Board of Commissioners of Ohio County
Minutes of a Meeting
Tuesday, September 1, 2026, at 8:00am

County Commission meetings are held in
Room 215 of the City County Building, 1500 Chapline Street, Wheeling, WV 26003
County Commission meetings are open to the public

County Commission Members Present

Commission President Zachary T. Abraham
Commissioner Donald A. Nickerson, Jr.
Commissioner Randy Wharton

Staff Members Present

County Administrator Randy Russell
County Solicitor Donald J. Tennant, Jr.
Director of Ohio County E911 Rickie Pritt
Finance Director Becky Coyne
Election Coordinator Erin Allietta
Chief Deputy Kent Lewis

Other Elected Officials Present

County Clerk Mike Kelly
Circuit Clerk Ella McCardle

- **Call to Order**

  Commission President Abraham called the meeting to order at 8:00am in Room 215 of the City County Building. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **Introductions**

  Administrator Russell introduced Ella McCardle, the new Circuit Clerk.

- **Delegations**

  None

- **Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

  Regular Meeting of August 18, 2026

  The minutes were reviewed by Commissioners. Commission President Abraham made a motion to table the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **Grants**

  None

- **Community Grants**

  Opioid Funds, Sheriff Dept, WV Narcotics Officers Association
  Administrator Russell presented a request from the West Virginia Narcotics Officers Association for opioid settlement funding to support its annual conference and training session at the Highlands Event Center. The request totaled **$10,129.20**, consisting of **$4,993.20** for event facility costs and **$5,136.00** for a conference dinner. He noted that the County Commission approved similar funding last year and that law enforcement training is an eligible use of opioid settlement funds. However, all available opioid funds have been committed, and the County is uncertain when additional allocations may be received.

  Chief Deputy Lewis indicated that alternative funding sources, including seizure funds, may be available and that the association would be willing to pay the expenses upfront if reimbursement could be provided at a later date.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve reimbursement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **Unfinished Business**

  Opioid Grant, Laughlin Chapel to Still We Rise and Grow Inc.
  Administrator Russell stated that the County Commission had previously approved an opioid grant in the amount of $25,257.55 to Laughlin Memorial Chapel for the Still We Rise and Grow program. During the grant distribution process, it was determined that Still We Rise and Grow, Inc. is a separate nonprofit organization, and that grant funds cannot be co-mingled with Laughlin Memorial Chapel funds. Because the grant application described Still We Rise and Grow, Inc., approval was requested to change the grantee designation to the appropriate nonprofit entity. It was confirmed that no grant funds had been distributed to Laughlin Memorial Chapel.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the change. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **New Business**

  - **Ohio County Commission – Advice and Consent for New Hire**
    Administrator Russell introduced Jennifer Hastings as the new Executive Assistant for the Ohio County Commission office.

    Commission President Abraham made a motion to accept. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **Addressing, New Street Name, Mahalo Dr.**
  Administrator Russell presented a request by the County Commission to establish Mahalo Drive as a new road name. The road will intersect with Chapel Hill Road. One home is currently being constructed on Mahalo Drive. Approval was requested for the new road name.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **WVFF, Region I Director Election, Designee**
  Administrator Russell informed the County Commission that the Region 1 Director's seat on the West Virginia First Foundation will expire in November. The County Commission is required to appoint a designee to participate in the election alongside representatives from other counties and municipalities within the region. The election is scheduled for October 13 at 6:00 p.m. at the Highlands Event Center. Administrator Russell noted that the current Region 1 Director, Dr. Steve Corder, has expressed interest in being re-elected. Commission President Abraham volunteered to serve as the County Commission's voting designee for the election.

  Commissioner Nickerson made a motion that Commission President Abraham be designated as Ohio County Commissioner's designee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **Energy Savings Project, Metal cap on stone coping, Cattrell/Kalkreuth**
  Administrator Russell addressed deteriorating caulking between the stone coping on top of the courthouse parapet, which poses a risk of rainwater infiltration into the building. Kalkreuth Roofing and Sheet Metal provided a quote to install an aluminum cap system over the coping at a cost of $54,500. Administrator Russell noted that the project had previously been expected to cost nearly $300,000 based on an earlier estimate from another vendor, which would delay the work to seek grant funding. Given the significantly lower cost and the urgency of preventing water damage, he recommended proceeding with the project.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the aluminum cap option. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **TIF Bond 2024A, Requisition # 1**
  Administrator Russell presented Requisition #1 from the 2024A TIF Bonds in the amount of $8,575 to reimburse the Ohio County Development Authority for costs incurred with bond monitoring and reporting. Approval was requested to submit Requisition #1 to the Bond Trustee for distribution of funds.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **SDEX 2025A Requisition #1 and #2**
  Administrator Russell presented Requisition #1 and Requisition #2 from the SDEX Bonds. Requisition #1, in the amount of $953,621.02, was submitted for costs associated with the WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital Rapid Care build-out at the Highlands. Requisition #2, in the amount of $15,277.50, was submitted to reimburse the Ohio County Development Authority for qualifying costs that they have spent to date for monitoring and construction costs. Approval was requested to submit Requisition #1 and Requisition #2 to the Bond Trustee for distribution of funds.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve Requisition #1 and #2 of SDEX 2025A. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **FEMA Flood Reimbursement**
  Commissioner Wharton requested the status of FEMA reimbursement funds related to expenses incurred during the previous year's flood. Administrator Russell explained that the County Commission, Ohio County Development Authority, and Public Service District incurred eligible expenses and that reimbursement requests had been submitted. He confirmed that the anticipated FEMA reimbursement has been received by the County Commission. It was noted that FEMA reimbursements can often take 18 to 20 months to process and that Andrew Moretz, of Belomar, who assisted with the grant application process, had previously indicated that reimbursement was expected soon.

- **Airport Tower, FAA Telephone Lines, Verizon**
  Administrator Russell reported that the FAA will no longer cover the cost of telephone lines for the tower manager's office at the Ohio County Airport. Midwest ATC has a Verizon voice service contract, which currently provides two telephone lines at a cost of $80 per month. It is requested that Ohio County Commission assume Midwest's contract. He explained that the system equipment is relatively new, having been installed within the last six months, and that the remaining equipment costs of approximately $250 are expected to be paid off within the next two months. After that time, the service would continue on a month-to-month basis at $80 per month.

  Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

- **Staff and Elected Official Reports**

  - **County Administrator Randy Russell reported on the following:**

    - **Jail Bill Update**
      Administrator Russell reported that the July jail bill has been submitted to the City and reimbursement is still pending. Additionally, there was a conference call with the **West Virginia Large County Caucus** regarding rising jail costs and potential legislative solutions for managing these costs and identifying alternative funding

sources. The County will continue to monitor jail-related costs and participate in any lobby effort.

- **Ohio County Correctional Center**
  Administrator Russell reported that the Ohio County Correction Center is scheduled to close on September 30. The West Virginia Division of Corrections will relocate inmates to other correctional facilities throughout the month of September in preparation for the closure.

  It was discussed that the facility currently generates approximately $200,000 in net annual revenue, but continued operation would require an estimated $700,000 in facility improvements, including replacement of the elevator and generator and installation of a sprinkler system. Commission President Abraham noted that future uses for the building will need to be considered once the facility is vacated.

- **WV State Auditor's Conference**
  Administrator Russell and Becky Coyne attended the conference at Oglebay Resort.

- **Election Director Erin Allietta reported on the following:**

  - A HAVA grant application submitted in June for new voting machines was approved, and the machines are expected to be delivered and ready for use by the 2028 election cycle. The Elections Office is seeking to recruit approximately two interns.

  - Due to planned renovations, the Poplar Avenue Fire House will not be available as a polling location for the November election, and alternative locations are being evaluated.

  - Poll worker recruitment remains ongoing, with an estimated need for 40 to 60 workers for Election Day. A new West Virginia law permits 16- and 17-year-olds to serve as poll workers with parental permission, which is expected to increase student participation.

  - Poll worker training is scheduled for October 6, 7, and 8 at the Oglebay Pine Room. An election survey was sent to coworkers requesting interest in relocating to the Oglebay Pine Room, and the majority was in favor of switching locations.

  - The recent legislative change allows precincts with the same ballot style and polling location to be consolidated. It was noted that precinct consolidation could reduce the number of poll workers, voting machines, and administrative requirements, resulting in greater efficiency and cost savings.

- **Sheriff of Ohio County**

  - The Tasers approved at the previous meeting have been received. Certification training for four deputies is scheduled for the 9th, after which the Tasers will be distributed. Deputy Parsons and Deputy Milbert graduated from the academy on the 21st and are currently in their field training (FTO) phase. They are expected to complete training and be fully released for duty by December. The Sheriff's Office also experienced one deputy resignation, creating an additional vacancy. A civil service test will be conducted to identify candidates to fill the open position.

- **Clerk of Ohio County**

  County Clerk Kelly reminded of his retirement in December. He also requested blinds be put up in his office. It was stated that the blinds are in the process.

- **Finance Director Becky Coyne**

  Finance Director Becky Coyne presented the list of Payables to the Commissioners. Commissioner Abraham and Commissioner Nickerson had some questions relating to the invoices. Finance Director Becky Coyne addressed the questions. Commission

  President Abraham made a motion to approve the payables. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

  The unpaid invoices were presented to the Commissioners and there were no questions/inquiries on them. No action required.

  Finance Director Becky Coyne advised that there were no budget revisions.

- **Assessor**

  Exonerations

  None

  Certificates of Re-Entry

  None

- **Commission Board Reports**

  There were no Commission Board Reports

- **Commissioner Comments**

  There were no Commissioner Comments

Commission President Abraham advised those present that the next Regular Meeting of the County Commission would take place on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, in Room 215 of the City-County Building, 1500 Chapline Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, promptly at 8:00 am. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 am.

We do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct transcript of the minutes of a meeting of the County Commission of Ohio County conducted on Tuesday, September 1, 2026.

Zachary T. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, County Administrator