minor Victims of Human Trafficking **(Federal)**

- Aims to enhance the services available to minor victims of human trafficking by tailing services to victims' individual needs.
- Grants require a 25% match, applications close June 6.

Lead Hazard Reduction Grant **(Federal)**

- Seeks to protect the health of young children by funding comprehensive programs to identify and control lead-based paint hazards in rental and owner-occupied housing units.
- Applications close June 14.

CCAO hosting performance audit webinar next week

Next Friday, June 9, CCAO will host a webinar with the Auditor of State regarding the Auditor's performance audit program.

Performance audits examine the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and functions with the goal of making them better. While financial audits determine whether public funds are spent legally and managed in accordance with accounting principles, performance audits examine whether funds are spent wisely and if programs achieve their intended purpose. The webinar will help county officials learn more about how a performance audit can help your entity.

Registration is free and can be completed here.

SAM.gov, federal grant portal, walkthrough available; grant writing resources available

Last month, the US General Services Administration hosted an online forum to help walk state and local officials through how to use SAM.gov. The website is the primary portal for intergovernmental assistance from the federal government to state and local governments.

The Administration has made the presentation slide deck and the recording of the session available for download, as well as a one-page guide.

Grants are a valuable resource for counties to utilize, but knowing how best to develop competitive applications can be difficult and the learning curve cause counties to lose out on grants. Luckily, federal agencies and nonprofits offer resources to assist in developing competitive applications. Federal agencies websites point to internal and external sources and many conduct free training and targeted one on one or small group technical assistance. Here are some current resources to explore:

- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse
- Great Lakes Community Action Partnership
- Local Infrastructure Hub
- National Wildlife Federation
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- State and Community Energy Programs-Tools and Resources
- US Department of Transportation
- USDA Rural Development
- 10,000 Communities Initiative

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

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This section of *Counties Current* will be a permanent fixture for the foreseeable future to help counties with the ins and outs of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These two laws provide a once-in-a-generation investment.

Updated comparison of state and federal procurement law available

Bricker Graydon has shared a revised comparison of Ohio procurement law and federal uniform guidance. The document is intended to provide a comparison of the procurement rules and regulations prescribed by both federal law and state law, as they relate to Ohio counties using ARPA funds. Counties must comply with both state and federal law, where possible. Where federal requirements are more restrictive than state law, federal law must be followed. Where state law is more restrictive than federal requirements, state law must be followed.

The key revision regards state term contracts (page 8), which counties may participate in but Bricker Graydon suggests exercising caution and reviewing Auditor of State training materials before doing so.

The information presented in the chart was prepared by Bricker Graydon LLP as a service to CCAO. This information is intended solely for informational purposes of CCAO and its members and is not intended to constitute legal advice to, and may not be relied upon by, any party. Readers should engage legal counsel to provide legal advice related to any specific transaction.

Federal legislation increases ARPA flexibility for infrastructure, disaster response, and CDBG projects

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 was signed into law on December 29, 2022. The legislation contains important updates to how counties and other local governments may use their ARPA funds. First, the Act codifies the standard allowance included in the US Department of the Treasury's Final Rule that permits counties to use up to $10 million for the provision of government services under the "revenue loss" eligibility category without having to demonstrate losses through a complicated formula. This codification means that the Treasury Department cannot alter the standard allowance in any subsequent rulemaking.

The Act also permits counties to use the greater of $10 million or 30 percent of their total ARPA allocation for federal infrastructure projects, responding to natural disasters, or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects. Counties must expend these funds no later than September 30, 2026, rather than the standard date of December 31, 2026. Eligible natural disaster responses include emergency relief and the negative economic impacts of natural disasters, including temporary emergency housing, food assistance, financial assistance for lost wages, or other immediate needs. CDBG projects must meet the requirements of Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Some of the federal infrastructure programs eligible for ARPA match include the National Highway Performance Program; Bridge Investment Program; Surface Transportation Block Grant Program; and, the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program. More information, and a complete list of eligible transportation programs, is available from NACo at this link.

Resources for ARPA Reporting and Compliance

The most recent version of the US Treasury Reporting Guidance was published September 20, 2022. Counties and other local governments with populations greater than 250,000 or ARPA distributions greater than $10 million are required to file Project and Expenditure Reports no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter throughout the grant period. Other recipients will file Project and Expenditure Reports annually by April 30.

Members are urged to consult resources from US Treasury, NACo, and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management for more information about reporting and how to use ARPA funds. CCAO maintains a list of ARPA links and resources, including a comparison of state and federal procurement laws, at the ARPA Resources page.

Ohio Ethics Commission issues statement regarding stimulus funds

Last week the Ohio Ethics Commission released a statement ensuring that public officials are aware that stimulus funds, such as those received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the funds that communities will receive under Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian investment program, are public funds and that conflict of interest laws must be observed.

To that effect, the Commission also recirculated its Advisory Opinion No. 2009-006, issued in 2009 regarding stimulus funds made available to governments under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It provides a more in-depth examination of potential conflicts of interest with stimulus funds, including a discussing regarding vendors.

CCAO encourages members refamiliarize themselves with this Advisory Opinion and conflict of interest laws to ensure good stewardship of ARPA and Appalachia funds.

Guidance and overview of available BIL funding available from NACo and the Ohio Department of Transportation

NACo and ODOT each host a resource page providing information to counties about the Bipartican Infrastructure Law. The pages are rich with information including multiple tables providing overviews and links to funding opportunities, a timeline of upcoming grant programs, and much more.

The NACo website can be found here and the ODOT website can be found here.

CCAO strongly encourages counties to frequently visit the sites and apply for funding through the myriad of programs to bring valuable federal funds to Ohio communities.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One county from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted.

Northwest District

Allen County Commissioners optimistic about new downtown administration building

LimaOhio, May 25, 2023

As Allen County Commissioners considered how to consolidate various county offices under one roof, prospects of remaining downtown were looking bleak for a long time, with commissioners beginning to resign to the idea of building a new facility in the vicinity of Commerce Parkway off St. Johns Road.

However, a recent meeting with Good Food Restaurants president John Heaphy is making the prospect of Allen County offices staying downtown not only feasible but also increasingly likely.

Heaphy is the owner of 237 N. Main St., formerly occupied by Hofeller, Hiatt and Clark men's clothing store. According to Commissioner Brian Winegardner, Heaphy recently approached the commissioners about obtaining that property and parcels around it, including the brick building at 221 N. Main St., to build a new county administration facility, one which could hold such agencies as the county auditor, recorder, treasurer, buildings and grounds, coroner and the commissioners' office, among others.

Northeast District

Stark County commissioners set limits for tax abatement zone

Canton Repository, May 25, 2023

The Stark County commissioners are moving forward with plans for a new tax abatement zone in Canton Township.

The three-member board approved a resolution to establish boundaries for a Community Reinvestment Area in the township during its regular meeting Wednesday. The program will allow eligible commercial and industrial companies in the area to receive tax exemptions on future construction or renovations.

County Administrator Brant Luther said officials hope eligible commercial and industrial businesses are able to take advantage of the program and help the entire area.

Central District

After hitting record levels in 2021, home building falls in Licking County — despite Intel (Paywall)
(No Paywall)

Newark Advocate, May 28, 2023

Home building, which soared to record levels in Licking County in 2021, has fallen dramatically this year, especially along the growing western edge close to Columbus.

The western Licking County communities of Pataskala, Johnstown and Harrison Township, as well as Hebron to the south, combined for just 37 new home-building permits through the end of April this year. That's a 69% decrease from the first four months of 2022, when there were 119 such permits in those four communities, according to the Licking County Building Code department.

Newark has suddenly become the county's top home builder, with 48 permits issued so far in 2023. The county seat has recorded more single-family home building permits this year than Pataskala, Johnstown, Harrison Township, Etna Township and Hebron combined. But even its overall numbers are down from 62 in the same period last year.

Industry experts blame a mix of factors, including increased building costs and interest rates, but remain confident that things will bounce back.

Southwest District

What jobs will Hamilton County move? (Paywall)
(No Paywall)

Cincinnati Enquirer, May 23, 2023

A large portion of the 4,400 people who work for the Hamilton County government might move to a new office next year.

Hamilton County requested proposals May 17 to lease office space that could accommodate at least 1,200 employees, with parking for at least that many, that is within 7 miles of the Hamilton County Courthouse in Downtown Cincinnati.

The county is one of the largest employers in the Downtown/Over-the-Rhine area; any move of county departments could impact the city by relocating a large number of workers.

County officials wouldn't say exactly which departments they're considering moving or where. The county expects to start leasing the space by Jan. 1, according to the request for proposal obtained by The Enquirer from the county.

Southeast District

Commissioners discuss well issue; Dr. Rice-Spencer

Vinton-Jackson Courier, May 18, 2023

Vinton County Board of Commissioners announced a timeline for dealing with issues associated with a well at the county's airport and talked about reaching out to Dr. Cassie Rice-Spencer about a medical clinic.

During Tuesday's Board meeting, commissioners said the well, which is only for airport use, still provides water to around four nearby homes that do not pay for the water. The problem is that these properties do not have another source of water.

Commissioners said Smith Well Drilling of McArthur has been contacted about plans to dig a well starting mid-July. Since digging a proper well isn't like digging a hole for a fence post, drilling the new well — that won't be on county property — will take time.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

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JUNE 9
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting
CCAO-AOS Performance Audit Webinar

JUNE 15
General Government Committee Meeting
CCAO Executive Committee Meeting

JUNE 16
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

JUNE 19
Juneteenth

DID YOU KNOW?

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Lawrence County

Ironton, the county seat of Lawrence County, is home to the oldest continuing Memorial Day observation in the country. The Ironton-Lawrence County Memorial Day Parade began in 1868 and has continued every year since. The inaugural parade was held on May 30, 1868, a day that had been called for by General John A. Logan, the head of the Grand Army of the Republic (a fraternal organization for Union veterans of the Civil War).

Why General Logan picked May 30 is unknown, but one supposed origin is that there were no major battle anniversaries that fell on May 30, so it was an ideal day to honor all those who gave their life to preserve the Union. Today, Memorial Day falls on the final Monday of May, ranging from May 25 to May 31.

Whenever it falls, you can be sure of one thing: there'll be a parade in Ironton.

An undated photo of the Ironton-Lawrence County Memorial Day Parade. The Lawrence Register believes it is from the 1946 parade, the first parade held after the Allied victory in both theaters of World War II.

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