

What if?
Commissioners
participate
in EMA drill.

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Barn Quilt
Trail to
celebrate
100th at
Lodge / Page 3



Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners
25 West Jefferson St.
Jefferson Ohio 44047



Ashtabula County Insights

November 2017
Volume 1, Issue 9

Budget Advisory group gets down to business

Serving on this year's Budget Advisory Committee are (seated) Susan Hill and Kristen Daubenspeck; Jeff Magyar, Bud Hill and Dave Bogardus.



YOUR VOICE

President Kozlowski responds to citizens' questions



Q What steps are being taken to address projected reductions in county revenue in 2018?



Commissioners and the five-member Budget Advisory Committee (see photo at left) began work sessions with county elected officials, department heads and managers on Oct. 23. Many hours will be spent at the table listening to their 2018 budget requests and the rationale behind the dollars they are requesting. These sessions are invaluable windows to the operations of every county office and department whose budget comes under the Commissioners' jurisdiction.

After receiving this information, the Board and County Administrator Janet Discher will begin the process of reconciling requests with the anticipated revenues for 2018. Of particular concern for the Board is a projected decrease of \$1.3 million in taxes that were once collected on Medicaid services provided in the county.

Do you have a question for Casey Kozlowski?

Call 576-3750 or email

crkzlowski@ashtabulacounty.us

Ashtabula County INSIGHTS

is published monthly by the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners:
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Kathryn Whittington, Vice-President
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The current and previous issues are always available for download from the county's website, ashtabulacounty.us, and the Ashtabula Wave, ashtabulawave.org.

NOVEMBER 2017 meetings

7 10:00 a.m., Commissioners work session
1:00 p.m., Commissioners agenda

14 10 a.m., Commissioners work session
1 p.m. Commissioners agenda

21 10:30 a.m., Commissioners work session
1:00 p.m., Commissioners agenda

28 10 a.m., Commissioners work session

6:30 p.m. Public meeting
7:00 p.m. Agenda meeting
Off-site, Monroe Township, 5578 S. Monroe Center Road, Monroe Township

All other meetings held in the commissioner's second-floor meeting room, 25 W. Jefferson Street (old courthouse, Jefferson. Elevator, ramp available.

'13' lucky number for YMCA program youngsters

Friday, Oct. 13, was a lucky day for 13 children who attend the pre/after-school program at the Ashtabula YMCA.

That's the day the youngsters, who had a day off from classes at Buckeye Local and Ashtabula Area City schools, were treated to the Challenge Course at [Lake Erie Canopy Tours](#). The Delaware North outdoor adventure project is just west of The Lodge and was built earlier this summer in the forest of Geneva State Park.

Annette Griffith, Learning Center director for the YMCA's pre-school and school-age programs, says Lodge General Manager Eric Frantz offered the course to the YMCA students on the day the course held an open house. But transportation could not be arranged, and Frantz worked with the program to offer the course on another day, when the schools were closed.

Griffith says parents were given notification of at least two weeks so their children could participate in the School Days Off activity. The YMCA offers a Success Before/After School program that gives parents the option of dropping off a child as early as 6:30 am.; the child's school bus makes a stop at the YMCA. A similar after-school options is available, as well, until 6 p.m.

Additionally the YMCA has satellite programs at Ridgeview and Kingsville elementary schools.

The School Days Off program does the same thing, but for the entire day, when school is closed for snow or a holiday.

Tuition for the program is private pay and through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Griffith says there were 13 children in the School Days Off program for Oct. 13.

"Not everybody from (the Success Before/After) program attended that day," she says. Parents who elected to have their children participate had to sign waivers provided by the Challenge Course in advance.

The participants ranged in age from 5 to 12.



Although it's short and relatively close to terra firma, the zipline section of the Challenge Course is thrilling and a bit intimidating when you are only 6 or 7 years old. The youngsters from the Ashtabula YMCA's School Days Off program got a chance to test their courage and learn about themselves during a visit to the course at Geneva State Park in October. The Lodge and Conference Center and Lake Erie Canopy Tours sponsored the visit.

All of them had to go through an orientation program with a guide before being placed on the Challenge Courses.

"They did the kids' course and were able to even go on a short zipline. It was a short span, but they got to do that," Griffith says. "I thought that was so cool."

Lake Erie Canopy Tours treated the youngsters to the course, an activity that otherwise would have been beyond the reach of some of the families. The cost is around \$40 per child; Griffith said one family has four children in the program, and each child was able to participate in the Challenge Course.

For all 13 youngsters, it was a lucky day to be off school and living in Ashtabula County. "They loved it," Griffith says. "Some of the little ones might have been a little scared when it came to the zipline part. Some of the kids got to go back through and do the course two or three times."



Barn Quilts Trail to celebrate 100th

When the Ashtabula County Barn Quilt Trail Steering Committee was formed in the winter of 2014, members wondered if they would be able to get a dozen barn quilts on the trail.

On Nov. 20, the committee will celebrate the installation of a barn quilt at the 100th location in Ashtabula County. Some locations have multiple barn quilts.

The celebration will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. at The Lodge and Conference Center at Geneva-on-the-Lake. The event is free and open to the public. All barn quilt owners have been invited, as well as trail stakeholders and supporters. That includes the Board of Commissioners and The Lodge and Conference Center, which saw the tourism value of having a trail and linking it to other rural attractions, including wineries, farms and covered bridges.

Indeed, three of the county's covered bridges sport colorful 8-by-8-foot barn quilts: Graham Road, South Denmark and Mechanicsville.

The Lodge and Conference Center will host an exhibit of local barn quilt history beginning Nov. 20. The exhibit will include a barn quilt, photos and informational signs and be displayed in the lobby through the winter months.

A new documentary film about the county's barn quilts and the farms that host them will run on a monitor as part of the exhibit. "The Story Quilter's Threads: The Barn Quilts of Southern Ashtabula County," tells the county's barn quilt trail story through the words of



Barn quilts are changing the face of the Ashtabula County countryside. This one measures 12-by-12 feet and inspired the owners and artists, Jefferey and Rachel Scribber, to transform the side of a block building into a faux barn facade. Their shop, at Route 7 and Marcy Road, Pierpont Township, was likewise a product of the trail: The couple have built and painted many of the large barn quilts in Ashtabula County.

owners, artists and founders.

The premiere of the documentary will be at the celebration on Nov. 20. The event will be held in a Lodge ballroom to provide an excellent viewing experience. Copies of the DVD will be available that day at a cost of \$20 each. The DVD is a fundraiser for the barn quilt trail.

For more information about the county's Barn Quilt Trail, visit the trail's website at barnquiltsashtabulacounty.com.

Celebrate the 100th

- ➔ Nov. 20, 2017, 1-3 p.m.
- ➔ Ballroom of the Lodge & Conference Center at GOTL Routes 534 and 531

Refreshments, barn quilt exhibit opening in lobby and premiere of documentary film about the Ashtabula County Barn Quilts Trail.

Seniors of the Year get proclamations from Board

Each nominee was a winner at the 20th annual Ashtabula County Senior of the Year luncheon, held Oct. 13 at Martini's in Saybrook Township.

The annual event puts the spotlight on a county resident, 60 or older, whose work as a volunteer and contributing member of the community, deserves special attention. The award and luncheon at which it is announced are sponsored by the Senior Care Network of Ashtabula County.

When it came time to announce the winner from the slate of 14, each one of the nominees was presented the award, along with a proclamation from the Board of Commissioners.

The 14 award winners and the contribution(s) for which they were nominated are:

Kristine DeCaro, 66, who has worked with the Ashtabula County Special Olympics Booster Club;

Evelyn Pendleton, 78, who has volunteered with the Volunteer Ombudsman program since 2009;

Paulette Hillyer, 68, a volunteer with Bella Care Hospice;

Patricia Blum, 79, who is a volunteer ombudsman and works with residents of two nursing homes;

Mary Smith, 85, is an Ashtabula Senior Center volunteer who possesses "a positive personality and wonderful demeanor";

Evelyn Thomas, 86, volunteers with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, contributing more than 7,300 hours of service to local nonprofits;

Hazel Oneal, 73, who volunteers with the Garage Sale Bonanza and is known for her cheerful and kind attitude;

Mary Martin, 73, organizes the Ashtabula Senior Center's annual rummage sale and has

logged 8,000 service hours with the Garage Sale Bonanza;

Kathy McCarty, 64, co-founder with the late Chris Angerman, of the Ashtabula County Barn Quilt Trail;

Dean Moore, 67, organizes events at the Rae-Ann Nursing Home and provides one-on-one encouragement and comfort to residents;

Judy Deitke, 69, who raises funds for Samartan Houe and other charities;

David Speelman, 72, who owned the Chalk Box with his wife, Cathy, until recently, and is involved in many community-building activities in the downtown Ashtabula area;

Ginnie Hassett, 65, operates the Harbor Cat Rescue, a free-range, no-kill sanctuary;

Ron Winters, 72, has dedicated his life to helping others through the Salvation Army and one-on-one assistance.

Study delves deeply into county tourism drivers, trends

Wine.

That one word sums up what tourists most often associate with Ashtabula County.

That finding emerged from interviews with the people who drive the county's tourism industry, the tourists themselves. It was revealed in a report compiled from research conducted by North Star for the Ashtabula County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) earlier this year.

The data was released to ACCVB members on a flash drive during the organization's annual luncheon at The Lodge and Conference Center in October.

The data is valuable to members because it can help them target specific demographics and locations with marketing, says Stephanie Siegel, executive director of the ACCVB. The bureau paid for the study and provided the results at no cost to members. Lodging tax, administered by the County Board of Commissioners, funds the ACCVB, along with membership fees and other revenue.

Here are the major findings of the report:

- Just over half (51 percent) of all respondents were from the Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown areas. The rest were mostly from elsewhere in Ohio, as well as Pittsburgh and other Pennsylvania locations.
- Ashtabula County often drew associations with wineries and wine growers. Forty-three percent said that the wineries in Ashtabula County were the most important factor to its identity. When asked what best describes Ashtabula County, 41 percent said "Wine Country."
- Ashtabula County often found itself in close competition with Sandusky and the Shores and Islands. The county finished second to Sandusky in three categories: access to the lake, outdoor recreation and family-friendly events and activities.
- When it came to family-friendly events and activities, however, millennials were more likely to think of Ashtabula County than any other age group.
- In terms of what is missing in Ashtabula County, respondents most consider lodging variety, unique dining, retail, and entertainment, and awareness of assets to be lacking in the county.



The report showed that "Comfortable Empty Nesters" top the "Tapestry" profile of who visits Ashtabula County. These visitors have above-average net worth and also are above average in age. The data was culled from 3,000 actual hotel records, with 50 percent of the records from The Lodge, 15 percent from Sleep Inn, 10 percent from Lakehouse Inn and 25 percent from Hampton Inn.

 **Ashtabula County: Close to home for tourists**

Top per capita Ashtabula County tourism markets:

1. Youngstown-Warren-Boardman
2. Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor
3. Akron
4. Canton-Massillon
5. Erie, Pa.



ACCVB receives state Destination Marketing Advocacy award

The Ashtabula County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) is tops in the state for Destination Marketing Advocacy.

The Ohio Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus gave its first-place award in that category to the ACCVB during its 20th Annual Awards of Excellence Luncheon in Greenville, Ohio, on Sept. 21.

The STAR (State Tourism Achievement Recognition) Awards are presented for outstanding destination marketing and tourism development.

CVBs are destination marketing organizations that are responsible for promoting travel and tourism product awareness to visitors. Funding for the ACCVB is provided by the county's 3 percent lodging tax, the administration of which is a Commissioners' Office function. That office also administers the

2 percent lodging tax that is committed to the Ashtabula County Convention Facilities Authority (CFA), much of which goes toward debt retirement of The Lodge and Conference Center.

The ACCVB also was a runner-up in the print advertisement category of the annual, statewide competition.

"We had tough competition this year," says Stephanie Siegel, executive director of the ACCVB. "Our work was compared to some of the largest tourism organizations in the state. I'm so proud of the work that our team does and it's nice to be recognized by our peers."

Siegel says the ACCVB ordered 90,000 copies of the 2017 Visitors Guide, and all but a few cases of the hefty guide had been distributed by the middle of October. She says the 2018 guide will feature a new format that

will make it even more competitive with the work done by other CVBs in Ohio and across the United States.

The OACVB received more than 100 entries in 10 categories this year. The awards reflect industry trends in destination marketing, increase competitiveness among the entries and improve consistency in evaluation of marketing efforts within the industry. Siegel says "destination marketing advocacy" is basically "the way we tell our story." "It communicates the value of the work that we do to our constituents," Siegel says.

Pieces are judged on achieving their objectives, measuring results and originality. Being singled out for a job well done in the promotion of travel and tourism throughout Ohio is a highly valued achievement, according to the OACVB press release.



Sheriff William Johnson presents his thoughts on the situation during an exercise in the Emergency Operations Center of the county's Emergency Management Agency the morning of Oct. 25. The exercise was based upon a hypothetical radiation-release from the Perry Nuclear Power Plant. Around the table in the OAC are members of the executive team: Mike Fitchet, EMA Director, Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV, Board clerk Lisa Hawkins and Commissioners Kathryn Whittington and Casey Kozlowski.

Only a drill . . .

but had it been the real thing, the county is prepared to respond to a nuclear power plant emergency

On the morning

of Oct. 25, 24 hours following a radiation release from the Perry Nuclear Power Plant in Lake County, Ashtabula County Commissioners gathered in the operations center of the county's Emergency Management Agency (EMA) to tackle the next phase of response: Relocation, Return and Recovery.

The plant was in shutdown. The release that spread across portions of Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties had been contained. Commissioners and officials from many other branches of government and emergency services in all three counties were gathered in their respective county operations centers to deal with the aftermath of the unusual—and **entirely fictional**—event at Perry.

This exercise in emergency management and preparedness is part of the ongoing training and testing that the county's EMA must comply with under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations, says Mike Fitchet, the county's EMA Director. Two FEMA monitors were at each site and will prepare an assessment of the counties' response and performance. Fitchet says that a report on the three-hour exercise will be issued in 90 days.



As the drill gets under way, team members study maps and prepare strategies for dealing with the aftermath of a radiation leak from the power plant. The focus of the drill on Oct. 25 was Relocation, Return and Recovery.

Continued on Page 6

DRILL Continued from Page 5

The situation

Gathered in the basement operations center, commissioners and 39 other officials learned that a section of Harpersfield Township had been evacuated from the exclusion zone after ground measurements indicated unsafe levels of radioactivity from the release. Any farm products from the area could not be sold. Drinking water in the area was not to be consumed, as well. Farmers were not allowed to plow their fields or conduct other activity that might disturb the radioactivity that had fallen onto the land. Businesses were closed, as were roads accessing the exclusion zone.

Yet it was likely that some residents had been overlooked in the initial evacuation efforts; a search of every property would have to be made. Vital services to the affected zones had to be provided. And calls were already coming in from business owners and individuals eager to resume life before the disaster. When could they return? How will the event affect the viability of their business? Who will protect their assets in the affected zone?

Responsibility for safety decisions

Those are the kinds of questions that the county commissioners could expect to receive had the event been anything other than a training exercise. The board members are part of the executive team that also includes the Ashtabula County Sheriff and EMA Director.

“All public safety decisions regarding Ashtabula County under home rule, including Declaration of an Emergency, news releases, evacuation, sheltering, and request from State of Ohio for assistance are decisions that the commissioners would have to make,” Fitchet says.

The Ohio Revised Code requires commissioners to provide Emergency Management and enter into an agreement with First Energy to provide offsite protection under the Radiological Emergency Response Plan, regulated by FEMA, Fitchet says.

While Board President Casey Kozlowski has done the drill in previous years, the October drill was a first for J.P. Ducro and Board Vice President Kathryn Whittington.

“This was my first such exercise and it was an interesting and educational experience,” Commissioner Ducro says. “I am grateful for the many people and departments that participated and provide their expertise to help us make an educated decision on the best course of action for our community. Let us hope the training will not be needed for an actual incident, but this exercise is critical for us to be prepared if it should.”

“I enjoyed participating in the exercise this past



More than three dozen people from law enforcement, emergency services, government, health care, agriculture and other essential services were involved in the exercise on Oct. 25.



Emergency Management Agency Mike Fitchet (left) and commissioners J.P. Ducro IV and Kathryn Whittington study the map that shows the path of a fictional plume of radioactivity released from the Perry Nuclear Power Plant a day earlier. Looking on are Clerk of the Board Lisa Hawkins and Board President Casey Kozlowski. The scenario was created to test the response of Emergency Management Agencies in each of the three affected counties. Commissioners are part of the Executive Team, which includes the county sheriff.

week,” says President Casey Kozlowski. “This was a great opportunity to see our emergency operations center in action. We hope that we never the circumstances that prompt us to activate the EOC, but it was great to see the cooperation amongst agencies from all over Ohio work together to conduct a trial run, should an incident occur in the future.”

Commissioners will be immersed in another, much more extensive drill in 2018. “Next year, we will do a full-scale week-long exercise known as Plume Exposure Pathway,” Fitchet says. “The dry run will be in August with the evaluation in mid-September.”

Ashtabula County’s funding for equipment, training and exercise costs comes from the Perry Nuclear Power Plant’s parent company. FEMA’s requirements, under the RERP, stipulate that responsibility to meet the requirements.

Fitchet says he is thankful for the hundreds of hours of training that each person in the EOC has behind him or her. While the drill was specifically related to a radiologic event, the applications are much broader.

“What we learn from these exercises can be used for all types of large emergencies,” he says.



Commissioners held their Oct. 24 agenda meeting in Harpersfield Township. From left are Trustee Cliff Henry, Commissioners J.P. Ducro IV, Kathryn Whittington and Casey Kozlowski and Trustees Jim Pristov and Ray Gruber. The next off-site meeting is Nov. 28 at Monroe Township, 5578 S. Monroe Center Road. The agenda meeting is 7 p.m.; an open question session is 6:30 p.m.

Meet Your Commissioners

Members of the Public and Officials

The Board of Commissioners of Ashtabula County cordially invite you to attend a Regional Evening Agenda Session to be held Tuesday, November 28, 2017 in Monroe Township. Beginning at 6:30 p.m. there will be an opportunity to meet with the Board to discuss any issues of importance regarding your community.

The regular session of the Board will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND!

**WHERE: MONROE TWP., 5578 S. MONROE CENTER RD.,
MONROE TWP, 44030**

DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2017

TIME: PUBLIC: 6:30P.M. AGENDA: 7:00P.M.



CASEY R. KOZLOWSKI
PRESIDENT



KATHRYN L. WHITTINGTON
VICE-PRESIDENT



J. P. DUCRO IV
COMMISSIONER

**Ashtabula County
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