

Regular Meeting #5 - 2025
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office
February 4, 2025

Review Meeting

The Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. at 210 E. Main St., Lancaster, OH. Commissioner Fix called the meeting to order, and the following Commissioners were present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis, and David Levacy. County employees present: County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle; Deputy County Administrator, Jeff Porter; Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, Rochelle Menningen; Communications & Information Coordinator, Bennett Niceswanger; Budget Director, Bart Hampson; JFS Director, Corey Clark; IT Director, Dan Neeley; Facilities & EMA Director, Jon Kochis; Economic & Workforce Development Director, Rick Szabrak; Utilities Director, Tony Vogel; Deputy JFS Director, Heather O'Keefe; Auditor, Dr. Carri Brown; Clerk of Courts, Branden Meyer; and Health Department Director, Joe Ebel. Also, in attendance were: Bryan Everitt, Frank Uhl II, Kris Keller, Louise Pence, Teresa Speakman, Terry Horn, Mary Hutton, Pamela Hutton, Betsy Alt, Cheryl Tatusko, Breg Tatusko, Amanda Everitt, Janet Duncan, Sherry Pymmer, Wayne Harris, Barg Martin, Frank Martin, Judy Zollinger, Bill Krusling, Christina Hill, Patricia Hill, Lisa Thomas, Nick Cavalaris, Lori Sword, Betty Bennett, George Bennett, Brad Berry, Isaac Berry, Alan Turnbull, Melissa Hoover, Tim Knisley, Mike Connor, Chris Douglas, and Joe Ebel.

Virtual attendees: Lisa Dan, Karshner, Scott Barr, Jane Harf, Chris Snider, Shelby Hunt, Nicole Schultz, Bill, Deborah, EM, Jennifer Morgan, MB.

Welcome

Commissioner Fix opened the meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance and speaking about the purpose of the evening meeting, which is to allow those who are unable to attend during the day the opportunity to attend meetings in the evening.

Budget Update, End of Year, Bart Hampson

Mr. Hampson spoke about the county's 2024 end of year financials and the General Fund's revenue and expenses. A PowerPoint was provided and is available in the meeting minutes which provided the end of year numbers, a financial trend analysis, and a financial dashboard with a General Fund budget overview. Mr. Hampson explained the revenue categories, provided the annual sales tax amount, and spoke about the expense categories. Charts were provided with percentages for revenues and expenditures. He added that the finance team continues to analyze financial data to ensure the county is meeting its goals and stated that the county continues to experience a strong return on investment revenue. Mr. Hampson also stated that the sales tax revenue decreased in 2024 due to a decrease in auto sales and that \$6,000,000 went to the capital improvement fund for one time expenditures.

Commissioner Fix stated his appreciation for Mr. Hampson and for Staci Knisely for their outstanding work.

Commissioners Davis and Levacy echoed Commissioner Fix's sentiments and thanked Mr. Hampson for his presentation.

Public Comments

Melissa Hoover-Conner of Walnut Township stated that the American Farmland Federation Bureau published that industrial solar is not a suitable use for land that is suitable for agriculture. She asked the Commissioners to write a letter to the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) against the Eastern Cottontail Project.

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Frank Uhl II of Christmas Rock Road spoke in support of the Eastern Cottontail solar project because he believes it creates jobs and protects the land from development.

Craig Tatusko stated he is part of the Eastern Cottontail project and attended the OPSB public hearing and was offended by the way the Fair Fields group conducted themselves. He added that there is an option for the land besides keeping it as farmland or using it for industrial solar power, and that would be developing the land for residential, commercial or industrial use.

Cheryl Tatusko stated she is part of the Eastern Cottontail project and attended the OPSB meetings and was also disappointed by the behavior of the Citizens for Fair Fields. She added that individuals who had leased their land were visibly shaken. She read a letter from someone who leased their land for industrial solar and who has been repeatedly slandered for three years. The letter also spoke about misinformation regarding industrial solar.

Betsy Alt of Baltimore thanked the Commissioners for attending the OPSB meetings and spoke about the behavior of those who opposed the solar project. She stated her support for the Eastern Cottontail project.

Wayne Harris of Pleasantville asked the Commissioners to deny Eastern Cottontail and all other solar projects in the county. He added that he does not believe the County, schools, and communities will receive tax benefits/revenue from the projects.

Mary Hutton of Baltimore stated she is a property owner who supports Eastern Cottontail and leased her land to the solar project.

Louise Pence of Columbus owns land near the proposed project and believes in good stewardship of land. She spoke in opposition to the project and feels it would be detrimental to the current landscape.

Pam Hutton of Baltimore stated she is a landowner who has leased her land to the project. She thinks it is important to look for alternative sources of energy and is worried that this does not give a good image of our community and that businesses may avoid the county if they feel it is not conducive to development.

Janet Duncan of Pleasantville stated that she believes there is a difference between misinformation and different information. She spoke about a solar farm in California that stopped in its eleventh year of operation and added that she fears we are investing in 8 tracks when we already have streaming music. She requested a denial of Eastern Cottontail as well as any other industrial solar project in the county.

Christopher Douglas of Pickerington stated his support for the Eastern Cottontail project and stated that there are risks in the air we breathe and the water we drink but that he believes the future will be better if we invest in alternative energy sources.

Francis Martin of Walnut Township stated that he lives across the street from the proposed Eastern Cottontail project. He stated that property rights should be equal for all owners and should end when they negatively impact neighbors. He asked the Commissioners to have a strong united front against the Eastern Cottontail project.

Chris Keller of Deep Cut Road stated he has concerns regarding property rights and added that if land is developed, it is never again farmland. He spoke about climate change and added that solar energy may provide a solution. He spoke about people who stated that solar panels should be

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installed on roofs of large facilities and added that roofs would need reengineered to support solar panels.

Amanda Everitt, the Executive Director of Destination Downtown Lancaster, stated her support for the Eastern Cottontail project. She added that the project would be good for local businesses, especially those that look for clean energy options.

Teresa Speakman of Lancaster stated that alternatives are needed for energy and added that grazing sheep will enrich the land, and the project will bring jobs and money to the area.

Bill Krusling from Albany, Ohio stated he is a sheep farmer and has been rotationally grazing livestock for 35 years. We do our machinery dealings locally and sell our sheep to a local group. Sheep farming has not been taken over by large businesses. He added that he hopes to have his sheep on the property. He stated that the project should not be viewed as either agricultural or solar, but as both.

Tim Kneisley of Cattail Road spoke in opposition to the solar project. He stated that he thinks all the elected officials should be on the same page and protect Walnut Township.

Brad Berry of Pleasantville stated he has lived in Fairfield County his entire life and the farm has been in his family for 200 years and 8 generations. He stated the watershed from the project will come onto his farm where he raises both crops and livestock. He started direct marketing off his farm after working two jobs for 25 years and is concerned about the impact the solar project will have on that business.

Mary Berry of Pleasantville stated that energy that runs into fields and ruins family businesses is not clean energy. She spoke about the disposal issues with lithium and solar batteries and added that she does not believe the solar project will be good for Fairfield County.

Lori Sword of Hampson Road stated that landowners must follow strict guidelines for developing their own land but thinks the solar companies don't have to go through as many hoops. She added that many of the people speaking in support are not from the area. She knows property values will go down because she is a real estate agent. She added that her grandchildren live near the proposed solar project and that she is concerned about their health.

Barb Martin of Pleasantville has lived in Fairfield County for 30 years and moved to Walnut Township so she could be surrounded by farmland. She is directly adjacent to the proposed land. Many of the people in support are not from Walnut Township or even Fairfield County. The jobs created by these projects are only for the construction of the project. She thanked Commissioner Fix for writing a letter to oppose the project and asked Commissioner Levacy to also write a letter.

Issac Berry of Pleasantville stated the noise from the project would be difficult for his cattle. He added that the country will experience food shortages by 2050, and we should be focusing on the next generation.

Alan Turnbull of Pleasantville stated he is in favor of the Eastern Cottontail project and that this allows land to be preserved for future farm use.

Jim Shelf of Pleasant Township stated he drives through the project area frequently and is in favor of the project. He added that 20% of the farmland in the United States is used to grow corn for ethanol production and that corn is not safe for consumption. He further added that solar technology is better today than it was 10 years ago and continues to improve.

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Annalise Berry of Pleasantville stated that the decision regarding Eastern Cottontail will affect her future. She is involved with her family's farm and raises sheep on that farm. Sheep are afraid of sounds. The pounding of the posts will be traumatic for the sheep and that will affect the quality of the meat.

Sherry Pymer of Walnut Township spoke about visiting the Yellow Bud project and the small numbers of workers at the project. She also spoke about the wet fields and cracked panels at that project. She asked the Commissioners to ask the OPSB to deny the Eastern Cottontail project.

Mike Connor of Pleasantville stated that he feels his wife has been respectful when addressing others about the Eastern Cottontail project and added that he is opposed to the project. He believes local zoning is being denied, and that the project will cause harm to wildlife and the water supply, and cause construction and safety issues. He asked the Commissioners to unanimously oppose the project.

Allison Barrick of Millersport stated she lives ¼ mile form the project and asked the Commissioners to write a letter of opposition to the OPSB. She added that there are 138 homes within 15 feet of the proposed Eastern Cottontail solar project and 257 homes withing .5 mile. She believes the land is too populated to accommodate a project this size. She is not against diversifying our energy sources but thinks we do not need this project. She asked Commissioners Levacy and Davis to oppose the project.

Betty Bennett of Somerset Road stated that her way of life has already been affected by the project. She asked the commissioners to oppose the Eastern Cottontail project.

Lisa Thomas of Pleasantville moved to the area unaware of the proposed Eastern Cottontail project and added that the conflict over the project has made her an angry person. She urged the Commissioners to oppose the project.

Commissioner Fix thanked everyone except one for the way they conducted themselves and for being respectful. He added that the comment made by the one person regarding Commissioner Levacy was disrespectful and that he does not know a single person who has more integrity than Commissioner Levacy.

Commissioner Davis spoke about the effect on the Commissioners of stating incorrect things about their character.

Commissioner Fix called a 7 minute recess at 8:43 p.m.

Legal Update

There was no legal update provided.

County Administration Update

- *The County Administration Update was provided by County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle, unless otherwise noted.*

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Week in Review

New Security Staff at the Administrative Courthouse

Beginning yesterday, February 3rd, the Administrative Courthouse will have a new security presence. We are happy to have Deputy Andy Roberts working in the building and want to thank Sheriff Lape for helping us fill this role.

County Elected Official and Department Head Roundtable

The first Roundtable meeting for 2025 is scheduled for February 25 from 1-4:00 pm at the Agricultural Center. We will be reviewing the final draft of the 2025-2028 strategic plan.

Highlights of Resolutions

Administrative Approvals

The review packet contains a list of administrative approvals.

Resolution Review

There are 17 resolutions on the agenda for the Regular voting meeting.
Resolutions of note:

- A resolution to approve an Expedited Type II Annexation of 5.08 Acres from Pleasant Township to the City of Lancaster. David Hodge is the agent for the petitioner. This petition involves the Blue Label Packaging Company property.
- We have two resolutions authorizing advances from the General Fund to CDBG Funds. One for \$392,500 for the FY2023 CDBG Critical Infrastructure Fund and \$500,000 for the FY2024 CDBG Allocation Grant.
- A resolution approving funding from – Domestic Relations Special Projects Fund to the Visitation Center Fund.
- A resolution from Economic and Workforce Development to approve a Revolving Loan Fund for the Creative Coach Co. The loan is in the amount of \$75,000 for a term of five years. This will allow for the purchase of a motorcoach.
- A resolution from the Engineer's Office to approve an agreement between that office and CTL Engineering, Inc. for construction inspection and testing services.
- A resolution from JFS authorizing a shared family foster home agreement between Fairfield County Child Protective Services and Perry County Children Services.
- A resolution approving a Memorandum of Understanding between JFS and Family and Children First Council for fiscal services.
- A resolution approving a service agreement extension between the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office and the City of Canal Winchester. This agreement is for law enforcement and jail services.
- And a resolution from MCU for an advance from the General Fund for \$75,000 to be paid back by the end of 2025. MCU received a Violent Crime Reduction Grant, and the advance is necessary to allocate monies to pay vendors in a timely fashion.

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Budget Review

No additional budget information was provided.

Calendar Review/Invitations Received

Bennett Niceswanger provided an invitation received for the Ribbon Cutting for the ClearSky Rehabilitation Hospital of Lancaster. The Ribbon Cutting would be February 12, 2025, 4:00 p.m., at 1201 River Valley Blvd. in Lancaster.

Informational Items

- US 33 Stakeholder Meeting, Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 1:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room
- MCJDC Board of Trustees Meeting, Friday, February 7, 2025, 9:00 a.m. at 923 Liberty Dr., Lancaster, OH
- MCJDC Joint Board of Commissioners Meeting, Friday, February 7, 2025, 10:30 a.m. at 923 Liberty Dr., Lancaster, OH
- Invitation from Center for Energy Education to the Utility-Scale Solar Workshop, Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 4:00 p.m. at the Lancaster Masonic Temple, 224 S. High St., Lancaster, OH
- Invitation from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce 2025 Annual Housing Summit, Thursday, February 20, 2025, 8:30 a.m. at the Ohio Statehouse
- Invitation from CCAO to attend the Legislative Reception, Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 5:00 p.m. at the Ohio Statehouse Atrium

Correspondence

- Correspondence Regarding Industrial Solar Project
- Correspondence Regarding Property Taxes
- Lancaster Law Director & City Prosecutor 2024 Annual Report
- Letter from Corey Schoonover, Executive Director of Fairfield Area Humane Society, regarding the 2025 Humane Officer stipend
- 2024 Law Enforcement Trust Fund Reports from the Fairfield County Prosecutor and Fairfield County Sheriff

Updates from Elected Officials and Department Heads

Clerk of Courts, Branden Meyer, thanked Mr. Kochis for his assistance with an incident at the Fairfield Center earlier that day.

Auditor Brown thanked Transit and the Commissioners for approval of the organ donation advertisement. She stated that her office will send correspondence with updates for the Homestead Program, and the website has updates to the tax estimator tool allowing people to voice concerns. She added the February's map of the month is for the 8 presidents that hail from Ohio and area schools are already requesting copies of the map.

Mr. Szabrak spoke about the ClearSky rehabilitation facility and their upcoming grand opening.

Mr. Ebel stated that hospitals are seeing a lot of influenza.

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Mr. Kochis spoke about the damage at the Fairfield Center and added that the driver was fully insured. There will be about 20 feet of frontage that will have to be removed, but there was not any apparent structural damage.

Commissioner Davis spoke about the solar array field at the BMV in Lancaster and suggested the requests for proposals are ready in case the window of cost reductions is met.

Mr. Neeley stated that the new badge readers act differently and are still being verified.

Mr. Clark spoke optimistically about the Governor's budget.

Old Business

Commissioner Davis stated he attended the OPSB public hearings. He added that he received a notice from the OPSB that he was not required to attend the hearings or the evidentiary hearings, but did attend the public hearings and will attend the evidentiary hearings.

Commissioner Levacy attended the OPSB meeting on Monday when most speakers were heard.

Commissioner Fix attended the Silicon Heartland meeting for officials located within a certain radius of Intel where Fairfield County was commended for being a model in creating a land use plan. He added that he will be attending the Greenfield Township zoning meeting.

New Business

Commissioner Davis stated he was invited to the Yellow Bud project and added that it was an informative tour.

Commissioner Fix referenced the letter that he sent to the OPSB. He spoke about the Village of Thurston's desire to grow, and the Eastern Cottontail project will be very close to that growth and will prevent future development in that area.

Regular (Voting) Meeting

The Commissioners continued to the Voting portion of the meeting with the following Commissioners present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis, and David Levacy. County employees present: County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle; Deputy County Administrator, Jeff Porter; Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, Rochelle Menningen; Communications & Information Coordinator, Bennett Niceswanger; Budget Director, Bart Hampson; JFS Director, Corey Clark; IT Director, Dan Neeley; Facilities & EMA Director, Jon Kochis; Economic & Workforce Development Director, Rick Szabrak; Utilities Director, Tony Vogel; Deputy JFS Director, Heather O'Keefe; Auditor, Dr. Carri Brown; Clerk of Courts, Branden Meyer; and Health Department Director, Joe Ebel. Also present were: Bryan Everitt, Frank Uhl II, Kris Keller, Louise Pence, Teresa Speakman, Terry Horn, Mary Hutton, Pamela Hutton, Betsy Alt, Cheryl Tatusko, Breg Tatusko, Amanda Everitt, Janet Duncan, Sherry Pymmer, Wayne Harris, Barg Martin, Frank Martin, Judy Zollinger, Bill Krusling, Christina Hill, Patricia Hill, Lisa Thomas, Nick Cavalaris, Lori Sword, Betty Bennett, George Bennett, Brad Berry, Isaac Berry, Alan Turnbull, Melissa Hoover, Tim Knisley, Mike Connor, Chris Douglas, and Joe Ebel.

Virtual attendees: Lisa Dan, Karshner, Scott Barr, Jane Harf, Chris Snider, Shelby Hunt, Nicole Schultz, Bill, Deborah, EM, Jennifer Morgan, MB

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Announcements

There were no additional announcements.

Approval of Minutes for January 28, 2025

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the Minutes for the Tuesday, January 28, 2025, meeting.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of Resolutions from the Fairfield County Commissioners

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from the Fairfield County Commissioners:

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| 2025-02.04.a | A Resolution to Approve the Annexation of 5.8 +/- Acres from Pleasant Township to the City of Lancaster, Expedited Type II, Pursuant to ORC 709.023, David Hodge Petitioner |
| 2025-02.04.b | A resolution authorizing the approval of an advance from the General Fund to the FY2023 CDBG Critical Infrastructure Fund # 2788, Sub fund# 8334 |
| 2025-02.04.c | A resolution to approve a memo expense for interest allocation reimbursements for Fairfield Department of Health, Fairfield County Parks, & Fairfield County Port Authority – Fund #7012, #7321, #7308, & #7865 |
| 2025-02.04.d | A resolution to appropriate from unappropriated into a major expense category and request for an advance from the general fund for fund #2788 for FY2024 CDBG Allocation Grant |

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from Fairfield County Domestic Relations Court

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from the Fairfield County Domestic Relations Court:

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| 2025-02.04.e | A resolution approving funding from – Domestic Relations Special Projects Fund # 2625 to Visitation Center Fund # 1001; appropriate from unappropriated Special Projects Fund |
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Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from Fairfield County Economic & Workforce Development

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On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from Fairfield County Economic & Workforce Development:

2025-02.04.f A resolution to approve loan documents to fund Creative Coach Co. as a Fairfield County Revolving Loan project

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from the Fairfield County Engineer

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from the Fairfield County Engineer:

2025-02.04.g A resolution to approve an Agreement between Fairfield County and CTL Engineering, Inc.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from the Fairfield County Facilities

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from the Fairfield County Facilities:

2025-02.04.h A Resolution to approve a Contract Amendment between Steed Hammond Paul, Inc., d/b/a SHP Architects, Inc., and the Fairfield County Commissioners

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of Resolutions from Fairfield County Job and Family Services

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolutions from Fairfield County Job and Family Services:

2025-02.04.i A resolution to approve a memo exp./ memo receipt for the costs of Transportation paid to Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit as a memo expenditure for fund# 2018 Public Assistance Fund

2025-02.04.j A resolution to approve a memo exp./ memo receipt for the costs of Transportation paid to Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit as a memo expenditure for fund# 2599 Workforce Fund

2025-02.04.k A resolution to approve a memo exp./ memo receipt for the costs of Birth Certificates paid to Fairfield County Health Departments as a memo expenditure for fund# 2072 Public Children's Services

2025-02.04.l A resolution regarding a Memorandum of Understanding between the Fairfield County Family and Children First Council and Fairfield County Job and Family Services

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2025-02.04.m A resolution authorizing the approval of a Shared Family Foster Home Agreement by and between Fairfield County Job & Family Services, Child Protective Services Division and Perry County Children Services

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from the Fairfield County Sheriff

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution from the Fairfield County Sheriff:

2025-02.04.n A resolution authorizing the approval to extend service agreements by and between Fairfield County Sheriff's Office and the City of Canal Winchester

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from South Central Major Crimes Unit

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolutions from Fairfield County Utilities:

2025-02.04.o A resolution authorizing the approval of an advance from the general fund to MCU – Fund 7911 Violet Crime Reduction Grant 2024

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of a Resolution from Fairfield County Transit

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolutions from Fairfield County Utilities:

2025-02.04.p A resolution to approve a memo exp./memo receipt for the costs of flood insurance premiums effective 8/1/2024 paid by general fund during Transit transition as a memo expenditure for Fund #1246 Transit Fund

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

Approval of the Payment of Bills

On the motion of David Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve the following resolution for the Payment of Bills:

2025-02.04.q A resolution authorizing the approval of payments of the vouchers without appropriate carry-over purchase orders and the cash disbursement for all departments that are approved by the Commissioners

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Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

The Commissioners and Ms. Cordle thanked deputies Hedrick and Romine for being in attendance.

Adjournment

With no further business, On the motion of Levacy and the second of Steve Davis, the Board of Commissioners voted to adjourn at 9:18 p.m.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

Voting aye thereon: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, 210 E. Main St., Lancaster, OH.

Motion by: David Levacy

Seconded by: Steve Davis

that the February 4, 2025, minutes were approved by the following vote:

YEAS: David Levacy, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

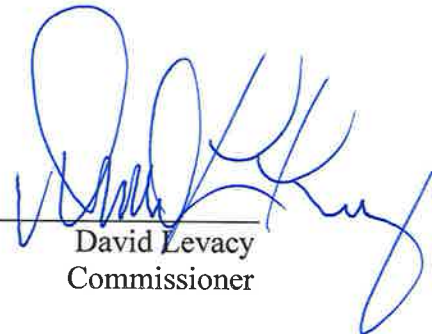
NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS:

*Approved on February 11, 2025


Jeff Fix
Commissioner

Steve Davis
Commissioner


David Levacy
Commissioner


Rochelle Menningen, Clerk