April 28, 2025

Two Lights for Tomorrow was a nationwide observance on the evening of April 18 -19 to mark the 250th anniversary of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.

Morrow County was one of many Ohio counties to observe the event by placing two lanterns in the county courthouse's upper windows.

Photo courtesy of Morrow County Commissioner Tim Siegfried.

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Ohio Newsroom article discusses county opioid settlement fund usage

The below is an article entitled "'We plan on using every penny': how Ohio small towns are making the most of opioid settlement money" published by The Ohio Newsroom.

Noble County Commissioner Allen Fraley says the opioid epidemic threatened the fabric of his rural eastern Ohio community.

“You couldn't go to a football game. You just couldn't go to church. You couldn't go to an ice cream social without knowing somebody's whole family was hurting,” Fraley said.

Through various lawsuits against opioid manufacturers, Noble County has received a little over $100,000 over the last three years to tackle the issue. It’s not enough money to build a brand new jail diversion center, like Cleveland did. Or to hire an addiction coordinator, like they’re doing in Cincinnati. Still, Fraley sees it as a once in a lifetime opportunity to repair some of the damage.

“We really need any money we get to be as impactful as possible,” Fraley said. “How can we pull this off?”

It’s a question many of Ohio’s small cities and counties are asking themselves. Over the course of 18 years, Ohio and its communities are receiving about $2 billion from pharmaceutical companies to compensate for harm caused by opioids.

For smaller Ohio communities, the payouts don’t come close to the millions heading to the state’s major metros. So, Ohio’s rural areas are strategizing on how they can make the most out of what they have.

Leveraging what’s already there

There are plenty of opportunities to aid Ohioans with substance use disorders that don’t require a lot of money, according to Kristen Pendergrass. She works with Shatterproof, a national nonprofit that’s working alongside John Hopkins University to help communities spend their opioid settlement money on evidence-based practices.

Pendergrass said small areas, like Noble County, should focus on strengthening local programs that already work, instead of starting from scratch.

“If you know that you already have an organization that's doing good work, that you want them to do more of that good work, then that could be a way to just tap into what's already happening,” Pendergrass advised.

To figure out what’s actually working in the community and where the biggest needs are, Pendergrass said communities have to ask. She suggested putting some money toward conducting a comprehensive community needs assessment.

Some places, like Knox County in north central Ohio, have formed focus groups of schools, law enforcement and healthcare providers to ensure every dollar of settlement money goes to addressing a real problem.

“Before we even had any idea of what our focus would be, we had group meetings [where we asked] in an ideal world, what would we have for the jails, what would we have for the schools? What would we have for the community?” said Lisa Lloyd, who helped lead Knox County’s settlement advisory board.

Working together

Still, not every community has the infrastructure in place to manage these funds on their own. Lima mayor Sharetta Smith said the small northwest Ohio city lacked the capacity to divvy out their dollars independently.

“I don't have a health department or a direct department that can provide the direct services that these dollars were calling for,” Smith said. “And so rather than looking to build that infrastructure, we looked to collaborate with another entity.”

Lima pooled resources with Allen County, which hosts the area’s public health department. Combined, they’ll be receiving more than a million dollars over nearly two decades to spend on programming that benefits them both.

Plus, they’re being careful that the projects they do fund will be sustainable in the long-term.

“These are one-time dollars,” said Allen County commissioner Beth Siebert. “We cannot build a program off of this because if we did, we would have to sustain it with our general funds.”

Making the most of the money

It doesn’t take a large investment to make an impact, Pendergrass said. Even small purchases, like buying fentanyl testing strips or creating care packages for Ohioans in recovery, can go far.

“Those things are not expensive, but they can make a big difference in just making someone's life a little easier and reducing the stress so that they don't return to use,” she said.

In Noble County, Fraley said they’ve already started spending what they can. Some of it has gone toward increasing prevention programming at their schools. Some has gone toward improving the court system. The rest is being placed in a rainy day fund to save for something bigger.

Places like Noble County have at least one advantage, Fraley said. They’re practiced in making ends meet.

“We're doing our best with what we have,” Fraley said. “It just may not be the Taj Mahal.”

CCAO publishes County Advisory Bulletin on Pay Stub Protection Act

Last week, CCAO released County Advisory Bulletin 2025-07, which details the provisions of the Pay Stub Protection Act. The bill, which took effect on April 9, requires all employers to provide pay stubs to their employees. Counties, as employers, are subject to this requirement.

Pay stubs can be provided physically or in electronic format and must contain:

- The employee's name and address
- The employer's name
- The gross wages earned by the employee during the pay period
- The net wages paid to the employee during the pay period
- A listing of the amount and purpose of each addition to or deduction from wages paid during the pay period.
- The date the employee was paid and the pay period covered in the payment
- If the the employee is paid on an hourly basis, the following:
  - The total hours worked by the employee in the pay period
  - The hourly wage rate at which the employee was page
  - The number of hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a workweek

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Attorney General releases 2025 Sunshine Manual, AG Opinion on Marsy's Law information sharing

Attorney General Dave Yost recently released two documents that may be of interest to counties.

First, the Attorney General's office released the 2025 edition of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Manual. The manual provides an an overview of public records and open meetings law and can serve as a valuable guide for elected officials.

This year's Sunshine Manual, sometimes referred to as the "Yellowbook," incorporates changes made during the 135th General Assembly, such as the public records disclosure adjustments CCAO discussed in County Advisory Bulletin 2025-04 Public Records Law Changes, the authority for law enforcement agencies to charge a fee for producing video records (also discussed in CAB 2025-04), and some discussion concerning virtual meeting authority (discussed in a forthcoming CAB).

CCAO encourages our members and other county officials familiarize themselves with the Sunshine Manual.

Second, the Attorney General recently issued Attorney General Opinion 2025-08, regarding crime victim confidentiality in Marsy's Law. The opinion arose from a request by the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor regarding whether or not legislative bodies meet the definition of being "charged with the responsibility of knowing the name, address, or other identifying information of a victim or victim's representative," and subsidiary questions, under the victim's rights legislation commonly referred to as Marsy's Law.

Attorney General Yost finds that legislative bodies do not fall under that definition since the members of legislative bodies do not engage with individual victims in the course of their duties. Therefore, they do not have a legal responsibility to know crime victims' information.

The Opinion further states that a public office or official with documents containing a victim's information has discretion regarding sharing unredacted records with other offices or officials who are charged with knowing the information. This essentially means that, for example, a sheriff may, but is not required to, share unredacted information with a prosecutor, but not other elected officials (such as a legislative body) that do not have a responsibility to know the information.

We encourage counties familiarize themselves with OAG 2025-08 to ensure compliance with Marsy's Law.

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

FINAL DAY TO REGISTER: Greater Ohio Policy Center hosting Brownfields Conference on May 8

The Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC), in partnership with the Ohio EPA, is hosting the 2025 Ohio Brownfields Conference, to be held on May 8 in Westerville. The conference will provide attendees with panel sessions to learn about the latest in brownfield remediation and redevelopment, connect with environmental professionals, and network with peers from across the state.

Registration ***CLOSES TODAY*** and can be completed here. Registration costs $185 per attendee.

Attendees can attend sessions about the following subjects:

- Brownfields Funding & Financing
- Remediation and Redevelopment Case Studies
- Public-Private Partnerships in Brownfields Remediation
- Community Planning to Redevelop Brownfields
- Brownfields into Residential Housing
- Brownfields and Land Banks
- Ohio EPA Voluntary Action Program (VAP)

A full schedule, with details about each session, can be found on the event's website.

As with past conferences, GOPC is seeking continuing learning education credits, including AICP credits through APA Ohio, CLE credits through the Ohio Supreme Court, and CP credits through Ohio EPA.

BroadbandOhio and OSU Extension to host broadband information sessions

BroadbandOhio and OSU Extension are partnering to host information sessions across the state to discuss the availability of federal funds to connect unserved areas and how to advocate for your area.

The organizations will host five sessions across the state during May, one in each region of the state. The schedule is below.

May 5, 3:00 p.m.
Knox County
Remser 4H Activity Central
700 Perimeter Drive,
Mount Vernon, OH 43050

May 7, 2:00 p.m.
Paulding County
Paulding County OSU Extension Building
503 Fairground Drive,
Paulding, OH 45879

May 12, 2:00 p.m.
Stark County
Main Library Branch
715 Market Avenue N,
Canton, OH 44702

May 19, 2:00 p.m.
Preble County
Eaton OSU Extension Building
722 S. Franklin St.,
Eaton, OH 45320

May 20, 2:00 p.m.
Athens County
Athens Public Library
30 Home St.,
Athens, OH 45701

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

Board of Lucas County Commissioners approves Local Vendor Preference Policy

WTVG, April 22, 2025

The Board of Lucas County Commissioners approved a policy Tuesday that is designed to support and sustain local economic growth.

According to documents from the board of commissioners, under the new policy, county departments and agencies under the board will be encouraged to prioritize local businesses in procurement decisions.

The policy will allow businesses that have been operating for at least three years within 50 miles of Lucas County to receive preferential consideration during the quote process. If the local businesses quote a price within two percent of the lowest bid, they will be invited to match the lowest bid.

The Board of Lucas County Commissioners approved the policy Tuesday and according to documents, the policy will be in effect immediately.

According to the documents, the policy will not apply if prohibited by federal or state funding requirements tied to the procurement.

Northeast District

Opiate settlement money could fund 3-year program

Tribune Chronicle, April 23, 2025

Commissioners are being asked to use $3 million in opiate settlement funds to finance a three-year program designed to assist residents needing help.

The proposal would provide transportation for those in recovery, $75,000 per year; establish a jail-based treatment program in the Trumbull County jail, $150,000 per year; establish a county behavioral health case manager in the jail, $115,000 per year; upgrade body scanners for the jail, $92,000; continue a workforce development program for people leaving the jail, $500,000 per year and establish a community service program for those in the criminal justice system, $96,000 per year.

April Caraway, executive director of Trumbull County Mental Health and Recovery Board, suggested the county should spend about $1 million per year from the opiate settlement funds. The board worked closely with Sheriff Maj. David Bobby, who manages Trumbull County jail, in developing this proposal.

Caraway said the TCMHRB provides the jail an estimated $400,000 per year because it sees the connection between mental health and drug addiction to crime and the inability of former prisoners to recover after they get out.

“We do not have to,” Caraway said. “But we know, as a board, that everyone in the jail has a mental health issue from which they are recovering. These issues led to a lot of the crimes that were committed.”

Central District

Richland County commissioners appoint Potes as EMA director

Mansfield News Journal, April 25, 2025

Richland County's new emergency management agency director is a familiar face.

County commissioners appointed Sarah Potes to take on the role at their Thursday meeting. She replaces Rebecca Owens, who resigned earlier this month. Potes will start on May 8 with an annual salary of $63,052.40.

Potes was an administrative assistant for the county EMA from January 2022 to August 2024. She served as interim director for a few months at the end of 2022.

"We didn't want her to leave," Commissioner Tony Vero said. "She did an excellent job as interim director."

He added that commissioners considered her for the full-time role.

"She was relatively new. We thought there was a bit of a learning curve," Vero said. "She stayed with the EMA career path."

Since August 2024, Potes has been a grants specialist at the Ohio EMA, working with agencies in 24 counties. She also has earned a bachelor's degree in emergency management from Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

"It (the hire) was a no-brainer from where I sit," Vero said.

Southwest District

Butler County considering hiring freeze in ‘terrifying’ economy

Wilmington News Journal, April 25, 2025

With the stock market bouncing like a yo-yo and the economy on very shaky ground, Butler County Commissioner Don Dixon said the county should institute a hiring freeze and find other cost savings.

Dixon said the federal government has set things in motion, like the global tariffs that can’t be “readily undone,” and the county must prepare for the worst sooner rather than later. “I’m not saying the sky is falling, I think the sky has partially fell.”.

“We’re in territory we don’t know what’s going to happen, stock markets are falling 1,000, 1,500 points in one day, we’ve had the worst April since the Depression, think about that, to me that is terrifying,” he said. “Maybe they can put some things back in place, but there is so much being unraveled we need to pay attention. I think we need to put some policy in place to restrict any new hiring, only replacements. We’re going to put a freeze across the board on everything. This could get very, very serious and we need to be in front of it, not behind it.”

The county’s budgeted general fund expenses have risen 15.4% since the pandemic hit in 2020, from $109.4 million to $126.3 million this year. Budgeted revenues are projected to reach $133 million this year, a 21.5% increase.

Commissioner T.C. Rogers said he isn’t ready to pull the trigger on a hiring freeze at this juncture, but “maybe we should have some criteria or measurements to see when we’re getting close to the edge.”

“I’m not ready at this desk to vote for a hiring freeze,” Rogers said during their board meeting on Tuesday, but agreed they need a contingency plan. “Maybe it’s like to be ahead of the game that you say if this happens we’re going to cut here, here and here. Maybe we should verbalize what those first cuts are going to be.”

Southeast District

Gallia County Commission hears updates on airport project

WVNews, April 25, 2025

The Gallia County Commission met in regular session Thursday, discussing and voting on multiple resolutions, and hearing updates from county officials.

Commission President Leslie Henry, Vice President Jay Stapleton, and Commissioner Jeremy Kroll attended the meeting. Also present were Commission Clerk Amanda Phillips, Grant Administrator Karen Sprague, Special Projects Manager Tom White, and Commission Assistant Janie Peck.

Sprague presented a notice of project recommencement for the reconstruct existing general aviation airport terminal building at the Gallia-Meigs Regional Airport. Henry entertained a motion that would allow her to sign the notice on behalf of the county, which all commissioners approved.

Sprague presented the commission, on behalf of the airport project consultants Delta Airport Consultants, with the FY 2025 FAA BIL AIG Final Grant application for approval. This project will expand the terminal apron by 160’ x 85.' The task order obtained from the consultants is to perform the project design totaled $175,000. The commission approved the measure.

Sprague presented the commission, on behalf of the airport's consultants, with the FY 2025 FAA NPE AIP Final Grant application for approval. This project will rehabilitate the terminal apron with 4,950 square yards. The task order obtained is to perform the project design totaled $155,000. The commission approved the grant application. The commissioners also approved professional service agreements for both of the airport measures.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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APRIL 28
Ross County Regional Legislative Briefing
Seneca County Regional Legislative Briefing

MAY 9
Northeast District Meeting

MAY 12
Richland County Regional Legislative Briefing

MAY 15 - 16
CCAO Board Retreat

MAY 19
Portage County Regional Legislative Briefing

MAY 26
Memorial Day - Holiday

MAY 30
Montgomery County Regional Legislative Briefing

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