

Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: April 29, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Erie County Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky

Welcoming Remarks

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman **Mike Parker**, Roll Call was taken. All present. An attendance sheet was signed by audience members present.

Approval of Minutes from April 22, 2025 – Topic of Discussion: Entity Administrative Staffing

A motion to approve the minutes that were distributed electronically was made by Ms. Crescimano and seconded by Ms. Balconi Ghezzi. The motion carried unanimously.

Purpose of the Meeting

Mr. Mike Parker (Blue Ribbon Commission) explained the topic of discussion today is to provide insights into determining how entities can work together to reduce costs and be more efficient with Infrastructure - roads/street maintenance. The Facilitators for the day include Mr. Mike Parker and Mr. Kelly Moon.

Mr. Parker expressed that a meeting was held at the recommendation of the County Engineer Eric Dodrill. Many of the Townships had representation at this meeting and concluded that the Townships currently do an amazing job of working together to be more efficient and will continue to progress with additional ways to work together. Mr. Parker reviewed the following questions and answers that were discussed at that meeting.

Review

- Major maintenance, Capital improvements or extra capacity needed in the near future (less than 5 years)? Long term - > 5 years?
 - The Erie County Engineer proposed sending a memo, from the Erie County Township Association President and County Engineer, requesting a 3-5 year road and street plan from each township.
 - Received Oxford, Margaretta, Perkins, Florence Townships

- Overall benefits for sharing these street plans were discussed, such as, cooperative contracts for any preventive maintenance (PM) including: thin overlay, micro-seal, crack seal, 2-inch overlay, chip seal, etc. Discussed including cities in contracts in some cases.
 - Potential is there for rural areas to have increased costs, due to costs in the cities are higher because of increased traffic control costs, mobilization costs, and the piecework involved in working around manholes and other utility obstructions. The City of Sandusky sets mobilization cost limits in the bids; however contractors are likely to make up for any possible underestimates by adding the cost to another area of a bid.
 - County and Townships concluded, that by sharing 3–5-year road and street maintenance plan, the Townships and County could benefit from cooperative contracting for work and purchases. The cities may wish to participate in some cases to reduce costs and coordinate with the County on projects.
- The County Engineer proposed informal quarterly meetings with Townships to discuss work and issues, which was a favorable idea.
 - If cooperative contracting takes place, County Engineer would coordinate with the contractor and negotiate a price and then a separate contract with each individual entity would be created.
- Is routine maintenance primarily in-house or contract?
 - Erie County – staff mechanic onsite
 - Perkins Township - staff mechanic onsite
 - City of Sandusky - has a facility onsite and staff for maintenance
 - Berlin Township - uses American Diesel for out of warranty work.
 - Under wash facility – idea expressed in previous public meeting. This is another cost-cutting issue that has merit, but where, and how much, how to fund are issues.
- Snow Removal and Service
 - Use of brine to pre-wet salt and reduce bulk salt costs – Margaretta purchased brine mixing machine via grant and is letting Perkins purchase brine. Groton and Oxford will work with Margaretta on a similar deal. The Erie County Highway department may also want to share.
 - Township Trustee Coleman noted that when the salt is treated as it comes out of the truck it reduces splattering, which is up to 30-40%. The salt sticks better and helps prevent hard pack ice formation which takes 10 time more salt to remove than just snow.
 - Townships and County drivers work together to work out efficient snow removal routes to reduce time and costs

- Equipment Sharing
 - Oxford-Margaretta-Groton (OMG) have jointly purchased used a road roller, new asphalt crack sealing machine, new mini-track hoe, and used paving machine. Erie County and OMG share equipment and personnel to do smaller paving jobs at about 60% of what a contractor would cost to mobilize and lay asphalt for small jobs.
 - Combined work for three townships last year resulted in approx. 6000 tons of asphalt being laid.
 - OMG team assists the County with some small jobs (Columbus Ave, Hull Rd bridge deck).
 - The County Highway Dept. frequently assists with trucks, and last year Margaretta Township paid for a local contractor to assist with semi-trucks with Flow Boy systems to speed up the work.
 - Crack Sealing – Purchasing in large quantities may be done by contractor, this could be a cooperative contract.
 - Perkins Township – State Dept of Administrative Services, 101L (and a 101G), competitive state bid price for crack sealing contractors
 - *FYI: Trustees need to pass Resolution to enter into contract*
 - Graders – Erie County has three graders that could possibly be shared.
 - Brine – Refer to snow removal.
 - Mini Excavators – Most Townships have their own, OMG did a shared purchase in 2024.
 - Backhoes – This piece of equipment that is not used much anymore.
 - Vacuum trucks – County Highway Department assists Townships quite frequently. (Formerly Perkins Townships truck)
 - Sandusky has their own
 - Hydro-jet Sewer Cleaning – same as above
 - County purchased Perkins Townships truck
 - Local contracts with Franklin or Fox for villages and townships
 - Tree trimming – Generally this is contracted and for rural areas non-routine, thus contracted as needed
 - Sandusky has a Forestry Department
- Coordinate road bidding projects together among cities, townships, villages
 - By sharing road plans with the County Engineer, Townships and the County could benefit from cooperative contracting for jobs and purchases. This would expand on the current program that was instituted decades ago. Cities may also benefit.
- Fleet maintenance, fleet garage, and fleet mechanic concept might benefit townships, cities, villages and school districts. Even within the Erie County Departments, this could be beneficial.

- Level 3 events – how to best share resources
 - Note: ODOT has joint agreements/mutual aid and contracts with local contractors on assistance
- In regards to paying for shared services contracts (Crack Sealing)
 - Cost aggregation strategy has worked for ECSWD
 - Erie County Engineer can aggregate a bigger program with each entity able to enter into own contracts but one aggregated program for a service provider
- State has Best Management Practices (BMP) for cost savings strategies
 - See if ODOT makes info readily available
- Centralized fleet maintenance concept feasible?
 - Need mechanics who have a broad skillset to maintain all equipment and Engineer Eric Dodrill stated hiring personnel with this necessary broad skillset could be difficult.
 - Perkins Township – Staff mechanic currently has no time outside of current workload
 - Larger items they may not have qualifications or large scale equipment for specialized lifts will be contracted out to maintain national standards
 - Margaretta Township – Limited on time to perform the work. Most work is preventative maintenance or contracted out
 - Used Oxford Township facilities to refurbish paving machine
 - Can do in-house and save for the three townships versus contracting out
 - Townships have limited staff filling numerous roles and readily work together with surrounding townships to respond to immediate issues

The Blue Ribbon Commission commended the knowledge, ability and dedication of the various Townships and County. They recognized the fact that all entities work well together and respond to a variety of challenges daily.

Meeting Summary

Mr. Parker provided a summary of key points from today's meeting:

- Development of 3-5 year local plans to help collaborate larger scale contracts
- Equipment rentals and sharing
- Establish quarterly meetings with local entities to help coordinate projects

Adjournment

Work Session Meeting: Scheduled for 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, 3rd Floor Chambers

Next Regular Blue Ribbon Meeting: Scheduled for 10:00 A.M., Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, 3rd Floor Chambers

Topic Discussion: Economic Development

Facilitators: Mr. Krabill and Mr. Parker

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Krabill and seconded by Ms. Crescimano. The motion carried unanimously.