

HELP WANTED!

Building Department, Ashtabula County Nursing & Rehabilitation Center seek to fill positions: **Page 4**

4-H to hold Chili Cook Off/Family Night, Carnival and Community Encounters

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Tornado season approaching! Attend the EMA's Skywarn Spotters Class! **Page 5**
#MetroParksRocks! Find out why on **Page 6**



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



Ashtabula County Insights

February 2018
Volume 1, Issue 12

Citizens Budget Review Committee at work



The Budget Advisory Committee, a volunteer, citizens review committee, met with commissioners on Feb. 1. The Board brought the members up to date on the gap between the 2018 spending requests and anticipated revenues. From left are Jeff Magyar, Kristen Daubenspeck, Bud Hill and Dave Bogardus.

Eastgate a good investment for county

Q



Why does Ashtabula County have membership in the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, based in Youngstown?

Our membership in **A** [Eastgate](http://eastgatecog.org) (eastgatecog.org) provides the county with access to transportation, regional and environmental planning resources and expertise, as well as networking with regional economic development and government officials. I and Vice-President J.P. Ducro IV serve as representatives to the council.

For residents of the county, the most tangible benefit of this relationship is access to funding from the [Appalachian Regional Commission](http://arc.gov) (arc.gov). The grants from ARC are administered by Eastgate, which also serves as the portal for making application.

In Fiscal Year 2017, Ashtabula County received \$415,000 in grant

See Eastgate, Page 2

Do you have a question for Kathryn Whittington?

Call 576-3750 or email

KLWhittington@ashtabulacounty.us

Ashtabula County INSIGHTS

is published monthly by the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners:
Kathryn Whittington, President
J.P. Ducro IV, Vice-President
Casey Kozlowski, Commissioner

To have Insights delivered via email, send an email to cefeather@ashtabulacounty.us to be added to the mailing list.

The current and previous issues are always available for download from the county's website, ashtabulacounty.us, and the Ashtabula Wave, ashtabulawave.org.

February 2018 meetings

- 6** 10 a.m., work session
- 13** 10 a.m., work session
1 p.m., Commissioners agenda
- 19** Courthouse closed, President's Day
- 20** 3 p.m., work session
- 22** 9 to 11 a.m., work sessions
1:00 p.m., Commissioners agenda
1:30 p.m., FFA proclamation presentation
- March 2** 10:00 a.m., work session
11:00 a.m., Commissioners Agenda

Commissioners make Capital Budget requests

Commissioners sponsored two capital projects in the biennial Capital Projects Bill moving through the Ohio Legislature.

The board's projects are replacing the roof on the Old Courthouse and making improvements to the grandstand at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds, both in Jefferson.

Additionally, the Board also wrote letters of support for requests from Ashtabula County Metroparks and the Platt R. Spencer Historical Society.

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski says the Capital Budget Bill provides funding for community projects in each legislative district in Ohio. Funding requests can be funneled through either the state's administrative or legislative branches. Each of the Board's requests has been submitted through dual channels. He says that requests made through the legislative branch filter down to departments, which can give additional support to the cause. For example, one of Ashtabula County's awards from the last round came through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Commissioners are seeking \$550,000 between their two requests. Replacing the roof on the Old Courthouse is expected to cost \$400,000 and the board is seeking \$300,000 from the state. The red-brick building houses the Commissioners' offices, Covered Bridge Festival Committee office, Building Department, Coroner and Community Services/ Planning office. According to the request, replacement of the roof is necessary in order to preserve the building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The second request is for \$250,000 of the \$310,000 estimate for improving the main grandstand of the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds.

The renovation project would include an upgrade to the existing roof of the grandstand, an extension of the grandstand's west end for ADA seating and new wood decking.

Eastgate, continued from page 1

money from ARC as a result of our Eastgate membership. This money helped fund the North Cedar Street access road project in the City of Geneva. Prior years' projects included the sanitary sewer project on State Route 534, Orwell water facility improvements, surgical equipment for the Geneva Medical Center and a diabetes education and wellness program at Ashtabula County Medical Center.

The county pays a per capita membership fee to participate in Eastgate; the return on that investment is significant.



The slate roof on the Old County Courthouse is falling apart, shingle by shingle. Commissioners have requested state capital money to replace the roof and thereby protect the historical courthouse.

The funding also would provide for a new new 40-by-60-foot maintenance building with cement floor and electrical service.

The Spencer Historical Society is seeking \$35,000 to preserve and restore the penman's former residence on North Myers Road. The house in which Spencer lived in from 1848 to his death in 1864 was donated to the society, which hopes to create a museum to the famous Geneva Township resident.

Commissioner Kozlowski says the awards will not be known until spring, at the earliest. "I am thinking probably April," he says. "It depends on the Legislature; I would expect to have a good idea by April."

Kozlowski, who was 99th District State Representative for 2011-2012, says there was no Capital Budget Bill during that session, therefore he has not experienced the behind-the-scenes decision making that occurs between making the requests and the awards. The first bill was 2014.

How Ashtabula County fared in the last Capital Budget Bill

Ashtabula County received \$925,000 in the state's Capital Projects Bill for 2016-17.

The four projects funded were:

- Glenbeigh Hospital Multipurpose Building, \$400,000;
- Kent State University, design phase of a main classroom building wing, \$325,000;
- Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum, \$100,000;
- Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival Entertainment Pavilion, \$100,000.

'In Fiscal Year 2017, Ashtabula County received \$415,000 in grant money from ARC as a result of our Eastgate membership.'



Ashtabula County's Chief Building Official, Todd Nagy (right), runs a lean department with just four full-time employees: (from left) Administrative Secretary Laura Thompson, Building Inspector Cory Hubbard and Administrative Secretary Cari Ellsworth. The department is open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Building Department continues to tweak service

Todd Nagy, the chief official of the county's Building Department, says he will continue to implement ways to streamline the permitting and approvals processes in 2018.

Nearly two years ago, the department began opening its doors an hour early to accommodate contractors who need to get on the job by 8 a.m., the department's prior opening time. The closing time was moved to 3 p.m.

In 2017, the department signed on two more plan examiners, outside consultants that review commercial building plans. Nagy says the county's review time was "one of the biggest complaints" that the department received and was the result of being at the mercy of the single plan examiner's work load. With the addition of two other consultants, Nagy has backups in the event an examiner can't perform the review in his target of 10 days.

"The turnaround time also depends on the complexity of the project," he says.

All commercial projects are sent out for an independent review; the applicant bears the cost of that review. "I will eventually be obtaining certifications through the state to perform plan reviews, however with all of my other job duties, it makes it difficult to perform reviews in a timely manner," Nagy says.

With that bottleneck addressed, Nagy is turning his attention to making it easier for contractors to complete and file their annual

Just the numbers

Residential Type Permits for 2017:

of Permits Issued: **906**
Estimated Construction Value: **\$21.2 Million**

Commercial Type Permits for 2017:

Permits Issued: **301**
Estimated Construction Value: **\$31.6 Million**

Residential Type Permits for 2016:

of Permits Issued: **808**
Estimated Construction Value: **\$21 Million**

Commercial Type Permits for 2016:

Permits Issued: **266**
Estimated Construction Value: **\$25.7 Million**

registration with the building department.

"It gives us the ability to know who is working in the county and who is doing the work on a project," Nagy says of the required application.

As in the past, some 200 [applications](#) were mailed to contractors in the fall. They must complete the application and return it with the annual fee of \$100. What Nagy is working on for 2019 is an online registration process that would eliminate mailing and returning a completed application. Payment would be handled through a credit card—only cash and checks are accepted now. While the software used by the building department has the

online registration function, the credit card processing, which brings other county officials into play, will require additional discussion and work.

Likewise, Nagy hopes to be able to accept credit cards at the building department's counter, so applicants don't have to remember to bring cash or a checkbook.

Overall, 2017 was a busy year for the department, with a steady stream of residential new construction and remodeling throughout the year. A relatively mild winter helped keep work at a steady pace, although the brutal January 2018 weather has definitely brought about a slow down.

"Within the next month, we'll start to see new projects come in here," Nagy predicts.

The county's big commercial projects were in Austinburg Township, where both a Taco Bell and Dollar General store went up, and in Ashtabula Township, where commercial development is occurring at the corner of Metcalf and Route 20.

Nagy says the five-person department underwent some personnel changes in 2017 that included bringing back Laura Thompson, who had worked there before transferring to the Board of Commissioners office. The department is still looking for a second full-time building/electrical inspector, he says (story on Page 4).

HELP WANTED:

Building Department continues search for inspector with dual certifications

The county's chief building official, Todd Nagy, and commissioners are exploring ways to make the county more competitive as it seeks to fill a vacant inspector position in the department.

Nagy says the county needs a second building inspector with dual certification in both building and electrical safety. Problem is, many other building departments in Ohio also are looking for that person.

"This is not just Ashtabula County, this is all over Ohio," says Nagy, who has been looking for the right person since last fall.

The ideal candidate will have at least five years in the commercial and residential construction field plus be an electrician/have electrical background. The candidate must meet state qualifications and be certified by the state for the dual position.

Nagy says that someone with these kinds of qualifications is in demand both within the industry and government. A younger

'It's a very small pool that we have to draw from.'

person who qualifies often will prefer to stay within the industry as a contractor and make more money. Candidates on the other end of their career timeline aren't that interested in relocating or jumping ship to another position.

Further, Ashtabula County has only two or three neighboring counties from which to draw candidates; the county can't compete with the Cleveland labor market's wages, and Pennsylvania candidates won't have the necessary Ohio certification.

"It's a very small pool that we have to draw from," Nagy says.

Smaller building departments like Ashtabula County's want inspectors with dual certification because it is much more efficient and cost effective than hiring one for each discipline. "It is like sending two people out to the same location," Nagy says of having a dually certified inspector.

Adding to the county's challenges is its geographic immensity. It can take an inspector an hour to drive from one corner to the other. "Our inspector averages about 200 miles a day," he says.

To avoid delays in inspections and building progress, the department uses a subcontractor that provides a qualified inspector three days a week. But Nagy says that is an expensive solution. "I could hire two full-time inspectors for what I am paying this part-time inspector," he says.

The Board of Commissioners is working with Nagy to evaluate the county's inspector pay rates and perhaps make the county's wages more competitive in the market. Doing so, however, will also mean giving the department's sole inspector additional pay in order to maintain pay equality.

Nagy says the candidate search will continue through all the normal channels. And, no, wooing the contract inspector away from his employer won't work—the agreement prohibits that.

County's nursing home holds job fair, offers sign-on bonuses

The "help wanted" sign is out at the Ashtabula County Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Kingsville Township.

The facility held an onsite job fair on Feb. 7, but if you missed it, applications also are being taken at the facility during business hours and on the website (www.ashtacountynursing.com).

Commissioner Casey Kozlowski says the facility is feeling the pinch in the healthcare job market.

"There are a lot of openings overall in the healthcare field," he says. "While they usually have openings (at the ACNRC), we are making a special big push right now."

Three of the full-time positions—RNs, LPNs and STNAs—come with sign-on bonuses.

Other positions open at the facility are in resident service aides, food service workers and housekeeping. Both part- and full-time staff are needed for many of the positions.

The county-owned nursing home is located at 5740 Dibble Road.



Vice President of the Board of Commissioners J.P. Ducro IV makes a point during a meeting of the Board and Budget Advisory Committee. The board continues to wrestle with a 2018 permanent budget as requests fall more than \$3 million short of projected revenues.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

Medical, Dental, Vision and General Volunteers will be needed to serve at this clinic!!!



To register as a volunteer go to:
<https://ramusa.org/volunteer>
and choose "Ashtabula, OH 2018"
under Event Tab.

For more information contact
ramashtabula@gmail.com or
[440-990-1919](tel:440-990-1919)

Ashtabula County
Emergency Management Agency
is hosting a



"SKYWARN" SPOTTERS
CLASS



Monday, March 12, 2018

6:30pm - 8:00 pm

The class will be held at the:

Ashtabula Co. Engineers Office

186 E. Satin St. Jefferson, OH 44047 (2nd floor)

SKYWARN is a National Weather Service program which consists of trained weather spotters who report significant and severe weather to the National Weather Service.

These reports enhance the accuracy and timeliness of warnings, statements and forecasts. The SKYWARN spotter provides a valuable and significant service to the local community, county and state.

The class is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Please register by March 2, 2018 by calling
Ashtabula County EMA at 576-9148
or email: Alicen Limestoll ALimestoll@ashtabulacounty.us





#METROPARKSROCKS!



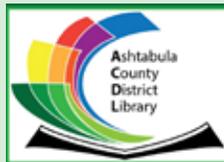
Ashtabula County rocks in MetroParks

Paint the rocks—hike the trails—find the rock—post a picture—win a great prize at the end of the season!

Details on the Ashtabula County Metroparks Facebook Page. Visit the page every day and discover a new Metroparks location for your next family outing!



Sponsored by:



Join us! We're looking for corporate and private sponsors willing to donate services/prizes to #MetroParksRocks! 440-415-3596

Metroparks 2018 programming & events guide available online for download

For the first time in its history, the Ashtabula County Metroparks District has published electronically a programming guide that covers the entire year of events and educational programming at its parks and properties.

The guide was produced with the assistance of the Board of Commissioners' Lodging Tax administrator, who also is a member of the volunteer committee that develops programming for the park.

The 22-page document is available as a [PDF download](#). Publishing the guide electronically saved the Metroparks District thousands of dollars in printing costs while keeping the park's marketing "green."

The document includes information on the #MetroParksRocks! partnership marketing effort with the Ashtabula County District Library and Photographers in the Parks, one of several new programs being offered in the Metroparks System this year.

For more information about Metroparks or to become a volunteer, call Pam Blough at 440-576-0717 or send an [email](#).

Chili, carnival focus on county 4-H program

Commissioners will issue a proclamation declaring March 4-10 as Ohio 4-H Week in Ashtabula County. This year's 4-H centered events actually start in February, with a Chili Cook Off and Family Fun Night on Feb. 23, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The Cook-Off will be at the Fairgrounds, 127 N. Elm St., Jefferson, and will feature a variety of chili recipes.

The \$5 entrance fee includes chili, cornbread, dessert and beverage (children 3 and under are free). Votes will be collected for the favorite chili.

Tickets are available from any 4-H camp counselor or at the Extension Office on Wall Street. This event is sponsored by and benefits Ashtabula County 4-H Camp Counselors.

To enter your chili in the contest, download the entry form from https://ashtabula.osu.edu/sites/ashtabula/files/imce/Program_Pages/4H/Camp/2018%20Chili%20Cook%20Off%20Complete.pdf.

March events

The county's annual 4-H Carnival is 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, March 1, at the Fairgrounds. Food, games and information booths about 4-H clubs and programs will be offered.

An informational event is 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 3, at the Tractor Supply Company's (TSC) Ashtabula Township store.

During 4-H Week, there will be a series of Community Encounters to provide information about 4-H programs.

The locations and dates for the Community Encounters are:

- ▲ Tuesday, March 6, 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Andover Public Library;
- ▲ Tuesday, March 6, 6 to 8 p.m. at Henderson Public Library, Jefferson;
- ▲ Wednesday, March 7, 5 to 7 p.m. at the Conneaut Public Library;
- ▲ Wednesday, March 7, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Geneva Public Library;
- ▲ Thursday, March 8, 5 to 8 p.m. at the Rome Fire Hall.

For more information about these events or the 4-H programs in Ashtabula County, contact the 4-H Youth Development office, 39 Wall St., Jefferson, 576-9008, or send an email to hojt.88@osu.edu.