



Summer Caucuses with State Lawmakers

Village Caucus

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Call to Order/Welcome – The County Caucus met virtually on Wednesday, August 4, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. via GoToMeeting. Rosanna Hoelzle, administrator for the Village of Swanton and caucus facilitator, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

Caucus members in attendance included:

- Laurie Adams, Managing Principal, DGL Consulting Engineers, LLC
- Genna Biddix, Village Administrator, Village of Fayette
- Michael Brillhart, Village Administrator, Village of North Baltimore
- Victor Coleman, External Affairs, FirstEnergy/Toledo Edison
- Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer, Council Member, Village of Whitehouse
- Donna Dettling, Administrator, Village of Archbold
- Janet Goldner, Mayor, Village of North Baltimore
- Sarah Helbig, Executive Director of Marketing, Jones & Henry Engineers, Ltd.
- Rosanna Hoelzle, Village Administrator, Village of Swanton
- David Hower, Village Administrator, Village of Elmore
- Heather Lumbrezer, Fiscal Officer, Village of Metamora
- Mark Stahl, County Commissioner, Ottawa County, Chair of TMACOG
- Roberta Streiffert, Senior Rural Development Specialist, Great Lakes Community Action Partnership
- Tim Suter, Regional External Affairs, FirstEnergy Service Company
- Tony Swartz, Financial Officer, Village of North Baltimore

Non-caucus members in attendance included:

- Lori Brodie, Northwest Regional Liaison, Office of Ohio Auditor Keith Faber
- Reid Courtney, LSC Fellow, Office of Ohio State Rep. Haraz Ghanbari
- Meghan Gallagher, Regional Business Development Coordinator and Account Manager, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission
- Erica Krause, Northwest Ohio Regional Representative, Office of Ohio U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown
- Christa Luttmann, Northwest Regional Liaison, Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine

TMACOG staff in attendance included:

- Jennifer Allen, Executive Secretary
- Alex Aspacher, Public Information Specialist
- Bill Best, Vice President of Finance and Administration
- Tim Brown, President
- David Gedeon, Vice President of Transportation
- Kari Gerwin, Director of Water Quality Planning
- Sara Guiher, Water Quality Planner

- Eric Kostecky, Water Quality Associate
- Gilda Mitchell, Director of Membership and Outreach
- Nate Reiter, Accountant
- Roger Streiffert, Transportation Planner
- Michael Tippett, Director of Communications

Overview of Meeting – Discussion of Issues - The following topics were discussed by the caucus:

- **Water/sewer funding through the American Rescue Plan**
 - Rosanna Hoelzle said \$250 million in ARPA funds is available through the Ohio Department of Development for water and sewer projects. Funds are available for design and construction. Cooperative regional projects will receive priority ranking. Smaller communities have unfunded mandates for household sewage treatment systems and combined sewer overflows that could be addressed.
 - Genna Biddex said Fayette is applying for ARPA funds for a large infrastructure project.
 - Sarah Helbig, Jones and Henry Engineers, shared discussion from the previous caucus session that county engineers may not be directly involved water and wastewater projects. There is a sense of urgency when applying for these funds, but the application review timeline is still unclear. She speculated that shovel-ready projects may score higher, but design projects may be funded and prioritized for future rounds of funding.
 - Northwestern Water and Sewer District and the City of Toledo are seeking funds for a regional project for an additional sewer line from Rossford to the Toledo treatment plant.
 - Tim Brown said communities have expressed difficulty in providing the 20 percent match required for federal projects.
 - Erica Krause provided an overview of the federal funding and offered help with applications and information on the process. She discussed the \$500 billion infrastructure funding that will be available over five years for transit, water infrastructure, broadband, bridges, and “Buy American Build American.” The bipartisan reconciliation bill includes funds for the care economy and human infrastructure.
 - Rebecca Conklin Kleiboemer said many communities lack political will to raise taxes in order to provide matching funds for projects and perform long-term maintenance of infrastructure investments. She wondered if there were regional studies to look into these issues and suggested a bootcamp-type training to familiarize new elected officials with these challenges and resources.
 - Eric Kostecky said the University of Toledo Public Administration Department may offer student-led studies as part of coursework.
- **Retroactive treatment of temporary withholding**
 - Rosanna Hoelzle said House Bill 110 allows people working off-site to request refunds of income taxes paid in their employer’s municipality. Currently the impact to local governments is unknown. Decreases in funding from previous years may affect fiscal planning.

- **Income tax withholding provision**

- For those working from home during pandemic and possibly in the future, there could be an impact of tax withholdings. This could impact local governments due to the unknown of the withholding amounts.

What legislative action might be helpful?

- Genna Biddex said has there been discussion about funding projects without revenue streams such as stormwater and streets projects. The challenge is funding these projects proactively without an underlying flooding problem, so many often wait until infrastructure is failing.
- Kari Gerwin said funding is often targeted toward green stormwater infrastructure and stream restoration projects. FEMA funds may be available to upgrade infrastructure for climate resiliency.
- Sarah Helbig said EPA funds may be available for brownfield sites.

Roundtable Discussion

- North Baltimore has \$10 million in major roadway projects, replacement of 100-year-old water mains, and issues with railroad crossings.
- Whitehouse is incrementally raising tax revenue to fund improvements rather than seeking more debt. The water tower needs repair/replacement. The village is in a 20-year contract with Toledo and does not charge service fees for water distribution. Many projects have been put off due to the pandemic.
- Swanton has road projects and other capital improvements, and is working on walkability projects, milling, filling, and crack sealing. The village is also working on a new website and community welcome guide.
- TMACOG applied for a U.S. EPA grant for water workforce development that will recruit and train water and sewer operators. TMACOG is still awaiting an announcement on funding from U.S. EPA. Members expressed interest in pursuing this initiative with other funds if a grant is not awarded.

Adjourn – Rosanna Hoelzle thanked everyone for participating in the caucus and adjourned the meeting.