The County Commission of Ohio County WV
Minutes of a Regular Meeting for
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

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

Members of the public can watch County Commission meetings LIVE at:
www.youtube.com/@OhioCountyCommissionWV

- **County Commission members present:**
  Commission President Zachary T. Abraham
  Commissioner Don Nickerson
  Commissioner Randy Wharton

- **Staff members present:**
  County Administrator Randy Russell
  County Solicitor Don Tennant
  Finance Director Becky Coyne
  Election Coordinator Erin Allietta
  Chief Deputy Kent Lewis
  EMA Director Lou Vargo

- **Other public officials present:**
  Sheriff Nelson Croft
  Assessor Tiffany Hoffman

- **Call to Order**
  - Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 215 of the City County Building at 8:00am. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **Delegations**
  - None

- **Review and Approval of the Meeting Minutes**
  - Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, June 6, 2026, meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Grants**
  - **Help America Vote Act (HAVA), Grant Application**
    Administrator Russell stated that we seek your approval to apply for the HAVA grant in the amount of $167,061.50 to replace our twenty-year-old DS200 Scanner and Tabulators. This is the piece of equipment that scans and casts your ballot. The total cost of

replacement is $368,671.00. ES&S is offering a trade in credit of $34,550 on the old equipment as well as the DS450 that has not functioned properly during the last two elections. Net cost $334,123.00. There is a fifty percent match with the County's share totaling $167,061.50. We want to apply for this now, as there is less competition for the HAVA grant during off-year elections. The administration recommends your approval of this grant application

- Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve submitting the grant application. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **OJP FY 2026 Special Attorney's Program, Grant Application**
  Administrator Russell stated that the Office of Justice Programs has issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity to hire Special Assistant United States Attorney's within the local prosecutor's office. The Special Assistant will focus on investigating human and drug trafficking. The grant will cover the cost salary and benefits, plus twenty percent for equipment, technology and other costs for a period of three years. The administration recommends your approval of this grant application.

  - Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve submitting the grant application. The motion was seconded by Commission Nickerson. The motion carried by a unanimous vote

- **Victims of Crime Assistance, Grant Application**
  Administrator Russell stated that this VOCA grant partially funds the Victim/Witness Coordinator in the Prosecutor's office. The amount of our application will be $38,235, and while there is no match required for this grant, we do have other costs associated with the position. We have applied for and received this grant for longer than anyone can remember. The administration recommends your approval of our grant application.

  - Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve submitting the grant application. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **West Virginia Department of Tourism, America250 Mural, Grant Application**
  Administrator Russell stated that in conjunction with America250, Governor Morrisey launched a statewide initiative designed to celebrate West Virginia's rich and local heritage through hand-painted murals. With that, Tourism is offering grants of up to $5,000 to any County that participates, to help cover the cost of the mural. We have selected a mural proposed by local artist, Vondell Bell, as the official mural for Ohio County. Vondell's rendering appears later in your packet. The administration recommends your approval of this application for this grant.

  - Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve submitting the grant application. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carry by a unanimous vote.

- **Unfinished Business**

  - **Ohio County Group Health Insurance, Stipends**

Administrator Russell stated that this matter was tabled at the last meeting. After much consideration, the administration is recommending keeping in place the opt-out payments for those employees who decline coverage under the County's Employee Group Health Insurance. We also recommend keeping the stipends at the same levels: $2,000 for an individual and $6,000 for the family. The stipends will be paid over the twelve-month fiscal year. The administration seeks your approval of our recommendation.

- Commission President made a motion to approve keeping the opt-out payments. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **New Business**

  - **Ohio County Employee Health Insurance Proposal, Revised**
    Administrator Russell stated that at your May 19 meeting, Commissioners approved the Employee Health Insurance proposal for the 2026-27 fiscal year. As a result of transactional challenges, the administration is recommending that the payment of the employees' responsibility of a portion of the deductible be last-in rather than first-in as originally proposed. This would mean that the County's HRA would continue to pay its share of the deductible, before the employee.

    - Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the change to the Employee Health Insurance proposal. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motions. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

  - **Airport, ACTC Rehabilitation Phase 2, Construction Contract**
    Administrator Russell stated that the construction contract with Allegheny Construction Group, Inc. from Pittsburgh in the amount of $1,566,000 to complete the work of this project is ready for execution. Mr. Tennant reviewed the document and found everything to be in order. This work will include replacing the glass in the air traffic control tower, additional asbestos abatement, new floor, and some new roofing. The County's match will amount to $19,589. The administration recommends the award of the contract to Allegheny Construction and seeks your approval for the County Administrator to execute the contract agreement on behalf of the County Commission.

    - Commission President Abraham made a motion to award the contract to Allegheny Construction and authorize the County Administrator to execute the contract agreement on behalf of the County Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

  - **Airport, Runway 3-21 Runway Rehabilitation**
    Administrator Russell stated that while working with the FAA on this project, we found that there was more grant availability that total cost of our project. As a result, we have modified the Scope of Work on this project to include rehabilitation Taxiways A and D. The low bidder for the project is JJ Cunningham from Celebration FL, who has agreed to honor their unit prices on the bid for the additional work. The lighting in this contract is a specialty. The administration recommends the award of a contract for this work to JJ Cunningham in the amount of $919,640.00 and seeks your approval to apply for the grant through the FAA in the amount of $1,087,071. The total cost of the project is $1,154,812 and the County's match will be $28,850.

- Commission President Abraham made a motion to award the contract to JJ Cunningham, to increase the scope of work for the project and to authorize the County Administrator to execute the construction contract agreement and FAA grant agreement on behalf of the County Commission. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Community Impact Network (CINI) and New Bridge Academy's request for a Letter of Support**
  Administrator Russell stated that Community Impact Network and New Bridge Academy have requested your support for their 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request. These organizations are requesting $3,000,000 to retire the debt on their building. CINI operates the Newbridge Academy for Kids in downtown Wheeling. A Letter of Support is in front of you. The administration seeks your approval of the Letter of Support.

  - Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve and submit the Letter of Support for Community Impact Network and New Bridge Academy. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Board Appointments**

  Northern Panhandle Home Consortium
  Administrator Russell stated that the County Commission appoints three members to the Northern Panhandle Home Consortium. At your last meeting, Commissioners appointed Jeremy West to the Consortium. We have recently been advised that both Lisa Badia and Missy Ashmore are interested in being reappointed to the County representatives to the Consortium. We recommend your approval of both to NPHC.

  - Commission President Abraham made a motion to reappoint Lisa Badia and Missy Ashmore to the Northern Panhandle Home Consortium. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Sheriff's Law Enforcement, Open Position**
  Sheriff Croft reported that he currently has one open position for deputy sheriff that he would like to fill. He still that this position was budgeted for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

  - Commission President Abraham made a motion to authorize the Sheriff to fill the open position. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **County Property, Liability, Automobile, Cyber Self-Insurance**
  Administrator Russell state that before the County Commissioners is a proposal from WVCorp for the County's property, liability, automobile, and cyber insurance totaling $323,477 for coverages equal to or better than the coverage will have with our current provider. As Commissioners are aware, WVCorp is the public entity risk pool in West Virginia, meaning that all participants in the pool are essentially insuring each other. With this coverage, should there be a catastrophic loss incurred by another covered entity, we could be asked to pay additional contributions. However, the pool has been in existence since 2007, that has not happened to date. At present, there are fifty-one WV counties, 114 WV municipalities, and 195 WV authorities participating in the risk pool. Our insurance

premiums for this fiscal year were $360,361, this would represent a 14% savings off that number. Having said that, our current provider has yet to provide us with a renewal quote yet. Municipal insurance in the State has become very difficult to find and, as a result, we are expecting an increase of 15% from our current insurance carrier which means that the risk pool would represent a 36% savings. Again, since this is the last meeting of the fiscal year, and our current provider has not quoted the renewal, we seek your approval to move the County's insurance to WVCorp, subject to our current provider not providing a competitive quote by Monday, June 22.

- Commissioner Nickerson requested that the administration obtain a definition for the term catastrophic. Commissioner Wharton questioned the need for going to the risk pool and suggested that the administration put out a Request for Proposal for next year's coverage. Commissioners that requested that County Solicitor Tennant conduct additional research on the pool, their financial stability, and experience. The matter was held over to the next meeting.

- **Staff and Elected Official Reports**

  - **County Administrator Randy Russell**

    The June 2026 jail bill is currently being reviewed by the City Solicitor.

  - **Finance Director Becky Coyne**

    - **Payables**

      Finance Director Coyne stated that before the County Commissioners are lists of the County payables requiring payment since the last meeting totaling $1,198,770.38. Unless there are any questions about the payables, the administration seeks your approval to pay the invoices.

      - Commission President Abraham made a motion to pay the invoices listed on the payables sheet. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

    - **Unpaid Invoices**

      For informational purposes only, before you is a list of open and unpaid invoices as of this date totaling $300,498.02. No official action is required

    - **Budget Revision # 3**

      Finance Director Coyne stated that before the County Commissioners is County Budget Revision #3 for review. The administration recommends approval of Budget Revision #3.

      - Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve Budget Revision #3. Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote

  - **Assessor**

- **Exonerations**

Administrator Russell stated that before the County Commissioners is a list of forty exonerations that have been recommended by the Assessor, all of which are to correct incorrect assessments, and all of which reduce taxes in total by $14,914.81. We have reviewed all of he exonerations and found them to be reasonable. The administration recommends your approval of these exonerations. Assessor Hoffman reported that so many exonerations at this meeting due to the fact exonerations have not been submitted the past couple of meetings and that many of the exonerations are the result of new employee errors.

- Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the exonerations. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Certificates of Re-entry**
  Administrator Russell stated the before the County Commissioners is a list of seven Certificates of Re-Entry to add these properties back onto the tax rolls. We recommend your approval of these Certificates of Re-Entry.

- Commission President Abraham made a motion to approve the certificates of reentry. Commission Nickerson seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

- **Emergency Management Director Lou Vargo**

Director Vargo stated that since this was his last meeting, he would like to read a statement. Mr. Vargo thanked the County Commission as the Administration for providing him the opportunity of serving the residents of Ohio County for the past thirty-seven plus years. He went on to say that he hoped that the County Commissioners would continue to support Ohio County Emergency Management and Ohio County Emergency Medical Services.

- The County Commissioners thanked Director for his many years of service. Director Vargo was given a standing ovation by all present.

- **Commission Board Reports**

None

- **Commissioner Comments**

None

- **Future Meetings and Important Dates**
  - *Friday, June 19, 2026, Juneteenth/WV Day, observed (Holiday)*
  - *Friday, July 03, 2026 – Independence Day, observed (Holiday)*
  - **Tuesday, July 07, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
  - **Tuesday, August 04, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
  - **Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**

- *Monday, September 7, 2026 – Labor Day (Holiday)*
- **Tuesday, September 8, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- **Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- **Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- *Monday, October 12, 2026 – Columbus Day (Holiday)*
- **Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- *Tuesday, November 3, 2026 – General Election Day (Holiday)*
- **Monday, November 9, 2026, at 9:00am Board of Canvassers**
- **Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at 8:00am Regular Meeting**
- *Wednesday, November 11, 2026 – Veterans Day (Holiday)*
- **Tuesday, November 24, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- *Thursday, November 26, 2026 – Thanksgiving Day (Holiday)*
- *Friday, November 27, 2026 – Lincoln's Day (Holiday)*
- **Tuesday, December 1, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- **Tuesday, December 15, 2026, at 8:00am, Regular Meeting**
- *Thursday, December 24, 2026 – Christmas Eve (4 hour Holiday)*
- *Friday, December 25, 2026 – Christmas Day (Holiday)*

There being no further business to address, the meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

I, Zachary T. Abraham, President of the County Commission of Ohio County, and Randel A. Russell, County Administrator of the County Commission of Ohio County do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct transcript from the minutes of a regular meeting of the County Commission of Ohio County held at the City County Building Room 215, 1500 Chapline Street, Wheeling, WV on June 16, 2026, and that the meeting was duly called and held in all respects in accordance with the laws of the Ste of West Virginia and bylaws of the County Commission and that a quorum was present.

Zachary T. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, County Administrator