

**Budget Hearings #46 - 2025**  
**Fairfield County Commissioners' Office**  
**October 21, 2025**

Commissioner Fix called the Budget Hearing Session to order with the following Commissioners present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis and David Levacy. Also in attendance were Aundrea Cordle, Jeff Porter, Bennett Niceswanger, Bart Hampson, Staci Knisley, and Taylor Forquer. Attendees of specific hearings are listed in their respective section of the minutes.

Each hearing has a corresponding Budget Summary and Excel spreadsheet that are included with the minutes. The Auditor's Office also has a presentation included in the minutes.

**Budget Hearing, Auditor, 11:00 a.m.**

Auditor Carri Brown was also in attendance for the Auditor's Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson summarized items in the proposed budget that have experienced increases.

Auditor Brown reported a net increase of \$19,000 in contract services, that salaries and benefits remain within established parameters, that no new positions would be added to her organizational chart, and referenced her presentation.

Commissioner Fix discussed the potential for local governments to implement a lodging tax, with the Auditor's Office administering collections for a fee.

Auditor Brown confirmed there would be a standard administrative charge should such an approach be taken.

Commissioner Fix requested additional discussion on this topic later.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the effect of interest rate decreases on conveyance fees.

Auditor Brown responded that fewer home sales and limited housing inventory are currently being observed.

Commissioner Fix asked how many counties met the reporting deadline.

Auditor Brown replied that only one other county met the tax abstract deadline.

**Budget Hearing, Treasurer, 11:15 a.m.**

Treasurer Jim Bahnsen, Jennifer Effinger, and Michael Kaper were in attendance for the Treasurer's Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the proposed Treasurer's Office budget for 2026 reflects a 4.8% increase compared to 2025. The budget is within parameters.

**Budget Hearing, Transit, 11:30 a.m.**

Rick Szabrak, Aaron Kennedy and Courtney Martin were in attendance for the Transit Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 budget allocation remains flat from the prior year. Szabrak summarized revenues, expenses, and grants, along with projects such as vehicle replacements, bus stop redesigns, new software, and the Ohio Workforce Mobility Grant. He presented a year-over-year analysis, noting that the major change was the medical transportation contract through JFS, which now qualifies for a state match, and will bring in additional funds.



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Mr. Szabrak explained that federal funds pass through the state, and the state determines the distribution. He does not expect changes to that federal funding process.

Administrator Cordle suggested marketing transit services to Meals on Wheels clients to boost ridership.

Mr. Kennedy noted that unmet service requests are referred to the mobility manager for assistance.

Mr. Szabrak reported lower turnover within the department and said adding full-time staff will further help. The vehicle replacement plan includes replacing three buses with two new buses and one van and will move toward using three vans overall.

Commissioner Davis thanked the management team for their work improving transit operations.

**Budget Hearing, Economic & Workforce Development, 11:45 a.m.**

Rick Szabrak and Angel Conrad were also in attendance for the Economic & Workforce Development Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 Economic & Workforce Development budget reflects a 6.6% increase over 2025. Items outside parameters include employee salaries due to a new staff member, Medicare, retirement, workers' compensation, contractual services, and community support.

Mr. Szabrak noted the addition of a Career Navigator position and provided brief explanations for each item outside parameters.

Commissioner Davis shared positive feedback from a recent meeting with Ohio University Lancaster and expressed appreciation for the Workforce Center's strong reputation among local organizations.

**Budget Hearing, Job & Family Services (JFS), 12:00 p.m.**

Corey Clark, Heather O'Keefe, and Brandi Downhour were also in attendance for the Job and Family Services Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson provided an overview of 2026 budget allocations for JFS departments, noting overall increases.

Mr. Clark summarized projected 2025 revenue and demonstrated how funds are distributed across JFS departments. He explained that leveraging county funds allows JFS to obtain \$2 in federal funds for every \$1 spent, and that the General Revenue Fund (GRF) provides flexibility to allocate resources effectively.

Mr. Clark expressed appreciation for the commissioners' continued support. He compared cash balance projections with and without a levy renewal and discussed the rising costs of child placement. He noted progress toward opening a shared placement facility with nine other counties. The facility would be in Gallia County and would reduce placement costs. Mr. Clark emphasized that levels of care vary per child and that some facilities specialize in specific needs.

Commissioner Fix expressed interest in further exploring the possibility of establishing a similar facility in Fairfield County.



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**Budget Hearing, Family and Children First Council (FCFC), 12:15 p.m.**

Tiffany Wilson, Heather O'Keefe and Brandi Downhour were also in attendance for the Family and Children First Council Budget Hearing.

Bart Hampson reported that the 2026 allocation proposal will remain flat.

Ms. Wilson outlined the funding sources for out-of-home placements.

Administrator Cordle clarified that FCFC placements differ from Child Protective Services cases, as FCFC youth require placement support without issues of neglect or abuse.

Ms. Wilson shared an example illustrating program impact and highlighting a youth who benefited from services through the placement of a therapy dog.

**Budget Hearing, Municipal Judges, 1:00 p.m.**

Judge James Fields and Jackie Long were also in attendance for the Municipal Judges Budget Hearing.

Judge Fields reported that the Municipal Court's 2026 budget is within parameters and reflects a 0.7% increase, primarily due to higher contractual costs for interpreter services. He noted efforts to secure new grants for the court.

Commissioner Levacy asked about the role of technology in interpretation services.

Judge Fields explained that pre-trial hearings can be conducted by phone, but in-person interpreters are required for trials.

Commissioner Fix inquired about the residency of most defendants.

Judge Fields confirmed that most defendants are county residents and primarily from the Pickerington and Reynoldsburg areas.

Commissioner Davis asked about the court's reporting on immigration status.

Judge Fields stated that specific questions are required if a defendant indicates they are not a U.S. citizen. He added that security remains the court's greatest concern, noting that probation officers are armed and prepared for potential threats.

**Budget Hearing, Municipal Clerk, 1:15 p.m.**

Municipal Clerk of Courts Valeda Slone was also in attendance for the Municipal Clerk Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 budget is based on statutory requirements and reflects a 0.4% decrease compared to 2025.

**Budget Hearing, Domestic Relations Court, 1:30 p.m.**

Judge Laura Smith and Lori Lovas were also in attendance for the Domestic Relations Court Budget Hearing.





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Mr. Hampson reported that the proposed budget reflects a 6.4% increase from 2025, with employee salaries and health insurance being items outside parameters.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the Visitation Center was included in the 2026 budget for Domestic Relations Court.

Mr. Hampson stated it was not included, and Ms. Knisley explained that the grant is held by the Commissioners.

The Commissioners expressed a willingness to review ways to obtain funding to continue the program.

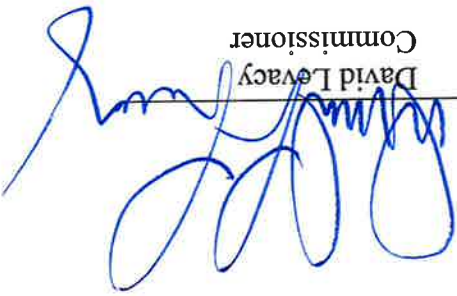
**Adjournment**

With no further business, on the motion of Steve Davis and the second of David Levaey, the Board of Commissioners voted to adjourn at 2:05 p.m.

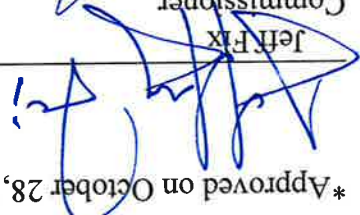
Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:  
Voting aye thereon: David Levaey, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix

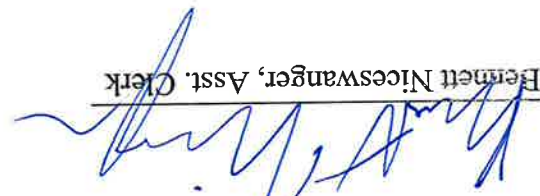
Motion by: David Levaey  
Seconded by: Steve Davis  
To approve the October 21, 2025, Budget Hearing minutes by the following vote:  
YEAS: David Levaey, Steve Davis, and Jeff Fix  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None

\* Approved on October 28, 2025

  
David Levaey  
Commissioner

  
Steve Davis  
Commissioner

  
Jeff Fix  
Commissioner

  
Bennett Niceswanger, Asst. Clerk