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July 8, 2024

Last week, Mack Knupp was sworn in as the newest Shelby County Commissioner. Read more about Commissioner Knupp below!

Association and Member News | State and Federal News | Education and Grants | County News | Job Postings

Statehouse Report and Counties Current Archive | Dates to Remember

ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

Back to Top

Mack Knupp sworn in as Shelby County Commissioner

Last Tuesday, Mack Knupp was sworn in as Shelby County Commissioner, filling the seat that had been vacated earlier upon Commissioner Tony Bornhorst's retirement. Commissioner Knupp won the Republican primary for the seat in March and does not have an opponent in the November general election.

Commissioner Knupp is the owner and operator of a family farm, has served as the fiscal officer for Green Township in Shelby County, and has served on the Board of Supervisors for the Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Congratulations Commission Knupp, and welcome to the County Commissioners Association of Ohio!

URGENT: DRC seeking notices of intent to participate in TCAP for upcoming state budget requests

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) administers the Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison (TCAP) grant program through Bureau of Community Sanctions (BCS). This grant provides funding to counties who volunteer and agree to participate in the program and who submit Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) pursuant to R.C. 2929.34 and R.C. 5149.38 that indicate their willingness to participate. In the SFY 2024-2025 biennium (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2025), 63 counties volunteered to participate.

In preparation for the upcoming state operating budget (which will run from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027), DRC needs to know which counties will be participating in the TCAP grant program during SFYs 2026 and 2027 to determine the correct amount of funding to request from the General Assembly to support the TCAP grants.

DRC is respectfully requesting that counties provide an email response from one person authorized to respond on behalf of the county to DRC.BCSgrants@odrc.state.oh.us by Wednesday July 31, 2024.

These responses will be used to create applications in early 2025 through which each county will be required to upload their Memorandum of Understanding. Requests made after this date, may be excluded from consideration. Each email response must include the following information:

- **County:**
- **Name of Primary Contact:**
- **Phone number of Primary Contact:**
- **Email Address of Primary Contact:**
- **FY24/25 T-CAP participation (choose only one):**
  - **{ } YES Felony 5 T-CAP**
  - **{ } YES Felony 5 and Felony 4 TCAP**
  - **{ } NO**

It is ***imperative*** that each county respond by July 31, 2024, as requests made beyond this date may not be included in the budget request presented by DRC. It is the intent of BCS to pursue TCAP grants with all counties that indicate their desire to participate if funding permits.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and response. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Morris at Matthew.Morris@drc.ohio.gov or Jennifer Gentry at Jennifer.Gentry@drc.ohio.gov.

Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit becomes official Fairfield County department

Below reposted from Scioto Post

The Fairfield County Commissioners are delighted to announce that Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit (LFPT) has officially become a county department. This strategic move aims to enhance public transportation services, ensuring more efficient, accessible, and reliable transit options for the residents, visitors, and workforce of Fairfield County.

LFPT has long provided safe and affordable transportation across Fairfield County, particularly excelling in meeting the transportation needs of local employers and their employees. Offering curb-to-curb demand response and six deviated fixed routes, LFPT is an accessible option for individuals with disabilities and serves a variety of community members. This includes young adults looking to save on gas, families experiencing car trouble, and the elderly needing transportation to medical appointments. This comprehensive service supports the local workforce by providing reliable and convenient transit options, helping employees commute efficiently and on time.

Fairfield County Commissioner Steve Davis remarked, “This is a significant milestone for our community. Integrating Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit into our county structure affirms our commitment to providing exceptional public transit services and meeting the transportation needs of our workforce and employers. This change will support economic development and enhance the quality of life in Fairfield County.”

The Fairfield County Commissioners will immediately begin collaborating with the Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit team, including LFPT’s new director, Aaron Kennedy, to enhance the current public transit system and improve the quality and reach of transit services across the region.

“We are excited about the opportunities this transition presents,” said Kennedy. “With the support of Fairfield County Commissioners, we look forward to expanding our services, improving our infrastructure, and meeting the growing transportation needs in our community.”

This integration marks a new chapter for public transportation in Fairfield County, promising improved services and greater accessibility for all residents.

Traffic enforcement camera annual report due this month

Any county that operated or contracted with another party to operate any traffic enforcement cameras during the previous state fiscal year (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024) is required a file a report with the Department of Taxation no later than July 31. This report is required by R.C. 5747.502 and must contain the location of traffic enforcement cameras and the civil fines collected from the cameras in school zones and non-school zones.

A copy of the report can be accessed here. If you have questions concerning the reporting requirement, please contact the Ohio Department of Taxation, Revenue Accounting Division at RevenueAccounting@tax.state.oh.us or call (614) 466-7150.

Dam in Carroll County to be removed under H2Ohio Rivers Program award

As part of the H2Ohio Rivers program, created in the state operating budget to expand the H2Ohio program to waterways across the state, the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District received a grant last week to remove a dam at Riley Run, a tributary of Yellow Creek, in Carroll County.

The dam has caused water quality downstream to degrade and has become an impediment to fish migration and movement. The project will take place next year and is expected to cost $775,000, which will be fully covered by the grant.

You can learn more about the award here, and more about the H2Ohio Rivers program here.

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner:

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

Back to Top

Akron Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub receive $51 million from federal government

Last week, the Biden Administration announced that the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub located in Akron will receive $51 million through the CHIPS Act. Akron is one of 31 regional innovation hubs that were designated in October and one of 12 hubs to receive funding from the awards made last week.

The $51 million will support seven projects, including workforce development training, development and scaling up for new technology, and commercializing the recycling of end-of-life tires. The central focus of the Akron hub is to accelerate sustainable polymer manufacturing and commercialization due to the "severe climate and enviromental impacts" the result from the use of polymers derived from fossil fuels.

The Greater Akron Chamber is serving as the lead agency for the hub.

Comment period on state Fire Code open through July 25

The Division of the State Fire Marshal (SFM), part of the Ohio Department of Commerce, is in the process of reviewing and updating all chapters of the Ohio Fire Code. The State Fire Marshal is accepting comments on the draft proposed rules until the end of the day on Thursday, July 27.

The draft code is available here. The division has also made available a table summarizing significant changes, accessible here.

If you have any questions about the rule update process and/or the submission of a comment, please contact OhioFireCode@com.ohio.gov or call the SFM’s Code Enforcement Bureau at 614-728-5460.

Auditor of State issues bulletin on fraud, theft in office, and misuse/misappropriation of public funds training and reporting

Auditor of State Keith Faber recently issued Bulletin 2024-005, which focuses on the requirements to report fraud, theft in office, and misuse or misappropriation of public money. The bulletin comes after the key Revised Code section pertaining to these issues, R.C. 4113.52, was amended by the state operating budget and by Senate Bill 91.

Additionally, the Auditor of State is required to develop training material detailing Ohio’s fraud-reporting system and the means of reporting fraud, waste, and abuse and required to be viewed by every employee and elected official of political subdivisions (along with state agencies and the General Assembly).

Elected officials and employees of counties are required to compete the training no later than September 28, 2024. The training can be found here. Please ensure that you and all county employees complete this training within the 90-day window.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in the Bulletin, please contact the AOS’s Special Investigations Unit at (800) 282-0370

Auditor of State opens nominations for Taxpayer Hero Awards

Auditor of State Keith Faber announced last week that nominations for Taxpayer Hero Awards are open. The award was created to acknowledge state and local government officials who demonstrate initiative with innovative ideas to cut costs, increase efficiency, protect tax dollars, and uphold the integrity of government in Ohio.

Nominations can be submitted by anyone in the state and will be reviewed and approved by the Auditor or a designee. Once a nomination is approved, the person will be contacted and formally presented with a certificate and an award.

Nominations can be submitted here.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

Back to Top

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

CCAO, DCY to hold child welfare placement webinar

On Thursday, July 25, CCAO and Department of Children and Youth (DCY) Director Kara Wente will provide an update on the department’s transition and strategic goals. The director will focus on updates regarding Ohio’s child welfare placement challenges, including information on the department’s Children Services Placement Crisis Working Group.

Members will have the opportunity to ask questions.

House Bill 33, the state operating budget, created DCY as a new cabinet level agency. DCY operates programs and services previously housed at six other cabinet agencies and serve children prenatal to age 21.

Director Wente has spent her career advocating for children. She has served as the Director of the Governor’s Children’s Initiative since January 2023 and was previously the Chief Operating Officer for Future Ready Columbus. With more than 20 years in dedicated state service, Wente has extensive experience in serving the most vulnerable children and families in Ohio.

She used data as an accountability tool for systemic change during her time as the Assistant Director of Health and Human Services at the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services and led several large-scale system and policy changes as Deputy Director at the Office of Family Assistance.

You can register for the webinar here. If you are unable to register with this link, please contact Nedra Benson, CCAO administrative professional, at nbenson@ccao.org or call 614-221-5627, and provide her with your email address.

Registration for SPBR conference open until July 31

Registration is now open for the State Personnel Board of Review (SPBR) conference and will continue through the month of July.

The conference, to be held on August 22, is intended for those new to the field of managing exempt and non-exempt employees in the classified civil service. This SPBR Conference is also for new or current managers, union officials, attorneys, staff, human resource professionals, elected officeholders, and those who are or will be working in positions where they need to know how Ohio’s laws and court decisions are evolving to impact public varied employment issues and questions.

Registration costs $175 and can be completed here. Rooms are available at the Marriott Columbus Northwest as well (SPBR requests that you abstain from booking hotel rooms until your registration for the event is confirmed).

The session topics include the following:

- How Will AI Impact Tomorrow's Workforce?
- Best Practices and Challenges to Implementing R.C. 124.34 Orders
- Whose Side is HR On? Employer vs Employee Interests
- Social Media: Work or Personal Expression?
- Public Records: Challenges and Solutions
- Bridging the Generational Divide: Building a Cohesive Workplace Culture

An application for 5.5 continuing legal education hours is pending.

COUNTY NEWS

Back to Top

Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One story from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted, and on occasion other stories may be highlighted as well.

Northwest District

Lucas County commissioners approve levy for area office on aging

Toledo Blade, July 2, 2024

Lucas County commissioners on Tuesday approved a resolution in support of the renewal of the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio’s 0.75-mill levy and additional 0.25 mills for five years that will be on the ballot in November.

Tom Susor, chairman of the Lucas County Citizen Levy Review Committee, said the levy is needed because of an increase of seniors in the community in need of services.

“The senior population is growing, and the money doesn’t go as far anymore. Seniors are living longer and need more help,” he said.

The levy would generate over $8 million annually if passed.

“There’s 98,000 seniors in Lucas County, the largest number of seniors ever in Lucas County,” Justin Moor, president and CEO of the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio, said after the meeting. “The population will continue to grow over the course of the levy.”

Northeast District

New program launch to help disabled people during police stops

Mahoning Matters, June 30, 2024

The Mahoning County Prosecutor’s Office announced the launch of a new program that will aid people with disabilities in encounters with the police.

The prosecutor’s office stated that the Blue Envelope Program, which aims to enhance better communication between police and people with disabilities if they ever get pulled over on the road. It is set to begin on Monday.

The program will use a blue envelope that will contain the identification and specific special needs of the passenger. It will also tell police know-hows such as the passenger being sensitive to bright lights or needing extra time to formulate responses.

“We recognized a critical need for a tool that helps bridge the communication gap between individuals with autism or other special needs and first responders,” Mahoning County Prosecutor Gina DeGenova said. “The Blue Envelope Programis a proactive step towards creating safer and more supportive communities for everyone.”

It is specifically designed for community members with a condition or disability such as autism, anxiety, physical disability, or other conditions that might require additional accommodations or awareness during an interaction with law enforcement.

Central District

As FEMA assistance draws to a close, tornado recovery continues in Logan County

WYSO, July 1, 2024

More than three months after a series of tornadoes tore through Ohio, the deadline for victims to apply for federal assistance is closing.

So far, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has approved more than $3 million in grants for people across 11 Ohio counties: Auglaize, Crawford, Darke, Delaware, Hancock, Licking, Logan, Mercer, Miami, Richland and Union.

Tornadoes wreaked havoc in parts of those counties in March. In Logan County, about 70 miles northwest of Columbus, a twister struck a mobile home community near Indian Lake, killed three people, destroyed hundreds of homes and damaged thousands more. The area is still recovering.

“We have several families that are still living in hotels,” said Mike Yoder, president of the county’s commissioners. “And we have many that have gotten new places to live on a temporary basis.”

“I think the biggest challenge remaining is simply that of making sure these folks find a good place to live and making sure that we keep them going.”

Southwest District

Hamilton County wants to move some offices out of downtown to Bond Hill

WCPO, July 2, 2024

Hamilton County is exploring the move of several of its offices out of downtown and into the Mercy Health building in Bond Hill.

The plan, which has to be approved by county commissioners, would include moving the Hamilton County Job & Family Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, Public Health, Environmental Services, the Office of Addiction Response and the Veterans Service Commission to the building off the Norwood Lateral at Reading Road.

Hamilton County Administrator Jeff Aluotto presented the property acquisition plan to the board of commissioners at a Tuesday meeting. While still preliminary, Aluotto said the plan would help relieve the county of high operating costs and shed large deferred maintenance and future capital needs.

"We have over $100 million over the next 20 years that we have to put into our buildings," he said.

The move would affect around 1,400 county employees across the six departments, though that would be limited to between 500 and 600 employees on any given day.

Southeast District

Jefferson County commissioners study ARPA spending plan

Times Leader, July 1, 2024

With the expiration date for remaining ARPA funds fast approaching, the Jefferson County commissioners said Thursday it’s time to get an accounting of how much they still have to spend.

They’ll do that in a work session after Wednesday’s meeting.

“We want to spend every dime of it, but we have to know exactly how much is available,” Commissioner Eric Timmons said, adding what they ultimately do with it “depends on how much is left.”

All ARPA funds must be encumbered by Dec. 31, but Auditor E.J. Conn said the projects themselves don’t have to be done for a year after that.

During this week’s meeting commissioners were told there could be around $500,000 still to be spent on qualifying projects, though that number can go up or down.

What those projects will be remains to be seen.

“The contracts need to be signed by the end of this year,” Commissioner Tony Morelli said. “I have some ideas — I want to use it for brick-and-mortar projects, if possible. There are other options also.”

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

Back to Top

JULY 12 - 16
NACo Annual Conference

JULY 19
County Classic Golf Outing

JULY 26
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 16
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 21 - 23
CCAO Summer Symposium - Hocking Hills

AUGUST 23
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

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