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March 31, 2025

April is National County Government Month! The month recognizes the essential role counties play in serving communities, fostering innovation, and improving the quality of life for residents.

The Clermont County Commissioners recently issued a proclamation in recognition of National County Government Month and presented the proclamation to Ursula Miller, Clermont County's Communications Coordinator.

Photo courtesy of Clermont County

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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CABs about public records, engineer contracting published

CCAO has published two County Advisory Bulletins (CABs) regarding provisions of bills that passed in December and will take effect next week.

First, CAB 2025-04 Public Records Law Changes concerns modifications to public records law primarily contained in House Bill 265 of the 135th General Assembly. The changes allow designed public service workers (by and large, public safety workers) to request redaction of public records that include their work schedule and address. Journalists are still permitted to obtain these records if the disclosure is in the public interest. The bill also allows entities that process public records requests to deny requests from vexatious litigators.

Second, CAB 2025-05 County Engineer Contracting concerns provisions in House Bill 315 of the 135th General Assembly that mirror House Bill 430 of the same General Assembly. The provisions allow boards of county commissioners to contract with another elected county engineer if the board's county engineer position is vacant. The contracted engineer is paid the full statutory salary that the engineer in the contracting county would be entitled to, prorated for the duration of the contract.

The Policy Team expects to publish additional CABs in the next two weeks regarding virtual meeting authority, village dissolution, changes to group homes, and the Paystub Protection Act.

You can view the full CAB archive on our website.

Celebrate National County Government Month – April 2025! 🎉

April is here, and that means it's time to celebrate **National County Government Month (NCGM)**! CCAO is excited to recognize the vital role counties play in serving and strengthening communities across Ohio.

To make this year's celebration impactful, we're inviting you to participate in two key ways:

Educate Your Constituents on Issue 2
This May, Ohio voters will decide on **Issue 2**, the renewal of the Ohio Public Works Program that funds critical infrastructure projects—keeping our roads, bridges, and communities strong and connected. CCAO's Board of Directors has officially endorsed Issue 2, and we encourage you to help inform your residents about its importance.

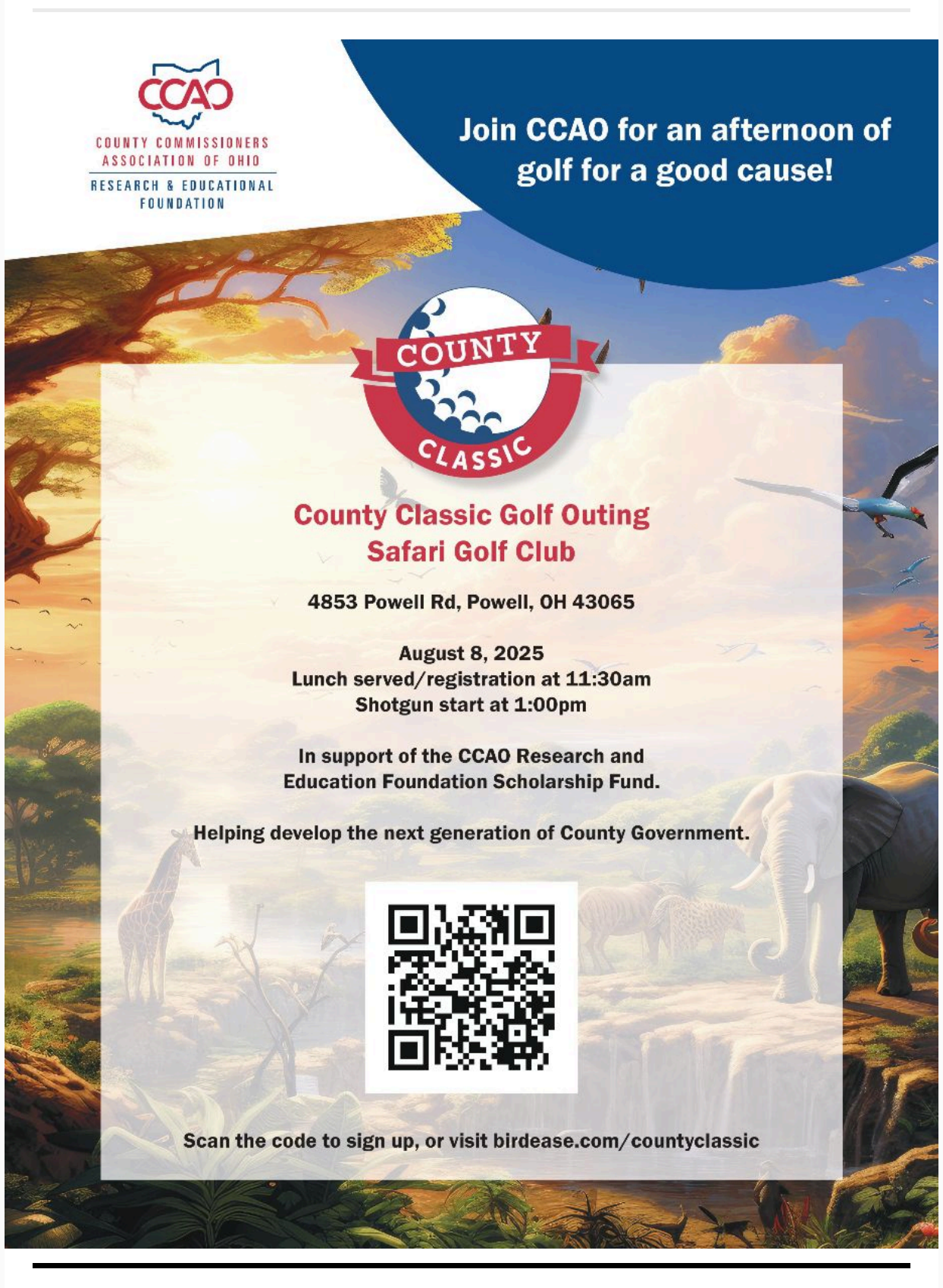
Last week, your county received an Issue 2 Toolkit with a sample resolution and other resources that are designed to educate your constituents on the fact that they May election is right around the corner and the positive impact that Issue 2 has in all 88 counties. Additionally, CCAO will have an allotment of Issue 2 yard signs available. Please reach out to CCAO's Karla Dunbar if you would like some for your county.

Use CCAO's New Educational Videos
We're excited to share two brand-new, engaging videos designed to help showcase the essential role of county government:

- **Video 1**: Highlights how counties impact residents' daily lives.
- **Video 2**: Features the work of County Commissioners, Executives, and Council members.

Each CCAO member will receive a flash drive with both videos, perfect for presentations to schools, civic groups, and local organizations. These videos pair perfectly with last year's *Ohio Counties Matter* publication. Need extra copies of Ohio Counties Matter or the videos? Reach out to Steve Caraway at scaraway@ccao.org.

Let's make National County Government Month a time to educate, inspire, and celebrate the hard work counties do every day! Thank you for your dedication to Ohio's counties and communities.


CCAO
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Join CCAO for an afternoon of golf for a good cause!

COUNTY CLASSIC

County Classic Golf Outing
Safari Golf Club

4853 Powell Rd, Powell, OH 43065

August 8, 2025
Lunch served/registration at 11:30am
Shotgun start at 1:00pm

In support of the CCAO Research and Education Foundation Scholarship Fund.

Helping develop the next generation of County Government.

Scan the code to sign up, or visit birdease.com/countyclassic

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A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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US Treasury intends to enhance review of ARPA obligation deadline

The US Department of Treasury recently announced that it intends to enhance compliance checks on the obligation data submitted by counties as part of its efforts to ensure taxpayer funds are used in accordance with program requirements. As a reminder, all ARPA funds were required to be obligated by December 31, 2024. Treasury intends to recoup funds obligated or expended impermissibly and to recapture funds that were not obligated by the deadline. Counties that are deemed noncompliant with the obligation deadline will receive "Information Document Requests."

Treasury also will begin sending "Financial Instructions to Return Unobligated Funds" to counties that did not fully obligate their award funds by the Dec. 31, 2025 deadline, based on the latest data available to Treasury. These instructions will:

1. Inform the county how much it owes, based on its most recently submitted report.
2. Provide a date by which funds must be repaid.
3. Require recipients to use Pay.gov to process the repayments.

If a county does not repay amounts owed by the specified date, Treasury will establish a debt and follow standard debt collection policy and procedures in coordination with the Bureau of the Fiscal Service. Interest and penalties will accrue once the debt is established.

If you have issues with the Treasury portal or has received a noncompliance email, but believe you are in compliance, please share your county name and Treasury case number with Research Analyst Nick Ciolli and he will help you get in contact with NACo to resolve the issue.

Attorney General issues opinion on forfeited property titling

Last week, Attorney General Dave Yost issued Attorney General Opinion 2025-005. The opinion arose from a request by the Highland County Prosecutor and concerns whether property seized by a county law enforcement agency and forfeited must be titled to the board of county commissioners of the county in which it was forfeited.

The opinion finds that when property is forfeited pursuant to R.C. Chapter 2981, it must be titled to the board of county commissioners before it can be sold via auction, but, depending on the property type and the specifics of the court order, the law enforcement agency may possess and use the property.

Finally, the board must follow the procedures in R.C. 2981.11 to 2981.13 and the court's forfeiture order in properly disposing of the forfeited property.

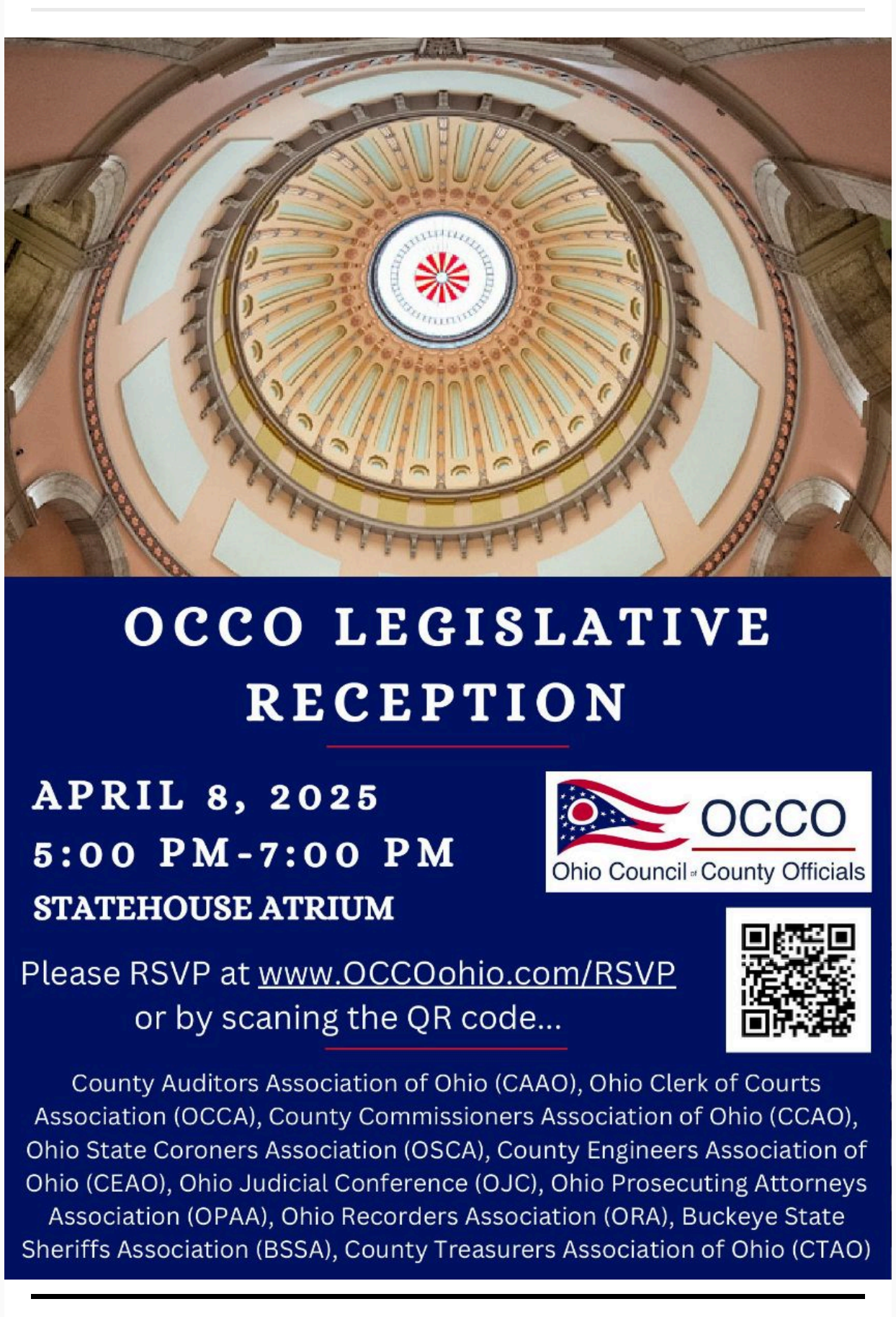
President Trump issues executive order on elections, Ohio implications unclear

Last week, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections." According to a statement issued by Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Ohio has already implemented many components of the order and is reviewing the other elements.

An overview of the provisions of the order is below, with comments on applicability to Ohio where appropriate:

- Requires proof of US citizenship on the federal voter registration form.
  - This form is maintained by a federal agency, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC).
- Requires proof of US citizenship for military and overseas registering to vote.
- Requires the US Secretary of Homeland Security and the US Secretary of State to ensure that state and local officials can freely access federal databases containing citizenship and immigration information.
  - According to Ohio Secretary of State LaRose, this access has been sought by his office for some time.
- Encourages the US Department of Justice to sue states that allow mail ballots postmarked on or before election day to be counted if received after election day.
  - Ohio law (R.C. 3509.05) requires mail ballots postmarked prior to election day and received within four days after the election to be tabulated.
- Requires the Department of Government Efficiency and the Department of Homeland Security to review voter registration files and list maintenance activities.
- Requires the Department of Homeland Security to provide the Department of Justice with information on any non-citizens who have indicated they registered or voted in any election.
- Requires the EAC to create new certification standards and to decertify voting systems that use ballots where the votes are contained within a barcode or quick-response code.
  - Ohio law (R.C. 3506.05) requires counties to only use voting machines and systems that are certified by the EAC. If the EAC changes standards, counties may have to acquire new machines and systems.
- Directs the US Attorney General to enter into information-sharing agreements with state election officials to identify cases of election fraud or other election law violations.
- Requires the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure non-citizens are not involved in the administration of federal elections.
- Instructs the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate with the EAC to review and report on the security of electronic systems used for voter registration and voting processes.
- Instructs the Department of Justice, in consultation with the US Department of Treasury, to prioritize enforcement of illegal election contributions by non-citizens and lobbying by any organizations that have received federal funding.

CCAO will share details on how the state will implement the provisions of the order with members as they become available.


OCCO LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

APRIL 8, 2025
5:00 PM-7:00 PM
STATEHOUSE ATRIUM

OCCO
Ohio Council of County Officials

Please RSVP at www.OCCOohio.com/RSVP
or by scaning the QR code...

County Auditors Association of Ohio (CAAO), Ohio Clerk of Courts Association (OCCA), County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO), Ohio State Coroners Association (OSCA), County Engineers Association of Ohio (CEAO), Ohio Judicial Conference (OJC), Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA), Ohio Recorders Association (ORA), Buckeye State Sheriffs Association (BSSA), County Treasurers Association of Ohio (CTAO)

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.

Ohio Realtors Association and Greater Ohio Policy Center release Ohio Housing Toolkit

Housing continues to be a growing issue for our membership and CCAO is always looking for areas of partnership in this area. Over the last couple of months, we have been working with the Ohio Realtors Association and others on regional housing forums. This week, CCAO was happy to support the launch of *Housing Ohio: Tools for Development* by the Ohio Realtors Association and Greater Ohio Policy Center.

This toolkit is designed to promote new housing production and infill development in Ohio by providing three key tools to local governments:

- **A la carte Zoning Adjustments** – Actionable recommendations for zoning code adjustments that eliminate barriers to infill housing and encourage new development. These changes are simple enough to be implemented by city staff without requiring outside consultants.
- **Free Building Plans** – Two pre-designed building plans (a single-family home and a duplex) with multiple variations are available free of charge. These plans help reduce soft costs, such as architectural fees, and can be incorporated into pre-approved plans programs to streamline permitting.
- **Pre-Approved Plans Program Guide** – A detailed roadmap for municipalities to establish a pre-approved plans program, enabling expedited permitting and lowering development barriers in their communities.

The Ohio Realtors Association will be hosting a webinar on Tuesday to go through the toolkit.

OneOhio Impact Academy to host webinar on sustaining capacity

Sustainability is a critical challenge for organizations working to create lasting change. The next OneOhio Impact Academy event, on April 2, 2025, will host experts who will introduce the Sustainability Framework designed to help organizations strengthen their capacity to combat addiction and save lives.

This interactive session will explore the eight key domains that influence program sustainability, providing valuable insights on how organizations can enhance their long-term impact. Attendees will also learn how to leverage the Program Sustainability Assessment Tool (PSAT), a free resource that helps organizations evaluate their programs and identify areas for improvement.

This session is ideal for past and future OneOhio grant applicants and stakeholders involved in addiction recovery, including:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Behavioral and mental health associations
- Government agencies
- Service providers
- Other related organizations

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

Commissioners open tech service bids

Advertiser Tribune, March 28, 2025

Seneca County Commissioners heard three bids for technology services for the county Thursday. The company that receives the bid will be replacing Buckeye IT, which will no longer serve the county as of June 1.

The bids ranged from $25,445 to $46,433. Tiffin city administrator Nick Dutro also attended, reporting that each proposal would be thoroughly reviewed by city and county representatives before making a final decision on a new provider by May 1.

"This is just another example of how we all work together," Dutro said. "I think we can do a lot more together to move our community forward than we can ever do by having three siloed communities. Seneca County has the opportunity to do things together."

In other news, Commissioner Tony Paradiso advised he and the county health commissioner, Julie Richards, had recently made a trip to Columbus to speak in favor of senate bill 147, an Ohio bill sponsored by Senator Bill Reineke dealing with joint solid waste districts. A similar bill, known as Ohio senate bill 119, was introduced in a previous general assembly but did not make it out of the Ohio House of Representatives.

County administrator Barb Patterson later shared she had recently attended a meeting discussing county property insurance.

"We were told that there was going to be a 10% - 12% increase in premiums," Patterson said. She had planned for a 6% increase and would later be asking the board to allocate more money for insurance.

Northeast District

New Ashland County airport terminal to be 'destination' for aviation training

Ashland Source, March 25, 2025

Construction on a new terminal at the Ashland County Airport officially launched Monday with a ceremonial groundbreaking event.

The nearly $2 million project is expected to conclude in November, said Ashland County commissioner Mike Welch.

Once finished, the approximately 4,000 square-foot facility will feature a flight school, a pilot lounge, a community room, a bathroom with a shower and a separate public restroom.

The building will replace the airport's existing terminal. Officials have said the 900 square-foot building, built in 1972, is undersized and dilapidated.

"This project has been years in the making," said Tom Zupan, a trustee with the airport authority. He said the new terminal was designed to support a longterm vision for the airport.

State officials, including State Rep. Melanie Miller (R-Ashland) and State Sen. Mark Romanchuk (R-Ontario), local dignitaries and members of the public gathered at a hangar at the Ashland County Airport on Monday to signify the start of construction on the terminal.

Central District

Commissioner Dave Levacy wants to see a local veterans hall of fame

Lancaster Eagle-Gazette, March 26, 2025

Commissioner Dave Levacy said there are about 10,000 military veterans in Fairfield County. But there is currently no place to honor them all.

That may change, though, as Levacy said there is a group wanting to start a hall of fame for county veterans before the end of the year. He said the hall of fame could be located at the county courthouse at Main and High streets and will include the inductees earning a bronze plaque. But the exact location has not been determined yet.

"We're in the process of checking all the boxes," Levacy said. "One of the things we have to do is establish a 501(3)(c) because we'll need some money. We'll need people to contribute. We have people working on this right now."

Those people include Tom Moe, Michael Crites, Bryan Everitt, Jim Bahnsen, Justin Messinger, Park Russell, Aundrea Cordle and Jeannie Ignash and Levacy. The Fairfield County Foundation will also help with the fundraising process.

Levacy said the group does not know how much money will be needed but that no county money can be used.

Southwest District

Clark County approves $336M annual budget, touts strong bond rating

Springfield News Sun, March 24, 2025

Clark County Commissioners have approved county government's $336.3 million budget for 2025, projecting a year-end balance of $448,958 without touching their $12 million in reserves.

"We were able to approve a balanced budget to support strategic priorities for our county," Commission President Sasha Rittenhouse said. "Overall, we feel we have met or exceeded the needs of the county government to serve our citizens and have responsibly allocated funds to the best of our ability."

The county listed the general fund portion of its budget for this year at $58.5 million. The general fund has a projected $53 million in revenue, which is 1.5% more than 2024, and expenditures of $58.1 million, which is 5.3% less than 2024. This decrease is because of reduction in ARPA funds and capital projects planned this year.

County Administrator Jenny Hutchinson's temporary budget at the end of last year listed the general fund revenue much lower at $49.8 million and expenditures at $57 million.

Hutchinson said the county ended the year with a $5.58 million carryover, and had an additional $2.6 million in interest they used for one-time purchases approved in the 2025 budget.

"The county only budgets $2 million a year in interest income since it is a volatile revenue source. Our investment advisor predicts the county will earn close to $4.6 million in interest revenue this year. The county has elected to use the additional $2.6 million in interest revenue for one-time purchases," she said.

Southeast District

Holmes County begins preparation for new engineer's office

The Daily Record, March 25, 2025

Planning for a building, about the size of a football field, is in the works to replace the Holmes County Engineer's Office and house its equipment.

The structure would be constructed at the site of the current county garage and office at 7191 State Route 39, Millersburg.

Last week the county commissioners approved an agreement with Tekton Engineering for about $665,600 to design and plan the redevelopment of the site, which in addition to the new building will have updated infrastructure.

"We're looking at some funding down the road to eventually build a new facility at our current location," said Josh Galbraith, deputy engineer. "This agreement allows us to be ready when funding does come available."

He said the currenty facility is in extremely poor condition with roof issues, the concrete inside is broken up and "pretty much all of our equipment is sitting outside. We probably have the best county roads in the state, but we probably have the worst facility."

A cost estimate for the building itself has not been determined yet.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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APRIL 4
CEBCO Annual Business Meeting
Lucas County Regional Legislative Briefing

APRIL 7
Madison County Regional Legislative Briefing

APRIL 8
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting
OCCO Legislative Reception

APRIL 11
Defiance County Regional Legislative Briefing

APRIL 14
Southeast District Meeting

APRIL 21
Licking County Regional Legislative Briefing

APRIL 24 - 25
CEBCO Board Retreat

APRIL 25
Columbiana County Regional Legislative Briefing

APRIL 28
Ross County Regional Legislative Briefing

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