Board of Commissioners of Ohio County
Minutes of a Meeting
Tuesday, September 22, 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 Solicitor Donald J. Tennant, Jr.
Director of Ohio County E911 Rickie Pritt
Director of Emergency Management Tony Campbell
Finance Director Becky Coyne
Election Coordinator Erin Allietta
County Assessor Tiffany Hoffman

Other Elected Officials Present

Sheriff of Ohio County Harry "Nelson" Croft, Jr.

- **Call to Order**

  Commission President Abraham called the meeting to order at 9:15am in Room 215 of the City County Building. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

  The meeting was originally scheduled for 8:00am but was delayed due to the preceding public hearing running over its allotted time.

  Notice was made that the scheduled live streaming of the meeting was unavailable due to an unexpected disruption with the internet service.

- **Delegations**

  None

- **Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

  Regular Meeting of August 18, 2026
  Regular Meeting of September 1, 2026

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

- **Grants**

WV Division Multi-Modal Transportation, Wheeling-Ohio County Airport, Grant
Finance Director Coyne reported that the $12,500 grant represents the State's contribution toward the Air Traffic Control Tower Rehabilitation, Phase II. The administration recommended approval of the grant agreement.

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

Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant
Finance Director Coyne reported that the County has applied for this grant for several consecutive years and would like to apply again for 2027. The proposed application would request an amount comparable to prior years and require a 25% match. She requested approval to proceed with the grant application.

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

- **Community Grants**

Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Bank Fantasy in Lights Parade
Finance Director Coyne reported that the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce requested financial support for the 2026 Main Street Bank Fantasy in Lights Parade, scheduled for Friday, November 20. The County Commission contributed $3,000 to the event last year and $2,500 in prior years. The sponsorship request indicated that contributions at any level would be appreciated.

Commission President Abraham made a motion to table the request for sponsorship. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

Auggie's 5k Run/Walk
Finance Director Coyne reported that Auggie's requested $500 in support for their 5k Run/Walk event. The event raises between $3,000 and $4,000 annually, which is contributed to the Ohio County Animal Shelter.

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

Wheeling YMCA
Finance Director Coyne stated that the Wheeling YMCA requested support for the youth programs in the amount of $175.00.

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

Harmony House, Harmony Haunt
Finance Director Coyne reported that the Harmony House Children's Advocacy Center seeks support for their Harmony Haunt event. The money raised from this event supports the children and families that the Harmony House serves.

Commission President Abraham made a motion to donate $150. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

Seeing Hand Association, 80th Anniversary events
Finance Director Coyne shared that the Seeing Hand Association is seeking support for their 80th Anniversary events.

Commission President Abraham made a motion to donate $150. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

YWCA Wheeling, Mega Bingo Sponsorship
Finance Director Coyne mentioned that the YWCA of Wheeling is requesting support for their Mega Bingo event on November 14. The request is to sponsor a bingo ball for $100.00 per ball.

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

Ritchie Elementary School, assistance for new playground
Commissioner President Abraham mentioned Ritchie Elementary School is seeking funding assistance to build a new playground at the school.

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

- **Unfinished Business**

None

- **New Business**

Board Appointment, Ohio County Public Service District, Robert R. Luchetti, Jr.
Commission President Abraham stated that Robert R. Luchetti, Jr. was recommended to serve the unexpired term of Robert Luchetti, Sr. Following the recent passing of Robert Luchetti, Sr., a vacancy exists on the Ohio County Public Service District Board. Pursuant to West Virginia Code § 16-13A-3, vacancies must be filled within 30 days for the remainder of the unexpired term. Mr. Luchetti's appointment is effective immediately and will continue through December 31, 2031.

Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve the appointment of Robert R. Luchetti, Jr. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

Bethlehem VFD, MOU for Weekend EMS Coverage, Extension
Finance Director Coyne reported that the MOU with the Bethlehem Volunteer Fire Department for county-wide weekend EMS coverage requires annual renewal. An agreement was reached to extend the MOU for an additional one-year term. The County Commission was asked to ratify the extension, which provides funding to the department in the amount of $30,000.

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

Election official trainees to be appointed election officials (HB4865)
Election Coordinator Allietta reported the House Bill 4865 permits county commissions to establish an Election Official Trainee Program for 16- and 17-year-old students who are not yet registered to vote. Participating students must declare a political party affiliation, and no more than one student from each of the two major political parties may serve in a precinct. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, obtain written approval from a parent or legal guardian, and, if Election Day falls on a school day, secure written approval from their school principal. Establishment of the program is an official action that requires approval by vote of the County Commissioners.

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

Elections, Polling Locations, Vance Church as a temporary location for Pct 120
Election Coordinator Allietta reminded the County Commission that the Poplar Ave. firehouse is not available to be a polling location for the upcoming election due to planned renovations. She stated that she was able to obtain approval for Vance Church to be the temporary polling location for Precinct 120. Approval of the location was recommended.

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

Belomar Region 10 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
Finance Director Coyne presented the Participation Agreement for the 2027 Region 10 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was provided by Belomar Regional Council. She explained that FEMA requires local governments to have an approved Hazard Mitigation plan to remain eligible for non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. Approval was requested to enter into the voluntary participation agreement.

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

West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, Dilapidated Properties Program (DLAP), Grant
Finance Director Coyne reported that the County is working with the Belomar Regional Council to apply for a Dilapidated Properties Program grant to demolish three structures located on County-owned property, including one on Apple Pie Ridge and two on Pens Drive. The grant application is due November 3, and the application will be presented to the Commission for consideration once project costs have been finalized. She further noted that, to demolish dilapidated structures, the County must either have a dilapidated structure ordinance and a process or obtain the property owner's consent for demolition. No action was required at this time.

Ohio County E911, Staffing
Director Pritt provided an update on the 911 dispatcher staffing shortage. He reported that four new employees have been hired; however, the department remains understaffed by two positions. He also noted that an additional employee is expected to retire in November. Director Pritt further reported on a proposal received from RESQ*911 and stated that he had explored the use of traveling dispatchers through getRESQ911. He advised that the option would be costly, with an estimated expense of approximately $160,000 for two personnel over a six-month period.

Assessor, Advice and Consent for New Hire, Melissa Hess
County Assessor Hoffman reported on the vacant position within her office and requested the advice and consent of the County Commission to hire Melissa Hess to fill the position.

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

Prosecutor, Advice and Consent for New Hire, Lauren White
Finance Director Coyne reported that the Prosecutor's Office has a vacant position and requested the advice and consent of the County Commission to hire Lauren White to fill the position. She noted that Lauren White has previously been employed by the County.

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

Addressing, New Road Names, Pieta Dr and Angelus Ln
Finance Director Coyne reported that the Addressing Committee requested approval of two new road names in Ohio County, Peita Drive and Angelus Lane. The roads were requested by the group that recently purchased the Miller Farm near West Liberty. Both roads will intersect with Long Run Road.

> Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the new road names. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed with a unanimous vote of the County Commission.

Employment Matters, Matter 2
Commission President Abraham stated that this matter would require discussion in executive session at a later date and recommended that it be tabled until that time.

- **Staff and Elected Official Reports**

  - **Facilities**

    Courthouse Annex (former AEP) HVAC
    Finance Director Coyne reported that the air conditioning system serving the front portion of the first floor and the main courtroom of Family Court failed the previous week. She stated that the replacement part has been ordered but is expected to take approximately eight weeks to arrive. The part will be installed immediately upon delivery, provided the building has not transitioned to the heating season. In the meantime, the County is proceeding toward the 5G process required for the selection of architects and engineers, to upgrade and replace the system.

    Ohio County Corrections Center
    Finance Director Coyne reported that the final inmates and staff were relocated from the facility on the preceding Friday. She further stated that Administrator Russell will arrange a tour of the facility for the Couty Commissioners upon his return.

  - **Emergency Services**

    Sheriff of Ohio County
    Sheriff Croft reported that operations within the Ohio County Sheriff's Office experienced some disruption, requiring the temporary relocation of personnel within the office. He noted that Administrator Russell and Mr. Hartman are working diligently to address the issue.

    Commissioner Wharton commended Sheriff Croft and Chief Deputy Lewis, along with the West Virginia State Police, the West Liberty Police Department, and the Wheeling Police Department for their coordinated response and handling of the recent situation in West Liberty.

    Ohio County E911
    Director Pritt acknowledged the ongoing internet and telephone service disruptions and reported that 911 services remained operational throughout the outage.

    Emergency Management
    Director Campbell reported that Ohio County has established both a swift water team and a scuba team. He noted that Sheriff Croft authorized Tom Fledderus of Ohio County EMS and Mike Klein of the Valley Grove Volunteer Fire Department to serve on the scuba team, enabling them to assist with incidents throughout the state as needed.

    Director Campbell further reported that the County's swift water team includes members of the Ohio County Sheriff's Department, along with Wayne Ferrell, Tom Fledderus of the Wheeling Fire Department, Donny Howard of Stone Church, and Mike Klein of the Valley Grove Volunteer Fire Department. He stated that grant funding from Expand Energy was used to purchase equipment for the team, enhancing the County's ability to respond to future emergency incidents.

On the emergency management side, Director Campbell reported that he and Dave Weaver are working to complete a national qualification process by December, which will support eligibility for Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) funding. He also advised that he has applied for Emergency Management Status III designation and is awaiting a final determination. According to Director Campbell, the designation would expand eligibility for additional grants and loan opportunities.

- **Finance Director Becky Coyne**

Finance Director Becky Coyne presented the list of Payables to the Commissioners for review.

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

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

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

- **Assessor**

Exonerations

Finance Director Coyne presented a list of forty-eight (48) exonerations recommended by the Assessor's Office. The exonerations would reduce tax revenue by a total of $312,522. She noted that the list included a significant exoneration for Team Sledd, which resulted from the failure to apply the Freeport Exemption to inventory. She stated that the exonerations had been reviewed and were found to be reasonable, and approval of the exonerations was requested.

County Assessor Hoffman provided additional information regarding the approximately $260,000 exoneration. She explained that the Business Personal Property Clerk had filed the Freeport Exemption but failed to enter it into the system. She reported that the matter is being corrected.

County Assessor Hoffman also mentioned that she is working with software systems to see how many supplemental tickets are being made each month, in hopes of providing a monthly report to the County Commission.

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

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, October 6, 2026, in Room 215 of the City-County Building, 1500 Chapline Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, promptly at 8:00 am. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 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 22, 2026.

Zachary T. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, County Administrator