



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF KNOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

MOUNT VERNON, OH

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025

TO VIEW THE RECORDED MEETING VISIT
<https://www.youtube.com/@knoxcountycommissioners1808>

10:00 AM Call to Order

Present: Commissioner, President Bill Pursel
Commissioner Barry Lester
Commissioner Drenda Keesee

Additional Staff

Jason Booth, County Administrator
Penny Doyle, Clerk/Executive Assistant
Andrew Champlin, I.T. Communications Coordinator

Public Attendance

Grant Richey
Kathleen Tate

Departmental Updates

10:00 AM Knox County Sheriff

Sheriff Dan Weckesser submitted a monthly report as follows:

As of April 24, 2025, there are 79 total inmates - 63 males and 16 females

We are in the process of onboarding 4 new employees - 2 for the Jail and 2 for Patrol.

We have 2 employees enrolled in the Central Ohio Technical College Police Academy and North Central State College Police Academy as Cadets.

The Knox County Sheriff's Office will be fully staffed if everything goes as planned with the 4 new employees and both Cadets pass their state test and FTO Training.

We are moving forward with the Training Division Commander, he has been taking and completing multiple courses so we can do more in-house training.

10:30 AM Knox County Park District

Commissioners met with Dave Heithaus, Director, and Brandon Schroepfer, Natural Resource Manager/Naturalist, of the Knox County Park District, in a regular departmental update. Dave and Brandon answered questions from the Commissioners and discussed the following items from their report:

Multi-Use Trails:

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant awarded in 2024 for re-paving the Kokosing Gap Trail (KGT) has entered the engineering phase with the Knox County Engineer assisting with phase 1 and phase 2 plans. Tree trimming to facilitate the passage of paving equipment has been conducted and plans for repairing or replacing drainage infrastructure are underway. This work must be completed before paving occurs in 2026. Bids will be solicited towards the end of 2025 through early 2026. The 13 miles of trail being paved (24 feet wide) will start at Mount Vernon Avenue and end at the parking lot in Danville.

The Midway Station project in Centerburg is still in process. Installing a fence on the boundary between the County Commissioners property and neighboring properties west of Clayton Street continues to be discussed. The County Commissioners position on the issue will help dictate how the Park District proceeds. Park District staff will work with the County Commissioners' staff to schedule a site visit.

Community members, primarily from Brinkhaven, are exploring re-constituting the Mohican Valley Trail Volunteer Board. If they proceed, they would be able to apply for funding beyond the Park District budget. If they increase volunteer activity on the trail, Park District staff would be able to redirect attention to other management responsibilities. The area includes Danville to the county line.

The Heart of Ohio Trail is experiencing berm erosion and pavement cracking in several areas with the worst being near Pacemaker's Drag Strip. A large box culvert is also failing between Route 314 and Updike Road. The Park District is investigating repair options that would likely occur in 2026.

Scenic Rivers:

The Park District has begun work on public access to the Mohican River north of Township Road 364 in Coshocton County. The area has been cleared and is ready for the installation of signage and a parking area. Acquiring permission letters from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to be a challenge.

The Park District will be leasing land on Kilduff Road in Harrison Township for an additional public access to the Kokosing River.

Parks:

The Ohio Department of Administrative Services has issued a draft purchase agreement for 165 acres of land adjacent to the Mount Vernon Developmental Center woods with a purchase price of \$1.00. The Knox County Prosecutor's Office, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Knox County Park District have all approved the draft. A formal purchase agreement will be submitted for the Governor's approval. Following that, the land transfer for Knox County's newest park will be complete. Initial public access will be off Upper Gilchrist Road while a second access off Vernonview Drive is designed.

Administration:

A pilot “Passport to the Parks” program aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles and outdoor recreation was successfully rolled out January-March. The Park District plans on expanding the program in 2025. Participants who complete a set number of hikes will be eligible to receive a custom Knox County Park District challenge coin.

The Knox County Park District was successful in applying for two grants this quarter. A \$10,000 grant for a picnic and event shelter at Thayer Ridge Park was awarded by the Knox County Foundation. We hope to have completed construction in late April or early May. A \$70,000 grant for data loggers on the county’s multi-use trails was awarded by the Ohio Department of Transportation in February. We anticipate installation to begin towards the end of 2025 with the assistance of ODOT contractors. Data loggers on the Kokosing Gap Trail will be installed after the paving project has been completed. MORPC has expressed interest in the data from the data loggers.

Brandon reported two interns from Mount Vernon Nazarene University and Miami University will start in May. Both interns are from the Mount Vernon area and are not interested in utilizing the housing option. David expressed his desire to rent the house out for the summer.

Commissioner Pursel inquired about Amish Buggies using the trails. Dave reported there is 4 1/2 miles of the trail that allow Amish Buggies. This helps keep the buggies off Route 62 and this area of the trail is chip-n-seal to accommodate buggy wheels. The most common complaint for the trail area that allows buggy traffic is manure.

Commissioner Pursel asked if there would be anymore controlled burns. Dave reported the controlled burns are done for the year and explained the process for controlled burns, noting winds after 2 p.m. can create problems, therefore, controlled burns tend to be completed in the mornings.

Commissioner Pursel inquired about the Route 36 trail access area, parking lot, and signage. Dave reported additional signage and directional markings will be installed at different locations for better visibility for linking access to Wolf Run Park. He also reported discussions continue with ODOT for egress issues for that particular area. Dave reported a picnic area and placement of a large boulder to honor Lori Totman (retired Parks Director) are in the works near Wolf Run Park.

The Commissioners thanked Dave, Brandon and the Park District staff for their continued dedication and hard work in serving our community through the Park District.

Resolutions to be Presented

RESOLUTION 2025-262--APPROVE SUPPORT LETTER FOR THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, OHIO, ADAPTIVE TREATMENT ENHANCEMENTS PROJECT (MVATE).

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Support Letter for the City of Mount Vernon, Ohio, Adaptive Treatment Enhancements Project (MVATE).

A copy of the support letter is attached to Journal No. 2025.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Barry Lester
SECONDER:	Drenda Keese
AYES:	Pursel Lester Keese

County Administrator Updates

County Administrator Jason Booth updated the Commissioners on the following items:

Jason read the monthly report from the Knox County Sheriff. Commissioner Lester would like to know the average length of stay for the inmates. A request for this information will be made to the Sheriff. Jason reported the final quote will be coming for the Jail kitchen equipment and installation (approximately \$56,000.00). The amount budgeted for the kitchen upgrade was \$50,000.00. The Maintenance Department will assist with the removal of the old equipment when the new equipment is ready to be installed.

Jason reported the architect is putting the final plan together for the Jail Evidence/Storage room now that the electrical engineer has determined the electrical access. Once the final plan is completed by the architect, it will be submitted to the state for approval. The Sheriff is very pleased with the progress of the project.

Jason reported the steel was delivered and the archway structure was put up this week for the Service Center Rear Entrance Project. The work continues and appears to be on schedule.

Commissioner Committee Updates

No updates to report.

Approval of Transfer of Funds, Supplemental Appropriations and Bills

RESOLUTION 2025-263--APPROVE BILL LIST.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Bill List dated April 24, 2025.

A copy of the Bill List is attached to Journal No. 2025.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Drenda Keese
SECONDER:	Bill Pursel
AYES:	Pursel Lester Keese

RESOLUTION 2025-264--APPROVE BILL LIST - THEN AND NOW.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Then and Now Bill List dated April 24, 2025.

A copy of the Then and Now Bill list is attached to Journal No. 2025.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Drenda Keese
SECONDER:	Bill Pursel
AYES:	Pursel Lester Keese

Public Comment

Kathleen Tate, Howard, Ohio, resident, asked to speak with Commissioner Keese after the meeting. She stated she is the head of the Democratic Party, but that is not why she is here. She stated she is a mother of a son who was accused of a very serious crime. She stated she is also a woman who was cornered by a minister or have relatives who have children and friends who had issues with other ministers. She would like to share her experiences with Commissioner Keese. Commissioner Keese met with Kathleen Tate for a private conversation after the Commissioner meeting ended.

Adjourn the Meeting

Commissioner, President

Commissioner

Commissioner

ATTEST:

Penny R. Doyle
Clerk/Executive Assistant