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July 21, 2025

County commissioners and council members joined other rising leaders during the 2025 John Glenn College of Public Affairs Public Leadership Academy last week.

Pictured left to right: Harrison County Commissioner Amy Norris, Gallia County Commissioner Leslie Henry, Tuscarawas County Commissioner Kristen Zemis, Wayne County Commissioner Jonathan Hofstetter, Champaign County Commissioner Tim Cassady, and Cuyahoga County Council Member Michael Houser

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Ohio Public Defender sets indigent defense reimbursement rate at 82% for the fiscal year; provides budget updates

Last week, the Office of the Ohio Public Defender (OPD) released a memo that includes information regarding the projected reimbursement rate for the fiscal year, as well as information concerning various provisions in the budget that impact indigent defense. A copy of the memo can be found here.

House Bill 96, the state operating budget, appropriated nearly $400 million dollars to reimburse counties for the costs associated with administering indigent defense in the state. OPD has been monitoring the monthly reimbursement submissions from counties, and they are right around $19 million per month. Based on this information, OPD plans to reimburse counties at 82% for Fiscal Year 2026. OPD states that the funding level is the highest dollar figure that has been appropriated in the history of the state and is the fourth highest rate of reimbursement in the history of the state. As a reminder, bills that are submitted for payment after July 1, 2025, will be reimbursed at the 82% rate, even if the work was performed during the last fiscal year. Bills for submission must be submitted within 90 days of completion of the work to qualify for reimbursement from the state.

The budget also includes a pilot program to explore a new indigent defense delivery model in the state. The pilot will allow OPD to directly administer indigent defense services in Allen, Putnam, and Hardin counties. This program is separately funded and does not impact the reimbursement percentage for the other counties. The pilot program is expected to come online sometime in the fall of this year. OPD will be tracking various metrics from the pilot program to evaluate its effectiveness.

Additionally, language was included in the budget that requires each board of county commissioners or county executive to submit an indigent defense cost projection report to the Ohio Public Defender by July 31, 2026. The report shall contain data on the most current projected costs of the indigent defense services in the county for the next two upcoming state fiscal years at the time of submission. The intent of the language is to provide OPD with a rough estimate of county indigent defense costs that they will use in preparation of their state operating budget request. OPD plans to provide a simple form that counties can use to satisfy this requirement. Additional details are forthcoming, and we will keep members informed as we receive information.

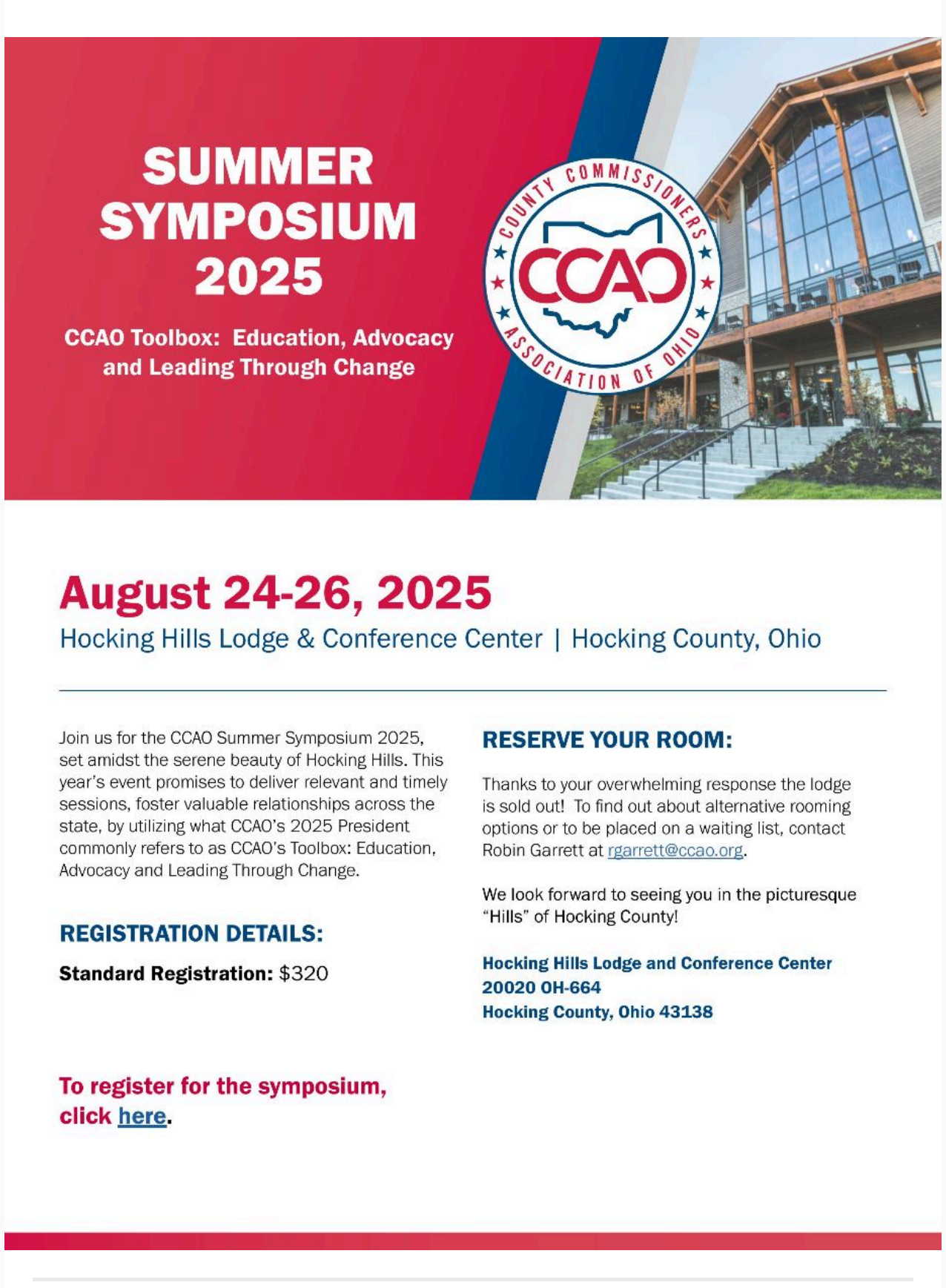
There were two other policies in HB 96 that impact indigent defense. The first was the removal of language that would have capped appointed counsel reimbursements at $75 an hour for non-capital cases and $140 an hour for capital cases. Currently, there are only seven counties that are paying appointed counsel above $75, so the overall fiscal impact of the cap is minimal. It is also important to note that this language takes effect July 1st, so payments that are submitted after that date will not be subject to the cap limitation on reimbursement.

Last, language was inserted into the budget to require the Auditor of State (AOS) to conduct a performance audit of the indigent defense system in Ohio. The performance audit will review the challenges of the delivery of indigent defense services, including, but not limited to, the costs, accounting, and payment processes of the OPD and at least five counties that represent each of the various indigent defense delivery methods in the state. The audit must be completed and submitted to the Ohio Legislature by January 1, 2027. Although the audit will be completed after OPD's budget submission, it will be an important tool to guide policy makers during the next biennium budget process.

If you have any questions about the memo or the information contained above, please contact CCAO Managing Director of Policy Kyle Petty at kpetty@ccao.org or at 740-503-6088.

Full tentative agenda for 2025's Summer Symposium announced

The tentative agenda for the 2025 Summer Symposium is now available! We look forward to gathering together at Hocking Hills Lodge and Conference Center this summer to reconnect and discuss topics including property tax policy, housing development, tourism, and more. To view the agenda or register, visit ccao.org.


COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO
CCAO

SUMMER SYMPOSIUM 2025

CCAO Toolbox: Education, Advocacy and Leading Through Change

August 24-26, 2025

Hocking Hills Lodge & Conference Center | Hocking County, Ohio

Join us for the CCAO Summer Symposium 2025, set amidst the serene beauty of Hocking Hills. This year's event promises to deliver relevant and timely sessions, foster valuable relationships across the state, by utilizing what CCAO's 2025 President commonly refers to as CCAO's Toolbox: Education, Advocacy and Leading Through Change.

REGISTRATION DETAILS:

Standard Registration: $320

RESERVE YOUR ROOM:

Thanks to your overwhelming response the lodge is sold out! To find out about alternative rooming options or to be placed on a waiting list, contact Robin Garrett at rgarrett@ccao.org.

We look forward to seeing you in the picturesque "Hills" of Hocking County!

Hocking Hills Lodge and Conference Center
20020 OH-664
Hocking County, Ohio 43138

To register for the symposium, click here.

NOTICE: MARCS radio authentication deadline extended, fines to be imposed on truancy

The following is a message from the Department of Administrative Services' MARCS Program Office.

MARCS Radio Users:

Thank you to all of you who have authenticated your MARCS radios and met the July 1 deadline. There are over 100,000 of you who have done so. As you know, radio authentication is important to protect the emergency communications infrastructure of the MARCS radio system throughout Ohio.

Unfortunately, the radio authentication project cannot yet be fully implemented at this time, as there are still many radios that have yet to be authenticated and 100% of our radios need to be completed in order for this project to go forward. Therefore, the original deadline is being extended to Dec. 31, 2025, to allow for everyone to complete radio authentication.

For those entities who have yet to authenticate their radios, and who go beyond the newly extended deadline, fines will be imposed beginning Jan. 1, 2026. Fines will increase every 30 days if radios remain unauthenticated. We regret having to take this action; however, the MARCS Program Office has been actively encouraging customers to have radios authenticated to provide the best and most secure service for everyone since July 1, 2020.

What is Radio Authentication and why?

Radio Authentication is a necessary step to protect the MARCS (Multi-Agency Radio Communication System) system and is an industry standard in public safety/first responder communications.

Each radio – base, mobile, and portable – must have Radio Authentication to operate on the MARCS system by Jan. 1, 2026.

Radio Authentication (also known as Link Layer Authentication) is an increased safety and security measure to ensure only authorized users have access to the radio system. This increased security helps safeguard against unauthorized people using and listening on the system and helps to protect against those attempting to disrupt the system.

Since July 1, 2020, the MARCS Program Office has been actively encouraging customers to have their radios authenticated to provide the best and most secure service to everyone.

Some radios purchased after July 1, 2019, may already have been authenticated. If you have a radio purchased prior to July 1, 2019, the radio may have the ability to be updated to comply with Radio Authentication, without the need to purchase a new radio.

If you are a MARCS customer who hasn't had your radios authenticated, immediately take the following two actions:

- Contact your radio manufacturer or programming vendor today to begin the authentication process.
- Email MARCSRadioAuthentication@DAS.Ohio.gov explaining your plan, including a timeline, to complete the process to authenticate your radios.

For questions, contact:

MARCS Program Office
Ohio Department of Administrative Services
Email: MARCSRadioAuthentication@DAS.Ohio.gov
Call: 866-OHMARCS (866-646-2727)
Website: DAS.Ohio.gov/MARCS

A Special Thanks to our Pinnacle Partner

PALMER ENERGY COMPANY

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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NACo report outlines significant changes in federal, state and local government partnerships

The recently enacted legislation, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), and President Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget request signal significant changes to the federal, state and local government partnership. While counties collaborate with federal and state partners to deliver essential services, several changes — aimed at reducing federal costs — will shift financial and administrative costs onto subnational levels of government. In a complex intergovernmental structure, these subnational governments, including counties, could see a downstream effect approaching $1 trillion over ten years. This removal of longstanding federal funding sources and federal cost shift represents a fundamental swing in the intergovernmental partnership, potentially pushing counties to choose between cutting services or raising local taxes.

NACo has issued a report outlining how the federal cost shift and spending cuts pose a significant challenge to counties nationwide. It aims to clarify the scope of the potential impact, highlight key areas of concern and provide county leaders with the information needed to prepare for and respond to these intergovernmental changes.

The full report is available here.

OneOhio Recovery Foundation releases inaugural Annual Report

The OneOhio Recovery Foundation issued its 2024 Annual Report. The inaugural annual overview of the Foundation's work includes details about the first full year of grantmaking, collaborations with frontline partners addressing Ohio's addiction epidemic, and strategic planning efforts for the future. Of note, in 2024 the Foundation awarded more than $45 million in grants through the OhioOhio regions to fund local programs and initiatives addressing the needs of those affected by the addiction crisis.

For more information about the Foundation, visit oneohiofoundation.com.

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.

Save the Date: July 23 BroadbandOhio BEAD Benefit of the Bargain Round Webinar

BroadbandOhio will open the BEAD Benefit of the Bargain Round on Monday, July 28 and will run the grant round through Friday, August 15. BroadbandOhio will host a webinar discussing this next grant this Wednesday, July 23 at 1:00pm.

BroadbandOhio has not released a link for the July 23 webinar at this time. CCAO expects a link to be released sometime on July 21 or 22 and will share the link once it is available.

In addition to the webinar, earlier this month BroadbandOhio released the location of all BEAD and ORBEG Grant eligible addresses. Please reach out to CCAO Policy Analyst James Kennedy at jkennedy@ccao.org if you are interested in obtaining the eligible addresses within your county. Due to a licensing issue, BroadbandOhio is unable to publicly release specific addresses and will require elected officials agree to keep the addresses confidential.

CyberOhio Monthly Briefing: Free Resources to Comply with Ohio's New Cyber Law

Local governments across Ohio will soon be required to adopt new cybersecurity standards under Amended Substitute House Bill 96, signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine on June 30, 2025. The law—mirroring language from House Bill 283 and Senate Bill 208—goes into effect 90 days from the signing and sets forth a statewide cybersecurity framework for all political subdivisions.

Join CyberOhio, Cybersecurity Strategic Advisor to the Governor, Kirk Herath, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and key members of the Ohio Cyber Range Institute for a free webinar to learn:

- What's required under HB 96
- How to report cyber incidents to the Ohio Cyber Integration Center (now required within 7 days)
- How to access free training through O-PCI to meet the annual training requirement
- Best practices for building a cyber program as required under the bill

Visit cyber.ohio.gov to register and learn more.

Ohio Energy Conference to be held October 20 and 21

On October 20 and 21, the Energy Coalition of Ohio will host the 2025 Ohio Energy Conference in Columbus. The conference gathers energy providers, technology innovators, and consumers looking to connect, collaborate, and stay ahead of the curve.

The registration link, conference agenda, and information about hotel accommodations can be found here. To receive a discounted rate, use code COLLABORATE2025OEC.

Workforce conference to be held in late September

On September 18 and 19, the Ohio Workforce Association (OWA) and the Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Workforce Professionals (IAWP) will host a workforce training conference in Lewis Center. The conference is titled Future of Work Ohio 2025: Innovate. Elevate. Connect.

Sessions on the tentative agenda include a history of the public workforce system, a panel discussing the recently-released regional behavioral health workforce toolkit, and how to create a children's services workforce pipeline, among many other sessions.

The registration fee is $395 until August 31. Registrations after this date will be $425. Members of OWA or IAWP receive a discounted rate of $365.

The registration link, as well as more information about the conference agenda and how to reserve a room, can be found here.

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

Lucas Co. Commissioners vote to do assessment on existing jail

WTOL, July 15, 2025

Lucas County Commissioners voted Tuesday to conduct a facility assessment on the county's existing jail as costs for building a new jail continue to mount, ultimately leading to the axing of the plan for the new jail.

Rising construction costs have delayed progress on the new build, potentially shifting focus to renovating the current jail.

When asked if plans for the new jail were no longer under consideration, Sarah Elms, communications director for the county, said that was correct.

According to a document, the county is seeking qualified firms to perform the assessment on the Spielbusch Avenue jail. The commissioners said they wanted to maintain a jail that is safe for both employees and inmates.

During the meeting, Lucas County Commissioner Lisa Sobecki expressed that she wanted a new jail built, while commissioners Pete Gerken and Anita Lopez did not.

"This facility is old," Sobecki said. "Its systems are failing, and we cannot continue to limp along with Band-Aid solutions. Not only that, the configuration of the old jail is holding us back."

Gerken said he has been part of the project from the start, but there have been continual roadblocks. He said different sites and funding issues have come up, but the biggest one stems from the city.

"When Mayor Collins with the city of Toledo gave three days' notice saying we're not paying our costs for your prisoners in your jail anymore," Gerken said.

Gerken and Lopez said moving forward with the jail is not smart when it is now estimated to cost more than $273 million. The county would have to fund a $5 million annual gap for the project for 35 years from the general fund.

Lopez said that rising health care costs and state and federal legislation are creating more financial concerns for the county.

Northeast District

Trumbull Co. Commissioners considering buying ODOT outpost on State Route 7 in Hubbard, Ohio

WKBN, July 16, 2025

Trumbull County Commissioners are considering purchasing an Ohio Department of Transportation Outpost.

The Trumbull County Engineer's Office has been using the property off state Route 7 for a few years. Now, county commissioners are thinking about buying it.

"ODOT wants to sell it, and when I heard it was for sale, I thought, we need this for our operations," said Trumbull County Engineer David DeChristofaro.

The ODOT outpost already has a storage facility and two domes with rooms for about 3,000 tons of salt

County Engineer David DeChristofaro says it would benefit county plow drivers and other nearby communities with agreements.

DeChristofaro says that by being able to continue to use the salt domes on the property, the county's plow drivers will save time once winter comes around.

"They'll just drive directly to that location, pick up the salt they need and start salting immediately, and then when they need to pick up additional salt, they don't have to drive all the way into the main facility," DeChristofaro said.

"I believe, too, that it would save wear and tear and also fuel, I think, hauling this aggregate or whatever we're going to store there personally. I believe, personally, this is something we need to do," said Trumbull County Commissioner Rick Hernandez.

The property comes with a $150,000 price tag, which is less than half of its total appraisal value, according to information on the Auditor's Office website.

Central District

Pickaway County Commissioners Reject 344-Acre Commercial Point Annexation Again Over Road Maintenance Dispute

Scioto Post, July 15, 2025

The Pickaway County Commissioners unanimously denied a proposed annexation of 344.391 acres from Scioto Township into the Village of Commercial Point on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, citing ongoing concerns about a bisected roadway. The decision follows a contentious debate over a development plan valued at over $30 million, which includes building up to 1,200 homes on the site.

The Village of Commercial Point had passed Resolution 22-2025 on Monday, June 23, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. during a special council meeting at the Municipal Building, adopting a statement of services and declaring an emergency for the annexation. However, Scioto Township Trustees countered with a resolution on Thursday, June 26, 2025, opposing the plan along Gibson Road.

During today's commissioners' meeting, the Struckmans' legal team argued that objections related to school population, water, and sewage were invalid under annexation law and urged the commissioners to overlook them. They also addressed the divided roadway issue, noting a similar Struckman-owned annexation along Gibson Road five years ago, which proceeded without a service agreement despite the same split road boundary concern. A Commercial Point Council member highlighted a 50-year "handshake" agreement with Scioto Township for fair management of shared roadways and maintenance funds, suggesting no significant issues historically.

Southwest District

Butler County tax budget dubbed 'reasonably conservative'

Journal News, July 15, 2025

Butler County Commission approved a $132 million tax budget for next year that includes 68% in personnel costs.

Every July, governmental entities must pass a tax budget which is the first draft of the spending plan for the next year. The approved county tax budget anticipates $132 million in general fund expenses which will be covered with an estimated $146.1 million in revenues. The county will open the year with $164.2 million in unencumbered cash in the bank and is expected to end with $43.8 million in carryover.

Expenses are $5.7 million or 4.5% higher than the $126.3 million budgeted this year and revenues are planned to jump by $12.9 million or 9.7%. Given the uncertain economy, the commissioners issued a hiring freeze for the rest of this year and next and have reined in the annual raise program to 2%.

County Administrator Judi Boyko said $5.3 million of the budget increase is for personnel.

Boyko told the commissioners that most county employee wages are more competitive than they have been in past years.

"Your investment in your employees has gotten us to where we are at least competitive in the market. We will not see that level of increase in future years, at least the next couple," she said.

Personnel costs consume roughly 68% or $89.5 million of the proposed general fund budget for next year.

"When the county's individual greatest expense is personnel, at nearly 70% of expenses, the compounding cumulative effect of expanding wages becomes unsustainable," Boyko told the Journal-News. "The board of commissioners will remain deliberate in balancing employee welfare and taxpayer burdens."

Other notable expenditures include $5 million each for the county engineer's paving program and upgrades for the Emergency 911 dispatch system. Another $15 million will also go into the capital reserve fund that is mainly paying for a massive space reutilization project.

Southeast District

Jefferson County commissioners provide $25,000 for afterschool program

Times Leader, July 14, 2025

Jefferson County commissioners agreed last week to dip into their OneOhio drug settlement money to help fund an afterschool program that aims to keep kids off the street — and off drugs.

Commissioners awarded the Sycamore Youth Center $25,000 to help cover costs associated with its after-school and summer programs after being advised by Prevention and Recovery Board Executive Director Bill Holt that it met the OneOhio requirements, which includes prevention strategies and education — which is exactly what the Sycamore Center program aims to do.

There's currently a little over $830,000 in Jefferson County's OneOhio account, it's share of the settlement money from the pharmaceutical industry for its role in the national opioid epidemic.

"We're running multiple programs right now with those funds," Holt said. "One of the things I look at with (them) is sustainability — I want to make sure any programs the board is funding are community programs built to last and built to serve our community for the long-term. If we're going to make the investment, let's make sure they're going to be around."

Holt told commissioners the Sycamore Center's comprehensive program "really, it checks all the boxes, adding he'd met with its president, Bobbyjon Bauman, to work the numbers. "What we did is we revised his budget and got a number that I think works," Holt said.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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

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JULY 25
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 8
2025 County Classic Golf Outing

AUGUST 15
CORSA Board of Directors Meeting

AUGUST 24 - 26
2025 CCAO Summer Symposium
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting (August 26)

AUGUST 29
CEBCO Board of Directors Meeting

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