



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF KNOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

MOUNT VERNON, OH

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026

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

Cheryl Splain, Reporter for Knox Pages

10:00 AM Departmental Update - Knox County Park District

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

Multi-Use Trails:

The Knox County Engineer's Office is in the process of soliciting bids for the Kokosing Gap Trail milling and re-paving project. The window for completing the work will be May - September 2026. Within that window, we are requesting that the work be completed without pause to minimize the duration of trail closure. The Park District and Kokosing Gap Trail Volunteer Board will manage communications and post detours during the construction process.

Eleven data loggers acquired with grant funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation were installed in November 2025. Data from these loggers can be made available to any individual or group upon request. Since January 1, 2026, over 4,400 individual users have been logged on Knox County's multi-use trails.

Several larger maintenance issues on the Heart of Ohio Trail will need to be addressed in 2026 - 2027. They include the replacement of a large culvert east of Updike Road, berm stabilization in several areas, and tree maintenance and removal along the length of the trail. Tree maintenance has been scheduled with a local contractor beginning this week.

Scenic Rivers:

No substantial updates. Improvements to several Kokosing and Mohican River access points continue to be evaluated for feasibility. Permitting and funding continue to be challenges.

Parks:

The Park District plans an official opening for The Woodlands on May 9, 2026. A small parking lot has been installed at 12185 Upper Gilchrist Road and trail has been roughed in from this location to the old growth forest. The main parking lot will be located at 1740 Vernonview Drive. The Park District is in the process of applying for a Knox County Foundation grant to assist with construction of parking facilities and an event shelter. Prior to the official opening, the district will host a public tree planting in late March or early April.

The Park District partnered with the Philander Chase Conservancy to acquire 40 acres adjacent to The Woodlands. The Conservancy will hold the title to the property until such time as the Park District can acquire funding to purchase it. Applying for Clean Ohio funding is the most likely path forward in 2026 or 2027.

Programming and Administration:

The Knox County Park District Board of Commissioners would like to attempt a renewal with an increase levy in November of 2026. The current levy expires in 2027. The levy would request an increase from 0.35 mills to either 0.75 or 1 mills. The Park District Board of Commissioners believe this increase is essential to maintain and improve the Park District's holdings, which have expanded beyond its management capacity.

The Knox County Park District will be moving its office from the Service Center to 104 East High Street in February. The district appreciates the County's continued administrative support and the opportunity to expand into a larger space.

The next Knox County Park District Board of Commissioners meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, in room 253 of the Knox County Service Center.

10:30 AM Departmental Update - Knox County Transit

Commissioners met with Bethany Celmar, Transit Director of Knox County Transit (KCT), in a regular departmental update. Bethany answered questions from the Commissioners and discussed the following items:

Bethany reported the routes, stops and times were analyzed in December for the six month review. Based on the information, changes will be made starting February 17, 2026. The Round Hill/Coshocton Avenue route will have changes to route stops, times, and the stop at Dollar Tree will be eliminated. The transfer location will change for all riders due to the amount of projected activity at the new facility. The new transfer location will be easier to access and a bus shelter is already in place. The new transfer location will be at the corner of Howard and Gay Streets. Due to low ridership, the Yellow Jacket Express route will be eliminated. The Knox Community Hospital and Knox Public Health stops were not utilized and will be eliminated. Riders can still use the Coshocton Avenue Express Route to access those stops if needed. A new route will be implemented South of the River which includes Columbus Road and the Industrial Park and will also link to the downtown area. This route is used primarily for riders going to and from work.

Bethany reported the changes to the routes, stops and times are posted on the Knox County Transit website, social media, and on all transit buses. Fares are still free for the Flex Routes for the next six months during the Pilot Project timeline. Flex Routes operate from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. On-Demand Routes operate from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Work Route operates until 1:00 a.m. Transit shuts down for lunch each day from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Bethany reported work continues with local establishments for signage and posting updated route information.

Bethany stated she was made aware of reports from riders that individuals were impersonating Knox County Transit for pickups and trying to collect trip fares. She stated all Transit vehicles are clearly marked and all Transit drivers have Driver ID's. Safety is a priority for Knox County Transit and all vehicles are equipped with security cameras.

Resolutions to be Presented

RESOLUTION 2026-81--APPROVE THE BID AWARD FOR THE KNOX COUNTY BUSINESS CENTER - KNOX COUNTY TRANSIT FACILITY TO MODERN BUILDERS, INC., IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,574,508.00.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Bid Award for the Knox County Business Center - Knox County Transit Facility to Modern Builders, Inc., in the amount of \$2,574,508.00. The Engineer's Estimate is \$2,500,000.00.

A copy of the bid award and supporting documentation are attached to Journal No. 2026.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-82--APPROVE STATE OF OHIO - OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - REQUEST FOR PAYMENT DRAW NUMBER 2 FROM CDC OF OHIO, INC., FOR THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF CDBG GRANT #B-F-24-1BM-1 - DANVILLE PARK IMPROVEMENTS, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$8,800.00.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the State of Ohio - Office of Community Development - Request for Payment Draw Number 2 from CDC of Ohio, Inc., for the General Administration of CDBG Grant #B-F-24-1BM-1 - Danville Park Improvements, in the amount of \$8,800.00.

A copy of the request is attached to Journal No. 2026.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-83--APPROVE THE DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 305.30 of the Ohio Revised Code, the Knox County Board of Commissioners (the "Board") may delegate specific authority to the County Administrator for contracting on behalf of the Board, allowing and paying claims, performing personnel functions, and performing additional duties as the Board may determine by resolution; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Knox County, State of Ohio, as follows:

The Board hereby delegates the following authority and duties to the County Administrator, pursuant to section 305.30 of the Ohio Revised Code:

1. Upon prior notice to each Commissioner, negotiate, approve, and execute contracts, agreements, or change orders for amounts not exceeding Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) and for a period of two years or less; and
2. The County Administrator is hereby authorized to approve appropriation adjustments, supplemental appropriations, and fund transfers for amounts not exceeding One-Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000); and
3. Approve the payment of claims for goods received and services rendered (i.e. "Bill List") not exceeding One-Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) per transaction on the list, provided that the county department receiving those goods and services certifies their receipt before the claim is allowed. The Administrators approved "Bill List" will be entered into the Commissioners official record by the Clerk at the next session/meeting.
4. Upon prior notice to each Commissioner, prepare, sign, and submit applications for real property tax exemption and remission for county owned property when required; and
5. Serve as Contract Administrator, having general supervision over the contract and work performed thereunder, for any contract or agreements the Board has entered into and not specifically designated a Contract Administrator; and
6. Request written opinions or instructions from the Prosecuting Attorney on behalf of the Board, pursuant to sections 305.14 and 309.09 of the Ohio Revised Code; and
7. The County Administrator is hereby authorized to supervise and manage departments under the direction and control of the Board; and
8. Review and approve departmental payrolls for all departments under the direction and control of the Board; and
9. Approve requests for leave for the County Administrator, provided notification is given to each Commissioner and requested leave is within the County Administrator's available leave balances; and
10. Accept resignations of employees and department directors under the direction and control of the Board; and

11. Review and approve job descriptions, except the County Administrator shall not approve a job description for a position that reports directly to the County Administrator unless and until a draft job description for such position has been presented to the Board for comment; and

12. Review, in conjunction with Human Resources, all requests for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for all departments under the direction and control of the Board, and approve those requests that meet FMLA requirements; and

13. Upon prior notice to each Commissioner, execute last chance agreements for employees in all departments under the direction and control of the Board; and

14. Review, approve and execute any documents in furtherance of, all personnel actions, including but not limited to, employing new hires, promotions, pay increases, discipline, and terminations, except as follows:

a. The County Administrator shall not approve any pay increase that applies to any employee or group of employees, unless and until the pay increase has been discussed with the Board. However, the County Administrator may approve end of probation pay increases and union step increases as stated in the designated employee contracts.

b. The County Administrator shall not hire or terminate an employee that reports directly to the County Administrator, unless and until the personnel action has been discussed with each member of the Board.

15. This resolution supersedes all previously adopted resolutions on this subject matter.

A copy of the certified resolution is attached to Journal No. 2026.

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

Approval of Transfer of Funds, Supplemental Appropriations and Bills

RESOLUTION 2026-84--APPROVE BILL LIST.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Bill List dated February 5, 2026.

A copy of the Bill List is attached to Journal No. 2026.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-85--APPROVE BILL LIST - THEN AND NOW.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Knox County Commissioners approve the Then and Now Bill List dated February 5, 2026.

A copy of the Then and Now Bill list is attached to Journal No. 2026.

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

County Administrator Updates

County Administrator Jason Booth gave an update on the Knox County Business Center - Knox County Transit Facility. The bid was awarded today to Modern Builders, Inc. It will be a few weeks to get contracts ready for approval and a pre-construction meeting will be scheduled. The goal will be to get the project completed by the end of the year.

Commissioner Committee Updates

Commissioner Lester reported he attended the Knox County Fair Board meeting last night and it went well. He stated the Fair Board members are very thankful for the support of the Commissioners with funding for asphalt on the fairgrounds property. The Fair Board is ready to make arrangements for removing the blue house to make way for a beautification - welcome center project. Commissioner Lester stated he will reach out to Sam Filkins at the Area Development Foundation to secure funding for the demolition and check on the timeline for the removal.

Commissioner Pursel reported they will have a guest speaker for the WMVO Radio Line on Tuesday, February 10th, to discuss the 988 program.

Commissioner Keesee wished County Administrator Jason Booth Happy Birthday.

Adjourn the Meeting

Commissioner, President

Commissioner

Commissioner

ATTEST:

Penny R. Doyle
Clerk/Executive Assistant