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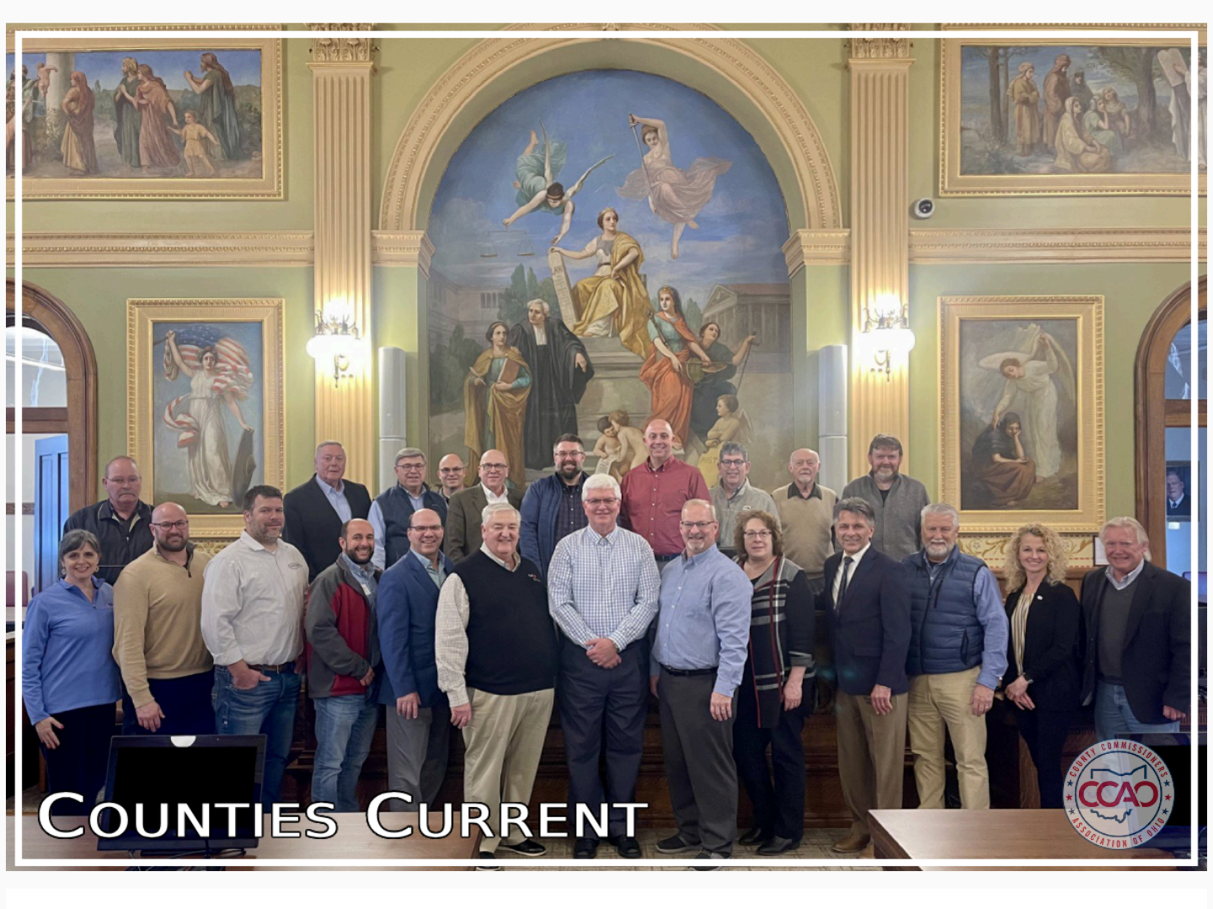

March 25, 2024

Last week, commissioners and engineers of Northwest Ohio gathered in Fulton County to share the happenings of their counties and receive updates from CEAO and CCAO, including a policy update on the Public Works Commission and the future need to renew the popular infrastructure program.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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CCAO member races, county ballot issue outcomes

Last week, the March election included primary contests for 187 county commissioner, county executive, and county council seats, as well as 16 county ballot issues. Full lists of the CCAO member races and the county ballot issues can be found on CCAO's Data Exchange.

As a note, election results are not official until final certification. It is possible some election results may change when that occurs. Applicable races are noted both in the lists and in the analysis below.

Based on the unofficial results, 19 incumbents lost primary challenges:

- Teresa Diane Ward (Adams County)
- Josh Meyer (Belmont County)
- Doug Weisenauer (Crawford County)
- David Smith (Gallia County)
- Paul Coffland (Harrison County)
- Thom Collier (Knox County)
- John Hamercheck (Lake County)
- Michele Hung (Lorain County)
- Mark Forrest (Madison County)
- Kerr Murray (Marion County)
- Richard Welsh (Morgan County)
- Tony Badalamenti (Portage County)
- Michael Lammers (Putnam County)
- Vincent Schroeder (Putnam County)
- Gloria Rogers (Summit County District 3)
- Niki Frenchko (Trumbull County)
- Mark Fout (Vinton County)
- William Wellman (Vinton County)
- Lew Hilkert (Williams County)

Additionally, in Perry County, Dan Kinsel was appointed to serve the remainder of Derek Householder's January 3rd term, after Householder's appointment as County Auditor. However, Commissioner Kinsel had already filed as a candidate for the January 2nd term, so while Commissioner Kinsel ran as an incumbent, he did not run for the seat of which he is the incumbent. Commissioner Ben Carpenter defeated Commissioner Kinsel in that race.

There are two races that are very close and may change as final results are certified. These are the Shelby County January 2 Republican Primary, where based on unofficial results, Mack Knupp leads John Adams by 11 votes (2,592-2,583, with a third candidate Philip Barhorst trailing by a few hundred) and the Vinton County January 3 Democratic Primary, where based on unofficial results, Lynn Herrold leads in a very tight race, 145-144-131, up on Jeff Allan Fee and Michael Betts, respectively.

Considering seats where the incumbent either lost last night or opted not to run, CCAO is likely guaranteed at least 50 new members. This count includes situations where, in Huron County, Jefferson County, Trumbull County, and Union County, former commissioners won their primary contests. Should these candidates win, they will not be new in the traditional sense. These candidates are Tom Dunlap (Huron County), Thomas Graham (Jefferson County), Daniel Polivka (Trumbull County), and Tom McCarthy (Union County).

As it currently stands, there will be at least 65 contested races in November, 39 of which will feature an incumbent. The remaining 123 seats did not have a primary in both parties, although there may be independents who filed to run.

On the ballot issue front, there were 16 property tax levies on the ballot in 14 counties (Morgan and Wyandot each had two levies) and there was one sales tax levy.

The sales tax levy was Mahoning County's 0.75% criminal justice levy up for its five-year renewal. The levy passed, which means Mahoning County's total rate will remain at 1.50%. This keeps the number of counties at the maximum sales tax rate at 52 counties.

Eleven of the 16 property tax levies passed. Those that failed to pass were:

- Coshocton County EMS, Additional 1 mill
- Guernsey County EMS, Additional 3.2 mills
- Highland County Children Services, Replacement 0.9 mills
- Logan County Children Services, Replacement 2.15 mills
- Morrow County OSU Extension, Renewal 0.5 mills

As a note, the Logan County children services replacement levy failed by only six votes, so it is possible that outcome may change by the time final results are certified.

CCAO conducting survey on municipal inmates in county jails

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio is conducting a membership survey to gauge how counties across the state are approaching an emerging issue in their county jails: the housing of municipal inmates.

CCAO has heard from some members that their jails, already crowded, are having additional strain placed upon them by municipalities in their counties sending inmates to the county jail instead of a municipal holding facility. While some counties may have agreements in place regarding the municipality paying to house inmates at the county facility, others may not.

To better evaluate the issue and potentially work with the General Assembly on a legislative solution to this issue, CCAO is asking members to respond to this survey to better educate the Policy Team on the scope of the issue.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Kyle Petty, Managing Director of Policy or Nick Ciolli, Research Analyst.

Central District to hold meeting on May 3; Southwest District on May 6

Central District
The Central CCAO/CEAO 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.

Southwest District
Save the date! The Southeast CCAO / CEAO District will host a meeting on May 6 at 11:00 a.m. in Harrison County. The meeting will be held at Wagner Field, the home of the Harrison Central High School Huskies.

The full agenda is still being finalized but the focus of the meeting will be on solar power and feature guests from two solar energy companies (Nottingham Solar and BJAAM Solar Partners) and area residents.

You can send RSVPs to cgraham@harrisoncountyohio.org.

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STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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State working group on psychiatric hospitals to host first meeting

At the beginning of March, Governor Mike DeWine announced the creation of a work group focused on the increasing number of "forensic patients" in state psychiatric hospitals. These patients are often justice-involved, resulting in limited access to the hospitals for community members in need.

The first meeting of the group will be held this Wednesday at the Ohio Department of Public Safety Atrium. While this initial meeting will be entirely in-person, future meetings are expected to include virtual attendance options. The group's planned schedule is to meet biweekly and submit final recommendations by summer.

CCAO will keep membership informed of potential opportunities to provide county-perspectives to the group.

SERB releases Wage Settlement Report, finds majority of public-sector contracts featured wage increases

Last week, the Ohio State Employment Relations Board (SERB) released its annual Wage Settlement Report. The report analyzes the overall wage increase percentage and other monetary incentives that were included in public-sector labor contracts in Ohio during calendar year 2023.

The 14-page report contains a lot of good information regarding contracts from across the state and is worth reading. For those who do not have the time, CCAO is highlighting a few notable points.

- About 87% of labor contracts negotiated feature wage increases, with an average of 3.75% in 2023, 3.09% in 2024, and 2.93% in 2025.
- County jurisdictions had the highest negotiated percentage wage increase in 2023 and 2024 (4.20% and 3.27%, respectively).
- The bargaining unit that received the highest percent wage increase across all three years was "Police (Safety/Security)".

SERB defines the county jurisdiction as "all county-level employers," and defines the police bargaining unit as any bargaining unit that includes uniformed police officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains across all jurisdictions, county sheriff deputies, corrections officers, security guards, park rangers, safety dispatchers, and E911 dispatchers.

You can view past Wage Settlement Reports and other SERB publications on the board'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.

Application window for Development grants closes *NEXT MONDAY*

The application window for lead entities to apply for two key Department of Development grants, the Brownfield Remediation Grant Program and the Demolition and Site Revitalization Grant Program, next Monday, April 1.

These programs can bring needed funds to communities to enhance quality of life, health, and provide future economic development opportunities. CCAO highly encourages counties to check with their lead entity (often the county land reutilization corporation, but in some cases the board of commissioners itself) to ensure that their application is either submitted or will be submitted by next Monday.

Ohio Land Bank Association to hold 13th Annual Conference in April

The 13th Annual Ohio Land Bank Conference will be held at the John S. Knight Center in Akron, Ohio, from April 24-26.

This year's conference covers a diverse range of sessions, from housing strategies and urban revitalization to leadership development. Highlighting practical knowledge for community revitalization, the event also features engaging receptions and a number of unique mobile tours, fostering networking and collaboration among attendees.

For more details on session topics and scheduling, visit the event's official site.

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.

Northwest District

Senior citizens in Allen County will soon be seeing benefits from Ohio's Healthy Aging Grants

Hometown Stations, March 21, 2024
Allen County seniors will be seeing benefits from the state's Healthy Aging Grants.

County commissioners approved several resolutions that will distribute $330,000 to several agencies that work with senior citizens. The Area Agency on Aging 3 is getting funding for food and housing assistance, and the West Ohio Community Action Partnership is getting funds for housing assistance too.

"It's helping those two entities to really get out to the constituents to provide assistance and any type of help that can be done. A lot of work goes into that, but we're starting to see the fruits of the grant now that the purchasing and programs are starting to happen. And we just really appreciate that collaborative relationship that we have with those entities," stated Cory Noonan, Allen County Commissioner.

Northeast District

Wayne commissioners approve EMA, roadside supply grants

Daily Record, March 21, 2024
Wayne County commissioners approved a resolution allowing the Emergency Management Agency to apply for the third year of funding from a Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant.

The $62,330 grant is from the Ohio EMA for October 2024 through September 2025, with about 80% ($49,864) being federally funded and the remaining amount funded locally through the county EMA.

The EMA certified about $10,000 of funding for the 20% local match portion of the grant. The grant money will be used for annual hazardous material training, Barbara Pittard, deputy director of the Wayne County Emergency Management Agency said.

"This funding gets the training for incoming firefighters and other facilities at no cost, and it also keeps other organizations up to date," Pittard said.

Central District

Richland County considers tornado sirens digital upgrade

Mansfield News Journal, March 21, 2024
The Richland County commissioners took time during the National Weather Services' annual observation of Severe Weather Awareness Week to give the OK for the county Emergency Management Agency and the sheriff's office to upgrade the county's tornado warning sirens to the Multi-Agency Radio Communications System.

The board voted at its meeting Tuesday to put out a request for proposals for the upgrade, which will fully digitize the system and save on long-term operating costs. The estimated cost of the MARCS upgrade is $190,000-$200,000.

Officials emphasized that the action was not the result of any problems during the recent weather event when a tornado struck the county just outside of Plymouth. EMA Director Rebecca Owens said all 44 of the county-controlled sirens worked following a $52,000 project over the past year that included repairing eight of the devices and making sure all were “fully ready” for the changeover to MARCS.

Southwest District

Commissioners certify land bank submissions

Portsmouth Daily Times, March 16, 2024
The Scioto County commissioners at their meeting last week certified a number of properties to be torn down as vacated and blighted.

“There are multiple properties that have been identified, both residential and commercial,” said Commission Chair Bryan Davis.

The Scioto County Land Reutilization Corporation, or land bank, is a government-adjacent agency funded through grants and partnerships to help reduce the number of local blighted structures. Structures must be vacated and declared blights in order to be submitted to the land bank for consideration. They must also be paid up on taxes and have no liens. Land bank projects are undertaken at no cost to the owner and the land bank does not take ownership of the property.

“This is all contingent on grant funding being secured at 100 pecent and also additional funds being received from the City of Portsmouth,” Davis said.

Many properties have been submitted this time around and the resolution, which was passed unanimously, was a certification of those.

Southeast District

Harrison County approves funding for anticipated county-wide demolition project

WTOV9, March 20, 2024
The Harrison County Commission approved funding Wednesday to remove dilapidated buildings from some of the county's most outlying areas, a project it says has been years in the making.

The first rounds of the demolition grant were approved by the commission, and they will be used for properties that need work, cleaned up or have buildings demolished. Plans also include less extensive work to some of the buildings on properties that have become run down.

"It's always nice to be able to clean up blighted properties,” Coffland said. “These will be in Hopedale and Scio. We're pleased with the way the bids came in, pretty much as we expected."

Plans for the project are expected to continue and expand, depending on some of the factors of each individual property. The commission is working to secure more funding for the plans, with the goal of having cleaner communities that will attract economic development.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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MARCH 31
Easter

APRIL 5
Annual CEBCO Business Meeting

APRIL 8
Solar Eclipse

APRIL 10
2024 State of the State Address

APRIL 18-19
CCAO Board of Directors Retreat

APRIL 24
CCAO Webinar: Broadband

MAY 3
CCAO / CEAO Central District Meeting

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