

2024 State of the County Address #37 - 2024
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office
August 27, 2024

2024 State of the County

Registration for the State of the County address officially began at 11:00 a.m., at the Liberty Center, 951 Liberty Dr., Lancaster, OH. The following Commissioners were present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis and Dave Levacy. There were approximately three-hundred and forty two in attendance including County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle, the Commissioners' staff, elected officials from Fairfield County and the State of Ohio, and residents and business owners from throughout the region.

Welcome

Travis Markwood, President of the Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce, welcomed everyone to the 2024 State of the County Address and spoke about the event sponsors. Kim Barlag, President of the Pickerington Chamber of Commerce, acknowledged all of the elected officials in attendance.

Posting of the Colors/Pledge of Allegiance

The Sheriff's Color Guard Posted the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Markwood.

Invocation

Dr. David Uhl, Superintendent of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities, gave the invocation.

Introduction of County Commissioners and County Administrator

Mr. Markwood introduced County Administrator Aundrea Cordle as the first speaker.

County Administrator Aundrea Cordle

County Administrator Aundrea Cordle welcomed everyone in attendance to the 2024 State of the County Address. She thanked the Chamber staff and Pickerington Chamber for their assistance. She focused on the "Power of Your Word" and what it means. Keeping your word is a critical component of any relationship. People quickly learn if someone has a history of not being able to keep their word. It not only is about respecting others, but respecting yourself and leading by example. She tied this idea back to the promises made and promises kept by the county and the County Commissioners. She explained that each of the three Commissioners will look back on recent years and look back on the initiatives that started as ideas or problems to solve, and will follow up with the progress that has been made over the last few years. She shared some of the big accomplishments with the Strategic Plan and drew attention to the centerpieces that detail the great progress that has been made in these areas of focus the county has been working on. She was also excited to feature how the county invested in the community with investments provided by the American Rescue Plan fiscal recovery funds, which ties directly back to the Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Jeff Fix

Commissioner Jeff Fix stated that Commissioners' predecessors had a tendency to fly under the radar in an attempt to continue getting reelected. He thanked his colleagues and other county elected officials and department heads for not doing the bare minimum and doing the things that are unpopular, but necessary. He provided his belief that if the County removes barriers to

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working then it can help to decrease generational poverty. He spoke on the housing crisis and the disproportionate cost of housing versus other necessary expenditures. Without affordable places to live, other areas of people's lives are impacted as a result. He conducted a housing symposium several years ago to explain to local governments the need for smart growth and planning. Due to initial push-back, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan was pulled back for reevaluation.

Commissioner Fix began meeting with each township, city and village to discuss the plan in greater depth. The County is on track to have cooperative agreements with various townships, cities and villages as a result of these discussions. By using new tax structures to have developers help pay for improvements in their areas, the County can save the taxpayer from any additional costs. He concluded by cementing that what the County is doing is only going to benefit residents, and introduced Commissioner Dave Levacy.

Commissioner Dave Levacy

Commissioner Dave Levacy thanked Commissioner Fix for all his help with housing and the Land Use Plan. He began his remarks by sharing that the country has experienced a sharp decline in the younger generations participating in the workforce. Years ago, he led the charge to build a Workforce Center in Fairfield County. His vision since the beginning has been to provide people with the skills to start their career and get good paying local jobs where they can be contributing members of their communities and flourish. The career readiness program has been a very important tool for the development of young professionals in their careers. The County has been working to build interest in junior high students in multiple areas of the trades at summer camps offered by the Workforce Center so they can be exposed to different career opportunities. More than 1000 students in Fairfield County have already received career readiness endorsements since the program began. He shared some success stories of students who went through the program and are now excelling in their fields, even receiving multiple promotions. The County is working to add more programs at the Workforce Center to increase the diversity of job skills and respond to the needs of the major companies coming to central Ohio. In conclusion of his remarks, Commissioner Levacy introduced Commissioner Steve Davis

Commissioner Steve Davis

Commissioner Davis thanked everyone in attendance for joining in a record breaking State of the County Address. He has been moved by what he has learned in his time as an Uber driver. He has learned that many of the people who are in poverty are trying to fight their way out but are unable due to a lack of transportation resources. Beginning July 1st, the County officially assumed governance of Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit. Given the increasing importance of available transportation services, he believes this transition makes the most sense. Fairfield County is looking to improve transit in multiple ways besides buses. He also emphasized that the number of teenagers getting their drivers licenses is down to just 50%, which restricts their ability to get their first job. The Commissioners are not by law required to partake in these services, but they do so for the wellbeing of Fairfield County citizens. Another such initiative not required of the Commissioners was a pilot program to mitigate costs of electricity usage by installing a solar field on county property. These fiscal decisions that have resulted in positive impacts on the budget. Pivoting back to Transit, he believes the County is doing the right thing, and stated that in the past year, 100,000 people have called Transit and successfully got a ride. The on-demand services have also dramatically improved. The nature of the calls he has received as an Uber driver has changed as well, which he believes reflects the impact Transit has had on the community. He also announced the rebranding campaign of Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit and encouraged everyone to give their best name suggestions. Finally, he thanked everyone for attending a record breaking State of the County.

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Adjournment

Travis Markwood thanked the Commissioners and Administrator Cordle for their remarks and thanked all for joining in the 2024 State of the County Address.

With no further business, On the motion of Steve Davis and the second of Dave Levacy, the Board of Commissioners voted to adjourn at 12:52 p.m.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:
Voting aye thereon: Steve Davis and Dave Levacy

Motion by: Jeff Fix Seconded by: Steve Davis
that the August 27, 2024, State of the County minutes were approved by the following vote:

YEAS: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis, Dave Levacy

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS:

*Approved on September 3, 2024


Dave Levacy
Commissioner


Jeff Fix
Commissioner


Steve Davis
Commissioner


Rochelle Menningen, Clerk

Event Schedule

Lunch/Welcome - 11:30 a.m.

Travis Markwood, President

Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce

Kim Barlag, President

Pickerington Area Chamber of Commerce

Posting of the Colors/Pledge - 11:40 a.m.

Fairfield County Sheriff's Office

Invocation - 11:45 a.m.

Dr. David Uhl

Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities

State of the County Address - 12 p.m.

Aundrea Cordle

Fairfield County Administrator

Jeff Fix

Fairfield County Commissioner

Dave Levacy

Fairfield County Commissioner

Steve Davis

Fairfield County Commissioner

Adjourn - 1 p.m.

Special thanks to Cheers Chalet, Innerphase Video Productions and Personal Touch Party Rentals for their assistance with today's event.

2024 State of the County Address

Fairfield
FORWARD



Brand the Bus!



Help to rename
Lancaster-Fairfield
Public Transit

Submit your best name suggestion
by scanning the QR code

Thank you to our sponsors:

7 Brew Drive-Thru Coffee
Accurate Heating, Cooling & Plumbing
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ActionCOACH Central Ohio
Atomic Credit Union
Aurora House Adult Group Home
Axxel Electric
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Bay Food Market
BluSky Restoration
Bob Boyd Auto Family
Buckeye Care and Rehab
Buckeye Paving Co.
Calandra Industrial Supply Co.
Central IT Dept. LLC
Company Wrench
Complete Filter Media, LLC
Dagger Law
Eastern Cottontail Solar Project
Edward Jones - Fairfield County
Environmental Comfort
Fairfield Community Health Center
Fairfield County Board of DD
Fairfield County Foundation
Fairfield County Job & Family Services
Fairfield Federal Savings & Loan
FAIRHOPE Hospice & Palliative Care
Fairfield Medical Center
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Halteman-Fett & Dyer Funeral Home
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Harper Family McDonald's
Hocking College
Holiday Inn Express
Home Helpers of Lancaster
Homeland Credit Union

Huntington Learning Centers
Key Realty Lancaster
Krile Communications, LLC
Kumler Collision & Automotive
Lancaster Camp Ground
Long On Life LLC-Longhaven Retreat
Mr. Froggy's Express Wash
Oatney & Associates CPAs Inc.
Ohio University Lancaster
Park National Bank
Pediatric Associates of Lancaster, Inc.
Performance GMC-Cadillac Columbus
Peoples Bank
Peterman Brothers Heating & Cooling
Porta Kleen
RE/MAX Megan Bell Group
Ruff & Associates CPAs
Sedgwick
SERVPRO of Fairfield County
Sitterley Law, LLC
Sitterley, Vandervoort & Nixon LTD
Snyder & Co.
South Central Power Company
Spectrum
Stebelton Snider LPA
The Savings Bank
The Wolf - WLOH
Triple P's
United Propane
Valley View Hills Winery
ValueCare Ambulance Service
Valuвет Wellness Veterinary Clinic
Walmart
Wellness With Cenell
Whit's Frozen Custard
Wichert Insurance Agency
Zimmerman School Equipment

American Rescue Plan (ARP): At a Glance

Investing Today for Tomorrow's Success!

PILLARS



Infrastructure
(Roads, Broadband, Utilities)



Social Services
(Mental Health, Addiction, & Youth Services)



Housing
(Affordable Housing & Housing Assistance)



Workforce Development
(Job Training & Growing a Skilled Workforce)



Economic Development
(Driving & Managing Equitable Growth)



County Operations
(Internal Operations & Policies)



ARP Summary

- 67 ARP Projects
- 72% of the projects are completed
- Total ARP Investment of \$30,606,902.00
- Projects aligned with county strategic plan pillars and to address impacts from COVID-19

Social Services

Approximately \$1.95 million dollars in funding provided to Fairfield County non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army, The Lighthouse, United Way, Fairhope Hospice, and the Harcum House to address housing, adult daycare, emergency shelter, childhood literacy, hospice care, and child advocacy, all of which experienced significant impacts because of the pandemic.

- **6 new single-family homes** are built or being built for clients of Habitat for Humanity in Fairfield County.
- **200 children were set up for kindergarten success** through participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library sponsored by United Way.
- Funded the Harcum House to assist over **500 children and families impacted by abuse.**
- **2,198 days of adult day care** were provided to clients of the Salvation Army.
- Provide financial support to fund **hospice care** for Fairfield County residents.
- **107 clients** of the Lighthouse Domestic Violence Shelter were able to find **3,102 nights of safe housing.**

Housing

ADAMH Venture Place project will provide permanent supported housing for those experiencing homelessness.

- Venture Place will provide 24 units of permanent housing with wrap-around services to ensure a successful transition.
- Venture Place will allow for expanded bed availability and service programming at the Lutheran Social Services homeless shelter and provide additional housing for veterans.

Infrastructure

Constructed three miles of drinking water and sanitary lines throughout Fairfield County, including the Fairfield County Airport, to promote residential and commercial development.

Provided improved water and sewer services to villages and townships. Funding was provided to projects in Baltimore, Pleasantville, and in the Walnut Creek Sewer district to improve infrastructure, run new water lines, and increase sewer capacity.

- **Walnut Creek Sewer District** will provide expansion of wastewater treatment plant to 400,000 gallons per day capacity; impacting customers in Walnut Township, Thurston, and Pleasantville.
- **Village of Baltimore** will replace the Washington Street waterline; creating a loop service that will directly impact 53 households and provide safe and reliable drinking water and fire protection to all village residents.
- **Village of Pleasantville** will refurbish two water tanks essential to village residential water service.





Economic Development

Provided a \$500,000 grant to the Agricultural Society to improve technology and facilities at the Fairfield County Fairgrounds, and to ensure successful county fairs and economic growth into the future.

28 successful grants and over \$2.55 million in needed grant dollars coming to townships, communities, and county agencies from grant writing support provided by the county through Hicks Partners.

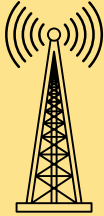




County Operations

Purchased and renovated former OU Pickerington property to allow for an expanded Sheriff substation, a Clerk of Courts Title Office, a Child Protective Services office, office space for BMV operations, and regional office for Congressman Balderson.

Improved access to local government services for the approximately 68,000 residents in the northwest portion of the county.

Service and Safety Improvements

- **Funded MARCS radios, towers and dispatch consoles** to allow for unified emergency response and better communications among various agencies, including sheriff, engineer's office, and city and township police and fire.
- **Upgraded case management systems** at county courts to allow for greater technological capabilities, including e-filing.
- **Digitized various records** to allow for increased and efficient public access to county records.
- **Funded a major technological upgrade** for Sheriff and Jail operations.
- **175 children were served by a school attendance program** to combat truancy resulting from the impacts of the pandemic.



STRATEGIC REPORT

2022-2024

OUR PLAN IN ACTION

OUR MISSION

SERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

We work to ensure high quality services, with outstanding customer service at an exceptional value to taxpayers. We foster economic and fiscal sustainability and enhance the County's reputation as a high performing, learning, and caring organization.

GOALS:

1. Advocate for, develop, and maintain sustainable infrastructure that supports equitable access, connectivity and wellbeing of Fairfield County residents and businesses.
2. Strengthen and support social service programs through broader coordination to better meet the needs of residents.
3. Improve availability and access to safe, quality, affordable and supportive housing throughout the County.
4. Grow and support a skilled workforce to meet the needs of current and future local employers.
5. Facilitate and drive economic growth through effective planning, promotion, and development.
6. Optimize County operations to meet the emerging needs of Fairfield County employees and residents.

INFRASTRUCTURE

ROADS, BROADBAND, UTILITIES

- ✓ Completed a transit development study to identify transit improvements with a workforce focus.
- ✓ Completed over three miles of water and sanitary line installation for residential and commercial development areas.
- ✓ Invested over \$5 Million in airport hangar development, creating opportunities for aviation related business.
- ✓ Secured funding to add additional lanes to Refugee Road and Route 33.
- ✓ Realigning Basil-Western Road to build a commercial corridor to alleviate congestion on Hill Road.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

JOB TRAINING & GROWING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

- ✓ Career Navigators and their 80 business partners helped over 1,000 students achieve the Career Readiness Endorsement.
- ✓ The Workforce Center graduated 165 students with certificates in HVAC, electric, carpentry, water/wastewater management, manufacturing, and phlebotomy.
- ✓ Secured \$3.5 million from the state to create a new engineering tech lab for career pathways in advanced manufacturing, including the semiconductor industry.
- ✓ Expanded Career Readiness through \$330k in grants to include free summer career camps for more than 400 middle school students.
- ✓ Provided funding to two schools to begin driver's education programs and helped secure a \$100k grant with the ESC to create a driver's education program at the Workforce Center.
- ✓ Transitioned Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit from the City of Lancaster to the County to better serve employers and increase service to all county residents.



COUNTY OPERATIONS

INTERNAL OPERATIONS & POLICIES

- ✓ Implemented citizen feedback processes to better understand their needs.
- ✓ Increased public education efforts regarding county government functions through social media, publications, and events.
- ✓ Implemented virtual options to support county service delivery and workforce needs.
- ✓ Upgraded current technologies to standardize operations and implemented new technology to support efficient operations.
- ✓ Utilized employee engagement activities to develop actionable recommendations and received Top Workplace recognition for three years in a row.

SOCIAL SERVICES

MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION, & YOUTH SERVICES

- ✓ Coordinated mental health and addiction services to maximize resources and capacity.
- ✓ Developed ongoing outreach programs to meet the mental, physical, and or addiction needs of the unsheltered population.
- ✓ Granted \$3 million to develop a supportive housing project and expansion and renovation of a homeless shelter.

HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOUSING ASSISTANCE

- ✓ Completed comprehensive land use plan to identify areas of the County to preserve or develop after conducting 26 stakeholder meetings with villages and townships.
- ✓ Funded a model zoning plan for townships and villages to make things more consistent for developers.
- ✓ Creating Comprehensive Economic Development Agreements between municipalities and townships to manage development.
- ✓ Establishing New Community Authorities to ensure growth can fund necessary infrastructure and operating costs for schools and government entities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DRIVING & MANAGING EQUITABLE GROWTH

- ✓ Fairfield 33 Development Alliance continues toward its 10-year goals, with an increase of 1,822 jobs, more than \$1.2 billion in capital investment, and a 41% increase in average wages.
- ✓ Landed DHL project that added 755,000 square feet of warehouse space and over 200 local jobs.
- ✓ Executed public and private agreements to fund \$10 million of improvements to Basil-Western Road for future development.
- ✓ Funded and coordinated grant writing support services which resulted in securing 27 grants for \$2.5 million for government entities in the county.
- ✓ Awarded \$900k of zero-interest loans to 14 local businesses to help them rebound from the pandemic.