February 20, 2024

CCAO President and Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl presented CCAO Secretary and Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro with her Decade of Dedication service award after last week's CCAO Board of Directors meeting. The service awards were originally presented during the 2023 CCAO / CEAO Winter Conference, but Executive Shapiro was unable to attend.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Warren County Commissioner Jones elected as new Ohio representative to NACo Board of Directors

Last week, during the February CCAO Board of Directors meeting, the board voted to elect Warren County Commissioner Shannon Jones as the new Ohio representative to the NACo Board of Directors. The seat was vacant after Clermont County Commissioner David Painter resigned upon his election to the NACo Board at CCAO's annual business meeting in December. Commissioner Jones will serve the remainder of the term.

Commissioner Jones is no stranger to NACo, having been active in the national association since her first term as county commissioner. She is currently the Chair of the NACo Human Services and Education Policy Steering Committee, overseeing critical matters related to children's issues, foster care, public assistance, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, immigration policy, social services, and education.

Congratulations Commissioner Jones!

Former Summit County Council Member Sims appointed to House

Earlier in February, the Ohio House of Representatives Democratic Party Caucus voted unanimously to appoint former Summit County Council Member Veronica Sims to fill the seat vacated when Tavia Galonski resigned to take the position of Summit County Clerk of Courts.

Sims was first elected to the Summit County Council in 2017 and served as both Vice President and President of the council during her tenure.

Sims' appointment to the House adds another CCAO Former to the General Assembly's ranks; there are now 15 Formers in the General Assembly, 11 in the House and four in the Senate.

- House of Representatives
    - Speaker of the House Jason Stephens, HD-93 (Lawrence County)
    - Representative Brian Stewart, HD-12 (Pickaway County)
    - Representative Dan Troy, HD-23 (Lake County)
    - Representative Bill Roemer, HD-31 (Summit County)
    - Representative Veronica Sims, HD-33 (Summit County)
    - Representative Rodney Creech, HD-40 (Preble County)
    - Representative Sharon Ray, HD-66 (Medina County)
    - Representative Marilyn John, HD-76 (Richland County)
    - Representative Scott Wiggam, HD-77 (Wayne County)
    - Representative Roy Klopfenstein, HD-82 (Paulding County)
    - Representative Bob Peterson, HD-91 (Fayette County)
- Senate
    - Senator Bob Hackett, SD-10 (Madison County)
    - Senator Shane Wilkin, SD-17 (Highland County)
    - Senator Jerry Cirino, SD-18 (Lake County)
    - Senator Al Landis, SD-31 (Tuscarawas County)

List of CCAO member races, county ballot issues available

In a month, Ohioans will go to their polling places and vote on a number of primary elections and local issues. As a presidential election year, two commissioner seats are up for election in each statutory county, as well as the other county row officers.

There are 187 seats on the ballot this year:

1. One county executive seat (Summit County);
2. 13 county council seats; and
3. 173 county commissioner seats (one of these seats is an unexpired term in Henry County).

Of the 187 seats, 153 have the incumbent running for reelection and 33 have incumbents who are not seeking a new term. The remaining seat is currently held by an independent who has stated he will seek reelection but, as an independent, does not need to file until March 18.

This equates to an 82% rate at which incumbents are seeking another term.

With 187 seats up for reelection, there are 374 races on the ballot in March (two per seat). Of these, 127 races (or 34%) have no candidates filed. Additionally, 164 races (or 44%) feature only one candidate. This leaves 83 races (or 22%) that are contested.

As mentioned earlier, there are 33 sitting CCAO members who are not seeking reelection. The following members of the CEBCO, CORSA, and CCAO boards are not seeking a new term:

1. CEBCO President and Shelby County Commissioner Tony Bornhorst;
2. CORSA Board of Directors Member and Fayette County Commissioner Dan Dean;
3. CORSA Board of Directors Member and Knox County Commissioner Teresa Bemiller;
4. CCAO President and Tuscarawas County Commissioner Chris Abbuhl;
5. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Wayne County Commissioner Ron Amstutz;
6. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Muskingum County Commissioner Mollie Crooks; and
7. CCAO Board of Directors Member and Huron County Commissioner Terry Boose.

Additionally, there are 16 county-level ballot issues across the state next month. Fifteen of these are property tax levies and one is a sales tax levy. The property tax levies are predominantly human services related, as well as two EMS levies and a levy to support OSU Extension activities. The lone sales tax levy on the ballot is a renewal of Mahoning County's combined criminal justice levy.

The full list of primary candidates is accessible here and the list of ballot issues here. Additionally, they are posted on CCAO's Data Exchange.

Northwest District to hold meeting on March 20, Central District to hold meeting on May 3

Northwest District
On March 20, Fulton County will host the quarterly meeting of the Northwest Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association. The meeting will take place at the Fulton County Administration Building in Wauseon.

The meeting will feature announcements from CCAO, CEAO, CEBCO, and CORSA, and culminate in a tour of the recently renovated Fulton County Courthouse.

To register for the Northwest District Meeting, please complete this form and send to Jessica Schuette via email at jschuette@fultoncountyoh.com, via fax at 41-337-9285, or mail to 152 S. Fulton Street, Suite 270, Wauseon, OH 43567. Registration must be submitted by March 6.

Central District
The Central District will host a regional meeting in Fairfield County on May 3.

The event will feature a breakfast and a welcome by Central District President and Delaware County Commissioner Gary Merrell, followed by an update from CCAO. Then, each Fairfield County Commissioner will give a brief presentation on one of their areas of focus:

- Commissioner Jeff Fix: Fairfield County's Land Use Planning Process
- Commissioner Steve Davis: Expanding Transit to Meet Workforce Challenges
- Commissioner David Levacy: The Fairfield County Workforce Center and Training Programs.

The event will conclude with a tour of the county's workforce center and a lunch.

Registration can be completed here. Please RSVP no later than April 22 so that appropriate preparations can be made. If you have difficulties registering, please contact Fairfield County Administrator Aundrea Cordelia at aundrea.cordle@fairfieldcountyohio.gov.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner:

JobsOhio®
Ohio's Economic Development Corporation

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Auditor of State reissues payment redirect scam advisory

After the recent report that more than $700,000 was stolen from the Granville Recreation District as a result of a phishing scam, Auditor of State Keith Faber has reissued an advisory to local governments on the type of scam that targeted Granville Recreation.

The scam type, called a "re-direct scheme," involves a bad actor impersonating either a vendor or employee and requesting payments be sent to a different bank account. The request may also include a sense of urgency to try to trick the receiver into acting before properly validating the request.

Counties are responsible for millions of taxpayer dollars and must be good wardens of these funds. Please review the advisory with your fiscal staff.

Residential Broadband Program challenge window open again, to last until April 19

The challenge process has begun for the second round of the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant program and will continue until April 19.

The challenge process is an important part of the program as it ensures that broadband maps are accurate so funds can be better allocated to where they're needed.

You can access the maps, challenge forms, and other necessary information on BroadbandOhio's website.

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.

TODAY: CCAO to host webinar with H2Ohio Program leaders

TODAY, CCAO will be hosting a webinar regarding the H2Ohio Program, which received unprecedented funding levels in the most recent state operating budget. This funding will be distributed among four entities with the goal of reducing harmful algal blooms within the Western Lake Erie Basin and other water quality projects across the state through the new Rivers Initiative. Funding flows through the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lake Erie Commission. The Directors and their staff will be providing project updates along with funding opportunities throughout the current state fiscal year.

Speakers will include Director of Agriculture Brian Baldridge, a former Adams County Commissioner and CCAO Board of Directors member; OEPA Director Anne Vogel, one of the early architects of the H2Ohio Program; Lake Erie Commission Executive Director Joy Mulinex, who has worked on water quality issues pertaining to the Great Lakes for more than 25 years; and H2Ohio Wetlands Program Manager Eric Saas, who oversees the H2Ohio Program within the Department of Natural Resources.

You can register for the webinar here. If you are unable to, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO administrative professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627, and provide her with your email address. A recording of the webinar, along with copies of slides, will be posted on CCAO's webinar archive shortly after the event concludes.

All Ohio Future Fund now accepting grant applications

The Ohio Department of Development opened the application portal for the All Ohio Future Fund as of Friday, February 16.

The $750 million fund was created in the state budget to support economic development and site preparation. Applications are competitive and will be accepted on a rolling basis until funding is depleted. Applicants are advised to review the Indication of Interest checklist, narrative form, and data form for guidance on submitting a site development proposal.

More information is available on the program website. If you have questions concerning the All Ohio Future Fund, please contact CCAO Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck.

CCAO, Ohio Housing Finance Agency to host webinar on housing tax credit program

On March 7, CCAO, in conjunction with the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), will host a webinar to educate members on a new tool that local governments can utilize to improve single-family housing stock in Ohio: The Single-Family Housing Tax Credit (SFHTC).

Created in the state's most recent operating budget, the SFHTC allows for a maximum of $50,000 tax credit per dwelling to projects aimed at developing or rehabilitating housing in Ohio communities. Counties play an important role in the SFHTC program, as the lead applicants for the programs must be a county, township, municipality, regional planning commission, community improvement corporation, or economic development corporation.

OHFA has produced a one-page handout with an overview of the program and more detailed information about the SFHTC, including the allocation plan and underwriting guidelines, can be found on the Agency's website.

Housing is one of the most pressing issues that the state is facing, so CCAO is happy to offer this educational opportunity on one of the new roles that counties can play in alleviating the housing crunch.

Registration is free and can be completed here.

Franklin County to be featured in NACo webinar

On March 14, Franklin County will be highlighted in a NACo webinar. The program will discuss how the county is solving long-standing challenges through "Rapid Low-Code Application Development" to become faster and more collaborative and pave the way for smarter governance through iterative solutions.

During the webinar, you'll get to hear firsthand from the team that brought Quickbase to Franklin County. They'll share valuable insights on their collaborative approach, staying ahead in tech, effective prioritization strategies, and the exciting prospects ahead.

Plus, we'll hear from Quickbase expert Jen Bensi to see some of the macro trends that are impacting government agencies around country and how Quickbase can digitize your public sector data and workflows without compromising your transparency, collaboration, and security.

Webinar on revitalizing coal communities to be held in March

On March 6, the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization will be hosting a webinar on its Getting Started Guide, a planning and action tool for community leaders in areas facing economic transition. The webinar will discuss how communities can use the Guide to approach their unique needs and discuss case studies of how communities have used the Guide for economic development projects.

The Energy Communities IWG was created by the Biden Administration to focus on economic revitalization in areas that have traditionally been focused on coal mining and oil and natural gas extraction.

Grant writing workshop to be held in Columbus on March 21 & 22

On March 21-22, Grant Writing USA will host a workshop in Columbus on how to write grant applications for governmental grants and grants from foundations.

The first day will feature instruction on how to articulate the community need, how to develop credibility as an applicant, and how to justify your need. The second day will include instruction on how to develop a grant budget, how to condense your grant summary into a one-pager, and how to locate and track grant opportunities.

Registration costs $495 per attendee but using the code "ASSN" at registration will save your county $30 per registration.

You can register and learn more about Grant Writing USA here.

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, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

NACo News

Can Funding Counties Directly Help Them Overcome Their Biggest Problems?
Governing.com, February 13, 2024
Federal funds are most effective if they come directly to counties, empowering them to use them according to their understanding of local conditions. That argument from the National Association of Counties (NACo) is a key takeaway from a published report released the day before the opening of its annual legislative conference.

From Feb. 10-13, almost 2,000 county officials from 46 states were in Washington, D.C., for the conference to meet with members of Congress. "We're not lobbyists," says Mary Jo McGuire a commissioner in Ramsey County, Minn., and the current NACo president. Instead, county officials seem themselves as "intergovernmental partners," fostering consensus and forward motion on issues of mutual concern.

County governments have a unique ability to impact things that can either improve or undermine the stability of families and communities, from public health and public safety to parks, roads, libraries and mental health.

In a conversation with *Governing* just before the conference, NACo leaders talked about present priorities for such cooperation, from Medicaid reform and election security to artificial intelligence and disaster preparedness.

Northwest District

County Officials and Riley Township Trustees discuss reopening the M-6 Bridge
Putnam Sentinel, February 12, 2024
A few weeks ago, the Riley Township Trustees met with the Putnam County Commissioners to discuss the reopening of the historic M-6 bridge. The trustees saw the closure of the bridge as a great inconvenience for a high traffic location. During this meeting, the trustees and commissioners brainstormed possible solutions without moving forward on anything actionable due to the absence of the county engineer and county prosecutor at this meeting, which the commissioners apologized for as it was due to a miscommunication on their part.

The commissioners outlined that for the bridge to be reopened, the solutions would need to prevent vehicles over the 5-ton weight limit from crossing it while also taking into consideration what the county engineer and county prosecutor had advised on this matter.

Though the M-6 bridge was redone in 2017, Michael L. Lenhart, the Putnam County Engineer, previously explained that the bridge was rehabilitated for historical purposes, not structural purposes. He said even though the bridge looks new, it is still the same capacity as when it was first put up. When the bridge was redone it was galvanized, which took some of the strength from the steel, making the structural strength uncertain and making it a safety issue for anyone using the bridge. Also, as part of being rehabilitated with Federal monies, additional steel beams, brackets, posts, and railings were installed adding additional weight to the bridge. Furthermore, the historic bridge is classified as a fracture-critical bridge, meaning that if key members of the bridge were to fail, the bridge would collapse.

Northeast District

Commissioners accept proposals for new engineer's storage building
The Review, February 9, 2024
Columbiana County commissioners accepted design/build proposals from five firms Wednesday for a new garage/storage building for the county engineer's office.

The electronic submissions were opened at the engineer's office and will be reviewed by county Engineer Bert Dawson and his staff, with the list to be narrowed down to three, interviews conducted, then a decision made on which firm will become the design/build team.

Firms who expressed an interest in the project by submitting their qualifications and the amount of their minimum bids included: J Herbert Construction/Strollo Architects/Fenton Engineering, Salem, $1,925,000; Dawn Inc./CT Consultants/Prater Engineering, Warren, $2,675,095; C. Tucker Cope/Engineering Direct, Columbiana, $1,247,961; Hively Construction/Strollo Architects, Canfield, $1,509,000; and Hodge Construction LLC/SH Design LLC, New Waterford, $1,408,434.

Dawson said firms will be evaluated based on their past experience, previous jobs, personnel, equipment, proximity and project proposal, besides their minimum cost.

Dawson previously said the new building will replace one and a half buildings on the South Market Street property and serve as home for the plow trucks, shop trucks and fuel trucks. He said the existing building is old and falling down and the trucks of today don't fit inside. Previously, he said plans call for construction of a larger building that measures 80 feet by 188 feet.

Central District

County Commissioners Learn More About Transit Services
Peak of Ohio, February 14, 2024
For over 50 years RTC has offered services to community members in Logan County.

RTC Transportation is celebrating Ohio Loves Transit Week and was joined by Logan County Commissioners Mike Yoder and Mark Robinson for a ride-along on Tuesday.

They learned about all the services RTC Transportation offers to Logan County Residents.

Transportation is essential in keeping Logan County moving, connects people to essential jobs, and allows the aging population independence.

Last year, RTC served Logan County residents with 62,594 trips covering 652,471 miles.

Transportation is provided throughout Logan County, and they also offer out-of-county service (within a 100-mile radius of Logan County) on a limited basis.

They are a Door-to-Door Demand Response service offered to all citizens and visitors of Logan County regardless of age or income status, meaning they pick you up at the door and deliver you to your destination door.

They transport ambulatory (those capable of walking) and non-ambulatory (those in wheelchairs); but cannot transport emergency or semi-emergency passengers, or those requiring transport in a reclining position.

Southwest District

Adams County set to unveil cutting-edge dog and kennel facility
Scioto Valley Guardian, February 14, 2024
The Adams County Board of Commissioners announced plans for a groundbreaking new dog and kennel facility. Situated on a 3-acre site near the Adams County Airport, this state-of-the-art facility underscores the county's unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of its furry residents.

"In launching the new state-of-the-art dog and kennel facility, we are not just building a space for animal care; we are investing in a future where the bond between pets and our community is nurtured and celebrated," remarked the Adams County Board of Commissioners in a joint statement.

The facility will boast 40 indoor/outdoor access kennels.

To support this project, officials said a Capital Building Fund has been established, with initial funding already allocated to Fund #675.

The chosen location near the Adams County Airport was selected for its accessibility and potential to foster greater connectivity with the community.

Bids will be advertised as soon as the blueprints are finalized.

According to the Adams County Board of Commissioners, the project is expected to break ground in the summer.

Southeast District

Local JFS office under new leadership
WJER.com, February 12, 2024
Tuscarawas County's new JFS director is sharing her goals for the agency and what attracted her to the position.

Veronica Spidell says it's always been her mission to serve the community in any way she can.

"I was the director of Leadership Tuscarawas for a couple of years and worked at the ADAMHS Board and was very fulfilled in that work and believed in the mission of that agency but to be quite honest, God had other plans for me. I really think He gave me the opportunity the last nine years to learn more so that I had a stronger foundation when this presented itself."

Spidell says addressing the agency's fiscal challenges and increasing community engagement are among her top priorities.

"And then honesty, I just want to continue to provide excellent casework and customer service to everyone we serve. I'm really proud of our Children's Service Department. They received a best practices award in December for timely investigations and assessments and timely visitation on their caseloads. And then stats are coming out for January, and our Income Maintenance Department, their application timeliness is over 90 percent."

She plans to meet with all 97 JFS employees in the coming weeks to find out what's working well and what isn't.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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MARCH 1
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 15
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 20
Northwest District Meeting, Fulton County

MARCH 21
CORSA Renewal Meeting

MARCH 21
CCAO General Government Committee Meeting

MARCH 22
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting

DID YOU KNOW?

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Ohio Presidents

Ohio is well-known as the "Mother of Presidents," producing eight US presidents. With the exception of William Henry Harrison, who served one month in 1814 before dying of an illness, all of Ohio's presidents served from 1869 to 1923, a 44-year-period during which Ohioans were in the White House for 28 years.

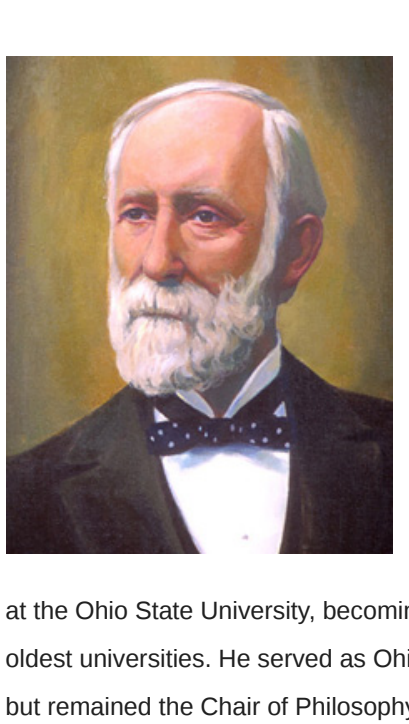
However, like *Counties Current* did last year when we looked at how Ohio produced the first two presidents of the American League of professional baseball, we will look at a different type of president: university presidents.

Ohio University, located in Athens, is the oldest university in Ohio. Its doors opened on February 18, 1804, making this year its 220th birthday.

Miami University, located in Oxford, is Ohio's second oldest university, having been established on February 2, 1809. It turned 215 years old this year.

Ohio State University, located in Columbus, is the 7th oldest university in the state and was the first land-grant university. It was established on March 22, 1870, making this year its 154th birthday.

Despite these three universities' long history in the state, only two men have ever served as president of two of them, and nobody has served as president of all three. Both men who served as president of two were native Ohioans.



William Henry Scott was born in Athens County and grew up in nearby Morgan County. When he was 19 years old, he enrolled at Ohio University and after a series of teaching jobs and pastoral work, he became the 7th President of Ohio University in 1872, when he was just 32 years old. As president, he advocated for the state to combine Ohio, Miami, and Ohio State into one unified university system, but was unsuccessful.

In 1883, after 11 of leading Ohio University, Scott accepted the position of Chair in Philosophy and University President at the Ohio State University, becoming the first person to serve as president of two of Ohio's three oldest universities. He served as Ohio State's third president for 12 years, stepping down in 1895 but remained the Chair of Philosophy until 1910.

Meanwhile, as Scott was nearing the completion of his high school education in 1855, in Guernsey County the couple David Glenn Thompson and Agnes Miranda Oxley gave birth to their son William. William Oxley Thompson would go on to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees from Muskingum College and practice as a Presbyterian minister until 1891, when he was appointed as President of Miami University.

He served in that role for eight years, until hired by Ohio State to be the university's fifth president. William Oxley Thompson would serve for 26 years as OSU's president, which remains the longest tenure of any Ohio State president.

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