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February 3, 2025

Last week, CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, CCAO Assistant Director John Leutz, CORSA Membership Services Manager Ali Redmond (not pictured), and CCAO President and Clermont County Commissioner visited Morrow County. The Morrow County Commissioners gave the visitors a tour of the county's new health department building.

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Social Security Administration releases FAQs on Social Security Fairness Act

The Social Security Administration released Frequently Asked Questions on its website regarding the implementation of the Social Security Fairness Act. The Act, signed into law last month by President Biden, ends the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) in Social Security.

December 2023 is the last month that WEP and GPO will apply. This means that those rules no longer apply to benefits payable for January 2024 and later.

The webpage states: “SSA is finalizing its plan to implement the Act while limiting negative effects on our regular workloads and services to the public. We cannot yet provide an estimated timeframe for when we will adjust a person's past or future benefits, but we will continue to provide updates on this webpage. We thank the public for its patience.”

To view the FAQs, click here.

CCAO will continue to update members as we receive additional updates.

Outgoing Member Mentorship Videos Available on CCAO Website

CCAO Communications Coordinator Jessica Newbacher and Licking County Commissioner & CCAO Board Member Tim Bubb spent much of 2024 capturing interviews from some of our outgoing members. These videos are a valuable resource for our members as well as anyone who may be interested in running for an elected county position in the future. Outgoing members shared their experiences in office as well as their professional backgrounds and advice for future county commissioners, executives and council members.

Three interviews are currently live on the CCAO website. Sign in to your account and click "County Government Toolkit" at the top menu to watch them, and stay tuned for more videos!

Last week for early bird registration pricing for New Member Training

We look forward to seeing you at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown for New Member Training on February 24-26, 2025! Early Bird registration pricing ends February 8th (this Saturday).

You can register for the training on the event page, as is the event agenda..

If you have questions regarding the training, please contact Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org.

Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck departs

On January 31, CCAO said goodbye to Senior Policy Analyst Jon Honeck. Jon started with CCAO in 2017 and took the lead on taxation, government finance, and infrastructure issues, as well as a wide variety of other important issues to the Association. Jon was invaluable for counties as he aided members navigate the rules and regulations around CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act funding in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past five years, Jon has been a consummate professional, a great teammate, and a fantastic boss to CCAO interns.

While CCAO is sad to see Jon go, he won't be leaving the county world entirely. Today is his first day as the Executive Director for the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors Association, one of CCAO's human services allies.

Thank you for all you've done for counties thus far, and CCAO looks forward to continuing to work with you in the future, Jon!

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

Anthem

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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DCY to host Q&A session on child care public-private partnership program

Next Tuesday, the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) will host a Q&A session about its Early Care and Education Business Partnership program. The link to join the event is here, but it will not become live until the event starts at 1:00 p.m. on February 11.

In this partnership, businesses, government or non-profit entities, and DCY support the cost of increasing child care access to eligible families. This opportunity seeks to embrace creative ways for DCY to partner with businesses striving to address workforce issues, and support employees facing challenges accessing affordable, reliable child care. Examples of models include providing drop in child care options, or increasing non-traditional work hour care options.

When families do not have sufficient child care options, the ability to join the workforce is impacted, thereby shrinking the available pool of potential employees. Without flexible, reliable and affordable child care, parents may struggle to keep up with work, which can lead to lost productivity. This creates extra costs for everyone. The partnership aims to increase employee attendance, improve work performance, lower turnover rates, provide better child care options, and help child care centers meet parents and the workforce where they are.

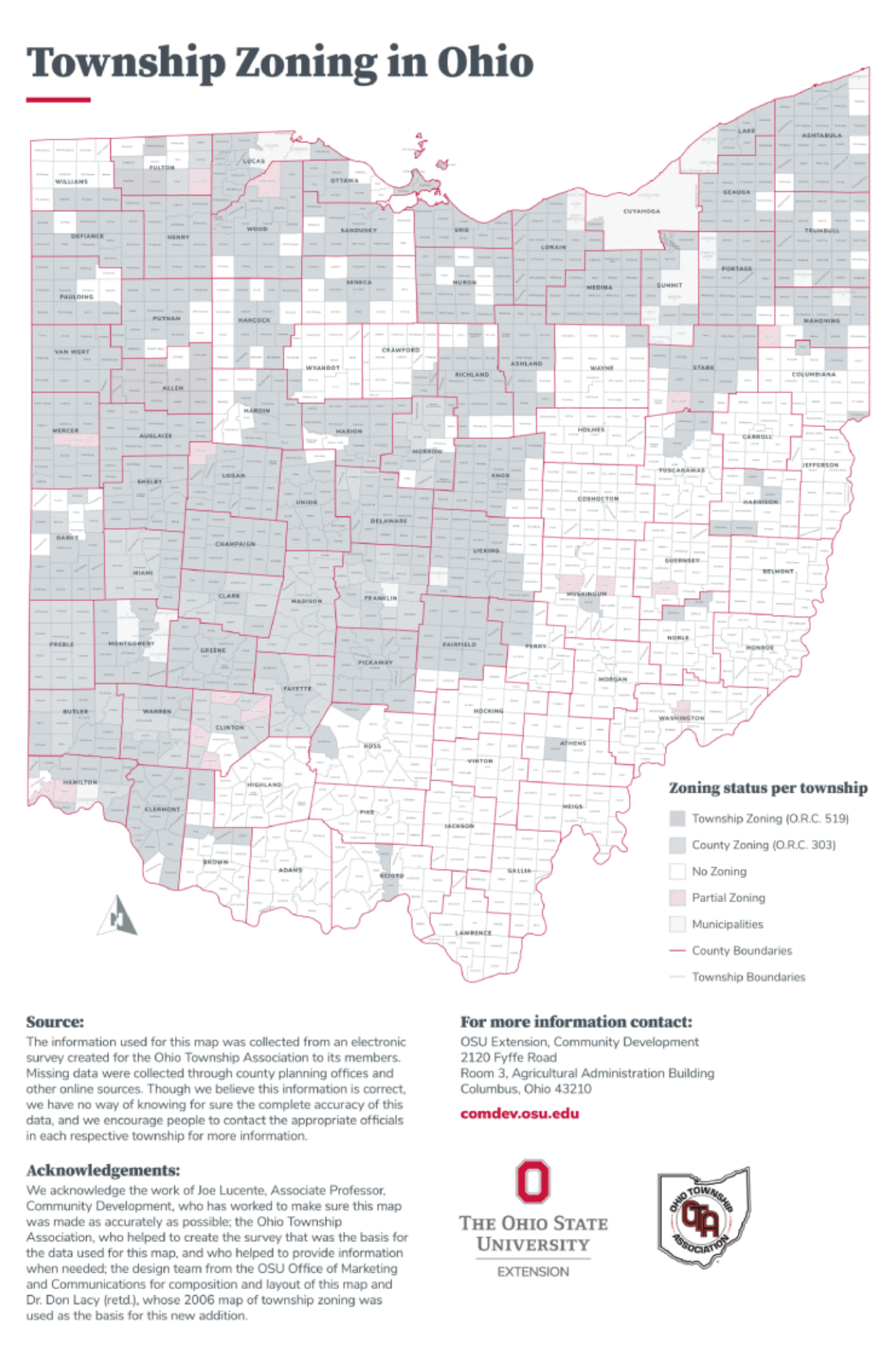
The application and required budget information are available on DCY's website. It is encouraged that you review the documents before the Q&A session. Questions can be submitted in advance to jill.schuler@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov.

If you would like to sign up to receive updates on this and other programs directly from DCY, you may do so by completing this form.

OSU Extension, OTA release updated township zoning

The Ohio State University's Office of Extension, in partnership with the Ohio Township Association, recently released a township zoning map, an updated version of a 2006 map showing which townships across the state have zoning regulations in place. The 2025 edition of the map, available here and presented below, includes which townships have zoning regulations in place via county zoning resolutions and which have partial zoning regulations.

If you have any comments on the map or believe there are errors, please contact the Office of Community Development within OSU Extension.


Township Zoning in Ohio
Zoning status per township
Township Zoning (O.R.C. 519)
County Zoning (O.R.C. 303)
No Zoning
Partial Zoning
Municipalities
County Boundaries
Township Boundaries
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION
OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

Source:
The information used for this map was collected from an electronic survey created for the Ohio Township Association to its members. Missing data were collected through county planning offices and other online sources. Though we believe this information is correct, we have no way of knowing for sure the complete accuracy of this data, and we encourage people to contact the appropriate officials in each respective township for more information.

For more information contact:
OSU Extension, Community Development
2120 Fyffe Road
Room 3, Agricultural Administration Building
Columbus, Ohio 43210
comdev.osu.edu

Acknowledgements:
We acknowledge the work of Joe Lucente, Associate Professor, Community Development, who has worked to make sure this map was made as accurately as possible; the Ohio Township Association, who helped to create the survey that was the basis for the data used for this map, and who helped to provide information when needed; the design team from the OSU Office of Marketing and Communications for composition and layout of this map and Dr. Don Lacy (retd.), whose 2006 map of township zoning was used as the basis for this new addition.

Advanced registration open for NACo's 2025 Legislative Conference

The NACo Legislative Conference, which will be held from March 1 to 4, is open for Advanced Registration through February 14.

Advanced Registration for NACo member counties is $590 and for non-member counties is $830. These prices will increase to $705 and $980, respectively, after February 14.

The four-day event will feature meetings by NACo's policy steering committees which will consider resolutions and platform changes to shape NACo's federal advocacy priorities. Attendees will also have the opportunity to network with counterparts across the country, hear from subject matter experts, and visit with their federal delegations.

You can register, view the event schedule, and more on NACo's website.

For questions or assistance with registration, contact NACo via email at nacomeetings@naco.org or phone at 202.942.4292. If reaching out via email, please include “Leg Conference 2025” in the subject line.

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.

Development holding webinar on Brownfield Remediation Program next week

On February 12 (next Wednesday), the Department of Development will host a webinar to discuss the second award period for the Brownfield Remediation Program. The webinar will discuss program updates, eligibility requirements, and the application process. It will also feature time for a Q&A with program staff.

A total of $50 million is available in the second award period. Unlike the first period, there is no set-aside for counties; this period is entirely first-come, first-served. The application window will open on February 19.

You can register for the webinar here. The guidelines for the second award period are available here.

Tobacco control, Lake Erie forestry grants available

CCAO has posted two new grant opportunities on our website!

The Local Tobacco Prevention and Control Grant is open to local public health agencies and non-profits. It is intended to help fund projects that prevent young people from using tobacco and nicotine products, help users quit, and facilitate other tobacco use cessation efforts. A total of $3.9 million is available, and applications close on February 24.

The second opportunity, the Lake Erie Forestry Assistance Grant, is open to soil and water conservation districts in the Lake Erie watershed. It is intended to facilitate training and support between SWCDs and landowners on managing woodland resources. Awards are available for up to $20,000 each. Applications close on February 28.

DRC Jail Funding Application Question and Answer Webinar Recording Available

House Bill 2, passed by the 135th General Assembly and signed by Governor DeWine, created capital appropriations for local county jails. The bill authorizes the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) to adopt guidelines to accept and review applications, require counties to justify the need for the capital project, and comply with timelines for submitting documentation for the project. The application period opened on December 9, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. and will close at 8:00 a.m. on March 3, 2025.

CCAO and DRC held a webinar on January 31 to allow counties an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the application progress. A recording of the webinar is available on CCAO's Webinars page.

COUNTY NEWS

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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

In wake of ransomware attack, Wood County IT director resigns, county hires consultant

BG Independent, January 18, 2025

The fallout from the ransomware attack on Wood County government has resulted in the head of the county’s IT department tendering his resignation.

A letter sent out to county department heads on Thursday stated that IT Director Ben Hendricks was stepping down as of Feb. 7. He had been head of the county information technology department for 18 years.

The letter, sent out by Wood County Administrator Carri Stanley, explained that the county commissioners have hired Glass City IT, a consulting company, to provide services as a part-time chief information officer. The company has been working to “get themselves up to speed on our IT system,” the letter stated.

The chief information officer role will be filled by Casey Timiney, of Glass City IT.

While the county commissioners have added outside tech support, the county’s in-house IT team will remain intact, with Dan Whiting agreeing to serve as interim IT director. The county expects Whiting and five others on the tech staff will “not miss a beat in taking care of your IT needs. The outside assistance for the IT department is meant to complement the staff, not replace it,” the letter said.

County officials will begin the search for a new IT director soon, Stanley said.

The letter went on to thank county employees for working to get through the ransomware issue.

“We appreciate the patience, dedication, and endurance you and your staff have all shown during this very trying time,” the letter stated. “Your cooperation has been monumental in getting the county offices through a most difficult six weeks. We assure you that aggressive steps are being taken to ensure that the most appropriate technology, procedures, and systems are being put in place to protect the future security of our IT system.”

On Friday afternoon, Stanley said the county commissioners are looking at the creation of the chief information officer position to be permanent.

Northeast District

Commissioners closer to budget approval

Star Beacon, January 29, 2025

The Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners is one step closer to a 2025 budget after a Tuesday morning work session.

Budget requests from department heads came in around $3.5 million more than last year, and Ashtabula County Administrator Janet Discher has been working to put a budget together.

After an earlier budget work session, Discher said she would return to the drawing board and evaluate overtime requests and compare to actual overtime spending, especially in the largest county department, the Ashtabula County Sheriff’s Office.

Discher has suggested a $32,677,000 budget, with $2.1 million coming from the county’s $5.5 million carryover from last year. She said the carryover can be used this time, but it is important to understand a budget can’t run with $2.5 million increases annually.

The commissioners agreed with the idea of using the carryover money for this budget. Discher and several commissioners said department heads work hard to keep costs under control, but the driving forces increasing the budget was a 10% increase in insurance costs, which the commissioners absorbed, and an average of five percent increase in wages for most workers.

All requests for new hiring were denied during the budget process. The commissioners said they agreed to the five percent raises because the county wasn’t competitive with other businesses and governmental agencies.

Discher suggested the commissioners review the budget in June and see how revenue is holding up at the half year point. She said sales tax was down 13% for January, but time is needed to evaluate all revenues.

“If we need to add $2.1 million on [through the carryover], I am okay with that,” Ashtabula County Commissioner Casey Kozlowski said.

Central District

Funding tightens for Knox County Senior Levy

Knox Pages, February 1, 2025

Agencies applying for 2025 Knox County Senior Levy funding must be more specific.

The senior levy funds organizations serving Knox County residents 60 and older. The levy intends to provide services and programming that help keep people independent in their respective setting.

The Senior Levy Advisory Board vets applications and makes recommendations to the commissioners.

The levy is anticipated to generate just over $1 million this year. Nine agencies applied for funding.

“Years ago when they were bringing in big money like that there were only three or four agencies applying, and it was easier to distribute the money,” Board Coordinator Julie Miller told the Knox County commissioners on Tuesday.

“Now it’s becoming a little bit of a nightmare, honestly, because we have great organizations doing great work, and we’ve got to make the recommendations of where we think funding ought to go.”

Southwest District

Commissioners talk workforce development, student career readiness

Wilmington News Journal, January 30, 2025

The Clinton County Commissioners’ meeting on Wednesday focused on workforce development and student career readiness, with discussions on the Blanchester Student Success Project (BSSP) and the Technical Needs Survey.

Presenting at the meeting were Ruth Brindle, workforce & data specialist for the Clinton County Port Authority, Connor Wyatt, workforce development director for Clinton County, and Emily Ledford, director of student services for Blanchester Schools.

Wyatt opened the discussion with a quarterly update, emphasizing the importance of workforce initiatives.

“I’m really excited for this quarterly update so I can share what I’m doing and go more in-depth about some of the things we talked about in our last meeting,” Wyatt said. “There are two main projects that I’d like to focus on today: the Blanchester Student Success Project and an update on the technical needs survey and where we are with that.”

Wyatt detailed the Blanchester Student Success Project (BSSP), a four-year grant-funded initiative through the Clinton County Foundation aimed at helping students explore career pathways. The program is structured across multiple grade levels, allowing students to identify interests, develop aptitudes, and engage with local businesses and industries.

As outlined in the project roadmap, students begin engagement in eighth grade, where they complete an “entry ticket” assessment to gauge how many students are unsure about their post-high school plans.

“What we’re looking for is how many students enter not knowing what they want to do after high school graduation, and then we take an exit ticket in the 12th grade to see where that lies,” Wyatt explained.

Southeast District

Commissioners Hear From Local Healthcare Provider

WHIZ, January 27, 2025

The Muskingum County Commissioners deal with a wide gamut of concerns that impact residents in the county.

Rambo Memorial Health Executive Director Shannon Bell updated the commissioners with some changes they expect to implement in respiratory care through the coming months.

“I wanted to update the commissioners on what we are looking at for 2025,” Bell said. “We had our levy pass in 2024. We’re so grateful to the voters for that. And we just wanted to let the commissioners know what we’re looking at, moving forward.”

One of the new ventures that Rambo is looking to take is to expand their oxygen program to fully cover the financially qualified patient’s copay for oxygen.

“So moving forward for 2025, we are looking to do a new program, which is going into our patients’ houses that have COPD,” Bell said. “And we want to help people not go back to the hospital. 90 percent of the time with COPD, it’s things in your own home that are causing you to go back to the hospital or to have an exacerbation of your COPD. Our goal is to help you fix those problems.”

During the meeting, Commissioner Drake Prouty suggested that Rambo should reach out to the local emergency management agencies to strategize a plan of action for reaching out to oxygen dependent patients during power outages.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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FEBRUARY 7
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

FEBRUARY 17
Presidents Day

FEBRUARY 24 - 27
CCAO New Member Training
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (February 25)

FEBRUARY 28
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

MARCH 1 - MARCH 4
NACo Legislative Conference (Washington D.C.)

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